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Ethnic Based Political Parties and Its Implication for National Unity: A Case Study between Oromo Liberation Front and National Movement of Amhara

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By

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June, 2019
Bahir Dar, Ethiopia
Bahir Dar University
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Ethnic Based Political Parties and Its Implication on National Unity: A Case Study between Oromo Liberation Front and National Movement of Amhara

A Thesis Submitted to the Department of Political Science and International Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Political Science

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June 2019
Bahir Dar, Ethiopia
Ethnic Based Political Parties and Its Implication on National Unity: A Case Study between Oromo Liberation Front and National Movement of Amhara

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Declaration

I confirmed in the below signature that this thesis named *Ethnic Based Political Parties and its Implication on National Unity: A Case Study between Oromo Liberation Front and National Movement of Amhara* is the original work of mine and nowhere presented before for any academic and other purposes. I also fully acknowledged all the references mentioned in the study.

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This thesis is submitted for examination with my approval as an advisor of the candidate.

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**Acronym**

AAPO-All Amhara People Organization

ADP-Amhara Democratic Party

AEPO-All Ethiopian People Organization

ANDM-Amhara National Democratic Movement

COEDF-Coalition of Ethiopian Democratic Forces

COI-Country Origin Information

ELF-Eritrean Liberation Front

EPDM-Ethiopian People Democratic Movement

EPLF-Eritrean People Liberation Front

EPRDF-Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front

EPRP-Ethiopian People Revolutionary Party

ESAT-Ethiopian Satellite Television

FDRE-Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

IFLO-Islamic Front Liberation Oromo

MEISON- *Melaw Ethiopia Socialist Nigenakie*

NaMA-National Movement of Amhara

ODP-Oromo Democratic Party

OFDM-Oromo Federalist Democratic Front

OLF-Oromo Liberation Front

ONC-Oromo National Congress
ONLF-Ogaden National Liberation Front

OPDO-Oromo People Democratic Organization

SEPDC-Southern Ethiopian Democratic Coalitions

SEPDM-Southern Ethiopian People’s Democratic Movement

SNDM-Southern National Democratic Movement

SNNPRS-Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Regional State

TGE-Transitional Government of Ethiopia

TPLF-Tigray People Liberation Front

USA-United States of America

WPE-Workers party of Ethiopia
Definition of Terms

Chaffee—Regional state council in Oromia

Finffinee—A name used to call Addis Ababa by Oromos

Gada – Traditional administrative system of the Oromo people

Ginbot 20- The victory of EPRDF forces over the Derg army

Kebele-The lowest administrative structure of government

Neftegna- rifleman

Oromiffaa-The language of Oromo ethnic group

Pan Ethiopianist parties- Ethiopian centered parties

Shanqilla- refers to people having black skin

Waaqeffannaa- The traditional Oromo religion

Woreda- an administrative level higher than kebele
Acknowledgment

Sometimes it is heavy to praise the few among many contributors. Likewise, in this research, many actors were an active participant for the successful accomplishment of it. To mention few; my first gratitude goes to my advisor, Moges Demissie (PhD), for his scholarly insights and constructive comments since from the very inception. Second, it is eligible to praise Getahun Wondie for his advice. Above all, I thank my lord and Saint Marry, who blessed me in sprite starting from my childhood age.
Abstract

Although there were ethnic based political organizations since 1970’s, the introduction of ethnic federalism in the post 1991 period opened a wider space for the mushroom growth of ethnic based parties in Ethiopia. Many of the political parties that are competing in the current Ethiopian politics are ethnic based. Their formation empowered many ethnic groups to have proper political representation at national and regional level. However, their exclusive policy is affecting the healthy functioning of the Ethiopian politics. Therefore, the main objective of this study was to assess the implication of OLF and NaMA on Ethiopian national unity. To reach on finding, the researcher used Qualitative case study design through comparative strategy. Both primary and secondary data sources were extensively used for this study. Key informants for interview and focus group discussion were selected through purposive, event and snowball sampling techniques. The collected data was analyzed by blending both thematic and discourse analysis methods together. The finding of the study indicated that OLF is a threat for national unity due to its ambivalent position to coexist peacefully, siege mentality attitude towards other ethnic groups and its participation in human right violation and illegal income generating activities. On the other hand, NaMA has created a mixed effect on Ethiopian unity. On the one side, it helps to maintain the power equilibrium between the secessionist and unionist forces. Its position on the issue of Addis Ababa and other national economic policies is Ethiopian oriented. NaMA’s initiation to amend the FDRE constitution, which is perceived by many scholars as a problematic document, is taken as a privilege for Ethiopian unity. On the other side, belonging the perceived core values and identities of Ethiopia as the identity of the Amhara people alone and emotion laden speeches of the party leaders to portray the Amhara people as the “creator of Ethiopia” erode the sense of unity as it served to diminish the role of other ethnic groups in state making. Its policy to make Amharic the national language of the state created a dissent on others as many rivalry ethnic groups compete for supremacy. As a result, the researcher recommends the need to revise the state structure, government institutions and other legal documents that endangered national unity.

Key words: OLF, NaMA, Oromo, Amhara, National Unity, National Consensus
Chapter One

1. Introduction
This is the preliminary chapter of the thesis. It could be considered as a guiding map that incorporated the problem, the case to which the study focuses the main questions and objectives it would address as well as the limitations and scope of the study. Beside to this, the research methodology, the design, and methods of data collection, sample and sampling techniques, ways to analyze the research are defined in plausible way.

1.1. Background
Political partie are effective instruments to incorporate the needs and desires of the public in the form of policy (Kelly and Ashiagbor, 2011). According to Duverger (1995), as cited in Byamukama (2003), all the world states, except United States of America, were stranger for multi-party system before 1850. Politicization of ethnicity is the pushing factor for most of the troubles happened in the world including the widespread movement of ethno nationalist movements in Europe, Youguslavian genocide and race based conflicts in USA around 1960’s and 1970’s (Lentz, 1995). In states like Malaysia, India, Pakistan, and Fiji, ethnic groups realized their plan of forming ethnic parties to advance the interest of their group only (Hashmi and Majeed, 2015).

African Associations inspired the formation of Student organizations and and nationalist movements before party politics introduced into the continent (Byamukama, 2003). Many African countries in the post cold war era were the advocators of one party system. Only Senegal, Gambia, Botswana and Botswana were the proponents of multi-party system in 1990. The victory of capitalism over socialism is a transition point for African states to practice multi-party system in their political field (Kura, 2007). Though political parties were formed and began mobilizing the public, one party dominance remained the fence to practice multi-party sysyem in Africa. Countries like Benine, Burundi, Central African Republic, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Uganda, Mali, Lesetho, Rwanda, and Niger are the few where one party dominant system is visible (Kura, 2007).
Party politics has very recent history in Ethiopia. Both the Imperial and the Dergue governments banned any legal political parties in the country (Teshome, 1981). During the 1960’s various student movements at home and abroad raised many questions, relating to land reform and nationalities right. Initially the Ethiopian student movement had a pan Ethiopianist view (Teshome, 1981). However, the rebellion in Bale and the Eritrean resistance as well as their inclination towards Marxist - Leninist idea reshaped them to focus on nationalities question (Baken, 2009).

Walleligne (1969) asserted that the diverse culture, language, and identity of nationalities in Ethiopia has been assimilated and dominated by pseudo Ethiopianists of Amhara or Amhara Tigre ruling class. According to him, political power has been controlled by those groups by precluding other nationalities. Therefore, genuine Ethiopia has to be created by accepting and respecting the culture of other nationalities. Alem (2003) also described the incredible contribution of student movement as a voice for nationalities who were ignored by the imperial government. The offspring parties of students, like MEISON and EPRP accepted the right of self-determination up to secession as their hallmark. They supported ethno nationalist groups in advance by detaching themselves from a usually advocated idea of Pan Ethiopianism.

The state formation process in Ethiopia resulted for the creation of very polarized view points. That is, pan - Ethiopianist versus Ethno - nationalists. The former perceived the expansion of emperor Menelik II in the late 19th century to form one Ethiopia as a nation state. On the other hand, Ethno - nationalist forces like the Oromo Liberation Front and Ogaden National Liberation Fronts claim that the Abyssinian rulers through their expansionist policy colonized vast territories by imposing their own culture and religion on colonies (Assefa, 2010). These political groups, in their earlier period, advocate and seek to establish an independent state of their own (Alem, 2003, Shehim, 1985).

The efforts of both Emperor Menelik II and H/selassie I to create a very strong unitary state by inculcating Amharic and Orthodox Christianity as a common culture for all nationalities resulted for the dissatisfaction of many ethnic groups on their respective regime. This policy instigated and led many dis satisfied ethnic groups to organize themselves on their line of ethnicity and started movements for the independence and freedom of their own ethnic group (Alem, 2003, Aalen, 2006 & Teshome, 1981). Ethnicity was a factor utilized by both imperialists and
opposition forces to get a support from the public (Tuso, 1997). In the 1960’s many ethnic based rebel groups like Eritrean Liberation Front, Ethiopian National Liberation Front, which was an Oromo based movement, and Somali Abo Liberation front were supported by Islamic and socialist states both ideally and financially to weaken the Ethiopian central government (Wondwosen, 2009).

Immediately, following the downfall of H/Selassie’s regime, the Derg government tried to give recognition for diverse nationalities by establishing an” Institute for the study of Ethiopian nationalities” and by permitting their culture and language to be practiced with some limitations. Though the Dergue government fully confirmed the Marxist Leninist ideology of self-determination of all ethnic groups and nationalities, practically it was highly centralized. The Derg government strongly believed that eliminating class differences would solve the problem of each ethnic group. This has done by granting self-governing right and regional autonomy for each ethnic group to enable them to decide on their internal affairs without any external intervention (Baken, 2009).

From the very inception, Dergue rejected the idea of secession in order to maintain national unity. The Dergue government established its own party, Workers Party of Ethiopia, by outlawing all kinds of political parties be it ethnic, non ethnic or multi ethnic (Baken, 2009). This policy forced the government to stay in a very protracted war with ethnic based groups like Tigray People Liberation Front, Oromo Liberation Front, Eritrean Liberation Front, Western Somalia Liberation Front, Afar Liberation Front, Islamic Oromo Liberation Front and Ogaden National Liberation Front (Wood, 1983). However, its offensive war did not stop the EPRDF forces from controlling power in 1991 (Alem, 2003). Many ethnic based movements which fermented at various corners of the country first inspired by the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front. However, it was not ethnic, rather regional, because it was shared by different peoples of Eritrea (Baken, 2009).

The Dergue government had a rigid policy towards Ethiopian national unity. Its popular slogan was Ethiopia first or Ethiopia Tkidem in Amharic (Tuso, 1997). The military government declared war against ethnic based movements who were ready to assure self-determination for their ethnic group. Rather than eliminating and stopping such groups, the Derg’s repressive and massive attack promoted them to be strong and invincible to achieve their goal (Alemante,

Ethnic based political groups dominated the transitional period national conference. This amplifies EPRDF’s conception of addressing and incorporating the basic questions of each ethnic group and promoting the unity of Ethiopia (Baken, 2009). It drawn itself to answer the quests of ethnic groups by representing themselves as a guardian of nations and nationalities (Keller, 1995). Since 1991 the EPRDF regime through its ethnic federalism, legally formalized the nationalities quest for self-determination up to secession. This paved the way for the formation of ethnic based political parties to maintain the interest of their own ethnic group. Currently, ethnic based political parties outnumbered that of Pan-Ethiopianist parties.

The nature of EPRDF as a coalition of ethnic based political parties promoted the mushrooming of ethno-nationalist parties while it discouraged pan-Ethiopianist parties (Wondwosen, 2009). There is a high interconnection between the view of 1960’s student offspring parties and EPRDF policy towards nation building strategy because both parties emphasized on creating a common Ethiopia by properly responding to the quest of each ethnic group. The FDRE constitution clearly stated its state building strategy on two basic pillars: protecting the right of each ethnic group and promoting the unity of Ethiopia (Baken, 2009).

Oromo Liberation Front and National Movement of Amhara are amongst ethnic based political parties that were formed at different periods to maintain the interest of Oromo and Amhara peoples respectively. There is a controversy concerning the exact year when OLF was established. Some sources have shown that it started with an armed struggle against the imperial government from 1963-68 in Bale province. The Bale revolt, largely, was considered as a sign of Oromo nationalism and a move towards self-determination (Wood, 1983). Others on the other hand, stated the year 1976 as its establishment period. It was founded for the independence of Oromo nation from Ethiopian colonial administration (Assafa, 1993, Aklilu, 2005). Mecha-Tuuluma welfare association and the Ethiopian student movement highly contributed for its formation (Assafa, 1993).

OLF was the one among 31 political parties who participated in 1991 national conference for peace and democracy. However, its stay as a membership of Transitional Government of
Ethiopia was very short. Since 1992, it restarted waging a war against EPRDF government (Keller, 1995). It was labeled as a terrorist organization by the Ethiopian parliament along ONLF and Ginbot 7 (COI, 2017).

The OLF faced a split into three factions. Its first faction was led by Galassa Dilbo. In 2008, the second faction led by Brigadier General Kemal Gelchu left the main OLF group that is still under the chair of Dawud Ibssa. Now a day, OLF has returned to Ethiopia to struggle peacefully by accepting EPRDF’s invitation for all opposition political parties based abroad. The revised OLF political program is mainly targeting on creating a new Republic of Ethiopia that gives equal chance for all nationalities and peoples. It rejected its former vision of creating an independent state of Oromia. Rather, in the revised policy stress has been given to maintain the right of Oromo people in the will be created democratic Ethiopia.

The flourishment of the Amhara Nationalism, the marginalization of Amhara from the center politics and the accumulated massive oppression of TPLF/EPRDF government led to the birth of the National Movement of Amhara in 2018. For the last 16 years, since the conversion of All Amhara People Organization/AAPO/ to All Ethiopian People Organization/AEPO/, the Amhara people were awaiting for a genuine Amhara based party that best represents their interest. Its aim is to end the unfair game that was started by TPLF as away to ignore the involvement of Amhara in the central politics. The party strongly believes the importance of a united Amhara people to defend threats of its own and against the continuity of Ethiopia (Addis Standard: 2018). The transitional government charter was ratified by precluding any political organization that stands for the Amhara ethnic group (Keller, 1995).

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The post 1991 Ethiopia is characterized by the following two contradictory political forces. The first group seeks ethnicity as a primary means to mobilize their own political interest. It uses the FDRE constitution as a means for their struggle to undermine Ethiopian sovereignty. The second group, on the other hand, strongly seeks the unity of Ethiopia by giving second place for the issue of ethnicity, culture and language identities (Zeryehun, 2012).

Ethnic based political parties have grown in a very alarming rate. For instance, in the 2000 national election out of the total 79 political parties that were registered by Ethiopian National
Board of Election there were only nine parties that were not ethnic based. The record on 2005 election also shows the registration of a very high number of political parties on the basis of ethnicity (Arriola, 2005). The EPRDF government strongly supports the mobilization of ethnic groups on the basis of their culture and language as a panacea to address their quest (Vaughan 2003:169-170 cited in African Report 2009). The formation of ethnic parties empowered many ethnic groups to have proper representation at regional and national level. It was on the basis of this assumption that OLF and NaMA political parties were established to maintain the interest of their respective ethnic group. Coinciding with giving due concern for their ethnic group, their vision is to create a common democratic Ethiopia that permit every nationality to be a genuine beneficiary of the state resource and active participant of political power (OLF political program, 2012, NaMA political program, 2019, Addis Standard, 2018, Herald, 2019).

However, for the one who scrutinized the program of both political parties, their agenda invites widespread quarrel and clash with the interest of other ethnic groups. Basically, it undermines the equality of nationalities language and it nullify their current landholding right. The revised OLF program (2012) put Afan Oromo and Amharic to be an official language of Ethiopia. Concerning border demarcation, the state of Oromia incorporated Finfinee (Addis Ababa) and other lands where the Oromo people are currently residing. On the other hand, the political program of NaMA (2019) defined the marginalization of Amhara because of its priority of Ethiopianism. It requests the need to restore the lands of Amhara that were taken by political decisions. It also declares Amharic to be a national language of Ethiopia. There is a disagreement between OLF and NaMA concerning the ownership over Addis Ababa (press conference, 2018). Generally, the enactment of such exclusive policies by both parties instigated the researcher to undertake this study in order to assess its impact on national unity.

Many ethnic groups are claiming to achieve their interest at the expense of other ethnic groups. Many local politicians and leaders are promoting their members to instigate a violence on other competing groups (African Report, 2009). It is clear that such kind of violent conflict strongly erodes the unity of various nationalities to live in a brotherhood sense. According to Teklu ( n.d: 2-3 ), practicing politics on the basis of ethnicity has the following drawbacks.

First, it weakens ethnic based parties capacity to look national matters beyond their own locality. Second, it will limit their existence physically and psychologically. They always
strive to campaign and win only on their particular region. Third, the existence of many ethnic based parties in a particular region may invite clashes among themselves. This in turn reduces people’s confidence on them and may led to confusion. Fourth, it strongly denounce political parties role to discuss on common national issues. They seek and devote their energy to solve the affairs of their own ethnic group at primary level. This attitude strongly erodes future cooperation with other ethnic groups under the umbrella of one Ethiopia. For instance, before the seizure of power by EPRDF, emperor Menelik II was considered as national hero. However, since 1991, he was condemned as a criminal who committed genocide against other nationalities (Bach, 2014). The TPLF manifesto, which was written in 1976, stated the Amhara ethnic group as its oppressor and historical enemy. The domination of Amhara in building Ethiopian empire resulted for the formation of many ethnic based political parties (Lubo, 2012).

Beside to this, EPRDF is a coalition of four ethnic based political parties including: Tigryan People Liberation Front, Oromo People Democratic Organization, Amhara National Democratic Movement, South Ethiopian People’s Democratic Movement. However, the party primarily serves to maintain the economic and political interest of Tigrean ethnic group (Young, 1998, Paulos, 2003, Aklilu, 2005-6 and Aalen, 2006). The remaining centrifugal parties who constituted it have only nominal power (Baken, 2009 and Young, 1998). Ethnic based parties expect a majority support from their own ethnic group and stands to serve the interest of their own group (Cheersmon and Ford, 2007). Tigryans placed themselves in key positions like security, military and economic sectors (DFAT, 2017). The boundary between regional states during the transitional period was done by the accord between EPRDF and OLF through the approval of council of representatives (Alemante, 1992). Initially, the boundaries were perceived to be demarcated on the basis of ethnic lines. However, the reality on ground was on the basis of political power. As a result, TPLF helped its ethnic group to access more fertile lands of other ethnic groups. Similarly, the Somalia ethnic group inherited the fertile lands of Oromo ethnic group. The Amhara ethnic group lost its previous lands in the redistribution process. Such clear lines of dividing regions on the basis of ethnicity promotes political organization on the ground of ethnicity. Such policies may aggravate inter ethnic animosity between friendly groups. It was this process that led people to explain themselves as a member of a certain ethnic group by distancing the status of being an Ethiopian at the first place (Alemante, 1992).
The situation needs urgent intervention because of the following three reasons. First, previously merged minor ethnic groups who lived with major ethnic groups for a very long period peacefully are currently demanding recognition from the federal government more than any time before. They are requesting a special zonal and regional state status which was not in their mind before. For this purpose, they organize themselves under the vanguard of ethnic based parties. For instance, the quest of Guraghe, Kaffa, Sidama, Gamo and Wolayita people for regional state status is a good witness for this.

Second, for a very long period the Amhara people were not interested to organize themselves on the basis of ethnicity. They were considered as the guardian of Ethiopian unity. Many educated elites and uneducated Amhara nationals preferred to advocate Ethiopianism by disregarding organization on the basis of their ethnicity. Fencing on the basis of ethnicity was considered as being very primitive for them (Wondwosen, 2009). However, recently situations have greatly changed. The Amhara nationalism, which was renowned since 2016, lead to the establishment of an Amhara based ethnic party, NaMA in 2018.

Third, the Ethiopian government more than any time before invited all opposition political parties to participate peacefully. The government’s reform to broaden the political landscape paved the way for the proliferation of many ethnic based political parties and the coming back of many previously persecuted ethnic based political parties like OLF and ONLF. This might make the competition among ethnic parties very fierce and the probability for the occurrence of inter ethnic conflict high. Finally, now a day many inter ethnic conflicts have erupted here and there. The agenda behind these conflicts might be political or economic interest. However, we could not deny the fact that those ethnic based parties are the main architect of such agendas. For instance, there is a visible rivalry between TPLF and Amhara National National Movement or Amhara Democratic Party now a day.

In states like USA, its political federalism has little to do with ethnicity. However, in Ethiopia different federations have been organized on the basis of ethnicity. This is a danger for national unity because it helps each political unit within a region to develop its own nationalism. After acquiring its own territory, each ethnic group will hesitate to bond itself with others. The independence of Eritrea and the lesson it gave for other ethnic groups, the presence of very few and weak pan Ethiopianist political parties as well as the firing of ex national army are indicators
of national disintegration faced in Ethiopia. EPRDF is promoting ethnicity just to stay in power without effective competition. The logic is that ethnic based political parties, rather than being a challenge, are opportunities to divide a very large regions and playing one another (Alemante, 1992).

Many Researches have been conducted by different scholars concerning Ethiopia’s multiparty system. For instance, Joirenan and Szayna (2015) in their study demonstrated the widespread informal repression of the incumbent government on opposition political parties. Lidetu in his article (2011) demonstrated the drawback policies of EPRDF regime on national unity. He explored political organization on the basis of ethnicity, constitutional provisions and government medias focus more on amplifying the differences among Ethiopian nationalities as an existential threat for national unity.

Similarly, Solomon in his article (2014) elaborated the program and type of parties running in Ethiopia. He demonstrated that unlike western parties who are programmed, political parties in Ethiopia are mobilized on the basis of ethnic affiliation. Additionally, he classified parties as ethnic and civic, the first being established to maintain the interest of a particular group. However, as the best knowledge of the researcher no disclosed research has been done by scholars concerning the implication of OLF and NaMA on national unity in comparative perspective. So, hopefully this research will serve as a springboard for further research on the area by demonstrating other ethnic parties as well.

1.3. Core Arguments
The core argument of this research is the formation of ethnic OLF and NaMA invites inter ethnic conflict because of their contending and exclusive political programs. This erodes national unity because many ethnic parties try to execute their interest at the expense of other ethnic groups. Beside to this, its program undermines the equality of nationalities and nullify the previous land distribution right that was allocated for each ethnic groups in the early 1991.

1.4. Research objectives
Basically, this research was focused on assessing the impact of OLF and NaMA on Ethiopian national unity through comparison. This was the core point of analysis. Accordingly, it tried to address the following sub objectives.
1.5. Research Questions

The need to conduct this research was essential to answer the following four fundamental questions.

1. What were the factors accounted for the formation of OLF and NaMA?
2. What is the policy of OLF and NaMA in articulating the interest of their own ethnic group?
3. What is the political program of both parties in relation to common national matters?
4. What looks the practice of OLF and NaMA and its implication on national unity?

1.6. Limitations

The researcher confined this study on urban areas only because of two factors. First, the urban residents have relatively good political knowledge than the rural people. They are educated and well experienced about the current political situation of the state. Second, the urban people have more proximity for Medias and the programs political parties. Many of them use social media. So that, they are near for information. So, including the rural participants, who are far from the topic, is worthless. Its focus on urban respondents, bear in mind the political culture variation with rural population, may reduce the weight of the research.

The incompatible history between OLF and NaMA, the first being an oldest and the latter very infant, was another obstacle to make a genuine comparison. Indeed, the researcher mainly focused on assessing their political program. Additionally, the political turmoil and instability that frequently erupted here and there was another obstacle that endangered the security of the
researcher during data gathering period. Fourth, unable to contact with key informants on the expected time interval, due to duplication of tasks, forced the study to delay. Fifth, unable to speak and listen Afan Oromo language was a temporary obstacle to collect the data about OLF through observation. Finally, lack of ample literature on NaMA, because of its infancy, impedes the researcher to present abundant issues about it.

1.7. Scope
This study was delimited to assess the impact of ethnic based political parties on Ethiopian unity with special emphasize on OLF and NaMA. It focused on investigating ethnic based parties and their influence on the current Ethiopian unity. It deeply investigated the participation of OLF and NaMA in the present political system. For the purpose of this research, OLF means a political organization that recently came back to its homeland and chaired by Dawud Ibssa. So that, readers should not be confused about which OLF the research is talking. In terms of time, it is restricted since 1991 because before that period though there was a discomfort by many political forces, the central government was unitary and strong and had a rigid policy towards the unity of Ethiopia. But, the provision of the right to secession, ethicizing of politics and the discontents of major ethnic groups such as Oromo and Amhara as well as the occurrence of widespread inter ethnic conflict in the post 1991 period makes the situation very sensitive. Beside to this, this study only focused on ethnic based political parties. Therefore, it precluded Pan -Ethiopianist political parties.

1.8. Significance of the study
This research has been done by considering the following benefits. First, to clarify the similarities and differences between the OLF and NaMA and their implication on national unity. Especially, it will be a good elaboration for those who generalize all ethnic based political parties in one sack. Second, to inform the government to take appropriate legal measurement on those political parties that endanger national unity. Finally, to increase the awareness of the public about the program and practice of ethnic based political parties and their related consequence on the state political system.
1.9. **Trustworthiness of the research**

The researcher highly believes in the idea that employing diverse data collection methods like interview, focus group discussion, and observation, a regular contact with advisor, collecting data on time from right respondents, recording the data by using audio or audiovisual equipments as well as analyzing the collected data in a proper manner presenting assured the authenticity of the research. Above all, avoiding any partiality during the analysis process would help the researcher to present a very reliable and trustworthy work.

1.10. **The Rational for Case selection**

It is clear that many political parties established in Ethiopia nowadays are ethnic based. However, the researcher deliberately selected only two parties as an illustration. These were Oromo Liberation Front and National Movement of Amhara. In the selection of these parties, the following six factors were taken in to consideration. First, both parties have grown from the two populous ethnic groups of Oromo and Amhara. These two major ethnic groups have a great capacity to reshape and influence the Ethiopian politics at large. Demographically, the two ethnic groups cover around 62% of the total Ethiopian population (CIA, World fact Book, 2019). Second, both parties were established because of a strong nationalism revived in their respective territory. Many youths in both Oromia and Amhara are active proponents of such parties program. Third, both parties are eager to establish presidential system of government. Fourth, their people just like what other ethnic based political parties wishes to achieve endow them with high trust and confidence. Fifth, both parties were established after a long oppressive system of the incumbent government. They came into existence after a protracted marginalization of their respective ethnic group by totalitarian and segregate administration. Finally, the two parties were selected to see the spill over effect of the most aged ethno nationalist parties on infant ethno nationalist parties.

1.11. **Research Methodology**

The philosophical foundation for this research is social constructivism. Social constructivism develop a personal meaning towards events or things around the world(Creswell, 2014). As a result, the researcher generated various data from many participants about the formation of OLF and NaMA and its implication for national unity. Social constructivists believe that individual differences in understanding things emanate from cultural or historical effects (Creswell, 2014).
The researcher understood the need to include participants from different geographical, cultural, and historical ethnic groups.

1.12. Research Design
The researcher used qualitative case study design. Qualitative research aims at understanding the opinion and view of respondents by employing focus group discussion or interview. Unlike the quantitative research, that uses numbers, qualitative research is always associated with the outlook of participants concerning a certain research topic (Dawson, 2007). Thus, the researcher’s intention was to understand the attitude and perception of respondents concerning the implication of OLF and NaMA on national unity.

In case study design, the researcher unabatedly searches various informations to analyze few selected cases from many respondents. It is useful to assess either one or more cases in a very deep manner and the selected cases must be very important for the research topic (Matthews & Ross, 2010). The selected ethnic based political parties for this study were OLF and NaMA. They are offspring of wide national movements and influential in mobilizing their respective ethnic groups. Actually, there are many ethnic based parties both in Oromiya and Amhara regional states. However, the researcher believes that neither of them are acceptable just like OLF and NaMA. Beside to this, the policy of all ethnic groups, except OLF and NaMA, is mutually inclusive.

Understanding people’s attitude about ethnic parties and its related implication on Ethiopian national unity was the concern of this research. In qualitative case study, events or programs are confined through time and place. Case study is the salient method to assess things deeply by focusing on limited cases or events (Kothari, 2004:113). As a result, the research focused on the post 1991 period, when organization of parties along ethnicity was legally promoted. The researcher selected those two ethnic based parties as a way to show the numerous ethnic based registered by national board of election. The strategy for this case study was comparative. Comparative case study is effective when the researcher selects multiple cases (Matthews and Ross, 2010). In similar case, here the researcher selected two ethnic based political parties, OLF and NaMA, to assess their difference and similarities in huge. Comparative study is a renowned research strategy to compare two or more countries by setting a criterion; always research questions (Matthews & Ross, 2010). The researcher gathered various data about the two parties
policy and their impact on national unity. All the questions raised for both parties are similar in content. Comparative case study is instrumental to make a comparison between the policies of two states (Matthews and Ross, 2010). Accordingly, the researcher mainly focused on analyzing the policy and practice of both OLF and NaMA on Ethiopian national unity.

The case study method focuses on assessing the mutual relation between events and factors associated with it (Kothori, 2004:114). The researcher has tried to know the implication of OLF and NaMA on national unity. Since the case was intrinsic, the researcher had no intention to generalize the case of the two ethnic based parties to the rest of ethnic based parties running in the state. Intrinsic case is useful when the researcher does not need generalization (Hancock & Algozzine, 2007). The researcher employed different data collection instruments to acquire a more refined data from participants.

1.13. Data Collection Methods
The forthcoming 2012 national election and the consequent opening of party offices helped the researcher to gather data easily. This research is exploratory in its type. Exploratory research is effective to demonstrate issues where no previous studies are available. Taking in to account the absence of disclosed research concerning the impact of ethnic based parties on national unity, it will serve as a springboard for further research. Exploratory research is effective to investigate ideas and perceptions (Kothori, 2004). Accordingly, the focus of this research was to understand the consequent implication of the policy and practice of OLF and NaMA’s on national unity.

It applied qualitative approach because its focus was to assess the understanding and insight of various political science scholars, Medias, journalists, and political party leaders about the impact of OLF and NaMA on the Ethiopian national unity. Qualitative research incorporates observation, interview, document and textual analysis, ethnographic research as well as historical analysis (Berg, 2001). The researcher analyzed various documents, the political program of parties, TV interview with party leaders, press conferences concerning the logic behind the formation of OLF and NaMA. Beside to this, he employed interview, focus group discussion, and observation to assess the perception of its members about their country, the mechanisms to reach consensus on national matters as well as the way the two ethnic parties maintain the interest of their ethnic group.
Both primary and secondary data sources were utilized as an input of data to investigate the case in detail. Among primary data sources, the researcher employed face-to-face interview with leaders of OLF and NAMA, political science scholars and journalists. This does not mean all the interviews were concluded through face to face interview. Rather, the researcher also used telephone interview with one of the key respondents due to the duplication of tasks and time constraint on the side of the respondent. The interview questions were Semi-structured in its approach because it allow the researcher to dig out very deep information about a particular event or case by forwarding the same questions (Dawson, 2007). Especially, scholars of political science and journalists by using their deep academic and professional knowledge investigated the case properly during the face-to-face interview. Above all, party leaders and their members provided a good insight, consider their proximity and advocate of ethnic politics, concerning parties implication on national unity. The researcher posed many similar questions for key respondents to collect the relevant data and to make the comparison between the two parties genuine. However, in some instances the researcher asked different questions for parties due to the difference in their nature and practice. Finally, the researcher included the view of pan-Ethiopianist political parties concerning the implication of OLF and NaMA on national unity.

Focus group discussion by gathering many respondents in one room was also the other strategy to collect a verified data from many respondents. For effective and hot discussion to be held, the researcher clearly managed and regulated the content and time of the discussion. To make the discussion outcome more fruitful, the researcher properly recorded all the events through visual and audio visual equipments. However, before he start recording, requesting the consent of participants was mandatory. The researcher, as much as possible, tried to arrange the focus group discussion with individuals having an intimate contact and similar status. This made participants felt secure and to exchange ideas without any fear.

Observing the intention and reaction of both party leaders and members concerning their feeling towards Ethiopia and other ethnic groups was also another strategy to assess the case properly. Participant observation is a classic method of research in order to add a drop of knowledge about a particular community (Dawson, 2007:105). In order to respect the research ethics, the researcher used overt participant observation. Overt participant observation is done on
organizations or events by disclosing the objective of the research for members (Dawson, 2007). As a result, the researcher planned to attend selected conferences of both parties. However, Unable to speak and hear Afan Oromoo language was a constraint for the researcher. As a result, the researcher represented two language interpreters, Afan Oromo speakers, who can depict the overall message and reaction of members about OLF and its public meeting. Language interpreters were effective in translating the message of OLF posted in its social media page. Sometimes, what explicitly stated by the parties for the public was found to be different from what they told for their members implicitly.

Secondary data sources like parties program and manifesto, stored documents, TV interviews, partie’s social media pages, magazines, documents, reports, articles and meeting reports were extensively used. Scrutinizing the report, manifesto, and program of both parties enabled the researcher to comprehend their program and practice easily. Today, due to the expansion of technology and presence of widespread social media users, any kinds of activities that those parties disseminate for their members and supporters is available and dig out with in a fraction of seconds. Evaluating and comprehending the social media page of both parties was part of the analysis part. Effective identification of the genuine page’s from the fake one’s was properly done. A wide range of analysis on the political program of both political parties was also an integral part of data collection process.

1.14. Sample and Sampling Techniques
For the purpose of this study, the target populations were party leaders, members of each political parties, scholars of political science, journalists, nationalist party leaders and members of the various community. However, making interview and focus group discussion with key informants continued until the researcher gets sufficient data. The researcher used purposive, snowball and event non probable sampling because it helps to meet target respondents easily. Event sampling involves collecting of data from participants of a particular event or conferences. In snowball sampling the original sample indicate another possible key sample who proximity with the case (Schreiber and Asner-self, 2011). Party members for focus group discussion were chosen through the guidance of original respondents. An annual and quarterly public conferences and meetings of both OLF and NAMA were taken as an excellent opportunity to gather the data properly.
1.15. Methods of Data Analysis
After the necessary data was collected through various instruments like Semi-structured interview, focus group discussion, document analysis and observation, the researcher coherently described basic outcomes through thematic and discourse analysis. In thematic analysis, a set of groups are identified by standing from the response of participants (Dowson, 2007). The researcher categorized the response of all key informants in to themes to present the data without fragmentation. According to Matthews and Ross, "Discourse analysis can be applied to conversations, letters, emails, television programmes, documents, archives and many other things" (2010:391). The researcher fundamentally used various television interviews with the leaders of parties, public conference speeches, and press conferences. By doing so, the available data was interpreted properly to address the basic research questions and objectives.

1.16. Research Ethics
The researcher as much as possible refrained from violating the privacy of respondents. Above all, he started any kind of discussion by requesting a consent from every respondent. To enable the respondents to disseminate their ideas freely, the researcher briefly explained and elaborated the purpose of the research and the expected role from them in detail. This made every respondent feel free to answer the listed questions in proper and responsible way. Not only that, but it also helped the researcher to get an authentic and accurate data.

1.17. Organization of the study
This research paper would have the following five chapters. Background, problem statement, core argument, research question, objectives, limitations, scope of the study and methodology constitute the first chapter. The second chapter consists of conceptual clarification and theoretical framework. Chapter three presents salient literatures that have relation with politicization of ethnicity in the post 1991 period like political parties, the relationship between ethnicity and politics in Ethiopia, the origin of ethnic based parties in Ethiopia, major ethnic based parties in Ethiopia, the participation of the Oromo and Amhara ethnic groups in Ethiopian politics, the political participation of OLF and NaMA as a vanguard party for their own ethnic groups and others. The fourth chapter focuses on analyzing the already collected data in a proper manner. The last, but hardly the least, chapter contains conclusion and finding session.
Chapter Two

2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

Politicization of ethnicity is globally abundant in states like Israel, Nigeria, Algeria, Sudan, Ethiopia, and India (Querol, n.d). Ethnic pluralism is not a problem by itself. Rather, the problem emerges as the government and few group leaders began to employ ethnicity for political purpose (Weber, 2009). In states like Malaysia, India, Pakistan and Fiji, ethnic groups realized their plan of forming ethnic parties to advance the interest of their group only (Hashmi and Majeed, 2015). Many scholars reached on consensus about the adverse effect of politicization of ethnicity in inter ethnic relations and development endeavors. Considering ethnicity as an instrument for political mobilization was began after World War II (Regin, 1979)

Countries with few and large ethnic groups are seen to be naturally endowed with support groups large enough to win the majority of in elections. Hence, these countries are expected to mobilize voters along ethnic lines and thereby, ethnicity emerges as a salient political identity. On the contrary, in countries with a multitude of small ethnic groups, political parties seem in need to promote national programs to attract sizeable amounts of voters (Weber, 2009:2).

The main function of ethnic based parties is to remind or create new narrations, mobilizing the public by precluding others and articulate the basic interests of the group in its program (Hashim and Majeed, 2015). In most cases, parties advocate the acquisition and restorations of lands as the basic agenda in front of the public.

Following the fall of communism and revival of capitalism at global level, many African countries adopted multi-party system (Posner, 2007). The introduction of multi party system in the continent instigate citizens to choose among alternatives prevailed on the basis of ethnicity including religion, language and race. Ethnicity is still a vehicle towards accessing state power. Members of a certain ethnic group tends to support the party having intimacy with their ancestor so as to capture the state’s resource like infrastructures and employment opportunities (Posner, 2007). Voters are incline to give their vote for political parties having high affiliation with their
cradle after a clear calculation of the privilege that their vicinity will acquire in the long run. In similar case, candidates incur the expected promise to the full-fledged interest of the ethnic group they aspire to represent at large. The decision to give one’s vote for their ethnic group seems easy in principle. However, it is ambiguous for electorates who are from mixed ethic and religious backgrounds.

Many of the post independent African states are controlled by one dominant ethnic group by oppressing other ethnic groups. This trend forced many political organizations to be formed on the basis of ethnicity (Ismagilova, 2004). In Africa colonialism posed great suspicion among ethnic groups (Aluko, 2003). For instance, there is unbalanced economic development between the south and north part of Nigeria, which in turn invites dissent in the disfavored side. This is happening not because of unsuitable topographic nature of the north. Rather, it is the effect of colonizers political conspiracy to play one group against the other. In many African countries, ethnicity is a prominent factor in recruiting supporters of political parties (Norris and Mattes, 2003). However, its extent may vary from one state to another. States having many ethnic groups may expose to such conditions as compared to less ethnic states. The politics of many sub-Saharan African states is highly affected by kinship, tribe, ethnicity, and religion (Horowitz, 1985). Voters tend to support an ethnic party having of a relative linkage with their society. In many African states like Kenya, national elections have the image of ethnic counting. Each presidential candidate gets support and rejection by selected ethnic groups.

According to Asafa (2019), ethnic politics is not a new trend in Ethiopian political system. Rather, it has had a long history back to the thinking of modern Ethiopian state formation. He depicted the situation that was happen before 150 years in the following way:

One of the reasons why Dejach Kassa Mircha (later called Emperor Yohannis IV) of Tigray revolted against Emperor Tewodros II and decide to work with General Napier who led British army from India to set free the English hostages under Tewodros was ethnic politics. The appointment of SaheMariam (Later called Emperor Menelik II) of North Shewa who eleven years younger than Kassa Mircha as Dejazmach, the title only two levels below King (Nigus) and appointed Kassa Mircha of Tigray as simply Balambaras, the lowest rank in the feudal aristocratic power structure, was considered as ethnic bias and discrimination and dissatisfied Kassa Mircha who then started working against Tewodros until Tewodros’ death in 1868.
The imperial government was intentionally deaf for party politics. Political parties, including rebel organizations, strictly forbidden to advocate their agenda explicitly. The only option remained at hand was to start a movement in a very clandestine way to save their members from persecution. Many Arab and socialist states sponsored ethnic based parties to revive in the state so as to weaken the central government (Wondwossen, 2009). Few ethnic based organizations began struggle with the name of ‘Ethiopia’ with the intent to reduce the harsh pressure of the government.

The era of Emperor Haile Selassie II was characterized by the active domination of the church and ignorance of the society about party politics. The 1955-revised constitution paved the way for freedom of association. However, none of the phrase explicitly stated about the right of citizens to form political parties. The 1974 revolution brought the concept of party politics for the first time in the history of the Ethiopia (Merera, 2007). Unfortunately, there was no legal environment, which allows political parties to function freely. As a result, Political parties decide to organize secretly to defend the demands of their particular ethnic group.

The expectation of the public to foster multiparty system was once again arrested with the rigid policy of the Derg’s ”Ethiopia Tikdem” slogan. While the Derg persecuted opposition political organizations, it declared one party system as a guiding principle of Ethiopia. Immediately, it formed the Workers Party of Ethiopia as the only legal party of the state. Merera (2007) accused both the imperial and the military government for the poor political culture Ethiopia faced today. While the former anesthetized the public with divine narrations the latter closed the door for political competitors. Beside to this , the first political parties in the history of Ethiopia, MEISON(1968) and EPRP(1972), inherited very cursed political lesson for the late comers as they spent much of their age in plot and division. Here, it is very crucial to remind those two political parties as the effects of the Ethiopian Student Movement running both domestically and externally. There was a temporary alliance accord among liberation fronts. The closeness of MEISON with the Derg government in its early age and the struggle of EPRP in urban centers both contributed for the weak political culture in the state (Merera, 2007). The conflict escalated as the tactical alliance between the Derg and MEISON countered with another cooperation between EPRP and EPLF. The political situation of the then was full of conspiracy, killing and destruction of one another. For instance, there was hatred between TPLF and EPRP as well as between MEISON and Oromo nationalists (Merera, 2007). Later on, the chapter was concluded with the victory of the Derg through mass killing and assassination of members of both political parties.
Many political organizations formed both during the imperial and Derg regimes were not allowed to participate explicitly. The government failed to recognize the right of political parties to involve in the affairs of the state. Rather they were forced to strength their structure in very secret manner. The Derg regime proclaimed the WPE as the only political party having legal entity to represent the worker class (Leake, 2017, Solomon, 2014). It legally endorsed one party system as the state operational mechanism of party system. The major contending political organizations responsible to topple down the Derg regime were predominantly ethnic based even though the Derg socialist regime is the pioneer in recognizing ethnic equalities throughout the state.

The pre 1991 Ethiopia was a source of dispute because there was Ambraization policy. Key government officials were under the Amhara control with little share of Tigray, Oromo and Guraghe nationals. Particularly, the omotic speakers were ignored from power (Ismagilova, 2004). The authoritarian system in Ethiopia was not ready to respond the quest of the diverse ethnic groups (Walle, 1993). Rather, its policy ignored the political, cultural and economic interests of nationalities. It was this system that instigated ethnic groups to abandon the usually advocated idea of Ethiopianism.

Walle described the Ethiopian national unity in the pre 1991 period as follows:

Prior to the adoption of the ethnic map, in each of Ethiopia’s pre 1991 administrative regions, members of every nationality had been living harmoniously in cities, towns and villages irrespective of ethnic backgrounds and places of birth. For example, in the predominantly Amhara provinces of wollo, Gojjam and Gondar members of ethnic groups from Oromo, Tigré, Guraghe and others had been residing with little or no regard for their places of origin. Like wise, in the southern provinces, where the Oromos, Sidamos, Omos, Kaffas and others live in greater numbers, members of all other population groups had lived for generations. While cultural differences had always existed among them, the sense of unity and nationhood still remained strong. However, the map has now become unnecessary intrusion in to their personal lives (1993: 37).

2.2. Conceptual Clarification

Arranging the public based on cultural belongingness to execute the goals of politicians is considered as ethnic mobilization. Ethnic mobilization needs a critical strategy to manipulate and consume the members of a certain ethnic group in to the political field. Olzak (1983) defined ethnic mobilization as the collection of people by searching some sort of similarity to achieve their common interest. Organizing the people from a specific ethnic category is very essential.
Political mobilization is a mechanism used by key party leaders to attract and win the hearts of the society by seeking a support for their party. The persuasion process can be effective after a clear explanation of political events taking place in the state or particular vicinity. It can encompass actions like criticizing the policies of the incumbent government or requesting the need to enact new rules. The overall performance of the mobilizes or political actors is measured by the extent and number of the public who are attracted by the persuasion process. There is a misunderstanding about political mobilization. The hitherto understanding of political mobilization is only associated with electoral campaign. However, scholars should scrutinize the issue beyond winning the electoral seat. It must include getting the public support in demonstration and strike. Mobilizing members of a particular ethnic group is not only confined to election period. Rather, its scope extends to practicing peaceful or violent actions towards the actions of a certain group or government (Vermeersch, 2011).

Ethnic group is defined as a collection of people that share similar cultural and linguistic identities which makes it distinct from others. According to Young, as quoted in Aluko, ethnic groups commonly share similar way of life, culture, language and boundary that makes the group very distinct from the rest of the group in the surrounding environment. It is important to understand the existence of very minor cultural dissimilarity within the group itself. According to Yang (2000:40) “ethnic group is a social group based on ancestry, culture or national origin”. Other scholars like Cohen and Nnoli agree on the role of language, culture and other affiliations as the maker of ethnic group. Many ethnic groups in Ethiopia are competing each other for very scarce resources like power and economy (Hailie, 2015).

Ethnicity is a product of cultural interactions between people and through process their long stayed intimacy resulted the formation of peculiar way of life (Jenkins, n.d.). Other scholars like Kalejayie and Alliyu (2013) defined ethnicity as advocating of one’s identity preclude from the rest of the group. Those authors further depicted the distinction among ethnicity, nationalism, and race. Nationalism is the transformation of ethnicity at national level for the sake of unity while race is more associated with the physical appearance of every human being as black and white. Ethnicity is the effect of common sharing of language, identity, race, religion and other social customs (Asafa, 2019). Members who shares similar manifestations grouped in to one ethnic category for the sake of common good. Ethnicity is an important instrument used by
politicians in every walk of their life. It can be employed to instigate protracted civil wars among ethnic groups. It is expressing of oneself in association with the identity of a certain group (Hare, n.d).

Ethnicity is a wide scope that includes tribes, races, nationalities, and castes. It is a proper set for various groups that distinct itself with a certain language, color, way of living and culture. An individual belongs him or herself with a certain ethnic group because of his or her family (Chandra, 2005). Prior to the 1960’s ethnicity was considered by many as irrelevant factor in politics. However, the quest of various groups by mobilizing their ethnic group forced many political science scholars to give much attention about ethnicity and politics in the 1990’s. The concept of ethnicity has various definitions according to the state context. For instance, ethnicity in India is defined as a broad concept that encompass religion, caste and sub caste (Huber and Suryanarayan, 2014). However, the range of politicizing ethnicity is very sharp in sub caste or jute level and becomes less politicize in religion. Ethnicity is an instrument frequently preached by politicians to achieve their interest. Factors like discrimination, power centralization, social strata, cultural inferiority, and biased feeling towards a certain ethnic group are responsible for ethnic manipulation (Ismagilova, 2004). Ethnicity is attaching of oneself in association with the identity of a particular cultural society (Yang, 2000).

**Ethnic identity** is membership to a category of race, language, caste or religion. Ethnicity consists of groups identified by color, language, and religion. It encompasses tribes, races, nationalities, and castes. It is our birth place and our parents who makes us to chose among many alternatives of belongingness (Chandra, 2005). For instance, our parents may born us from two ethnic groups. Therefore, the interest of us makes us to choose either of the two ethnic groups. I.e. be it the ethnicity of our father or mother. Ethnic identity in Africa is associated with clan, sub clan and tribe (Posner, 2007).

The preamble of the FDRE constitution provided ultimate sovereign power for nationalities or ethnic groups. The constitution placed ethnic identity at the top in lieu of civic citizenship (African Studies Center, 2010). However, there is no clear cut definition available for “nations, nationalities and peoples” stated on the constitution. It is ambiguous for everyone to identify nationalities from people (African Report, 2009).
The concept of ethnicity in the Ethiopian case is associated with nation, nationalities and people (Nishi, 2005 and African studies center, 2010). For the purpose of this research, it is lawful to use both terms interchangeably. Ethnicity for the purpose of this paper is defined as a particular group that manifests itself in a strongly linked cultural or historical ancestor. People from a similar ethnic group share similar psychological makeup that differentiate them from other groups. Ethnicity can be more attributed by similar identity on the basis of blood relation. Practicing culture in well-defined way and the historical events faced on a particular group concrete the sense of belongingness to a certain ethnic category.

**Ethnic Party**

Ethnic parties are political associations that are supported by a particular ethnic group alone. The main task of ethnic parties is to define the basic interests and agendas of that specific ethnic group (Horowitz, as cited by Norris and Mattes, 2003). During the 1960’s, in states like Trinidad, Guyana and Ghana political parties got 80-90 percent of their vote from a single ethnic group alone. There are a number of indexes to identify a particular ethnic group as ethnic or not. These includes the program, name and members background (Berat, 2017). An ethnic party in its program defines to which ethnic group it stands to defend after election. Its name should also reflect the legal and historical attachment of the party with the group it wishes to represent. In many cases members of a particular community tend to support parties having proximity with their vicinity.

An ethnic party is a political organization that mobilize voters by identifying the key interests of a particular ethnic group (Chandra, 2005). An ethnic party is a political organization that seeks a support in the voting process by articulating the interest of a particular ethnic group. The way how it understood the needs of that particular ethnic group is helpful to win the heart of the electorate and mobilize the mass (Chandra, 2005).

The ethnification of parties increases following the inequality between groups (Huber and Suryanarayan, 2014). The difference in earning creates the seignality attitude between the marginalized and the privileged groups. Even the disagreement may extend to the level of incompatibility on policy options. As ethnic parties contribute a positive thing for their ethnic
group, they may also create a negative impact by promoting a seigmentality attitude on its members towards the supporters of other political parties (Baret, 2017).

An ethnic party is a political organization that considers itself as the vanguard of a certain ethnic group. Its policy precludes the interest of non members. The clear articulation of the interests of a specific ethnic group helps the party to mobilize and control the mass inside the group. We can easily distinguish an ethnic party by a simple observation of its political program and its policy towards other ethnic groups. The rationale behind its establishment and the message it wishes to achieve in the election camping are useful information to understand particular ethnic group. Each ethnic party expresses its stand focusing on specific ethnic group. Their political program is targeted on mentioning the interest and basic agendas of their ethnic group (Chandra, 2003). The rationale behind the establishment of ethnic parties is to representation and defending of the group’s interest (Berat, 2017).

Ethnic parties are formed by raising the question of a particular community defined by an ethnic character (Flesken, 2018). It is formed after a critical assessment has been conducted by party leaders. Before they announce the formation of the party, its leaders critically examine the pros and cons of that political association. They tend to support its formation if they are certain about the possibility of mobilizing the public. Ethnic parties are primarily established to represent a particular ethnic group or sections of a society. Many ethnically oriented political organizations were created to represent a single ethnic group (Ismagilova, 2004). It is primarily organized to represent their own ethnic group.

Flesken (2018) defined the motive behind the establishment of ethnic parties in two approaches. I.e the Instrumental and Social movement approaches. The instrumental approach defines the reason behind the formation of ethnic parties because of power ambitious individuals. Accordingly, parties are mere instruments for individuals to achieve their private interest. The second approach, on the other hand, defines the logic behind the formation of ethnic based parties as a result of cumulative marginalization of a specific ethnic group from political power, economy and cultural participation. Accordingly, forming ethnic party is pushed by widespread ethnic dissatisfaction and resentment of a community on the political system. The basic agenda of ethnic parties, according to this approach, is raising and reflecting the basic questions of that particular community. Their primary target is to present an alternative policy that can address
the basic interests of their ethnic group. They are striving to erase the prevalence of discrimination on the existing political system. The social movement approach associates the existence of heterogenous ethnic groups as a pushing factor for ethnic party formation (Flesken, 2018). The number of ethnic parties will grow quickly as ethnic groups discovered abundantly.

According to Dowd and Driessen (2008), quoted in Abdisa (2018), ethnic parties portray the basic interests of a particular ethnic group as a means to mobilize the support of the mass. The focus of the electorate in an ethnic party system is identifying which party has more affiliation and association with a certain ethnic category. Other central factors like assessing the program and policy of parties are rare in many situations. Many scholars believe the function of ethnic parties as incapable of accommodating inter group interests as ultimate focus is devoted for their ethnic group. An electorate who wishes to give his/her votes for someone aside of his/her ethnic group faces a social exclusion.

Ethnic parties are of three types: the mono ethnic, the multi ethnic alliance, which is a coalition of convenience and commitment and multi ethnic integrative parties, a more permanent arrangement. While a mono ethnic party has obvious limitations, an alliance may prove to be internally fragile and short-lived (Abdisa, 2018).The nature of multi ethnic integrative forces is to stabilize politics based on strong leadership. The former two types of parties are typical representations for many of the political parties formed in Ethiopia (Abdisa, 2018).

2.3. Ethnic Groups in Ethiopia

Ethiopia is well known by its independent history, which makes it unique from other African states. However, its internal politics was affected by a power rivalry between the Amhara and Tigryan elites. The continues warfare with the Oromo migrants and Muslim sultanates was also another image of the long established state (African Report no 153, 2009).

Many scholars agree on the existence of more than 80 ethnic groups in Ethiopia. Each have its own distinctive culture, language and identity (Dereje, 20118).Donald Levine depicted the presence of 135 ethnic groups in Ethiopia (Ismagilova, 2004).The southern nations nationalities and peoples regional state is the third largest ethnic group next to Oromo and Amhara. This region is a home for more than 56 ethnic groups. Many minor ethnic groups including Birale or Ongota ethnic groups holding 70 people are found in this region (CSA,2011).During the early
1990’s the SNNPRS was divided into five autonomous regions (Barata, 2012). The Tigray ethnic group is the third largest ethnic group but it is politically active and dominant than others (Alem, 2003). The adoption of ethnic federalism facilitated a very conducive political atmosphere to practice linguistic diversity. Amharic remained the working language of the federal government while other ethnic groups allowed using their mother tongue as a working language for their own region. Many ethnic groups still use Amharic language as a medium of instruction in primary schools. This happened due to lack of organized teaching materials and trained professionals on local languages.

There are two irreconcilable views regarding the history of modern Ethiopian state formation (African Report no 153, 2009). The first group that encompass the pan Ethiopianists explain the formation process as a result of cultural intermingling between diverse ethnic groups. The other group considered the act of the various emperors as equivalent with the European scramble of Africa. For them, the Abyssinian conquerors alienated and forcefully subjugated the southern native people in cruel way.

Selassie, quoted from Dereje, defined the nature of Ethiopian ethnic groups in to three groups. The first group seeks equitable economic and political power allocation. The other group seeks a constitutional guarantee to preserve and practice their culture and language. The third group demands complete independence. No regional states established in Ethiopia are a home of one ethnic group alone. There are other ethnic identities live under the umbrella of major ethnic groups. It is obvious for everyone that the post 1991 Ethiopian state is too busy in glorifying the differences among ethnic groups that resulted for very weak social cohesion. Ethnic groups put their interest at the front and undermine the needs of others (Abbink, 2012).

The 1995 FDRE constitution in its article 39 stated the right of nationalities to practice self-determination to the extent of secession. However, many observers condemned the government’s act of prohibiting such right in a strong rope. The wish of ethnic groups to fix their destination by their own selves created a frequent clash with the state government. Failing to practice its vow on the side of the government intensified the widespread quarrel between ethnic groups and the government security forces at different occasions.
The work of Abbink (2012), in his assessment of the Ethiopian federal practice in the early five years revealed that there is a high degree of marginalization of ethnic groups found far from the Abyssinian sphere. Majority of the ethnic groups incorporated in the late 19th century by emperor Menelik II are still ignored from the center politics. The gap is more visible in the accessibility of social service centers like health post, education, water, road, electricity, bridge and market centers. In the absence of such fundamental facilities, it is too difficult to integrate the state people in to similar psychological makeup. The consequence for such government failure undermines the potential economic growth of ethnic groups. Sometimes, the people reside at the core and far distant peripheral areas may not share any attribute that makes consensus impossible. Emperor H/Selassie was very eager to create a homogenous society within the confine of Amharic culture and Orthodox Christianity (Pausewang, 2009). Though the majesty’s ancestor was from mixed ethnic groups of Amhara, Oromo, and Gurage, he was pro to the Amhara culture. The educational institutions and government offices were expected to provide service based on Amhara cultural and linguistic reflection.

Ethnicity in Ethiopia is not fixed. Rather, in most cases, it is volatile. Previously undiscovered ethnic groups are now recognized as an independent ethnic entity. For instance, before 1991 there was no Kimant or Silte ethnic group because both ethnic groups considered themselves as an Amhara and Gurage ethnic groups respectively. In similar cases, previously autonomous ethnic groups changed and assimilate their identity into another ethnic group. The best illustrative example for this is the Kumpal and Shanqila, that became part of the Agew and Gumuz ethnic groups respectively.

Surprisingly, both in time of emergency and war all ethnic groups stand together against their common enemy. Even after the politicization of ethnicity despite the dissatisfaction on the system, all ethnic groups participated and scarified their life in the fight against the Eritrea (Alem, 2003). The war inspired the missed and intentionally hidden feeling of Pan-Ethiopianism in the hearts of ethnic groups.

Ethnic groups are now claiming the issue of identity and territory. The clash between Tigray and Amhara on the lands of Wolkayit and Raya is mentionable. The identity quest of Kimant is also another example. For such problems erupted, the 1991 territorial rearrangement is a contributing factor (Dagnachew, 2018). The boundary commission organized in August 1991 was composed
from seven parties. It comprised ten experts of which three from EPRDF, two from OLF, Gurage, Harari, Afar and Somali each one representatives. Since 1991, the relation between ethnic groups have been changed into hostility and rivalry in search of power, resource, territory and local administration (African Report, 2009)

2.4. Theoretical Perspectives on Ethnic Politics

2.4.1. Culturalist Approach
The culturalist’s assumption is taking the public towards a certain action by strongly preaching the cultural similarity between members of an ethnic group. They explain a cultural uniformity as an instrument to ethnic mobilization. It is very easy to set agendas and execute it because the people are not active to refuse the presented issues as far as there are common features between them. The communication channel between individuals in different parts of the state is their culture. Wherever individuals live, whatever their economic position be it the basic mobilization tool is practicing of a uniform culture.

This approach is subject to criticism due to the following two reasons. First, it is not clearly stated whether culture or ethnic identity influences one another. Second, this approach considers the survival of a cultural manifestation without giving a credit for its reshaping actor.

2.4.2. Reactive Theory
The core argument of this theory relies on a problem in the distribution of resources among ethnic groups. Unbalanced and unfair resource divisions instigate mobilization along ethnicity inevitable. Micheal Hechter is the pioneer of this theory. According to him, the dissatisfaction on economic flow of the privileged and marginalized ethnic groups is responsible for employing widespread ethnic mobilization (Vermeersch, 2011). It seeks the prevalence of equal payment for equal work labor law. It was effective in mobilizing the worker class during the industrial revolution in Europe.

2.4.3. Ethnic Competition Theory
The core assumption of this theory is groups run to control very limited resources. The strong eager to monopolize a single resource invite ethnic groups to a wide scale conflict and dispute. The dispute escalate when the gap between the few elites and the general mass of the contending ethnic groups intensified. According to advocators of this theory, there is a disproprtionality
between ethnic groups and the privilege they get from the state’s resource. Few individuals who portrayed themselves as responsible for an ethnic group define the interests of their ethnic group. Ethnicity is a means employed by individuals to access power and benefit. Here, ethnic categories are created by few individuals who consider themselves as the guardian of that group. The variation in economy or political power can be a criterion taken by individuals to mobilize that ethnic group. Leaders identified a certain ethnic group after a critical examination of the realities on the ground like economic or political alienation and the denial of economic or social freedom.

This theory is the effect of the instrumentalism, that consider ethnicity as a way designed by politicians to achieve their goal, be it political, social or economic. Accordingly, ethnic groups are created with long process of marginalization and discrimination. This theory gives much emphasize to elites who run for power by presenting alternative policies (Vermeersch, 2011).

The culturalist approach emphasizes on identifying of a similar culture as a means to mobilize the ethnic group for political purpose. This theory cannot be applicable for this study because it gives the ultimate mobilization strategy for culture. This theory nowhere mentions about the basic reasons for mobilization It does not give much attention for economic, social and political reasons. Of course, no one cannot deny the fact that both OLF and NaMA political parties mobilize their own ethnic group by preaching the in separate fate of all Oromo and Amhara nationals reside everywhere in the state. However, this is only the strategy used by both parties. The agendas are articulated behind.

Again, the reactive theory is only confined in looking of the economic aspect as a means to mobilize the public. It is not found to be relevant for this research because it is not only the economic marginalization that forced the OLF and NaMA political parties to be established in the political landscape of Ethiopia. Of course, both the Oromo and Amhara ethnic groups are lagging behind in expanding basic industries as compared to Tigray, which is dominant ethnic group since 1991.Rather, other factors including political marginalization is also responsible for the formation and movement of parties along ethnic lines.

Ethnic competition theory argues that the domination of previously marginalized groups can intensify the conflict among ethnic groups. The controlling of all economic, political and security
affairs by the minority Tigryans instigated the widespread mobilization of both OLF and NaMA. To tell surely, the reason for the formation of Amhara based parties is the coming of TPLF in to power. Any ways, those two ethnic based parties represent the two major populous ethnic groups of Oromo and Amhara.

Per the assumption of ethnic competition theory leaders of an ethnic group either use the existing definition or create a novel meaning for ethnic groups to achieve their interest. Previously there was no well-organized Amhara identity. Many Amhara nationals preferred to explain their identity as an Ethiopian. However, the formation of NaMA inspired the Amhara nationals to give a proper place for their identity. In similar case, the formation of OLF paved the way for every Oromo to explain proudly his/her identity without harassment.

Ethnic competition theory describes the creation of ethnic group identity as the work of strong organizations and ethno nationalist political activists. The introduction of ethnic based arrangement helped individuals to awake and activate members of their ethnic identity to rescue the group from displacement and mal treatment. For instance, the Bale peasant uprising, the 1961 coupdeta by General Tadesse Biru, Mecha Tulema welfare association and the formation of OLF inspired the Oromo identity to get a proper treatment by the incumbent government. In similar pattern, the anti Amhara manifesto of TPLF, the displacement and killing of Amhara nationals outside of the region, the distribution of historical Amhara lands to neighboring regions inspired many Amhara activists to stand in unity against the government.

Among other factors, ethnic competition theory give due attention for economic and political marginalization of groups as the reason for mobilization. The OLF claimed the marginalization of the Oromo ethnic group since back to state creation as the cause for Oromo grievance. It depicts the Abyssinian domination in the center politics as the reason for the undermining of the Oromo identity. NaMA also depicted the alienation of Amhara nationals who were in top federal positions were either detained or deposed from power through systematic way.
Chapter Three

3.1. Historical Evolution of Ethnic Based Parties in the Post 1991 Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, multi party system was declared officially following the coming of EPRDF in to power. Before this period, there were political organizations but not legally registered. The government harassed their leaders and supporters from mobilizing voters in effective way. Theoretically, the introduction of multi party system was percived as a blessing to promote democratic system. However, its practice lacks many things. Many opposition political party leaders are subject to intimidation, torture, arrest, killing and vote rigging. The paradox between the legal provision and its implementation remains to be a chronic problem in the political system of Ethiopia. The ruling party continues to dominate all the election results through extra judiciary power. The influence of opposition political parties is not beyond mere wish as the government abuse its power to stay in power. The narrowing of peaceful political fields instigated political parties to employ another struggle strategy. As a result, many opposition parties were engaging in armed struggle to acquire power from the Tigrean dominated EPRDF regime.

In Ethiopia, many of the opposition parties are ethnic based. The ruling party, EPRDF, itself is a coalition of ethnic based political parties that represent four ethnic fronts. The constituent parties are ,TPLF, ADP,OPD and SEPDM. All such parties are responsible to administer the four major regional states. Beside to this, there are affiliated political parties in Afar, Somali, Benishangul Gumuz, Gambella and Harari regional states. Following the coming of Prime Minister Abyi Ahmed many opposition political parties including OLF, ONLF and Ginbot 7 were allowed to return back and participate peacefully (Amnesty International, 2011).Those three opposition parties were once declared as terrorist and illegal by the Ethiopian parliament. In many agrarian states like Ethiopia, political parties are established on the basis of religion, race, and ethnic identities (Solomon, 2014).

The FDRE constitution stipulated many provisions having relevance with multi party system. It allows citizens to participate in election including to present as a candidate and electorate. The political landscape is also widened to accommodate the interest of diverse ethnic groups though its practice remained problematic. The Ethiopian election proclamation allows every eligible
individual, except members of the defense and police force and judges, to participate in establishing and supporting political parties.

The overthrew of the Derg government with the collaboration effort of many ethnic based and few pan Ethiopianist political parties stimulated many opposition parties to be formed on the basis of ethnicity. The domination of the transitional government overwhelmingly by ethnic based fronts made the feature of the party system more incline towards ethnic background. The incumbent government in power advocate the formation of ethnocentric parties while denouncing the value of unionist political parties in structural way (Wondwossen, 2009). Many factors including the victory of ethnic based rebel fronts contributed for the emergence of ethnic party system in the political landscape of Ethiopia. The introduced ethnic federalism further inflated the need of the public to be represented at least by one ethnic party. The reality shown in many regions and identity groups is not far from confirming this explanation.

The political parties registration proclamation enacted in 2009 clearly stated the way how parties can get legal recognition from the national board of election board. Accordingly, country wide parties should get the signature of 1500 founding members from at least four regions. Beside to this, regional parties should acquire the consent of 750 founding members and each from at least four regions. Similar for both types of parties is the need to collect the signature of 40% of the supportive letter only from one region. According to Wondwosen (2009), by standing from their nature, the Ethiopian opposition political parties are grouped in to seven divisions each having a unique feature of manifestation. These are monarchical parties, Derg parties, Non ethnic parties created during Derg, ethnic and non ethnic against EPRDF, registered oppositions, phony or fake parties and disappointed parties of ex TPLF.

The Ethiopian experience of party politics could best described as ethnic based. Ethnic based party system allow political organizations to assume power by presenting themselves as the guardian of a particular community (Abdisa, 2018). All the policy options are enacted and confined in line with the basic interests of their specific ethnic group. Ethnic based system can create un healthy political environment that may conclude with full of conspiracy among elites of a particular ethnic group. Beside to this, it may narrow the scope of political parties to address the national agendas. Many ethnic based parties opt to focus on the issues of their community by
disregarding the country wide burning agendas. Simultaneously, it reduces the chance of electorates to look among various alternatives.

According to Abdisa (2018), the Ethiopian party system is best described as ethnic party system because almost or all of the political parties are representatives of a particular ethnic group. According to Teklu (n.d.), "Stated simply, Ethiopian politics is heavily smeared with ethnicism. On average each nationality (ethnic group) has got its own political party". The number of ethnic based parties outweigh that of the pan Ethiopianist political parties. The nature of EPRDF as a coalition government inspired many ethnic parties to be established just to serve as a vanguard for their ethnic group. The two blocs, either intentionally or randomly, are giving value for ethnic politics to continue in Ethiopia. Almost 70% of the Ethiopian political parties are ethnic based (Solomon, 2014). They are registered to represent the interest of a particular ethnic group. Even the ethnic affiliation is observable among nationalist parties. The post 1991 period created a conducive environment for the intensification of ethnic based parties in Ethiopian politics. Factors like the history of the state, the constitutional framework, and the government reaction towards pluralism are responsible for the increment of ethnic line parties (Solomon, 2014).

The post 1991 period resulted the coming of dependent and illegitimate political organizations throughout the state. Their structure is in full of orders from the above. They fail to stand alone in passing political decisions. The worst of all is the lack of trust by the public whom they claim to represent politically. The golden opportunity once found in history was the cooperation between MEISON and EPRP by forming the COEDF and the membership of the OLF in the transitional government that was considered by many as the end of the chapter between the North-South political animosity (Merera, 2007). Sadly, the all the good beginnings aborted with disagreement.

Attractive political platform was once reoccurred during the 2005 national election. Many parties were created but disappeared soon. According to Merera (2007), the big problem associated with political parties decay are lack of consensus about the state formation, institutional instrumentalism, stereotype attitude, failure to accept the bitter truth and divide and rule policy of the EPRDF regime.
3.2. Ethnicity and Politics in Ethiopia

Though ethnicity played an instrumental role in creating a widespread hatred among groups in many African states, neither of them provided an explicit declaration about the role of ethnicity. Ethiopia is unique in advocating ethnicity to run political affairs (Abbink, 2010). Although the system was not officially declared, the reign of emperor Menelik II was federal in defacto (Bekalu, 2018). The different regional lords administered their own province by paying a tribute for the central government. What makes the past experience very unique from the current federal system was in that the former was territorial based. The heart of the Ethiopian federal system is ethnicity. Regional states are drafted and demarcated based on ethnic lines.

Ethnicity is becoming a pivotal issue in the political affairs of Ethiopia. It is more predominant during political party formation (Hailie, 2015). The formation of many political parties never prohibited the government from controlling the whole political space alone. Opposition parties are becoming puppet and incapable to play the fair match in accordance with the electoral law. The lacuna of the EPRDF regime is the mismatch between the provisions stated in the constitution and the practical aspect visible on the ground. The constitution permits the formation and movement of legal political parties to compete for power. However, top party leaders and its supporters frequently tested the intimidation, arresting, physical injury and killing by the government. The redrawing of the federal arrangement empowered very few ethnic groups among the 80 diverse groups. The post 1991 regime is characterized as the domination of one ethnic group, Tigray identity, while it denounce the opportunity for other groups (Hailie, 2015). Many Amhara nationals are subject to persecution by the ruling TPLF dominated EPRDF regime. The government use politicization of ethnicity to retaliate other ethnic groups like the clandestine reduction of around 2.5 million Amharas from the earth crust (Hailie, 2015).

Now a day, it is unthinkable to detach ethnicity from the political affairs of Ethiopia (Abbink, 2012). Many of the liberation front’s and ethnic based parties established in the state consume ethnicity as means to attain their goal. According to Abbink (2012), the mushrooming of ethnicity is the effect of ineffective government actions. The more dissatisfied and marginalized ethnic groups organize themselves to maintain their interest and change the power equilibrium.
Ethnicity is becoming key determinant in the politics of Ethiopia. People are always considering the privileges of their own ethnic group in every government decisions. Members of many ethnic groups depict themselves in the sphere of their ethnic group. They give a second place for the more inclusive Ethiopian citizenship (Ismagilova, 2004). In Ethiopia, ethnicity is a parameter to arrange federal constituencies. According to the 1995 FDRE constitution, ultimate power relies in the hands of ethnic groups. An ethnic group having of less than 100,000 peoples is considered as minority (Ismagilova, 2004). There are some scholars who defined minority in terms of power control. For them, minority is not about number of population. Rather, it is about marginalization from political power. They depicted the Oromo ethnic group as minority though it is the most populous ethnic group in Ethiopia. Reversely, they defined they defined the Tigray ethnic group , that have a small number of population as majority because power is controlled by them (Barata,2012).The confusion of arranging the federal units remained still. All regional units are the host for diverse ethnic groups but dominated and named by one ethnic group alone. Beside to this, some nationalities having an equal number got a regional state status while denied for others (African Report, 2009).

In Ethiopia, ethnicity is a parameter to arrange the federal constituencies. On the basis of this, there are nine regional states and two city administrations organized under the FDRE constitution. The member states that constituted the federal system includes Tigray, Afar, Amhara, Oromia, Somalia, Benishangul Gumuz, Southern nations, nationalities and peoples, Gambella and Harari. The criterion to get a regional state status is not clear for the public. Furthermore, the FDRE constitution under article 47 stipulated the right of nations, nationalities and people to form their own regional state by making a complete detachment from their previous region. The criterion stated in the constitution includes a clear presentation of paper for the state council that request statehood and when the state council facilitate a referendum and supported by the majority of the public. Many zones having a tantamount population and landsize in comparison with other regional states are denied from forming their own state (Ismagilova,2004). The organized border commission used the linguistic criteria as the sole parameter to delineate the federal provinces though the constitution stipulated extra mechanisms like settlement pattern, identity and consensus (Vaughan,2016).
Ethnicity in Ethiopia is not something solely implemented by few self assigned elites of the community. Sometimes, what is strongly accepted by few leaders of the community may not be proportionally supported by the public. Dagnachew (2018) explained the case of Silte for illustration. All members of the Silte council, comprising of 961 members, supported the unionist agenda of the Silte people with Guraghe ethnic group. However, the actual referendum result showed the strong need of establishing an independent ethnic group of their own. Dagnachew in his study conclude that ethnicity in Ethiopia is far from being an instrument and primordial. Currently, individuals for a particular position are assigned on the basis of ethnicity. Though others are capable, the bureaucracy impede them from participation. Ethnic identity is becoming a major factor to acquire services from the government.

Individuals cannot acquire Ethiopian citizenship unless they passed through the domain of a particular ethnic group. To belong themselves under the umbrella of Ethiopian status they should first subordinate their activity within the scope of a certain nationality. Clapham associate the issue with the experience of European Union, where its members must be a citizen of either of the European states. It is impossible to apply and get Ethiopian citizenship by detaching oneself from any of the eighty ethnic groups. The constitution, as depicted in its preamble, is the sole property of nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia. The oppression and violence of individuals has little influence on the regime. The introduction of ethnicity in to Ethiopian politics forced individuals to manifest themselves to a particular ethnic group only. This is very difficult for a child born from mixed ethnic groups.

### 3.3. Ethnic Politics in the Post 1991 Ethiopia

The primary activity of the EPRDF following its seizure of power was rearranging the state structure from unitary to federal. Coincide with this, the coalition government described the issue of identity, citizenship and politics on the basis of ethnicity (African Report, 2009). Ismagilova explained the disadvantage of ethnic parties in the following way.

The existence of several parties and organizations that claim to defend the interests of an ethnic group aggravates the inter ethnic relations and leads to a split of a community into confronting groups. I was told by many respondents that the formation of such rival organizations is orchestrated by the EPRDF, which fact empowers its authority. Anti Tigray attitudes were quite notable in the localities where I worked. Sometimes the relations were so acute that many Tigryans complained in Gambella that they were forced to leave the places (2204:194).
The adoption of ethnic politics exacerbated things in to bad dimension. Inter-ethnic conflict is being registered in many parts of the state. Individuals from a certain region were forced to leave their area due to their ethnic identity (Walle, 1993). Defining politics on the basis of ethnicity denied the freedom of other non indigenous people in the region. The job recruitment and other privileges are easily accessible for native residents (African Report, 2009). The new settlers who came from various regions are subject to displacement and confiscation of their property by local residents.

The internal aspiration of the transitional conference was to reduce the number of Pan Ethiopianist parties like EPRP, MEISON, WPE (Wondwosen, 2009). Among the 27 political parties participated in the peace conference, many of them were ethnic based. Perhaps there is a confusion over arranging the demarcation of each ethnic group. For instance, people from the one federal constituency may have a similar cultural or religious practice with people of another constituency. Many people agree on the idea that demarcating of each regional unit on the basis of language was a parameter used by the framers of the 1995 FDRE constitution (Abbink, 2010).

The post 1991 Ethiopia is characterized by widespread ethnic tension that challenge the unity of Ethiopia. An indicator for the disintegration of Ethiopia is the secession of Eritrea from the state. It made Ethiopia portless and subject to huge expenditure for transit.

Ethnic conflicts between Guji and Gedeo, Amhara and Tigray, Sidama and Wolayita, Wolayita and Gamo, Amhara and Kimant, Afar and Issa, Somali and Oromo are among others. The period has also witnessed ethnic based violence in many parts of the state, attacks over Amhara in Arbagugu and Wollega, attacks over Agew and Amhara in Metekelle, the recent attacks on Gamo on Burayu can be mentioned among others (Dagnachew, 2018:75).

Self determination that provides a huge power for ethnic groups remain under the strict control of the federal government even in the post 1991 Ethiopia. The post 1991 Ethiopian government is blamed for its polarization of ethnicity (Vaughan, 2004). It is clear that many of the political organizations that fought with the imperial and Derg governments were ethnic based. They portrayed themselves as the guardian of their respective ethnic group in search of freedom and autonomy. The core constituents of EPRDF, mainly TPLF, ANDM, OPDO and SNDM were established on the basis of ethnicity. There are some scholars who defined the role of ethnicity during Menelik II expansion. For them the Amhara ethnic group was more privileged in terms of
economy and power. Other ethnic groups outside of Amhara were oppressed and undermined. The core culture of the Abyssinia including orthodox Christianity and Amharic language was forcefully imposed up on the conquered people. The Derg government is mentionable in promoting cultural freedom for ethnic groups. Ethnic groups were allowed to use their own native language as a medium of instruction for education. However, it was restrictive in allowing decentralization of power for local units.

The introduction of ethnicity as a core determinant of politics in Ethiopia is aimed at ruling the majority under the command of minor ethnic group. It is clear that the TPLF represent only six percent of the population. Other major ethnic groups like Oromo and Amhara see off from key positions in the early period of EPRDF regime. Other ethnic groups were also controlled by pseudo parties that are incompatible with the interest of the community they perceive to represent (Dereje, 2018).

Ethiopia adopted ethnicity as a basic pillar of administration due to both internal and external reasons (Pausewang, 2009). Internally, there was resentment by many of the ethnic groups by criticizing the domination of the Shoan Amhara domination in the center politics. They perceived themselves as being the subordinate in the state administration. Externally, all the opposition political groups in their struggle period were ideologically influenced by the Leninist idea of nationalities. Accordingly, granting nationalities with autonomous power and self-determination was found to essential in the framers of the constitution.

### 3.4. Ethnicity and the FDRE constitution

According to Abbink (2012), it is possible to use nations, nationalities, and people interchangeably with ethnicity. The 1995 FDRE constitution stated the right of ethnic groups in its provision. It is clear that its preamble begin with enshrining of power for ethnic groups. The most powerful provision of the constitution is the clause that deliver absolute power for each ethnic group to control the top ladder of the political power. Article 8 stated that the power of the government stemmed from nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia. This article empowered each ethnic group to have a say on the policies of the government. Above all, accordingly, the government is worthless unless supported and approved by the consent of ethnic groups. Members of each ethnic group have unreserved right to check and control the established government. Sometimes, if it found to be necessary, they can deprive the power and
function of the government officials. The arrangement of regional states was drawn on the basis of dominant ethnic groups. The only exception is the Southern Nations Nationalities regional state, Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa (Alem, 2003).

Again, article 47 of the FDRE constitution further delivered an extra right for the dissatisfied nations, nationalities, and peoples within member states of the federation to claim their own regional state. There are few prerequisites stated in the constitution. However, many of them are routine and depend on the consent of the people. Article 39 of the constitution is surprising for many Ethiopians because it provided nations, nationalities, to secede at any time. Even, many people considered it as the instrument used by the incumbent government to disintegrate the state in a systematic way. Others on the other hand, defined this provision in a positive way because nations and nationalities are ineffective to make secession from the state and there is a tight control of the federal government. For them, the provision would be effective if it had been given for member states of the federation. By any case the provision, at least, can motivate nationalities to raise their statehood claim though neither of them achieved it.

A nation, nationality, or people for the purpose of this constitution, is a group of people who have or share a large measure of common or similar culture or similar custom, mutual intelligibility of language, belief in a common or related identities, a common psychological makeup, and who inhabit an identifiable, predominantly contiguous territory (FDRE constitution, art. 39(5)).

Another provision related to ethnicity under the 1995 legal framework is article 54, that permit the minority nationalities to acquire 20 parliament seats in the House of People Representatives without any election contestation. It is ambiguous about what makes nationalities minority. Abbink explained the meaning of minority in the Ethiopian case as those nationalities whose population number is below 100,000 and insufficient to make an election campaign. The current federal arrangement of regional states is primarily drawn on the basis of ethnicity and language (Abbink, 2012).

There are scholars who support the introduction of ethnic federalism as a solution. Their assumption is that the Derg government was toppled down by nationalist organizations that fought for independence and self determination. As a result, for them the EPRDF policy successfully addressed the quest of nationalities. The high involvement of ethnic based organizations also contributed the transitional government to incline towards ethnic based
arrangement. They also depicted the recognition of previously marginalized ethnic groups in to the core politics of the state as a victory of ethnic based arrangement. The cease of the civil war that stayed for 17 consecutive years is also considered as the fruits of ethnic based federal arrangement.

Aside from the above argument, there are scholars who blamed the current ethnic based arrangement. For those scholars, Ethiopia in its history never ever participated in ethnic conflict. Rather, it was a fight between the government forces and self assigned ethnic based organizations. No ethnic based group fought with another ethnic group. Few elites, due to their marginalization of their ethnic group in the eyes of the central government, established their own movement and struggled for about two decade. The post 1991 period is characterized by a fierce and forceful competition for economic and political power, strong claim for land and discrimination everywhere on non-local residents. Generally, Ethiopia, since the launching of ethnic based arrangement, is in a threat of disintegration.

Regional states arrangement on the basis of ethnicity made the minor ethnic groups to stay in a continued struggle to maintain their own interest. Some dominant ethnic groups undermine the identity and interest of minor ethnic groups. This conflict between highly eroded the sense of unity (Dagnachew,2018).Currently, special zonal administrations formed under the umbrella of regional states are demanding a more federal structure, regional state hood(Alem,2003).

The introduction of ethnic federalism by the incumbent government is a problem by itself because it is impossible to get a pure ethnic group that does not blend itself with the other ethnic group through marriage (Dereje ,2018).There are millions of non native individuals residing in each of the nine regional states. Beside to this, the arrangement instigated border conflict and the oppression of minor ethnic groups by the majority. War is common in the border of ethnic groups in search of resources. The inclusion of secession created negative image in the minds of each ethnic group. The report released in 2017 shows that Ethiopia take the first rank in internal displacement among world states. The primary factor for such social instability is the problem associated with practicing ethnic federalism (Dereje,2018).

The target of the EPRDF was to get an acceptance from key areas of the state like Tigray, Amhara, Oromia and SNNPS (Vaughan,2004). As a result, to win such regions, it
expanded its structure to the lowest level of structure in each of the region. During its introduction period, there was an agenda on the need to discuss with local residents. It did so by nominating local personnel in to government structure. The EPRDF controlled the peripheral regions by supporting individuals or elders that have a high influence on their community (Vaughan, 2004). It provided an incentive for them in order to maintain its acceptance by the majority. It also promoted the formation of allied parties in many of the minor regional states.

There are scholars who appreciate the governments effectiveness of recognizing and guaranteeing the right for ethnic groups which was never seen in any of the state in the African continent. The constitution is effective in delivering very important rights for ethnic groups like preserving of their culture, using and developing of their language and worshiping religion with legal framework (Dereje, 2018).

Others on the other extreme take the adoption of ethnic federalism as a means to foster state fragmentation. The explanations on the side of the government assured acknowledging each ethnic groups or nations nationalities and peoples is the only alternative left to save the state from disintegration (Nishi, 2005). Thus, they believed that allowing self determination and self autonomy as a viable option to accommodate the diverse interest of nationalities.

3.5 Ethnic Based Political Parties in Ethiopia

During the imperial and the Derg era there were no political parties running in the state. The absence of prior party politics trend in the political landscape refrained Emperor Haile Selassie I from introducing such concept. Rather, ethnic based movements in different parts of the state were common. Many of them were supported by countries having hostility with the Ethiopian central government. They were financed and supported by socialist and Arab states (Wondwosen, 2009).

Immediately following the possession of power by the military committee or Derg, all ethnic and multiethnic political parties were prevented from influencing the government (Wondwose, 2009). The Derg government consolidated its power by legally arresting all the opposition political parties. It introduced one party system in which the Workers Party of Ethiopian remained the only legal entity allowed by the government. There was a paradox on the Derg government. On the oneside, it accepted the ethnic groups right of practicing self
determination. When each ethnic group wishes to determine its fate by its own self, it needs decentralization and freedom. On the other extreme, the Derg government was highly centralized. This approach widened the gap between the desire to practice self determination at the periphery and the government’s tight control of power at the center. It was this system that instigated ethnic based political organizations to be established in all directions of the state. The most renowned political groups of the time were the Eritrean People Liberation Front, Tigryan People Liberation Front, Oromo Liberation Front and Western Somali Liberation Front (Wondwosen, 2009).

The Derg regime is responsible for the proliferation of ethnic based liberation fronts in the late 1960’s. The right of ethnic groups to speak, write, and use their mother tongue language for their own purpose was restricted by the government policy. Not only this, the tight law that impeded the right to practice any social and religious activities also exacerbated the then political tension. Both factors knocked many ethnic groups to form an ethnic based organization or front that makes their ethnicity free of oppression (Abbink, 2012).

The Derg government understood the quest of students concerning nationalities as class contradiction (Abbink, 2012). Its basic assumption was solving of class differences will ultimately erase the quest of ethnic groups. However, the way interpreted by the Derg government was not accepted by various ethnic based liberation fronts. Rather, ethnic based liberation fronts considered the problem of the then Ethiopian political problem as nationality oppression. Again, some other movements such as ELF, OLF and ONLF labeled the problem as colonial domination. Any ways, in either of the two explanation, their claim was mismatched with the Derg government.

Vaughan defined the nature of the Ethiopian opposition parties in to four divisions as ethnic based, pan Ethiopianist, coalitionist and arm based parties. Political organizations including the OLF, AAPO, IFLO, Gedeo Peoples Democratic Organization and Ethiopian Democratic Action Groups alienate themselves from the 1992 district election. All the parties withdrew from the election mentioned a widespread oppression of their members by the government force as the reason behind their action. The transitional government was not ready to listen the feedbacks of the European parliament that request the need to open all the fields of for democracy and competition (Walle, 1992). The introduction of multiparty system in the early 1990’s was credited
to the proliferation of ethnic based parties. During 1994, there were more than 80 political organizations. Many of them were representatives of a particular ethnic group. For instance, the Somali and Oromo ethnic groups were represented by nine and six parties respectively (Ismagilova, 2004). The constituent member parties of EPRDF are guided by their own congress that have the ultimate power to decide on each front. Usually, it comprises members from 9-15 key personnel (Vughan, 2003) The following are some of the ethnic based political parties established at different times.

### 3.5.1 AAPO

It was formed in 1992 by holding the agenda of defending the Amhara people from mass killing and displacement (Wondwosen, 2009). Forming this party was a response for the anti Amhara narration disseminated by the Tigryan dominated EPRDF government. The TPLF led government portrayed the Amhara people as the oppressor and explicator of all Ethiopian nationalities. This propaganda was reacted by other ethnic groups by killing, displacing and confiscating the Amhara nationals in every corner of the state. Especially, the hatred was serious in Oromia region, where more than millions of the Amhara nationals lived for a long period. Asrat engaged in ethnic politics as a transition to achieve citizen politics.

It opened its office in many towns of the Amhara region. It faced a great opposition from the government. Its members and supporters were persecuted in many places. The party was ignored by many educated Amhara individuals as a contradiction of Pan Ethiopianism. Later on, its leaders, after a long disagreement, changed the scope of the party into All Ethiopian Unionist Party. The members and candidates of All Amhara People Organization were the target of government security forces. Its branch resides in Europe and United States forced the chairperson to conceal its plan to participate in the 2000 national election (RDIRB, 2000).

Following the ratification of the FDRE constitution and in response to the rampant persecution and mass killing of the Amharas, which is still the reality, Asrat was forced to form AAPO. Although the party was technically formed to ‘fight’ all the injustices made against the Amharas, the party was tasked to demand and safeguard freedom and democracy at national level (Teklu, 2003).

The low involvement of Amhara intellectuals in the party structure was the greatest challenge of the AAPO. Many educated Amhara’s were not volunteer to confine themselves on ethnic fence. Rather, they had an inspiration to join and support Pan Ethiopianist parties.
The AAPO had a deep hatred with the launching of ethnic federalism by EPRDF. For them, ethnic federalism is a means to fragment Ethiopia into smaller states. Arranging of regions on the basis of ethnicity escalate suspicion and segmentalism among ethnic groups and erode the long established norm of harmonious life. Rather, the EPRDF under the vanguard of TPLF seeks to increase its hegemony while others instable internally. This system was effective in weakening major ethnic groups like Amhara and Oromo.

The AAPO was changed into All Ethiopian Unity Party in 2002. Its leader, engineer Hailu Shawul, depicted the necessity of changing the scope of the party in order to give equal chance for all ethnic groups in their fight against the EPRDF regime. According to his explanation, in the early days of the EPRDF, the hatred was confined on the Amhara people only. But, today all ethnic groups are victims of the EPRDF ethnic policy.

3.4.1. ONC
It is perceived by many as a midway between the two edge parties of Oromo and OLf. It seeks to maintain the interest of the Oromo people within the Ethiopian scope by overthrowing the EPRDF regime (Vaughan, 2003). It has a relative acceptance in Ambo vicinity. The ONC was formed in 1996 under its chairman Professor Merera Gudina. The party mainly works for the self-autonomy of the Oromo within the federal Ethiopia. It has no intention to build the independence state of Oromia. Rather, it formed a coalition with non-Oromo political parties during the 2005 national election (Arriola, 2009).

3.4.2. SEPDC
It is a blending of many ethnic based parties having an influence in many towns of Southern Ethiopia. It has its own base at Hadyia, Gedeo and Kambata (Vaughan, 2003). The Southern Ethiopia People Democratic Coalition was a coalition of ten ethnic based political parties that run to represent the interests of the southern Ethiopian people. The main ethnic groups in this front were Guraghe, Kembata, Hadya, Wolayita, Sidama, Kafa, Omo, Yen, Gedeo and Burji (Walle, 1993).

3.4.3. TPLF
The TPLF as a student movement organized itself in manpower in 1975. Many of the founding members of the TPLF were students, who were inspired by the widespread student protest that
began in 1960’s. Its prominent members did not share the wide spread belief of the problem during the H/Selassie I regime as a class conflict. Rather, they concluded that the basic agenda to be remained the struggle among ethnic groups (Bekalu, 2018). For them, it is the domination of the Amhara ethnic group that troubled the state. While others defined the state formation process during the imperial era as nation building, colonial thesis, multination state, the TPLF described it in the spectrum of national oppression thesis (Bach, 2014). From the very inception the party was established to create an independent Tigray republic (TPLF manifesto, 1976). Later on after considering many issues the movement shifted its policy towards maintaining political autonomy for Tigray without making a divorce from Ethiopia (Vaughan, 2003 & Bekalu, 2018). The movement was successful in creating awareness about the then political condition of Ethiopia. Later on, it imposed its agenda successfully and mobilized the people per its will. The main agenda’s raised by the movement were the dictatorship of the Derg regime, absence of decentralized governance and the favor of the Derg government towards Amhara ethnic group.

Initially, the TPLF was established to offend the Amhara ethnic group in which they considered it as the historical enemy of Tigray people. Beside to this, the TPLF had a dream to establish the Tigrean republic (TPLF manifesto, 1976). However, in the eve of the victory, it came up with a novel idea of controlling the Ethiopian state by forming a coalition government. There are scholars who interpret the TPLF’s power control under the umbrella of EPRDF as a strategy to achieve its original goal. For them, TPLF, by using the Ethiopian security forces, is effective in expanding the Tigray territory and looted the resource of the Ethiopian people by controlling all roads to the economy (Selassie in Dereje, 2018).

It was successful in mobilizing the rural part of the Tigray province by inculcating the purpose and goal of Tigrayan ethno nationalism. The central committee of the party portrays itself as the guardian for the interest the Tigrayan people (African Report, 2009). Its strong reliance on democratic centralism closed any possible criticisms on the party decision. The absolute control of power by a single ethnic narrowed the political landscape of the state. The state served as a mere instrument to fulfill the agendas of the party (CRU Report, 2016).

TPLF in its struggle was condemned by multi ethnic parties like EPRP as narrow nationalist political organization. In the coalition of parties during the transitional period, TPLF became dominant. In its early stage of establishment, the TPLF, along with ANDM, was effective
inmobilizing the rural part of the northern Ethiopia. Many people gave little recognition for OPDO and EPDM as their representation for Oromo and Amhara ethnic groups respectively. Rather, many commentators defined the OLF and AAPO as the genuine representatives of the aforementioned ethnic groups. It is clear that those ethnic based parties that constitute the EPRDF coalition are created under the will of TPLF.

The TPLF was a dominant party even at the inception of the transitional government (African Report no 153, 2009). It formed the EPRDF coalition to have legitimacy in all corners of the state (Sisay, 2018). Though TPLF represent the Tigray ethnic group that constitute 6% of the total Ethiopian population, it is the dominant party with in the EPRDF. Since 1991, TPLF, that stands for the interest of the Tigrayan people, was the leading determinant of Ethiopian politics. Key positions were under the absolute command of Tigryans. It is few officials of the TPLF and the premier who pass decisions that determines the destiny of the state (African Report, 2009).

TPLF is effective in controlling and sustaining of political power by instigating hatred between the Amhara and Oromo ethnic groups. Its approach upgraded the participation of Tigryans, having of 6% of the country’s population (Sisay, 2018). It is the leading figure in EPRDF because other ethno nationalist parties having an alliance with it are nominal. TPLF highly interfered on the affairs of other regional states to maintain its hegemony. It was effective in dividing the major ethnic groups internally by imposing unnecessary nicknames on them.

The TPLF promoted hatred of the other two major ethnicities (the Oromo and Amhara). They gave names for Oromo “Tebab” and for Amara “Temketgna”. The name “Tebab” in Amharic language stands for “narrow Oromo nationalists as the Oromos believe in Oromoness and “Temketgna”stands for “Arrogant Amhara nationalists” as the Amharas believe in Ethiopianess. Indeed, it is a deliberate “speech act” used for the last 25 years to subjugate the other ethnic majorities and solidify the referent objects (the Tigray identity) at the center (Anwar, 2018:7).

The post 1990’s TPLF led EPRDF arranged the Tigryans to control basic economic sectors in every corner of the state. The native residents are marginalized and expressed their resentment for their local government (Anwar, 2018). Scholars like Aalen depicted the TPLF as still the proponent of secessionism. TPLF wants the continuity of Ethiopia as far as it favors for Tigrayan ethnic group. But, when things get worsen they may use article 39, a provision in the FDRE constitution that allow each nationality to separate itself from the federation.
The TPLF criticized the Ethiopian state formation as the domination of a single ethnic group, Amhara. As a result, what they did immediately after they controlled power was to ignore the Amhara nationals from acquiring power (Dereje, 2018). The conspiracy of TPLF on the Amhara people includes labeling of the Amhara people as exploiters of others, firing and accusing of its nationals as well as distributing the historical lands of Amhara for other neighboring regional states. The Tigray region also took the lands of Wolkayit and Raya forcefully. Metekel was also given for Benishangul Gumuz regional state.

The TPLF until 1987 was with its agenda of secession. But, after that period two things forced the party to adjust its program. These are the difficulty in conducting of peaceful relation with other neighboring ethnic groups and limited natural resource of the region. As a result, it planned to control the whole Ethiopia through coalition (Pausewang, 2009). The domination of the TPLF on key positions of the state was an obstacle for proper allocation of resources among federal constituencies (Bekalu, 2018). The TPLF took the issue of nationalities as the root of all problems created in the state. Hence fore, the FDRE constitution provided the ultimate power for nation and nationalities and people (African Studies Center, 2010).

3.4.4. ONLF
The Ogaden National Liberation Front was established around 1984 in search of a complete alienation for the ogaden part of Ethiopia. Its agenda is joining the Ogaden part with the proper Somalia state. It was reluctant to join the transitional government. However, through process it joined the transitional government and was successful in the 1992 election. Immediately, it expanded its own government structure in Somalia region. The federal government of Ethiopia jailed many of the leaders of this party because of its suspicion of secession. The ONLF resumed its armed struggle after its secessionist mission was failed and a pro EPRDF party was formed via the sponsor of the incumbent government (Vaughan, 2003). Consequently, the Somali special police force was established with full support of TPLF to resist the action of the ONLF (Anwar, 2018).

3.4.5. ANDM
The formation of ANDM is strongly associated with the 1960’s and 1970’s student movement. The student movement during the H/Selassie I and Derg regime created political parties like EPRP and MEISON. The Derg government was the supporter of one party system program.
While the government declared the WPE as the only party of the state, it waged a war against other pan Ethiopianist and other ethnic based parties. Many members of the EPRP were killed and poisoned during the red terror campaign of the Derg government. The remaining members were struggling in the jungle. The captive soldiers by TPLF and EPLF as well as the dis satisfied groups within EPRP together formed the EPDM. It is clear fact that TPLF played a lot in forming the EPDM in search of alliance to fight the Derg regime (Vaughan, 2003). It was not effective like TPLF because its scope was not as such broad. Finally, the EPDM, the later ANDM, formed the EPRDF along with TPLF, SEPDF and OPDO.

3.4.6. OPDO

The OPDO as a political organization was established by the captured oromifaa speaker soldiers of EPDM (Vaughan, 2004). It was formed as a rivalry of OLF, a party that got great acceptance in instigating the Oromo nationalism. The OPDO, for at least two decades, was busy in labeling the Oromo nationalism as extreme and unnecessary for Ethiopia. It associated all mal practices in Oromia regional state as the works of OLF.

The OPDO is formed as a coalition party within EPRDF under the strict dependent on the TPLF. It was organized by the TPLF to control the fate of the Oromo people (Pausewang, 2009). Though it got three ministerial positions at federal level, its activities were confined to local and regional levels. It was not fully stand by its own. Many of its functions were not self-regulated rather it was imposed from the above by TPLF. It blocked the participation of opposition parties by intimidating and killing their member (Pausawang, 2009). The OPDO wants to be the sole policy presenter for Oromo people. Its approach is not conducive even for peaceful and legally registered political parties in the region.

Many supporters of the OPDO are the Arsi Oromo people, who passed through huge discrimination by previous regimes (African Report, 2009). After 2005 national election, the OPDO quickly increased its members. However, many of them joined the organization to have a better economic life and privilege as well as not to be suspected with the OLF (African Report, 2009).

OPDO dominated the Oromo politics without any effective competitive political parties (Vaughan, 2016). Since its onset, it intimidated and harassed individuals who are suspected to be
a member of opposition political parties. For instance, an interview with a high government official explained that he passed almost ten year of his age at prison house. He was detained due to his support for the OLF.

3.5. The Oromo Ethnic Group

The Oromo ethnic group covers one third of the total Ethiopian population (Jeylan, 2006). There are many groups under the Oromo ethnic group. These include the Kerayu, Jima, Borena, Shoa, Welo, Arsi and Welega Oromo’s. Since 1960’s the different clans inside the Oromo people subdue themselves for the broad Oromo nationalism that seeks the unity and oneness of the Oromo people reside everywhere (Pausewang, 2009). Many of them are farmers. Its average land size is also very huge in comparison with others. Its members are also found in north Kenya. The people practice Islamic, Christianity and Waaqeffannaa religions (Jeylan, 2006).

The Moggasa or adoption system practiced among the Oromo people is very vital to familiarize the non Oromo individuals in to the cultural and social construction of the Oromo society. The Oromo people have their own unique calendar system confirmed after a proper understanding of nature and stars. They have also their own conflict solving mechanisms to reduce violent destructions among clans. The personality of individuals in the Oromo people is highly shaped by the behavior of collective society. The perception there was an assimilation by the Abyssinian rulers inspired the Oromo people to give value for their history and culture too (Jeylan, 2006).

The Oromo people were target to massive human right violation and oppression by the incumbent government. The government is hard there because the OLF is making military resistance in the region. The Oromo people historically compete with the Amhara ethnic group to control lands.

The adoption of ethnic based system by the government discredited the indigenous but egalitarian way of administration in different parts of the state. The paradox between what is usually accepted by each ethnic group as a custom and the introduction of the new political history along ethnic lines resulted the disagreement on the post 1991 Ethiopian politics (Abbink, 2010). The EPRDF program defined the Oromo people as narrow ethno nationalist and seeker of secession. Accordingly, the Oromo ethnic group is incapable to accommodate the interest of diverse ethnic groups.
Following the expansion of successful Abyssinian kings in to the lands of Oromia, its inhabitants were restricted from using and developing their cultural identity. The lands of the conquered people were also given for new settlers of the king. The Oromo ethnic group is the largest and populous with abundant traditional cultures. The typical manifestation that can be a model for the present day democratic system is their Gadda system. The Gadda system, like the constitutional limit of power, had a mechanism to control the terms of the community elders. Besides this, the Oromo people in their long established custom, had their own mechanism to reach on decision. This is coinciding with the present parliamentary function (Abbink, 2005).

The Oromo is, by and large, the most misrepresented ethnic group despite its largeness in its demography (Abbink, 2012). The Oromia region is the largest and populous area among federal units of Ethiopia. Many people from this region participated to overthrow the TPLF domination. Particularly, after 2005 national election popular uprising was common. The work of different civic and political organizations played a leading role in activating the oppression done on Oromo people. Majority of the people understood the economic and political discrimination of the Oromo people since the expansion of Menelik II (Arroila, 2009).

Its border dispute with the Somali region still exists. The referendum held in the border of both regions did not stop the ethnic conflict for once and all (African Report, 2009). The Oromo people have a long stayed feeling of discrimination by the central government (Arroila, 2009). For them, their resource is not properly allocated to meet the problems of their ethnic group. The fund raised is transferred for other regional states as well.

The Oromo nationalism is inspired by the frequent repression of the Abyssinian rulers on the Oromo people (Arroila). There is a consensus among the Oromo politicians regarding the massive killing and the forceful annexation of the Oromo people by the settlers from the north during the Ethiopian modern state formation process. Especially, they blame emperor Menelik II, Haile Selassie I and the Derg governments for their negative outlook towards the Oromo people.

Even after the introduction of ethnic federalism, many Oromo scholars does not feel comfort because they perceived that the coming of the EPRDF is a continuity of the past Abyssinian domination. Though the region is endowed with ample resource, it is exploited and plundered by Tigryans (African Report, 2009).
One of the fundamental civic organization that inspired the Oromo nationalism is the Mecha Tulema self help association. The rational for its establishment in 1963 was to preserve and develop the culture and language of the Oromo people. The government abolished this organization in 1967 because of its suspicion of supporting the Oromo nationalism. Even after the seizure of political power by EPRDF again it was sanctioned because the government accused it as instigator of violence and uprising among the Oromo pupil (Arroila, 2009). Various reports indicated that the Oromia region is the center of high human right violation and arrest by the government (African Report, 2009).

The Oromo based political parties can be grouped in to three groups depending up on their policy towards the public. The first group dream absolute freedom of the Oromo people even up to practicing secession. The OLF was the main advocator of this idea. The second political group seeks the continuation of the Oromo people within the federal structure. The proponents of this strategy is OPDO, which is seen by many as an instrument of TPLF domination in the region. The third group consist the ONC and OFDM is in a midway between the two extreme political groups (Arroila, 2009). The ONC has no intention to build an independent state of Oromia. Rather, it seeks to win the EPRDF regime by blending the party with non-Oromo political parties.

The OFDM party is also another ethnic based party that struggled for the establishment of presidential system of government and the advocacy of Afan Oromo language to be a national language of the state. It also sought the need to allow better autonomous power for Oromia regional state (Arroila, 2009). The Oromo people were an active participant of protest in the post 2005 national election (Arroila, 2009). Many Oromo youths were jailed and killed by the government security forces due to their opposition of the Addis Ababa integrated master plan. Youths depicted the displacement of the Oromo farmers for the expansion as the issue of life and death (Anwar, 2018).

The Somalia special police force having a great support from TPLF intensified and shoot the Oromo nationals in Somalia. The Oromo ethnic group achieved some political successes like administered by their own leaders and utilizing their language as a working language in offices (Pausawang,2009). The local government abused the right of citizens in the region as suspected member of the OLF. Farmers who are perceived by the government bodies as having a linkage
with the OLF were frequently prohibited from accessing basic equipments of farming (Pauswang, 2009). As the population of the Oromo ethnic group is too large each conflict erupted in the region have a negative influence on the overall peace of the state (Shinn, 2004). There is an intermingle interaction between the Oromos and other ethnic groups. When the road for peace are closed in Oromia, the wellbeing of other ethnic groups in the vicinity will be threaten.

The Oromo culture and dignity was highly deteriorated during the annexation of emperor Menelik II in 1880’s (Hassen, 2009). Its people felt the sense of inferiority due to the mistreatment by the settlers from the north. He further narrate the wither away of the Oromo Gadda system and their egalitarian administration system. Their natural right to worship their traditional religion by celebrating the Abba Mudda ceremony in every eight years was prohibited by emperor Menelik. This religious ceremony had a strong power in bonding the different clans of the Oromo with strong sense of brotherhood.

### 3.6. Oromo Nationalism

The well planned Oromo national movement was started in 1960’s. Both the primary and ultimate goal of Oromo nationalism is to help the Oromo people to decide its fate by its own. The leading organization in fostering the Oromo national movement is the OLF. The OLF activated every Oromo national to think deeply about liberation.

One of the great weakness of the Oromo national movement is the uneven development of Oromo nationalism. At this time, the Oromo people can be roughly categorized in to three. On one extreme, there are Oromo nationalists who have been sacrificing their lives and resources as they struggle to liberate their people. Those Oromos who have taken actions to defend the rights and interests of the Oromo nation belong to this category. The Ethiopians have targeted such Oromos for destruction. At the other extreme there are Oromos who consciously or unconsciously betrayed their people for personal gains by joining the enemy camp and end up fighting against the Oromo national interest and national struggle. One of the weakness of the Oromo struggle is its inability to minimize the power and impact of these collaborators. The majority of the Oromos are between these two extreme ends. This is the third category. Oromo nationalism matures as it mobilizes this large section of the Oromo society (Asafa, 2016:41-42)

Scholars who invested their knowledge and time on studying the Oromo nationalism classified the struggle of the Oromo people in to three periods (Vaughhan, 2016). The first phase is
associated with the unorganized but fierce resistance of the Oromo leaders against the Abyssinian conqurers. The five year Italian occupation supported the Oromo local rulers to consolidate their claim for autonomy. The second phase is linked with the Bale farmers uprising against the imperial administration. It is also coincide with the formation of welfare associations that raised the issue of land implicitly. The third period of Oromo nationalism starts with the imprisonment of members of Mecha Tulema welfare association and the execution of General Tadesse Biru. The high motivation and unity to defend their common enemy is a corner stone for Oromo nationalism (Gnamo, 2002).

The main target of Oromo nationalism was to defend the political, economic, social and cultural legacies of the Oromo people from absolute extinction (Mohammed as cited by Vaughan, 2003). Today, the Oromo nationalists employ a new strategy of changing the demography of urban areas by settling Oromo individuals (Teshome, 2018). This helps them to balance their population number with other ethnic groups. It is a clear fact that, since 1990’s, the Oromo nationalism is widening its scope among the Oromo students (Asafa, 2016).

3.7. **The Amhara Ethnic Group**

People of the Amhara ethnic group are available everywhere in the regions of Ethiopia. Since the introduction of ethnic based arrangement, the Amhara ethnic group faced a threat in many parts of the state. Members of this ethnic group were persecuted in Arbagugu, Wollega and Metekell (Dagnachew, 2018). The evilness of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia resulted for the death of 10,000-15,000 Amhara nationals in West Hararghe (Dereje, 2018). Their property was looted and plundered. The massacre was very brutal. Harbeson, as quoted in Wondwosen, explained the precluding of an Amhara based party during the transitional conference held at Addis Ababa. This discrimination left the Amhara ethnic group without a genuine representative that defends its interest.

Aregawi, as quoted in Dereje, stated the non representation of Amhara nationals during the transitional charter. On the one hand, the ethnic federalism recognized the need to call all representatives to discuss the affairs of the state. On the other extreme, it denied a chance for the Amhara ethnic group to forward its idea via its agent. Even after the launching of ethnic based politics by the EPRDF government, the Amhara people blamed the ethnic structure as the beginning of state disintegration (Keller, 2002).
Although the constitution legally proclaimed the right of every individual to accumulate property by moving in every corner of the state, members of the Amhara ethnic group are displaced and killed in Southern Ethiopia and Benishangul Gumuz (Anwar, 2018). In the early years of EPRDF, TPLF forcefully settled the land of Wolkayit by Tigrean nationals. However, the local residents of the Wolkayit people are not ready to accept the new identity imposed up on them. Peoples of Wolkayit associate themselves with Amhara culture and psychological makeup (Anwar, 2018).

Its historical lands have been distributed for other regional states under the conspiracy of TPLF. Although the people of Raya and Wolkayit claimed an Amhara identity, the federal government is still reluctant to decide on the issue (Dereje, 2018). The native residents of Wolkayit have been out of market due to the monopoly of Tigrean migrants (Sisay, 2018).

The mechanism used by the TPLF dominated EPRDF regime was to divide ethnic groups as dominant and dominated. To weaken the power of the Amhara ethnic group, TPLF portrayed it as the enemy of all ethnic groups and seeker of unitarism. This narrative was effective because members of this ethnic group were slaughtered, killed, and tortured through institutional way. They are seen with suspicion in the eyes of others (Dereje, 2018).

The Amhara, including the urban intellectuals who assimilate themselves with the Amhara culture, are the great power contenders of the TPLF domination (Pausawang, 2009). They claim the restoration of access to the port. They are working to address the demands of the rural population. The EPRDF program strongly criticized the approach of the Amhara as Chauvanist. The front defined the Amhara ethnic group as strictly pan Ethiopianist and the oppressor of the rest ethnic groups. According to the explanation, the chauvinists does not permit the participation and equality of other ethnic groups.

Since the launching of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia, members of the Amhara ethnic group were forcefully displaced by officials of the Oromo, SNNP, Afar and Benishangul regional state (Bekalu, 2018). Although the constitution stipulated the right to accumulate property by moving here and there, the woreda and kebele officials often intimidate and displace the Amhara nationals (Sisay, 2016). The Amhara nationals does not feel free everywhere. Minority groups in Amhara region enjoyed more decentralized administration than any of the federal states in
Ethiopia. For instance, in Oromo special zone people are administered by their own personnel and working language (Mastewal, 2016).

3.8. Amhara Nationalism

There is no ample literature written on Amhara nationalism because it is infant in the political dynamism of Ethiopia. Large numbers of people who speak Amharic language incline to depict themselves with the broad Ethiopian Identity. They do not emphasize on their ethnic affiliation. The prevailing widespread repression and marginalization of the Amhara people and the replacement of TPLF by ODP inspired the Amhara based political parties to run their affair with moderate freedom. As a result, different civic and political organizations were established to strengthen the Amhara nationalism (Mastewal, 2016).

Some scholars describe the Amhara nationalism as the effect of external force. Though many of the Amhara nationals attach their identity with Ethiopian citizenship, the government ordered them to accept the Amhara identity forcefully. The vision of Amhara nationalism is to restore the historical lands of Amhara and to facilitate conditions of local representation for Amhara nationals outside of their region (Mastewal, 2016). The identity quest of Wolkayit, Metekel and Raya Amhara are illustrations for the rise of Amhara nationalism even outside of the region. In many urban areas outside of the region, majority of the population is Amhara. The primary agenda of Amhara nationalists is to declare the representation of Amhara nationals reside outside of the region.

The government’s strong Anti Amhara policy and the widespread acceptance of ethnic identity in many regions provided a concrete base for Amhara nationalism. It was first preached by professor Asrat Woldeyes and his comrade’s. They formed the All Amhara People Organization in the early years of EPRDF. The Amhara kings take a lion share in expanding the territory of Ethiopia. However, no one can deny the fact that there were Oromo, Gurage and other Generals along with Amhara rulers (Mastewal, 2016).

In the current politics of Ethiopia Amhara is seen in a negative way for two reasons. First, historically, the current shape of Ethiopia was drafted and completed by Amhara rulers. As a result, other ethnic groups considered the expansion process as conquest. This inspired other ethnic groups to consider the Amhara ethnic group as the most privileged and
historically dominant. Second, the strong psychological attachment of the Amhara people with the territorial integrity and unity of the state created an obstacle for secessionist liberation fronts (Mastewal, 2016).

Today there is a good beginning of Amhara nationalism. Immediately following its power control, the TPLF dominated regime practiced the anti Amhara manifesto. Around 3 million Amharas were lost during the 2007 census (Mastewal, 2016). The historical Amhara lands like Wolkayit Tegede, Metekel and Raya are given for other regions through the decision of TPLF. The Amharas outside of their region cannot participate in local politics since they have no their own council (Mastewal, 2016).

3.9. National Unity in the post 1991 Ethiopia

The coming of TPLF in to power highly eroded the strongly established view of pan Ethiopianism (Barata, 2012). The work of Tegegne as depicted in Yeshiwas, challenged the existence of Amhara ethnic group by examining it with ethnicity parameters. He explained that the Amhara people are not cohesively associated with common progeny, settlement area, religion and common share of culture. For him, the only common thing among the people of Amhara is Amharic language. The work of Wubshet also tried to show the existed animosity relationship between Wollo and Shoa. Despite the contending view of scholars about the existence of Amhara ethnic group, recently the Amhara nationalism has revived. Attaching of oneself with the Amhara ethnic identity is becoming a new trend in Ethiopian politics (Dagnachew, 2018).

Huntington (1993), as cited by Wondwossen, explained the unique nature of ethnicity advocated by the EPRDF government. For him, politicizing ethnicity is absolutely a paradox to the agenda of the government to sustain a unified state. Many people expressed their un conducive feeling about ethnicization of the federal system since they worry that it may bring the split of Ethiopia into many petty states (Merera, 2003). It is mandatory for everyone to explicitly state his/her ethnic category. Otherwise he/she cannot effectively compete in government positions (Alem, 2003).

The government’s permission for ethnic groups to put themselves apart from the state is a surprise for many observers (Bekalu, 2018). Article 39 of the constitution allowed every nation, nationality and people to exercise unconditional right of self determination up to secession. This provision is an obstacle to discuss things on table round. Rather, the dissatisfied groups always
claim secession when things get worse. For instance, the OLF and ONLF were the demanders of independent state though the federal government restrict them. Playing politics on the basis of ethnicity highly erodes national unity by exacerbating inter ethnic animosity (Walle, 1993). The hegemony of Tigrean ethnic group in the post 1991 Ethiopia resulted for the dissatisfaction of other ethnic groups in the federal system (Ismagilova, 2004).

It is quite clear that in the post 1991 period ethnicity dominated all aspects of political activities be it election, party system or regional arrangement (Huntington, 2002). However, its final result may not be good and may extend to disagreement on national matters. Walle, quoted by Vaughan 2016, aver the risky nature of Ethiopian ethnic politics by comparing with Yugoslavia disintegration.

The division among ethnic groups is exacerbated by the government’s conspiracy of using one ethnic group against the other (Bekalu, 2018). This makes the relation between ethnic groups not to be smooth and healthy. For many Amhara elites applying ethnic based politics is irrelevant other than fostering the disintegration of the state into many piety states (African Report, 2009). There are many scholars who forecast the destiny of Ethiopia as similar as Yugoslavia and USSR (Alem, 2003). Their argument relies on the constitutional provision of secession. Previously both Communist states allowed secession clause and they faced disintegration. Surprisingly, sharing of a uniform language and culture cannot solely construct a particular ethnic identity. Here, mentioning the case of Kimant ethnic group is essential. Although the people of Kimant speak and practice a similar culture with the Gondar Amhara people, they considered themselves as unique from Amhara (Dagnachew, 2018).

There is a huge gap between what is written and the actual implementation on the ground. Although the constitution empowered ethnic groups with basic rights, the state is under the condition of fragility, animosity and weak social cohesion. For instance, Eritrea was seceded and inter ethnic conflicts erupted in many areas (Dereje, 2018).

Previously ethnic conflicts were rare because people perceived themselves under the circle of national citizenship. However, the politicization of ethnicity in the post 1991 period forced people to consider themselves within the bound of ethnic citizenship. They give priority for their membership to a certain ethnic group. The value of civic nationality is eroded and ignored by
many of the ethnic groups. As a result, when things get ill, they prefer to detach from the federal system.

The report of African countries released in 2017 putted Ethiopia as the one among the most politically unstable states like Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and Nigeria. Inter ethnic conflicts are chronic more than any time ever. Had Ethiopia preferred another way of federal system, the present ethnic conflicts would not have been occur. However, factors like land, resource, identity, and inequality of funds from the federal government questioned the effectiveness of the current federal system.
Chapter Four

The Establishment of OLF and NaMA and Its Implication on Ethiopian National Unity

Introduction

In the previous chapter the researcher raised many issues such as the role of ethnicity on Ethiopian politics, the reasons for the formation of ethnic based political parties, the nature of Oromo and Amhara people as well as the birth of Oromo and Amhara nationalism. Here in chapter three the researcher presented the various data that was collected through interview, focus group discussion, observation and various documents that are found to be relevant for analysis. The necessary data was collected through critical way to address the basic research questions formulated at the formative stage.

This chapter is divided into four subsections each having relevant topics that best coincides with the research objectives. The first sub section examines the basic reasons for the formation of OLF and NaMA .Again, the second subsection analyzes the policy of both parties in articulating and defining the interests of their respective ethnic group. Scrutinizing the policy of both the OLF and NaMA concerning common national matters is the aim of the third sub section. The last chapter analyzes the practice of both parties and its implication on national unity.

4.1. OLF

4.1.1. Factors for its Formation

The Oromo people started struggle in both organized and unorganized way since the era of emperor MenelikII. The five year Italian occupation facilitated the proposal to seek autonomy and complete separation from Ethiopian empire (Vaughan, 2003). The issue of land was a widely advocated idea among students prior to the formation of OLF (Vaughan, 2003). One of the earliest political organizations that began struggle was the OLF.

The various situations and groups that contributed for the creation of the OLF include : the German missionary activities in the western Ethiopia, the European colonial adventures in the area, the Somali Abo movement, the support from Somalia, the Mecha-
Tuuluma Welfare Association, and the Ethiopian students’ movement and through it the intervention of socialist countries (Wondwosen, 2009:2075).

It was formed on the basis of colonial thesis. In fact there was a hot debate among founders and supporters of the party before and during its formation. According to key informant 11, “Pamphlets prepared by the university students like “The Oromo Voice against tyranny” argued the question of Oromo as colonial question”. The organization believed that the Oromo people are conquered by Menelik II and his soldiers through military power. Menelik II is considered by OLF as a black colonizer inside Africa (KI11, Addis Ababa, 16 March 2019).

According to OLF leaders, the previous regimes of Ethiopia applied a divide and rule policy on Oromo people on the basis of clan (Arsi, Borena, Tulema etc), religion (Christian and Muslim) so as to weaken it. Externally, siyad Bare’s government claimed the eastern part of Oromo as part of the neighboring Somalia state it in order to achieve its goal of irredentism. The OLF has promoted the Oromo nationalism through different ways to create a unified Oromia. It did many things in consolidating the unity of Oromo people. It was successful in creating the so called Oromia region, which has never been existed before the introduction of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia. It also organized the Oromo cultural association to integrate the various clans of Oromo under the umbrella of Oromo nationalism.

OLF, along with TPLF and EPLF, had its own role in overthrowing the Derg military government. Establishing its base in Sudan, it challenged the Derg regime by imposing unexpected attacks on its soldiers (Dicke et al, 2015). Though it was not effective, the top leaders of MEISON facilitated a clandestine deal between the Derg government and the OLF (Wondwosen, 2009). The OLF’s intention to create a democratic and equitable country during the formative stage of the current regime became a mere wish as the TPLF decided to fire all contending political parties including the OLF (OLF’s letter to UN secretary, 2016).

It was also an active participant in formulating the transitional charter (Mastewal, nd). The charter was confirmed by the discussants of the transitional conference held in July 1991. Around twenty seven political parties participated including nineteen ethnic based, five pan Ethiopianist and three from professional unions including Addis Ababa university (Siraw, 2015). The OLF fully accepted the border demarcation among regional states without any complain (Dicke et
It is a recorded historical fact that the OLF was represented by two members in the boundary commission set by the transitional government. However, the withdrawal of the OLF from the transitional government left the Oromo people without effective political representatives. Many of the political parties including the ONC were ineffective to articulate the interest of the Oromo people (Smith, 2007). It was the main advocate and founder of ethnic federalism during its staying in the transitional government. It is a well experienced political organization that exposed all the killings, oppression and discrimination of the Oromo people to the international institutions like African Union, Amnesty International and United Nations.

To reduce the dissent and complain of other ethnic groups, EPRDF formed other satellite ethnic based parties in many regions such as in Oromia, Amhara, Southern Nations Nationalities and peoples’ regional state. Though EPRDF is a coalition party, it was internally dominated by Tigreans. As a result, the people refused to accept such EPRDF sponsored organizations as their genuine representative. For instance, the Oromo people preferred to be administered by the OLF and its continuation in the transitional government. Majority of the people ignored the involvement of the OPDO in the affairs of the Oromo people (Smith, 2007). Their disappointment mainly emanates from the dependency of the OPDO on TPLF and its weakness to address the basic questions of the Oromo people. Many people considered the OPDO as a puppet party formed to execute the commands of the TPLF irrespective of the Oromo people’s agenda. OPDO was formed to counter the acceptance and influence of the OLF in the hearts of Oromo people (Valfort, 2006). Though there is no exact litmus paper to compare which is more preferable among the Oromo people, the views of the majority of the Oromo people illustrated that the OLF has had better acceptance than the OPDO because the latter tends to deal with the EPRDF (Smith, 2007). The OPDO is understood by many as dependent organization that lacks full autonomy to address the basic questions of the Oromo people (Ethiopian Human Rights Project, 2016). According to Joireman and Szayna “The OPDO is viewed with suspicion by many Oromo because of its origin and closeness to the EPRDF” (2015:195). All key government apparatuses like military, power, economy and security were under Tigrean control until 2018 government reform. The following were the rationales behind the establishment of the OLF.

al,2015).
A. Self-Determination

The freedom to form self-help civic associations during H/Selassie regime paved the way for the establishment of Jibat and Macha, Metta Kobii and Tulama Shawa Oromo based self-help associations (RRT Research Response, 2009). During the 1960’s those independent organizations formed a coalition in a new name called Mecha Tulama association. Its purpose was to develop the cooperation sprite of the Oromo people (RRT Research Response, 2009). "Its founder was General Tadesse Biru " (KI4, Addis Ababa, 07 March 2019). The formation of OLF is not a direct process rather it was a gradual process that get its base in civic association. Its formation is associated with the 1974 popular revolution that deposed the emperor from power (KI7, Addis Ababa University, 10 March 2019).

The creation of MechaTulama civic associations laid the foundation to think about the liberation of the Oromo people. Its members raised the basic questions of the Oromo people like land and other infrastructures denied for it. It also discussed the undermining of the Oromo people and its domination by numerically minor ethnic groups. The quarrel with the government force began when the association fully transformed into advocating the Oromo nationalism. The association was abolished in 1967 due to the order of the imperial government (RRT Research Response, 2009).

The first meeting of the OLF accepted secession as the agenda of the party. In Its first congress meeting held in 1976, the OLF adopted a political program that includes its vision, aim and principle. The party explained the question of Oromo as equivalent with the Eritrean quest of colonialism. Though there was a debate, the political program of the OLF officially explained the quest of the Oromo people as colonial thesis. It is not only the whites who colonize the blacks rather there is also a black colonizer (KI11, Addis Ababa, 16 March 2019).

The OLF was formed as a political organization to fight for the Oromo people via the proposal of arrested members of the Mecha Tulama welfare association. Its objective was enabling the Oromo people to decide its future fate, negotiate on the way to evacuate the arrested members of Mecha Tulama self-help association and setting the quest of the Oromo people to be the agenda of all Ethiopian people. Some scholars also attached the formation of the OLF back to the Bale peasant rebellion. Prior to the formation of the OLF, the peasants of Tulama and Bale protested...
on the government in search of freedom for the Oromo people. Beside to this, the Western Oromo Confederation and the Oromo students at Addis Ababa University also raised the agendas of the Oromo people and discussed on the issue warmly.

While the Ethiopian students at national level hold the slogan” land to the tiller” the Oromo students advocated the motto” land to the natives”. In 1973 BaroTomssa,LenchoLeta and DimmaNegao were elected to draft the political program of the party. Their proposal was approved by the central coordinating committee in the year 1976. Dima Negao was elected as the first chairman of the party (KI11, Addis Ababa, 16 March 2019).

The vision of the OLF is not clear for majority of the Ethiopian people. It has a volatile position regarding peaceful coexistence versus independence (Aalen, 2002). The work of Medhane and Alagaw (2014) also confirmed the changing position of the OLF regarding its ultimate goal. On the one hand; it seeks the liberation and independence of the Oromo from Ethiopian state, more specifically the Abyssinian domination. Its alienation from the transitional government with the push of the EPRDF further aggravated the independence claim from the Ethiopian colonial administration (Bach, 2014). On the other hand, it depicted its interest to create a more democratic and egalitarian Ethiopia, where the Oromo people stayed in the federal arrangement without complain (Dicke, 2015). The new Ethiopia, according to OLF, must reflect the legacy of the Oromo people. The OLF left little room to continue in Ethiopia peacefully (Vaughan, 2003).

The OLF entered to the transitional government with little interest but mainly with its plan to inculcate the basic agenda of the Oromo politics (Assafa and Schaffer, 2007). It was represented by four ministers and twelve councils in 87 seat transitional government (Dicket et al, 2015). However, it withdrew from the transition in its early stage. There were reasons why the OLF boycotted the transitional government. First, the EPRDF’s decision to present the OPDO as the vanguard party for the Oromo people was taken as a counter to OLF’s active political role in the region. The way the president of the republic was elected from the Oromo ethnic group was part of the appeasement policy followed by the EPRDF to win the heart of the Oromo people (Keller, 1995). Second, the accord to make Addis Ababa the capital of Oromo was breached as the city arranged as self governing like Dire Dawa. Beside to this, the promised freedom at the inception and the self autonomous right for the Oromo people have been deteriorated from time to time (Arriola, 2009). In the preparation to make free and fair local and woreda election without intimidation the accord was reached to encamp the OLF and EPRDF.
army in seven and twenty camps respectively. While the OLF abide itself for the agreement the EPRDF failed to keep its promise (Interview with OLF chairman, ESAT, 2015).

According to Scherrer, as cited in Dicke et al (2015), the OLF during its membership in the transitional period showed a great interest to achieve independence for the Oromo people via referendum. It committed itself to the accords of London conference to conclude things peacefully (Alemayehu, 2014). However, following the clash between the OLF and the ruling government around twenty thousand Oromo nationals were arrested for being suspected member of the OLF. The mass suppression against the Oromo politicians and supporters was not confined only for OLF only. Rather, it extended its scope to other Oromo opposition political parties as well (Dicke et al, 2015). Its plan faced a confrontation following the strict intervention of TPLF dominated EPRDF government. Obviously, although the post 1991 period is constitutionally decentralized, strong TPLF supervision in the affairs of regional states was its core feature. The willingness of the federal government to peacefully cede the Oromia region remained a mere dream. Dicke et al (2015) stated that “Neither referendum nor the independence of Oromia was realized, which was to the advantage of the central government”.

The central government strictly controlled the quest of Oromo independence for reasons like the largeness of the region, the availability of fertile soil and its high attachment with Addis Ababa.

The relation between the OLF and TPLF get disputed in 1986 after TPLF published a paper that announces the OLF as incapable to lead the Oromo struggle. The main areas of operation for OLF were the west and east part of Oromo including Wollega, Illubabur, Harerghe, Bale and Arsi (DawudIbssa, Walta TV, 2019). To counter the activities of OLF in Oromia region, the EPRDF recruited members and formed the OPDO party to be a representative of the Oromo people (Vaughan, 2003).

The fragmentation of the Derg army following the 1989 coup d’etat facilitated the OLF along other opposition fronts to control the central government. The idea of forming transitional government and discussions about the future fate of Ethiopia was concluded in Metssowa, Eritrea, among EPLF, TPLF and OLF. In the 87 seat transitional government the share of the OLF was 12, which was the second largest seat next to EPRDF (Keller, 1995). At the inception OLF depicted its interest to work with EPRDF in the transitional government as far as the latter is willing to distribute power and ready to maintain the interest of the Oromo people. The
problem began to erupt when the OLF candidates prohibited from registration for the 1992 local election in areas administered by the OPDO(Keller,1995). There was an accord between the EPRDF and OLF on the need to station all the soldiers of both forces in camp(Dawud Ibssa’s interview with Walta Tv). However, while the OLF army kept its promise EPRDF breached its promise. The OLF candidates were persecuted and killed in their move to make an election campaign for the 1992 local election. Furthermore the EPRDF wants to monopolize key positions. Agriculture, trade, education, and communication ministers were positions given for the OLF in the cabinet structure (Interview with OLF first chairman, ESAT, 2013).

The disagreement intensified after the OLF officially announced its plan to resume armed struggle (Dicke et al, 2015). The main areas of incompatibility between the EPRDF and OLF was power. The EPRDF was not ready to listen and accept the recommendation of opposition political parties including the proposal of the OLF. For instance, the conclusion reached among the AAPO, OLF SPDC in search of peace and harmony in 1993 was rejected by the incumbent (Keller,1995). Such a close door policy of the EPRDF to discuss issues among opposition political parties in civilized way narrowed the scope for democracy for about two decades.

Following the decision of the OLF to isolate itself from the transitional government the TPLF/EPRDF government immediately controlled OLA members to nullify the organization as much as possible (Vaughan and Tronvoll, 2003). Many OLF military commanders were killed in the 1992 EPRDF-OLF civil war. The encampment of its 15,000 soldiers weakened the organization’s defensive capability to deter the EPRDF forces (Dicke, 2015). The intention of the government was to weaken the party by killing figurative members (Interview with Dawud Ibssa, Walta TV, 2019). In the process the EPRDF able to neutralize around 21,200 former OLF soldiers (Dicke, 2015). According to the report of Amnesty International (1993), within a year around 20,000 people were imprisoned as suspected member of OLF. Actually EPRDF followed similar strategy to demolish the remained Derg’s army.

The army of OLF is composed of members of the Oromo community residing both internally and externally. There are evidences that depict the joining of many combatant forces defecting from the Ethiopian National Defense Force. For instance, Brigader General Kemal Gelchu with his 150-500 followers committed a treason on the Ethiopian government in 2006 (ESAT, 2011 available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pg). The Ethio-Kenya border served as a base for
the OLF soldiers to launch an attack against government security forces. The military branch of
the OLF is Oromo Liberation Army. The feasibility of each war plan against the Ethiopian
security force is first approved and accepted by the war Generals of the Oromo Liberation Army
(COI, 2016). The clash between the government force and secessionist political parties like OLF
highly affected the life of government security forces, innocents and armed struggle groups
(Siraw, 2015). The OLF launched an armed struggle in 1976 (Interview with Dawud Ibsa,
WatIta TV, 2019). As a result, it has a good experience of armed struggle both during the Derg
and EPRDF regime (Arriola, 2009). It has well organized army, the Oromo Liberation Army,
which is responsible to take any military action against the central government. It has around
4,000 combatant forces though its number varies from time to time. Although it failed to acquire
proper political power, the OLF is older than the TPLF (Vaughan and Tronvoll, 2003). The
organization portray itself as the vanguard party for the Oromo people

Following the 2005 national election many Oromo Generals, Colonels and ordinary soldiers
were reduced from the government structure due to the order of the government officials. Hailu
Gonfa’s interview with ESAT (2011) stated that ”Many Oromo nationals defected and joined the
OLF to continue their struggle in Eritrea. Now a day, the OLF is not struggling to achieve
independence for Oromo rather to maintain the interest of the Oromo people. The Oromo people
never ever faced such kind of widespread oppression any time before”. However, this was the
speech before the creation of other factions. The OLF is a leading organization in coordinating
popular protests against the government (Arriola, 2009).

The OLF calls for the need to struggle against colonial rule till the objective for liberation
succeed(OLF EC Report, 2015). The Oromo rights advocate Jawar Mohammed’s response for
Aljazeera (2013) stated that “I am an Oromo first because to me first Ethiopia is imposed on me.
Second, because we are forced to denounce our identity, we ended up in reaffirming and
reasserting our identity.”

B. Abyssinian Domination

According to Assefa (2007), the Ethiopian colonial administration assimilated the indigenous
cultural identity and value of the Oromo people. The Gada system that allows peaceful power
transition in each eight years is a long established leadership style practiced by the Oromo
people. The system is still practiced in Arusi and Borena Oromo though it is criticized for its exclusion of females (COI,2016). The pillars of the Oromo cultural, political and social practices were banned and dismantled due to the oppressive system of the Abyssinian kings (Assefa,2007). The government is not interested to recognize the traditional Oromo religion; Waageffannaa (Alemayehu, 2014). One of the member of the OLF central committee described the situation of the Ethiopian state formation and the fate of the Oromo people in the following way.

Previously the Oromo people had its own egalitarian form of administration which might be equivalent with the modern democratic system. However, following the conquest of emperor Menelik II, the value of the Oromo culture deteriorated. Its land was distributed to the northern settlers or war lords while half of the holding owned by the government. The process facilitated the oppression of the Oromo people and the assimilation of the Oromo culture, language and identity. The fate of the Oromo people remained to serve the emperor by sacrificing their right. There was a massive human right violation. A protest demanding freedom resulted the death and harsh punishment of Oromo nationals by the nefeegna, a gun holder that assist the emperor to control others (KI11, Addis Ababa, 16 March 2019).

The OLF has a victimhood mentality because it always narrates the oppression and marginalization of the Oromo since the last 150 years. Its basic point is reminding the assimilation of the Oromo culture and identity during the Ethiopian state formation process. The OLF and many Oromo nationalists depicted the status of the Oromo people as equivalent with slave and property during the past regimes. For instance, Alemayehu (2014) stated about the culture of Abyssinians to present the Oromos as a gift in events like royal wedding ceremonies. However, others disprove this by mentioning the active participation of the Oromo Soldiers during Menelik II expansion towards the South (KI8, Addis Ababa, 13 March 2019). The basis of their argument stems from the idea that the Oromo soldiers might have no moral capacity to commit evil actions against their ethnic group.

OLF was established on the ground that the Oromo people are underrepresented and deprived equal rights with the northerners (Valfort, 2006). Majority of the Oromo people consider the status of the Oromo tradition, culture and identity being declined and assimilated by the Abyssinian rulers since the period of modern Ethiopian state formation. Emperor Haile Selassie I practiced the Amharization policy by assimilating the identity of other ethnic groups (McCracken, 2004). The policy adopted by Emperor Haile Selassie I to impose the Amhara culture in the name of Ethiopianism made the relation among ethnic groups abnormal turned the
sprite into hostility and suspicion (Keller, 1995). The effort of the Oromo cultural committee to publish texts using Oromiffaa Latin script was left fruitless as the Derg government banned it (Vaughan, 2003)

Keller (1995) defined the less probability of the OLF’s dream to form an independent Oromo state due to the following two reasons. The first is lack of unity and coordination among elites with in OLF and the other is the infancy of the Oromo identity as born, grown and cemented following the colonization and oppression by the Abyssinian Empire. In other expression, there was no prior Oromo state that had a political map recognized by the international community. As a result, the demand for secession mainly emanates from a strong fear of exploitation by another regime with in Ethiopia. The OLF failed to successfully address the secession of Oromo immediately in 1991 due to its military weakness to challenge the unionist forces (Dawud Ibssa, LTV interview, 2019). Especially in the last fifteen years, the fate of the Oromo people was to look both political and economic decisions apart from the center (Asafa, 1993).

What makes the EPRDF regime unique from the former neftegna rulers was that it provides a censored self governing right in the name of federalism (Arriola, 2009). The power rotation from the historically powerful Amhara to Tigreans is also another feature of it. The Amhara kings ruled Ethiopia from 1270-1872 and resumed from 1889-91 with little interruption of Tigreans from 1872-1889 (Alemayehu, 2014). The OLF letter written to United Nations mentioned many issues including the massive human right violations of the Oromo people since the conquest of the Oromo under the colonial empire of Ethiopia. It also depicted the undermining of the Oromo ethnic group though it is the largest in terms of demographic account (Vaughan, 2003).

The OLF was an active participant in drafting the transitional charter. According to Medhane and Alagaw (2014), the charter was drafted and approved by EPRDF and OLF before it got approval and feedback by the participants of the transitional conference. For the purpose of approving the transitional charter and determining the future fate of Ethiopia, around 32 political groups participated in the conference. Ethnic groups like Tigray, Oromo, and Somali were represented by ethnic based organizations like TPLF, OLF, and ONLF respectively.

It got certain ministerial positions during the transitional period. The OLF got two quotas among ten members of the boundary commission, a tentative institution that mandated to redraw the
current federal arrangement among regional states. It raised the claim all the Wollo land to be part of the Oromo regional state. However, its proposal was rejected due to a negative reaction from Hadya representative (Vaughan, 2003). However, it did little due to its early withdrawal from the transitional government of Ethiopia. It had a friendly relation with TPLF in overthrowing of the Derg regime. The relation suspended when the EPRDF decided to create the OPDO as a genuine representative of the Oromo people. This proposal, later on became a reality, discontented the OLF. As a result, the OLF resumed its military struggle against the incumbent government. It became powerless after 30,000 of its combatant forces taken as captive by EPRDF forces (Vaughan, 2003).

Currently, the OLF has made some amendment on its policy. Since its formation it fully devoted its resources targeted on independence. However, currently there is a belief that the Oromo people interest can be properly maintained if the existing federal arrangement genuinely practiced per its provision (Vaughan and Tronvoll, 2003). Their calculation is that being ruled by genuine Oromo nationals within the federation helps to articulate and incorporate the interest and wish of the Oromo people in a very wise scheme.

The incumbent government in Ethiopia labeled the OLF as a terrorist organization in 2009, along with Ginbot 7, Al Qaeda and AlShabab, as its soldiers intermittently fight with the government security forces (Wondwosen, 2009, Ethiopian Human Rights Project, 2016). The government accused the OLF and its members for any illegal action committed in Oromia region. The government points its finger towards the OLF and its allies for any security problems and destructive public actions throughout the state. However, the coming of the new prime minister in 2018 cleared the name of the OLF from blacklist. The speech of the new prime minister in front of the parliament invited the exiled OLF to return back to Ethiopia to start a struggle in a peaceful and democratic way. The OLA is sponsored by the Eritrean government and Oromo nationals residing abroad (ARC, 2016). According to the International Business Time, as cited in ACR (2016:25), “the OLF has been deemed a terrorist organization that carried out violent acts against people in Ethiopia, Somalia, and Kenya; however the group has always denied such allegations”.

Currently, OLF has made a policy shift by altering the usually advocated idea of forming an independent Oromo state. Rather, it seeks a peaceful coexistence with other ethnic groups as far
as the Ethiopian statehood is ready to strictly practice self and shared rule, deliver power for the Oromo according to its number of population and accept Affann Oromo as an official language of Ethiopia (KI11, Addis Ababa, 16 March 2019). Since OLF is an arm based political organization, each fighting with the government security forces are taken by the party as self defense strategy against the dictatorial regime. According to the report of Amnesty international (2014), the OLA committed unexpected military attack on the government forces that resulted the death of 150 soldiers and security personnel. However, its attack is very limited and poorly organized that can be easily averted by the central government.

4.1.2. Basic Interests of the Oromo People as Articulated by OLF

The OLF goes many miles together with many Oromo based parties in order to maintain the interest of the Oromo people. For instance, there was a pact signed among OLF and other Oromo parties. The front named United Liberation Forces of Oromia (ULFO) was established through the consent of OLF, Islamic Front for Liberation of Oromia, Oromo Liberation Council and United Liberation Force of Oromia (Dawud Ibsa, Walta TV, 2019). According to Dawud, there was a rivalry between OLF and IFLO that extends to military clash as well. However, the disagreement was concluded with reconciliation and cooperation to advance the interest of the Oromo people. The OLF has worked a lot in bringing the unity of Oromo and inculcating the Oromo people about its right (Assafa and Scheffer, 2007). The following are goals of OLF that are articulated as the basic interests of the Oromo people.

I. Self Determination

Currently the position of OLF is self determination. The word self determination, according to OLF, has two implications. These are independence or peaceful coexistence. After the Oromo people elected their genuine representatives and start to be administered by its personnel the remaining task is facilitating conditions for referendum. The right to opt independence, federation or confederation is left for the Oromo people alone. Self determination for OLF means creating an enabling environment for the Oromo people to decide its fate by its own vote (KI11, Addis Ababa, 16 March 2019). The Oromo people must be sovereign in that it should elect its leaders democratically. It should possess the ultimate supreme power to decide on its affair.
II. Reducing the eviction of the Oromo Farmers

The Addis Ababa master plan planned to launch since 2012 faced a great protest and challenge from the OLF. The intention of the master plan was to expand the city by annexing the surrounding Oromo land from 40 up to 100 kilometers distance (Asylum Research Center, 2016). The master plan faced a refusal from the Oromo people and the Oromo based parties like OLF due to its negative effect on the Oromo farmers. It brings a displacement of peasants from their farm land in which its final consequence might be begging and abject life situation. Since from its beginning the plan lack well informed discussion and deal with prominent stakeholders. When the government started to apply the integrated plan per its schedule the popular protest accompanied it. The confrontation was very severing including the gross violation of human rights and death of many Oromo nationals. More than 149 Oromo nationals were killed by government security forces in the year 2015-16 alone (Ethiopian Human Rights Project, 2016). The complain of the OLF about the Addis Ababa master plan emanates from the canny behavior of the Tigrean dominated central government. According to Finfinee Tribune (2015), the master plan has no intention to benefit the Addis Ababa people and the city itself. Rather, it is a means to control the fertile Oromo lands for Tigrean economic elites that dominate all key sectors since 1991. The plan is targeted to benefit the interest of Tigreans at the expense of Oromo farmers. The protestors requested the cancelation of the master plan that could increase the size of Addis Ababa twenty times than the current size (Ethiopian Human Rights Project, 2016).

The main areas of the OLF in its meeting are preventing the Addis Ababa integrated master plan and the conquest of more fertile Oromo lands by the EPRDF regime. The very fast expansion of the city by displacing the Oromo farmers from their farm land disappointed many of the protestors. According to press release of OLF, the plan is designed to displace the Oromo farmers without appropriate compensation to make their fate begging and dependency. It has also a secret agenda to increase Tigrean investors and capitalists that employ the Oromo farmers at cheap cost. In the year 2014 alone around fifteen houses near Addis Ababa were demolished by the order of the government without any compensation (ARC, 2016). Though people tried to condemn the practice of the government, the government treat with gun and bullet. The eviction continued in 2016 with a wide range in which around 600 farmers displaced in a month alone.
The Oromo farmers near Addis Ababa are forced to leave their land in the name of government development plan. Any complain about the unfairness of the compensation invites a jail and harsh punishment by government security forces. Still to the present day the border between Addis Ababa and the Oromia regional state is not demarcated. The absence of well planned and visible boundary between the two resulted for the quarrel between the city and the member of the federation (Ethiopian Human Rights Project, 2016).

III. Affaan Oromo as Official Language

The Oromo people has its own language, Afaann Oromo, which is spoken in many parts of east Africa including in Ethiopia, Kenya, Djibouti and Somalia (COI, 2016). There is an absolute consensus among the Oromo people on the need to end political repression and cultural marginalization of the Oromo (Jawar’s interview with Aljazeera, 2013). The OLF is effective in promoting the politics and cultural value of the Oromo people. In the preceding years it was a challenge and crime to discuss about Oromo Identity (Dawud Ibssa, Walta TV, 2019). But now the Oromo nationalism has got a great attention by many groups.

One of the fundamental agenda advocated by OLF since its establishment and during the transitional period was promoting the Oromo culture including Affaan Oromo language and music. As a result, it designed a curriculum that helps the Oromo students to learn and communicate with their mother tongue freely. Its effort extends to publishing of books that targeted to upgrade the status of the language. It is not only the language that is targeted to boost but the Oromo values and identities are also part of the struggle. It contend with the Derg regime as the government decide to use the Amharic language as medium of instruction in schools working language in government offices (Dicke et al, 2015). In order to accommodate the interest of diverse ethnic groups, the OLF introduced a reform that allow all ethnic groups to use their mother tongue as their working language.

IV. Special privilege on Addis Ababa

The way Addis Ababa became a self governing city is not clear for the majority of the Oromo people. As the city is part of the Oromo territory it must be demarcated by the consent of the Oromo state council (Finfinee Tribune, 2015). Even once after the city developed as city administration the Oromo special privilege stated in the constitution is not
allowed by the government to put into practice. The federal government forced the political capital of the Oromo regional state to shift from Addis Ababa to Adama. There is no well written law that declares what benefits the Oromia regional state should acquire from Addis Ababa city (Ethiopian Human Rights Project, 2016). It is the presence of such ambiguous provision that became the source of contention between the government and OLF supporters.

V. Proper Representation per number of population

Historically, the Oromo people are not adequately represented in executive government structures tantamount with its population (DAFT, 2016). During Haile Selassie I regime members of the Amhara ethnic group were dominant (McCracken, 2004). The military government was a collection of many ethnic groups but was rigid in allowing self government by local representatives. In much of the Ethiopian history it is difficult to get an ethnic group more marginalized than the Oromos (McCracket, 2004). Their largeness in population never benefited them to acquire a more representation in the central government. Rather, decisions ordered at the center affect their political and social life abundantly.

The Oromo people cover around 40% of the Ethiopian population but lack key political rights face widespread discrimination and targeted by the Ethiopian government. As a result, over many years millions of Oromos have fled their homeland to become refugees in other nations (Aljazeera English News, 2013).

Jawar Mohammed’s interview with the Aljazeera (2013) explained the origin of the Oromo exploitation back to the modern Ethiopian state formation. For him the Abyssinian empire conquered the Oromo people with the help of modern weapon. Since that time the plenty resource and the contribution of the Oromo people that cover around 60% of the GDP continued to be worthless as another minority groups from the north controls government power. Its resource distributed for other regional states with unjust calculation. The existence of abundant resource in Oromia region and its largeness made the independence question impossible to deal (Bach, 2014). Rather, the government, not so as to lose this gifted region, employed both peaceful and forceful strategies to the maximum extent. Its resources has been exploited and administered by another actor that is standing against its interest.

After the OLF left the transitional government, the state society relationship in Oromia is not good. Especially after the evacuation of OLF the fate of Oromo protestors continued to be
thrown in to jail (Ethiopian Human Rights Project, 2016). The struggle of Oromo people is on a half way as many things remain like self governance by its own elected representatives, managing its natural resource without much interference of the central government and facilitate conditions for Oromo people to decide its fate by its own decision (Kejjela, LTV interview, 2019). The option of Self determination, according to OLF, is left for the Oromo people alone. The role of OLF is paving the way for referendum without forcing the people to accept secession as sole alternative.

VI. Restoring the Oromo land

The OLF extended the territory of Oromo to Tigray in the north. It claims the Wollo territory including Raya and the present Gojjam province as the lands of Oromo (KI11, Addis Ababa, 16 March 2019). The party blame the Abyssinian domination 150 years ago as responsible for the lost of historical Oromo lands. Not only this, it raised complain on the border between Oromia and Somali and as well with South Nations, Nationalities and People regional state. The reason for the continued dispute between the Oromo and Somali people is also border and ethnic identity (Abbink, 2012). For instance, referendum was conducted in 2004 to decide the fate of Gerri-Jarso woreda. Around 35 Kebeles preferred the Oromo identity while others appreciate their Somali identity. Such positions of OLF have a power to instigate the Oromo people to engage in a continuous war with its neighboring regions.

4.2. NaMA

4.2.1. Factors for its Formation

The Amhara ethnic group was left without a genuine representative organization in Ethiopian politics (Mastewal, 2016). The definition of “Amhara”, according to NaMA, is a collective identity that share similar psychological makeup and indifferent fate with the Amhara people though they speak different language and culture (http://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/WOQ9a23aI8?enableisapi=1origin=https%3A%2F%). While major ethnic groups rely with their reserve plan, the Amhara ethnic group had no alternative plan other than Ethiopia. For instance, the Oromo politicians advocate the Oromo nationalism through a number of Oromo based political parties and Medias since long period ago. In similar case, the Tigreans controlled key economic and political outlets to maintain the interest of their ethnic group
through institutional way. Not only this, the interest of the Somali people has been represented and articulated by the ONLF.

Members of the Amhara ethnic group are well known in strongly sticking of themselves with Ethiopian nationalism. They had a very little space for ethnic nationalism. The Amhara people, both the peasant and the educated, considered organization along ethnicity as being primitive and backward (Wondwosen, 2009). For instance, the AAPO was changed into All Ethiopian Unity Party as a response for globalization and its assessment about the evil effect of ethnicity for national unity. Many Amhara elites were not ready to participate and help the All Amhara People Organization; the first Amhara based political party established in 1992 but became ineffective due to the government’s harsh measurement. As time passes and the government’s negative attitude towards the Amhara ethnic group intensified, people moved and decide to avert the situation through institutional way (Mastewal, 2016). One mechanism designed by its elites was forming National Movement of Amhara to advocate the basic interests of the Amhara people.

Without denying the contribution of other ethnic groups, the Amhara ethnic group takes a lion share in the process of Ethiopian state formation (Mastewal, 2016). The era of factionalism and local administration was ended by Tewodros II, who had a dream to form a strong central government. Later on, his ambition was realized by Menelik II. Both kings have had a strong blood lineage and psychological attachment with the Amhara people. The way Amhara defined by other ethnic based parties, including the TPLF and OLF, as oppressor and colonizer respectively, the strong psychological attachment of the Amhara with the unity of Ethiopia and its consequent label by other secessionist political organizations as chauvinist and the formulation of the TPLF manifesto that draw the Amhara people as enemy as imperialism and other factors instigated the need to form an Amhara based party (Mastewal, 2016). The Amhara elite for a century had neither exerted significant influence on pan Ethiopianist parties nor formed ethnic based parties for their ethnic group (KI7, Addis Ababa University, 10 March 2019). One thing that makes all the respondents to reach on consensus was the impossibility of detaching the Amhara identity from Ethiopian culture and value. NaMA introduced a new concept in the political dynamics of Ethiopia because it was formed from the society that worships strong Ethiopian identity.
The post 1991 period is a benchmark in Amhara politics since many negative forces obliged the Amhara people to react a situation through institutional way. The active participation of other ethnic groups to consolidate and maintain the interest of their ethnic group through different mechanisms stimulated the Amhara people to think further about its fate. The All Amhara People Organization was formed in 1992 following the TPLF’s anti Amhara propaganda throughout the country. The party was well known by its slogan “one nation, one country” (Bach, 2014). It had a very rigid stand on the oneness and unity of Ethiopia. The party condemned the decision of Eritrean independence as it instigates other ethnic groups to claim a similar agenda. Besides, the independence of Eritrea was considered by the party as an isolation of very intimate family members via wrong decision. Ethiopia became port less in the aftermath of the secession. The AAPO rose complain about the introduction of ethnic federalism at the very inception. Instead, it proposed the continuity of the unitary state structure to maintain the unity of Ethiopia (Aalen, 2002). The frequent arrest and suppression of its members made the organization very loose and impossible to deter violence. Not only this, the inconvenience of the Amhara elites to cooperate with this ethnic based party paved the way for its transition to All Ethiopian Unity Party in 2002. Since that period, there was no party that is structured and arranged to raise and address the quests of the Amhara people. NaMA is the second independent ethnic based party for Amhara next to the All Amhara People Organization.

NaMA is a counter against other ethnic based parties like OLF and TPLF (KI5, 09 March 2019, Addis Ababa). It is formed as a reaction to extreme ethno nationalist groups like the OLF (KI6, Bahir Dar University, 22 March 2019). The formation of NaMA is a viable strategy to bargain on the agenda of extreme nationalist groups in a positive way. It became a principal actor in keeping the balance between the secessionist and unionist forces. The executive member of NaMA depicted the necessity of forming the party in the following way:

Though the Amhara people built Ethiopian by scarifying his blood and bone, the false narration propagated by the 1960’s Marxist generation and EPRDF government for the last 50 years portrays it as oppressor of others. Especially, since the last 27 years, it has no proper political representation in the central government. The constitution was drafted and ratified without the Amhara representatives. Its population is systematically reduced to sabotage its budget. Nationals of Amhara reside in other regional states let alone administering of themselves but they have no equal right like natives (KI10, Addis Ababa, 12 March 2019).
The basic reason for the formation of NaMA is the undermining and marginalization of the Amhara people by the TPLF /EPRDF regime (KI1, Addis Ababa University, 12 March 2019). The TPLF manifesto released in 1976 explained the goal of the organization to struggle against the Amhara people and to achieve their goal of forming an independent Tigray Republic. The first and foremost agenda of TPLF following its seizure of power in 1991 was to charge and insult the Amhara people by using words like “Neftegna” and “Chauvanist”. As explicitly stated in the political program of NaMA the main enemy of the Amhara people is the ideology of the 1960’s generation. “That generation” who advocate Marxist-Leninist ideology depicted Ethiopia as the prison house of nationalities. It stated Amhara as dominant/oppressor and others as being dominated/oppressed (Waleligne, 1969).

The Amhara people are the victims of widespread massacre in west Hararghe, Benishangul and South Nations, nationalities and peoples region (Muluk, 2007, Dereje, 2018). Millions of the Amhara nationals were slaughtered in many areas, but mainly in Arbagugu and Bedeno (Wondwossen, 2009). On the other hand, among the participants of the transitional conference held at Addis in 1991, there was no political organization presented to represent the Amhara ethnic group (Dereje, 2018). During the transitional period the main determinants of the state were the TPLF and OLF, both having a victim history and proposal to revenge the Amhara people (Dereje, 2018). Even during the transitional government, no Amhara representative was a participant. The Amhara people is drawn as dominant and oppressor by political groups that represent major ethnic groups.

Woefully, Tigray People Liberation Front dominated government targeted the Amhara as their main enemies, spread animosity and hate, wrongfully accusing them of being rulers, oppressors and exploiters, demarcated the historical lands of Amhara to different regions such as Metekel to Benishangul Gumuz, Tigray has successfully annexed fertile lands from the neighboring regions of Wollo and Gondar of Amhara (Dereje, 2018:3). Previously lands administered under Wollo and Gondar provinces of Amhara were given to Tigray regional state. On the basis of the new federal arrangement Kafta Humera, Wolkait, Tegede and Tselemt areas are drawn to be include under Tigrean administration (Mastewal, nd). The political program of NaMA defined the struggle of the Amhara people as a matter of survival. The widespread propaganda made on the Amhara people by the anti Amhara incumbent government facilitated the displacement of the Amhara nationals in every corner of the state. For
the last 28 years other ethnic groups are forced to consider the Amhara ethnic group as oppressor and exploiter. Though the Amhara people in the long history of Ethiopia have a renowned contribution, the anti Amhara ethnic nationalists interpreted its deed in a negative way. The party attached the high vulnerability of the Amhara people due to its rigid attitude on one Ethiopia and its belief as the sole guardian of national unity. The following are the rationales for the formation of NaMA.

A) The Coming of Anti Amhara Government

The TPLF dominated EPRDF government has had a deep animosity towards the domination of the Amhara for most of the 19th and 20th c Ethiopian history. To restore the prestige of the Tigryan people, the TPLF canceled its cradle idea of forming independent Tigray. Instead, it modified to substitute the existing Amhara domination with Tigrean supremacy (Valfort, 2006). TPLF substituted the system that deemed the high Amhara domination (Abbink, 2012). The main enemy of Tigray, as written down in TPLF manifesto(1976), is the Amhara ethnic group. As a result, TPLF worked a lot to weaken and destabilize the Amhara people both forcefully and systematically (Bekalu, 2018). Following the seizure of power by EPRDF, new identities that claim self-rule and autonomy are recognized in Amhara regional state. Conflicts that erupted between the existing and new identities are still destabilizing the Amhara people. Lands previously occupied by the Amhara people were given for Tigrean farmers to expand their investment (Bekalu, 2018).

The formation of NaMA strengthened the Amhara nationalism by integrating the different parts of the Amhara in to one. It reshaped and reflected the basic questions of Amhara people into discussion table both internally and externally. It persuades the Amhara Democratic Party that rules the Amhara regional state, to accept the basic interests of the Amhara people in to consideration. NaMA since its establishment tried to expose the killing, oppression and discrimination of the Amhara people for US and Germany diplomatic groups.

B) The survival Threat against the Amhara nationals

Article 32 of the FDRE constitution (1995) stated “Any Ethiopian or foreign national lawfully in Ethiopia has, within the national territory; the right to liberty of movement and freedom of choose his residence as well as the freedom to leave the country at any time he wishes to.”
Theoretically, the constitution defends the right of every Ethiopians to move everywhere and engage in occupations they choose. However, it lacks a commitment on the side of the government to implement provisions as written in the document.

The Amhara people intermingled with members of other ethnic groups through business, marriage, villagization and resettlement program of the Derg government (Bekalu, 2018). The Amharas are considered as metic in other regions and subject to a continued killing and displacement. The pretext presented by government bodies to justify the eviction of Amhara nationals is illegal land occupation. However, the research of Bekalu (2018) indicated that “Despite the baseless allegations from the government, all cases have reported that “being Amhara” was the evictions accompanied during the last two decades in the region.”

The practice of ethnic federalism in rural parts of Ethiopia is problematic because ethnic groups that constitute majority in number began to marginalize minorities and aliens (Abbink, 2012). The extent of the problem is minimal in urban centers where there is high ethnic diversity. Due to the existing security threat they are forced to cede their Amhara identity and inherit the native’s identity (KI10, 12 March 2019). As a result, its population growth rate is declining from time to time. The property accumulated by the Amhara nationals outside of their region is exposed to frequent looting, confiscation and plundering. NaMA seeks to create systems that enable the Amhara nationals to work freely and to expand their business without fear.

Territories have become mono ethnic, even if they were not so historically. They cannot be shared by two or more groups. Acrimonious conflicts and personal drama have often been the result. One case was the repeated expulsion of northern re (settlers) of “Amhara” origin from Wollega in 2000 (and later in 2005), which reportedly happened with the connivance of the local authorities. It is to be recalled also that various regional state constitutions carry the clause that the “sovereignty “ in the region resides in the majority ethnic group or people, thus excluding other inhabitants (Abbink, 2012:604).

Members of the Amhara ethnic group are displaced in many areas due to the narration of the incumbent government. In many areas inter personal conflicts grown and take a shape of inter ethnic conflict. For instance, in Benishangul Gumuz and Gambella regions when a red face individual from other ethnic group committed a crime against natives, immediately people will start a revenge on Amhara nationals as have been proved in many incidents. Amnesty international (2018) reported about the death of 20 Amhara nationals in Qellem Wollega within a week. The strategy defined by NaMA manifesto to prevent the Amhara ethnic group from
vulnerability is the slogan of “One Amhara for All Amhara and All Amhara for One Amhara”. Keeping the Amhara ethnic group from systematic killing and displacement is the prime objective of the party.

C. Ethnic Federalism

The introduction of ethnic federalism in the post 1991 period promoted ethnic groups to claim their interest via organizations along ethnic lines. Many ethnic based parties were formed to defend the interest of their ethnic group. Beside to this, the constitution provides ultimate sovereign power for ethnic groups. Article 8 of the 1995 FDRE constitution stipulated that:

All sovereign power resides in the nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia. This constitution is an expression of their sovereignty. The sovereignty shall be expressed through their representatives elected in accordance with this constitution and through their direct democratic participation.

The status of individual rights and Ethiopian citizenship has got very little consideration in order to grant absolute power for nations and nationalities (Abbink, 2012). The constitution overlooked very important rights of individuals as it emphasize on group rights (Zerihun, 2012). Minor ethnic identities that were ignored and non recognized by the previous regimes got the legal foundation to claim their right (Abbink, 2012). Three factors that forced the Ethiopian government to employ ethnic federalism are the exclusive controlling of power by ethnic based forces, the widespread acceptance of national question and the alternative presented by majority of the post war political parties (Abbink, 2012). The constitution first gives priority and recognition for ethnic identity than the overall Ethiopian identity. The government system by itself created favorable condition for the proliferation of ethnic based parties (Bekalu, 2018). Ethnic groups confirmed practicing their identity, language and religion without any intimidation and sense of inferiority complex. Previously used phrases like “shanqilla”, which was used to call black ethnic groups, is legally prohibited (Abbink, 2012).

Ethnicity continued to be a determinant political concept in many aspects. The boundary between regional states was predominantly arranged on the criteria of language. Ethnic groups were allowed to write and use their mother tongue as a working language and medium of instruction in primary schools. The administrative structures were also designed in the name of
major ethnic groups although the existence of minor ethnic identities is internally recognized. The EPRDF government sponsored each ethnic group to be represented at least by one pseudo ethnic party (Abbink, 2012). Although ethnic parties existed before the enactment of the constitution, some provisions of it created a very fertile ground for fast increasing of ethnic based parties (Zerihun, 2012). Ethnic based parties in Ethiopia are established to assert the interest of a certain ethnic drove where it emanates. Mentioning the basic demands of a particular ethnic group helps the party to mobilize members of a society easily. By referring the central points of that ethnic group, parties can double its supporters especially during election campaigns. Well organized party programs enhance the influence of the party over other contending parties. Voters are inclined to provide their vote for political parties that raise the fundamental issues of their locality and ethnic group.

4.2.2. Basic Interests of the Amhara People as Articulated by NaMA

The following are the goals of NaMA that are identified as the basic interests of the Amhara people.

A. Protecting the Amhara people from survival threat

The basic agenda of NaMA during and after its establishment is to protect the Amhara people from security threat. “The Amhara nationals are killed and displaced everywhere due to the propagation of anti-Amhara narration by the incumbent government” (KI10, 12 March 2019). Members of this ethnic group are subject to mistreatment, mal administration and alienation from their farmland as the natives grievance increase in scale. The conflict between Berta and Amhara nationals in Benishangul Gumuz regional state is mentionable (Abbink, 2012). Around six million Amharas are systematically lost since the coming of TPLF dominated EPRDF into power (Bekalu, 2018). The party intends to assure the freedom of Amhara nationals to move everywhere and generate their own asset without intimidation and fear. The basic factor that obliged the party to incorporate this goal is the dispersal nature of the Amhara people in its settlement pattern. It is very difficult to find part of the Ethiopian territory never occupied by the Amhara nationals. The Amhara nationals are there even in nook places. They are intermingled with the native people through marriage, trade, government jobs, religious missions, villagization program and in search of better economy.
B. Revising the constitution and the federal structure

The FDRE constitution was drafted by the constitutional commission organized from members of the transitional council, which had 87 seats. The commission's final result is sent to constituent assembly. The main task of this assembly was to include and extend the provisions articulated in the transitional charter (Medhane and Alagaw, 2014)

National Movement of Amhara strongly believes that the stem for the current problem that Ethiopia faced in general and the Amhara people forced to expose to various kinds of attack in particular is the federal constitution adopted in 1995. Although The prelude part of the constitution confirmed this legal document as driven from the consent of representatives of all nations nationalities and people's of Ethiopia, no Amhara representative was invited to participate. The only major ethnic group left without any representative party in drafting, deliberating and approval of the transitional charter was the Amhara ethnic group (Keller, 1995). The share reserved for the Amhara ethnic group was to accept all the prescribed provisions of the charter under the bond of ethnic federalism. EPDM, the party that claimed to represent the Amhara people participated in the quota of EPRDF. As a result, NaMA believes on the need to make an amendment on some provisions of the constitution.

The preamble is read as follow”…Have therefore adopted on 8 December 1994 this constitution through representatives we have duly elected for this purpose as an instrument that binds us in a mutual commitment to fulfill the objectives and the principles set forth above” . The worse part of this legal document is the expression stated in the preamble that erode the peaceful relationship of the Amhara people with other ethnic groups in the state. "Fully cognizant that our common destiny can be best served by rectifying historically unjust relationships and by further promoting our shared interest". The party understood this phrase as a way to create hatred and animosity by other ethnic groups against the Amhara people. The explicit version of this provision is to show the Amhara ethnic group as the oppressor, exploiter, and destructor of other ethnic groups.

NaMA promotes individual right as its ideology is moderate liberalism. Moderate liberalism ideology enables the government to grant individual freedom while keeping group rights in
balance. To fully allow the free exercise of individual rights at best, NaMA vowed to extend to the extent of amending the FDRE constitution and other international conventions.

C. Restoring the historical lands of Amhara

NaMA believes that the current federal system detached the Amhara people from its historical lands like Shoa, Metekel, Raya and Wolkayit. Such lands were given for others without the consent of the people but through political decision. Large areas of historical Amhara lands conducive for agricultural production were forcefully given for other regional states. The best illustrative example for this is the fertile Humera land incorporated into Tigray regional state administration (Abbink, 2012). Humera was part and parcel of the Gondar Amhara part. However, it was decided to be part of Tigray regional state under the new federal map. Bekalu (2018) in his study also indicated the deprivation of the Amhara people from its land, Wolkayit Tseguede. According to this study, currently this area is occupied by Tigryeans though it was first occupied by the Amhara nationals.

No Amhara representative was invited to be members of the boundary commssssion. Major opposition parties that were suspected by the EPRDF as a counter for transition were systematically pushed back. The overall demarcation process was accomplished with a warm support and little rejection by participants (Medhane and Alagaw, 2014). According to the FDRE constitution, the body mandated to solve the border disputes among federal states is the House of Federation. Article 62 stated that”It shall strive to find solutions to the disputes or misunderstandings that may arise between states”. Again article 48 depicts the necessity of the house of federation intervention in conditions when border disagreements occur among regional states. The house will decide on the issue after a thorough study is conducted about the wish and settlement of the concerned people. Giving final solution for identity questions erupted here and there is also the function of the house. However, the steps stipulated as a working trend is too bulky as identity seekers request their identity from the state council that suppressed it.

The political program of NaMA stated that”in conditions when disagreements occur among the federal provinces its resolution must be on the basis of historical ownership via referendum”. It condemns the redistribution of the historical Amhara lands for other regional states and
neighboring states. It seems to address the public resentment on the actions of the incumbent government on the issue of Metemma land that is given for Sudan.

D. Proper representation of the Amhara people outside the region

One of the basic agenda frequently advocated by NaMA is empowering the Amhara nationals residing outside of their region. In fact it is being a stranger for Ethiopia to argue about the existence of Amhara people throughout all Ethiopia’s regions. The Amhara people occupied everywhere in Ethiopia as oxygen found in the all corners of the earth planet. NaMA appreciate the respecting of minority rights like Agew, Oromia and Kimant special zones within the Amhara regional state. At the same time it seeks a similar right for Amhara nationals in other regional states. Its justification is that in regions like Oromia, Benishangul Gumuz, Gambella and South Nations Nationalities and people regional state there are many areas in which majority of the residents are Amhara nationals. While the Amhara regional state properly addresses the quests of minor ethnic groups inside it other regions refused to allow self governing right for Amhara nationals.”The Amhara people has no representatives even at Kebele level in such cities predominated by Amharas like Dire Dawa, Jimma and Nazrethe” (KI10, 12 March 2019).

The political program of NaMA uses geography, suitability for development and administration, historical ownership, population settlement and consent as well as topography and language as a parameter to demarcate the federal provinces. However, in a condition where there is no consensus among federal provinces historical ownership over the land will be taken into a special consideration. In provinces that comprise more than one ethnic identity the working language will be determined by the consent or referendum. This can reduce the clash and dissatisfaction among ethnic groups within the province.

4.3. OLF and NaMA in Comparative Perspective

There is no nationwide consensus on national figures like National Flag, Constitution, National hero, Capital city, and history of the state. For instance, the state formation process is continuing to be a contending issue in the present Ethiopian politics. The Abyssinians extend the age of Ethiopia around 3000 years ago while the Oromos limit its history in 150 years (Assafa, 2007). The Tigryans interpret the works of emperor Menelik II as reluctant for the issue of Tigray since the victory of Adwa. Again they portray the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie I as exploiter
of the Tigrean people (Bach, 2014). Even common victories are becoming rare as ethnic groups began to interpret each celebration in line with the group interest. Here, mentioning May/Ginbot 20 celebration, the victory of EPRDF forces over the Derg government, is valuable for the issue. For the last 27 years, Ginbot 20 victory was celebrated with huge expenditure in all government offices. Many radio and television documentaries were released to make the victory as a benchmark in the democratic transition of Ethiopia. However, the speech of Prime Minister Abyi Ahmed denounces the victory as he publically cursed the killing of two brothers as a defeat for both parties.

4.3.1. Capital City
The issue of capital city was the one among few basic issues discussed among participants of the transitional government (Lencho Leta’s interview with LTV, 2019). There was a debate on which model is preferable for Ethiopia. The first was the US model that made Washington DC as the capital of American federation. The other was the Russia model that used Moscow as the capital of both the Russia federation and center of Soviet Union. According to Lencho, the accord reached during the transitional conference was to declare Addis Ababa both the capital of Oromia regional state and the center of Ethiopia. The OLF has reiterate Addis Ababa as the land of Oromo peoples as no claim is raised for Bahir Dar and Mekele as the land of Amhara and Tigray respectively. Addis Ababa is a city built on the blood of Oromo farmers because the operation to evict the Oromo clans was undertaken (KI11,16 March 2019). According to the respondent, many farmers were forced to evict as empress Taytu shifted its capital from Entoto to Filwuha. The land owned by Oromo farmers was divided for Menelik II war leaders and his soldiers as Dejach Wubie, Ras Tessema and Ras Hailu villages.

On the Other hand, NaMA claim the city belong to all Ethiopians reside in it for the last 100 years since its establishment. Its position is that the city must be administered by its own elected representatives as it is center for different national, regional and international organizations. It is a home for different diplomatic communities that work to improve the relation among states. NaMA does not agree on the ownership of the city by a single ethnic group.

Addis Ababa was established in the Amhara city called Berera, which was established by Atse Dawit in the 16th century. However, as it is the capital of the state and center international organizations it must be the property of all Ethiopians. Any kind of chaos
to own the city by a single ethnic group invites unstoppable quarrel with Amharas (Interview with NaMA chairman, ABN TV, 2019).

The policy of NaMA towards Addis Ababa generates the support of all Ethiopians and parties except that struggle for Oromo people. It is more accommodative and inclusive to the demands of diverse ethnic groups. All key informants, except members and supporters of OLF, agree on the position Addis Ababa belongs to all ethnic groups. One of the respondents stated that:

…..I think try to belong Addis Ababa as the land of a single ethnic group is a crazy idea. This attitude is never seen in any states of the world. For instance, the Nigerian moved their capital from Lagos to Abuja with no doubt. Again, the capital of US, Washington DC, is built on the lands of Virginia and Maryland states. Similarly, what is expected in our case is to demarcate the border between Addis Ababa and Oromia regional state (KI1, Addis Ababa University, 02 March 2019).

Claiming Addis Ababa as the land of a single ethnic group may spoil many things. First, the image of the city began to narrow as it is confined to reflect the culture, identity, and norm of that particular ethnic group. Second, the voice of other ethnic groups reside within it will be blocked as all the administrative power vested for a single ethnic group only. The idea of key informant 2 also consolidated the proposition of NaMA.

The position of NaMA on Addis Ababa is acceptable both legally and morally. Legally, the constitution grants a self governing right for Addis Ababa. As a result, the Amharas that cover around 57% of the population have a constitutional right to administer it via majority rule principle. However, NaMA preferred its fate to be decided by its residents as the city is a home of all Ethiopians (Addis Ababa, 04 March 2019).

Furthermore, there is a disagreement regarding the mayor of Addis Ababa. The OLF is working to sustain the Oromo nationals to administer the city since it claim the city as the land of Oromo. On the other hand, NaMA is striving to administer the city by its elected representatives through free and fair election as it belong the city as the common property of all Ethiopian nationalities.

4.3.2. National Hero
Currently it is difficult to find out a common national hero for all Ethiopians. What is a gallant for a certain ethnic group is presented as a devil for others. The coming of the TPLF in to power spoiled many things including the denouncing of emperor Menelik II and the construction of erects that instigate a hatred among ethnic groups (Bach, 2014).
The TPLF leadership thus remained devoted to their interpretation of the Ethiopian people and to their opposition against preceding regimes’ Ethiopian considered the root cause of Ethiopia’s troubles. For instance, the battle of Adwa (1 March 1896) symbolizing the success of Ethiopian resistance against European colonization, was still celebrated. But its hero, emperor Menelik II, was not celebrated as a national hero anymore. Tribute was rather given to the Ethiopia’s nation nationalities and peoples who fought Italian claims, while Menelik was condemned for the “genocides he committed against Ethiopia’s nation nationalities and peoples. An imperial hero in the former regimes, Menelik II appeared as a criminal, responsible for many massacres during his military campaigns towards the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries (Bach, 2014:109).

The post 1991 regime in Ethiopia facilitated conditions that could create a possible animosity among ethnic groups. The anniversary of the battle of Chelenko and Annole is targeted on eroding the relation between the Oromo and Amhara people, who intermingled in marriage for a century. For OLF, Emperor Haile Selassie II is an assimilator ruler who strived to load the Amharization policy on the Oromo people. The FGDO respondents also raised their complain on the previous kings of Ethiopia. Their dissent emanated from the narration preached by the OLF about the victimization of the Oromo people by northern settlers. As the researcher confirmed in his observation, the previous kings of Ethiopia who successfully defended the sovereignty of Ethiopia from invaders have a significant position in NaMA. The move of emperor Menelik II towards the South in the late 19th century is taken as the sacrifice for modern state formation. The Amharization policy of Emperor Haile Selassie II is considered by NaMA as part of the nation building process happened everywhere in Europe. FGDN participants depicted the difficulty of detaching the Amhara people from Ethiopian identity. However, they engaged in ethnic party politics due to the inevitable nature of the Ethiopian politics.

4.3.3. National Flag

The issue of formulating a common national flag became debatable in the post 1991 period. During the regime of emperor Menelik II there were two flags that explain Ethiopia in the international arena. The first flag had a rectangular shape while the other flag had the Amharic letter” ይ” at the center to represent the first name of the emperor. Both flags were painted in red yellow and green colors from top to bottom (Mastewal, n.d).

Latter on the sequence of colors were reversed in the era of Lij Iyasu and diarchy period. Again the era of Emperor Haile Selassie I was well known by emblem where the lion carrying a cross at the center beside to the non emblem green, yellow and red flag. The flag having a lion emblem was
confined in the palace and office of key government officials. It was an expression of the high blending of the Ethiopian Orthodox church and the state. Whereas the pure green, yellow and red colored flag was functional in schools and public posts. During the Derg regime, the emblem was added at the center in order to depict its advocacy of socialism. The EPRDF regime introduced a star as an emblem of the national flag. Article 3 of the 1995 FDRE constitutions stated that:

The Ethiopian flag shall consist of green at the top, yellow in the middle and red at the bottom, and shall have a national emblem at the center. The three colors shall be set horizontally in equal dimension. The national emblem on the flag shall reflect the hope of the nation, nationalities and peoples as well as religious communities of Ethiopia to live together in equality and unity. Members of the federation may have their respective flags and emblems and shall determine the details thereof through their respective legislatures.

As the researcher assured in his observation, the civil flag having green, yellow and red colors is preferable among majority of NaMA leaders, members and supporters. For instance, members of NaMA hold the civil flag during special conferences, celebrations and anniversaries. The logo and the office of NaMA are decorated with the green, yellow and red colors of the previous Ethiopian flag. It wishes to make the civil flag as the manifestation of the state at national and international arena.”The Ethiopian flag having green, yellow and red colors from top to bottom with no emblem at the center is a symbol of proud and heroism as our forefathers defeated foreign enemies through this flag”KI10, Addis Ababa, 12 March 2019). It associate this flag with victory and sacrifice paid for the territorial integrity and unity of Ethiopia. Despite its interest, NaMA recommends the necessity of deliberation on the colors and emblem of the national flag.

On the other hand, the interest of OLF is to make its logo the flag of Ethiopia. As the researcher assured in his observation, the OLF logo is highly acceptable in many parts of Oromia. However, OLF believes on the need to accommodate the interests of diverse ethnic groups in forming the new national flag. The flag that got a majority support by the public must serve as a national flag for Ethiopia. There must be a deliberation and consensus regarding the emblem and color of the flag (KI11, Addis Ababa, 16 March 2019).

4.3.4. Constitution

The adoption of the FDRE constitution was characterized by exclusion of others and over domination of the EPRDF party. Unlike the transitional charter that was designed and ratified by the consent of many ethnic based parties, the 1995 FDRE constitution was solely formulated by a
The OLF was not a single party (Aalen,2002). The OLF was not a single party in drafting and ratifying of the FDRE constitution (Lencho Leta interview with LTV). Lencho further added that the OLF withdrew and fled before the promulgation of the constitution. It first resigned from its post as days for election approached.

The OLF appreciate many of the provisions stated in the FDRE constitution while it denounce the inclusion of few articles. Although it has no deep resentment, it rejected some of the provisions of the FDRE constitution that was drafted and approved in 1995. Among the provisions identified by to be amended are the power sharing between levels of government and the issue of Addis Ababa (KI11, Addis Ababa, 16 March 2019). Article 52 of the FDRE constitution deliver power for regional states like formulating of their own flag and constitution, recruit its security force and to manage land and other natural resources coincide with federal laws. The OLF needs federal structure that empower regional states with huge power to bargain with the federal government. Beside to this, The OLF argues the seat of Addis Ababa representatives to be in chaffee, state council of Oromia regional state, not in House of People Representatives. In fact, this program may not be easy to implement unless new provisions incorporated in to the constitution. Article 49 of the constitution says nothing about the possession of Addis Ababa. Rather, it elucidates the rights of Addis Ababa residents to administer the city through its representatives. The city shall have a representation in the law making organ, House of People Representatives. In other expression, the city belongs to the federal government and its administration is should dispatch its activity only to the federal government. According to this provision, no regional state has reserved power to deal on the issue of Addis Ababa alone.

The other petition of OLF regarding the constitution is the issue of Oromia special privilege on Addis Ababa.

The special interest of the state of Oromia in Addis Ababa, regarding the provision of social services or the utilization of natural resources and other similar matters, as well as the joint administrative matters arising from the location of Addis Ababa within the state of Oromia shall be respected. Particulars shall be determined by law (FDRE constitution 1995, Article 49(5).

“The Oromo people shall access a special privilege from the city since the water and various commodities supplied for the city is highly dependent on the surrounding Oromia towns” (KI 11,
Addis Ababa, 16 March 2019). The special privilege of Oromo in Addis Ababa must be maintained because all the necessary things for residents of Addis Ababa emanates and passes through the various towns of Oromia. Beside to this, the trash of the city is thrown in to Oromo lands which may result serious health problems (Lencho Leta’s interview with LTV, 2019). The OLF strongly claim the immediate adoption of laws that allow the special privilege of the Oromo people from the city.

NaMA, on the other hand, requests readily amendment of many provisions of the constitution. It has a deep resentment on the preamble that stated “…Fully cognizant that our common destiny can be best served by rectifying historically unjust relationships and by further promoting our shared interest”. The party understood this phrase as jeopardize the survival of the Amhara people as it is used to implicate the existence of the Amhara domination in the past regimes. In one TV interview, its founder stated that “Perhaps there might be class difference in the past regimes. However, drawing one ethnic group, the Amhara, as oppressor is an explicit retaliation”. The party considers the constitution as a shackle to undermine the Amhara people in the coverage of rule of law. The government through its apparatus demoted the dignity of the Amhara people. Beside to this, the Amhara people is still forced to be governed by illegal documents ratified without the consultation of genuine Amhara representatives. As a result, NaMA recommends the introduction of new or amended constitution that does not create antipathy between the Amhara and other ethnic groups as mandatory. The new constitution should bring justice and exterminate the provisions that preach hatred between the Amhara and other ethnic groups. The special privilege of Oromia on Addis Ababa is interpreted by the party as a means of segregation to divide the residents of the city.

4.4. The practice of OLF and NaMA and its implication on National unity

Many people argued the incorporation of article 39, that permit secession through legal framework, as a motivation for ethno nationalist forces to advocate independence (Abbink, 2012). In fact secessionist forces were created before the promulgation of the FDRE constitution. Allowing the right to secede for more than 80 ethnic groups is an expression of deliberate denouncing of national unity (Dereje, 2018). On the other hand, there are scholars who consider the inclusion of article 39 as a means to accommodate the interest of diverse political groups of the then. Despite it is availability in the legal document of the state, the government has no room
to compromise on secession clause (McCracken, 2004). The post 1991 period that deem decentralized respond any claim for independence in very harsh way. Consider the fact that there are few steps necessary for secession but it is only Eritrea that achieved its independence successfully. The demand for the OLF and ONLF to liberate their region is deterred through force.

However, creating the legal ground to support their aim is a surprising thing for many Ethiopians. This provision was one of the bone of contention issues during the 2005 national election. Sill today day many Pan Ethiopianist political parties accuse this provision in need of constitutional amendment. According to Alem (2005), ethno nationalist forces like OLF, EPLF and ONLF were obstacles for the continuity of the socialist regime and state survival during the Derg era.

The introduction of ethnic based arrangement eroded the very strong relationship existed between the different ethnic groups in the state (Bekalu, 2018). The formalization of ethnicity sowed hatred and suspicion among ethnic groups. National cohesion is deteriorating from time to time due to the intensification of hostility and animosity between ethnic groups. For the one who scrutinize the genocide in Rwanda, the politicization of ethnicity In Ethiopia may invite a wide scale genocide among ethnic groups (Bacha, 2014). Advocating ethnicity for political consumption has no extra benefit other than dividing and weakening the state in to various pieces.

According to Abbasi, quoted by Bekalu, if the wide spread decentralization in ethnic politics is not supported by discussion it may led to disintegration of the state. Ethnic differences must be properly solved via negotiation and understanding. Selassie, as quoted in Dereje (2018), stated that ethnic political groups in Ethiopia have three types. While few groups seek a proper power sharing others requests the recognition of their identity and existence. The remaining groups advocate a complete detachment of their ethnic group from Ethiopia via the decision of secession. For scholars like Aalen (2002), the inclusion of secessionist article in the FDRE constitution is intentionally calculated by the TPLF to achieve its former plan of forming independent republic of Tigray if its canny political game is aborted by the struggle of all Ethiopian people. The rationale behind the application of ethnic based divide administration was eroding the unity of all ethnic groups while consolidating the power of the TPLF, a political organization that represents around 6.2% of the Ethiopian population.
Employing of ethnic based administration through legal framework is a problem by itself let alone other related factors (Dereje, 2018). The way regional states demarcated is too contending because it is drawn irrespective the society concerned and its people’s psychological makeup. Especially access to the land is the basic reason for the quarrel among regional states to this minute.

The connotation of “state” for OLF in its early years of establishment was to establish Independent state of Oromia (KI11, Addis Ababa, 16 March 2019). It started a struggle by drawing a map that indicates the boundary of Oromia republic (see appendices C). Its struggle was liberating the Oromo people from a black colonizer, Abyssinian state. However, currently it shifted from secessionism to self-determination on the basis of referendum. The provision of self determination has two meanings. These are either independence or peaceful coexistence.

According to political party’s registration proclamation no_46/1993, political parties cannot contest in election if they employ armed struggle to control power. Political parties that try to blend weapon strategy with peaceful campaign have no legal entity to participate in election. The OLF is very influential in mobilizing the Oromo people against the TPLF dominated EPRDF dictatorial government (Lencho Leta’s interview with LTV, 2019). The new prime minister officially invited all contending political parties reside abroad to come back and participate peacefully. The OLF is the one among many political parties that accepted the reform of the government in a positive way. Although the government ordered each political parties to abandon an armed struggle and substitute it in peaceful way, the OLF is not ready to disarm its soldiers. According to the government communication affairs explanation, it is only 1,300 soldiers of OLF that began the government’s reform training to participate peacefully. The remaining combatants of OLF remained with their weapon irrespective of the government order and notice. Dawudlbbssa (Walta TV, 2019) stated that “We never allow members of our organization to disarm because it was not part of our deal with the government. Part of our accord was the need to work jointly to protect the rights of civilians”. The chairman further added the need to allow self determination for ethnic groups to decide their fate by their own people.

The main points reached on consensus between EPRDF and OLF at Asmara were announcing the war has ended, allowing the free movement of OLF without restriction, deciding the fate of
OLF fighters and the need to work together to maintain peace and security. The practice of OLF has an adverse effect on Ethiopian national unity. The following are indicators OLF as anti thesis to state unity.

A) Lack of Clarified Agenda

The OLF is engaging in Ethiopian politics by holding two extreme and incompatible agendas in its political program. These are peaceful coexistence and secession.”OLF has no explicitly stated agenda. When situations get better it opts peaceful coexistence with other ethnic groups under the umbrella of Ethiopia. On the other side, it decides immediate secession in bad political environments” (KI1, Addis Ababa University, 02 March 2019)

Another key informant stated that “There is no well announced explanation on the side of OLF regarding its political program”. In fact other factions of OLF like ODF publically announced a shift in their program from secession to peaceful coexistence with in greater Ethiopia (Zerihun, 2012). The position of OLF now a day is in between two extremes either to construct a new Ethiopia shaped by the legacy of Oromo or deconstructing it to foster independent Oromo state. Key informant 6 stated about the practice of OLF as follows:

OLF does not need the continuity of Ethiopia constructed by Abyssinian values. Rather, it seeks to demolish it and replace with a new state that reflects the Oromo culture and value at best. However, if such proposition failed, it automatically will start to form an independent Oromo state (Bahir Dar University, 22 March 2019).

There are two contending perspectives among members of the OLF regarding the fate Oromo people. These are the demand for independence and the struggle for self-autonomy by abandoning secession (Valfort, 2006). Scholars like Assafa Jeleta supported the first view by explaining the historical distinctiveness of the Oromo people with other ethnic groups that advocate Ethiopianism. On the contrary, there are others who explain the inseparable fate of the Oromo people with the fate of other ethnic groups. According to Asafa and Schaffer (2007), the Oromo political organizations in order to achieve self-determination should completely abolish the remnants of Abyssinian values. Beside to this, the plan of independent Oromia will be realized as people move on the strong sprit of Oromummaa.
B) Siege mentality Attitude

The OLF inculcated the large number of the Oromo people with siege mentality attitude. This made the Oromo people to consider other ethnic groups as its existential enemy. It created isolation in the minds of the Oromo people. It is against a well-integrated social development, which is normal in every society.

Addis Ababa, which is the capital city of Ethiopia, as compared to other regional states, is very nearest for Oromo in terms of distance. We can say it” The smallest Ethiopia” as it is It is a shelter for diverse ethnic groups found in Ethiopia. However, in terms of demography as compared to other ethnic groups, the share of Oromo nationals is very few. Rather, others from Wolayita, Amhara, Guraghe, Tigray, Gamo that are far away from Addis Ababa crossed many kilometers and occupied there. Why this happened? It is because of the OLF that preached about the uniqueness and enmity of the Oromo people with other ethnic groups (KI2, Addis Ababa, 04 March 2019).

C) Human Rights violation

The policy and practice of OLF has also an adverse effect on the day-to-day activities of members of other ethnic groups. It inculcate majority of the Oromo people to develop a hatred towards other ethnic groups reside in Oromia regional state. The OLF killed many spectators who have no political participation at all (Abbink, 2012). Its armed strategy is responsible for aggravating the violence scale of the organization in many areas. Many incidents and catastrophes on civilians recorded in Oromia regional state, where it has majority support and recruit its soldiers. “The OLF inspired youths to displace members of the non Oromo ethnic groups as a revenge for the past Abyssinian domination .This is part and parcel of the independence process” (KI5, Addis Ababa, 09 March 2019). Its plan is to distribute the land occupied by settlers for Oromo nationals in the aftermath of the eviction.

The response of other key informants also consolidates this idea. They raised the participation of OLF in coordinating the displacement of one million Gedeo nationals from Guji and the eviction of around 90,000 Oromos from Benishangul Gumuz regional state. All such chronic social problems were occurred as a result of OLF illegal military movements. In fact the Benishangul-Oromo conflict is escalated after the OLF killed six top officials of Benishangul Gumuz regional state.
During its staying in the transitional government period, OLF is accused for the mass atrocities committed against Amhara nationals in Bedeno, Arbagugu and Woter. Thousands of Amharic speakers and Christians were killed and houses turned into ashes in Merti, Gegu and Abomsa provinces, all in Arbagugu by OLF members and representatives (Ethiopian Information Service Network, 1991). The response of key informants also confirmed the participation of OLF in coordinating gross violation of human rights during its staying in 1991.

OLF is responsible for the killing committed on Amhara nationals in different part of Oromia including Bedeno, Arbagugu and Bedeno. Beside to this, it lacks to blame any social evictions done in Oromia regional state as it represents the Oromo people. For instance, the Burayiuo martyr and Shashamenne crossification that are committed by OLF supporters through mob justice were not officially blamed by the party (KI8, Addis Ababa University, 13 March 2019).

The man who holds the flag of OLF was one of the collaborators on the Shashamannee mob justice committed on the Wolayita national. OLF has no recorded history of granting representation for non natives in areas administered by it. During the transitional period much of the Oromia region was controlled by OLF. Simultaneously there were many Woredas and cities predominantly occupied by other nationals. However, they were denied to administer themselves by their own representatives. The OLF never allowed their quest of organizing woreda council to maintain their interest.

C) Economic Failure and Internal in stability

Though OLF promised to stop a war strategy by demilitarizing its soldiers, it still refused to compete peacefully. Following the coming of Prime Minister Abyi Ahmed in to power there was a consensus between the government and OLF representatives. The main theme of the accord was the need to stop war and start a peaceful struggle at home. However, after it returned, OLF resumed fighting with government security forces in Wollega. Beside to this, it participated in illegal activities by violating rule of law. Different government and private Medias reported the participation of OLF in robbing the public and private properties like banks. The news of Ethiopian observer (January14, 2019) confirmed the participation of the OLF in robbing 17 economic centers including the Commercial bank of Ethiopia, Awash banks, united bank and Oromia union banks in west Wollega and Qellem Wollega zones. The report, by citing Oromia officials, confirmed the crime was committed by OLF. Almost 1.4 million ETB is stolen from
the Ethiopian people by a political organization called OLF. All such illegal activities are against the prosperity of Ethiopian people.

The political parties’ registration proclamation 1993/48 stated that political parties that is found on preaching of conflict and hatred on the basis of religious outlook and race, participating in arm struggle and inclusion of foreign nationals cannot be recognized by the national board of election. However, the OLF passed one third of its age by fighting with the central government of Ethiopia. Even after its name was erased from blacklist it fought with government forces in Wollega zone through weapon. Again the proclamation prohibited parties that participated in coup deta to control government power in short path. The government’s investigation result showed the conspiracy of the OLF in coordinating the plot to kill the prime minister on June 2018. This shows the OLF is participating on the Ethiopian politics without fulfilling the formal requirements of the Ethiopian election law. During the Ethio-Eritrean war(1998-2000), the OLF was on the side of Eritrea while all ethnic groups in Ethiopia altogether stood against the Eritrean government. On the basis of the aforementioned facts it is difficult to label this political party as defender of national interest.

NaMA

The coming of NaMA in to Ethiopian politics brought mixed effects on national unity. It is better to see the mixed effects one by one.

On the one hand, its policy and program can save Ethiopia from disintegration. It has rigid position towards the unity of the state. As clearly stated in its program the party committed itself to be the guardian of Ethiopian unity. “If Ethiopia faced disintegration, the Amhara people will be the most disadvantaged because of two reasons. First, the fate of twenty million Amhara nationals residing outside the region will expose to more risk than now. Second, It will not be easy to recover from the expected psychological crisis”(KI10, Addis Ababa, 12 March 2019). NaMa is the effect of Amhara nationalism that began to revive since 2016. The nature of Amhara nationalism is advocating and giving value for the historical deeds of previous kings. It praises the unreserved effort of forefathers that defend the state from external enemy. For instance, the researcher observed the warm celebration of the Adwa victory through the instigation of NaMA in Addis Ababa and other towns of Amhara. Its office is also painted with
previous rulers of Ethiopia like the images of Emperor Tewodros II, MenelikII, Haile Selassie I, Dejazmach Belay Zeleke, Ras Micheal, Empress Taytu, Empress Zewditu and other Amhara martyred. They depicted that”As our forefathers scarified their life for the territorial integrity of Ethiopia ,we should maintain the state for the next generation” (KI13, 20 March 2019).

NaMA is formed to react against the extreme nationalist groups. It is a synthesis to prevent state disintegration by secessionist forces (KI6, Bahir Dar University, 22 March 2019). Other ethno nationalists started their struggle with a dream to form independent republic as explicitly stated on the political program of OLF, ONLF, TPLF, and EPLF. However, the way NaMA was formed is very different because its vision is advocating the free movement of individuals irrespective of their ethnic background. Beside to this, no part of its political program mentions about secession. One of the policies stated in the political program of NaMA is to amend the federal structure. Many scholars confirmed about the problematic nature of the current ethnic based federalism in their investigation. For instance, Bekalu(2018) depicted that ”All opposition parties ,including both anti and pro federal parties ,reject the current federal identities and the way they are implemented because they claim that it is only serving the party in power.” Making improvement on the constitution and ethnic federalism is a half way to solve ethnic conflicts radically.

The strategy of NaMA has no difference with parties that advocate civic nationalism. The only difference is that the former gives priority for the Amhara people and belong all the manifestations of Ethiopia as the core values of Amhara while the latter directly advocate very strong Ethiopia nationalism. The basic quest of NaMA is correcting the unjust practices committed during the era of EPRDF. Key informant 6 stated”the policy of NaMA and other civic parties cannot clash each other as their final destination is to dream a strong and unified Ethiopia”. NaMA is a liberal ethno nationalist party that prioritizes individual freedom. It advocates the free movement of people from place to place without any ethnic fence.

Although the Amhara people participate in ethnic politics, its destination will never be apart from Ethiopia. The Amhara and Amharized political elites gives priority for their Ethiopian Identity (Medhane and Alagaw, 2014).They are reluctant to advocate their ethno national identity as other ethnic groups did in the last years.”Though NaMA primarily works for the unity of Amhara, its strength consolidates the unity of Ethiopia because it is impossible to detach the
psychology of the Amhara people from Ethiopia” (KI10, 12 March 2019). NaMA, through social Medias, condemned the massive human right violation committed on the Gedeo people. This makes NaMA the first ethnic based party that defends for the interest of other ethnic groups. Beside to this, its alternative policies, like economic and legal, about national issues disproved the already accepted idea of confining ethnic based parties to the extent of their locality alone.

The main opposition political parties that seek the unity of the state were persistently prohibited from engagement in the transitional government. No opposition party that counter the secession of Eritrea and demobilization of the Derg army was welcomed in the conference (Kassahun, as cited in Medhane and Alagaw, 2014). Rather, it was dominated by ethnic based fronts that fully support self determination up to secession. The All Amhara People Organization, an Amhara based party founded by renowned professor Asrat Weldeys, devoted for the continuity of one great and unified Ethiopia (Bach, 2014). This party is renowned in defending against the secession of Eritrea (Amnesty International, 1995).

On the other side, NaMA created a temporary shock in the eyes of other ethnic groups. The suspicion stems as NaMA started to possess the perceived core values and identities of Ethiopia as the identity of Amhara people only. For instance, previously the green, yellow and red flag, Emperors, victories, historical heritages, the Amharic letter and language altogether were perceived as common manifestations of all Ethiopians. This is happen due to the high Amhara cultural reflection in the Ethiopian identity. As NaMA began articulating such cultural manifestations as the identity of Amhara people others felt a sense of defection and isolation. The narration that the Amhara people takes a lion share in building Ethiopia and the reality shown about the eviction of Amhara nationals created paradox among party leaders. Emotion laden speeches emanated from over trust on Ethiopian state hood erodes the sense of unity as it serve to diminish the role of other ethnic groups in state making. This phrase denounces the contribution of other ethnic groups in state making process. It created a sense of neutrality and exclusion on others as it put the Amhara ethnic group as the only stakeholder in doing so. The nervous expressions used by few NaMA leaders to define the innocence and rationality of the Amhara people also erode national unity. Generally, NaMA’s perception to present the Amhara people as more Ethiopian than others created a sense of lowering on other.
Beside to this, its program stipulates Amharic language to serve as both the official language of the federal government and national language of Ethiopia. Other federal provinces can employ their own language as a working language of their province. Promulgating the Amharic language as national language of the state is not easy as making it as the official language in regional states. This policy could not be effective in a state where many ethnic groups compete for hegemony and supremacy. The proposal can be functional in states where nation state process is fully completed through assimilation.
CHAPTER FIVE

5.1. Conclusion

The previous chapter presented earlier tried to address the basic objectives stated in the proposal part. Different types of data collection methods were employed to elucidate each objective in more clarified manner. As a result, the purpose of this chapter is to sum up the full fledged finding in more precise manner.

The fundamental objective of this study was to investigate the implication of OLF and NaMA on Ethiopian national unity through comparative method. To address this general objective other sub objectives were analyzed. These objectives include the rational for parties’ formation, parties program in articulating the interest of their ethnic group, parties’ reflection about common national matters and their practice in Ethiopian politics.

As both the OLF and NaMA are ethnic based parties they primarily strive to promote the interest of their ethnic group. Their cradle mission is to ensure the security of their ethnic group from possible and existential threats. They are established to liberate their ethnic group from the yoke of oppressive and repressive governments. Both parties started struggle after a clear identification of perceived interests of their ethnic group. In fact the rational for their establishment is oppression and undermining of the ethnic identity which they claim to represent. To mobilize the public they designed strategies that depict the victimization of their ethnic group by the incumbent government. Despite the difference in other aspects, economic backwardness, abject poverty, human right violations, and the forceful annexation of their ethnic group land by power-controlled groups are instigations employed by both the OLF and NaMA.

The mobilization strategy used by both parties is ethnicity. As parties began to inculcate the public about the undermining, exploitation and oppression of their respective ethnic group, members tend to support their agenda. Both parties alike portray themselves as the vanguard parties that solely stand to defend the interest of their ethnic group. Beside to this, nationalism promoted parties and parties consolidate ethnic nationalism. Their effect is visible as many nationalists give priority for their ethnic identity. However, the observation revealed the high influence of OLF in imposing ethnic identity among the Oromo nationals than NaMA did among the Amhara nationals.
Despite the above similarities, there is irreconcilable divergent interest between the OLF and NaMA regarding the program and the practice they advocate towards Ethiopia. To contain the exploitation of Oromo people for once and for all, the OLF came up with its intent to establish an independent state of Oromia. It adopted secession as its political destination in its first meeting. For this purpose the map of Oromia republic, which shows the border demarcation between the Oromo and Ethiopian state is declared by the party. Beside to the present land the Oromia regional state located, areas like the whole Wollo including Raya, Gojjam and few Somali provinces are identified by the party as perceived lands of Oromia and seeks to incorporate. The party claims the quest of the Oromo people as tantamount with the EPLF’s struggle for independence. Emperor Menelik II and his riflemans are portrayed by the party as a black colonizer inside Africa. The emperor’s march towards south is presented in comparison with the white colonizers participated in Berlin conference around 1884.

The OLF since its establishment depict Ethiopia as a colonizer over the Oromo people. All the efforts of the previous Abyssinian rulers are interpreted by the party as a move to undermine and assimilate the Oromo people in to the yoke of Amharization policy. It accused the previous Ethiopian kings for the misdeed they committed on the Oromo people. The common understanding among leaders and supporters of OLF, conducted via interview and observation, is the oppressive and exploitative nature of Abyssinian rulers and northern settlers. It has no value for the Abyssinian legacies like the flag and different victories. For the OLF the concept of ‘state’ is used to refer the Oromo republic despite its ambivalent position now a day. Still today the OLF is participating in Ethiopian politics by holding two contradictory options. These are independence and peaceful coexistence. Its political dream is either to form independent Oromia state or reconstructing the Ethiopian state with no Abyssinian domination.

Furthermore, the OLF demands all ethnic groups to recognize Addis Ababa as the land Oromo. This claim created a widespread grievance among members of other ethnic groups. It erodes the trust previously built between the Oromo people and other ethnic groups. While it appreciate majority of the provisions stated in the constitution, it request the need to empower regional states by delivering more power through constitutional amendment. Its resentment on Addis Ababa is attached with the reluctance of the government to implement special privilege for Oromia. The OLF struggle to make Addis Ababa to be accountable for Oromia regional state
including the seat of its council in chaffee Oromia, a state council in Oromia regional state. However, the constitution stipulated the council of Addis Ababa to be accountable for the federal government.

The OLF is a threat for national unity. From the legal perspective, political parties registration proclamation no.46/1993 prohibit the recognition and the legal entity of any political party that try to employ armed strategy. In contrast with this declaration the OLF is still engaging in armed struggle beside to peaceful campaign. Part of its combatant force is still remaining with its arm. The recent war with the government forces in Wollega zone is an elucidation of the OLF’s plan to use force as another instrument until it achieve its goal. Its engagement in massive human right violations committed on Amharic speakers and Orthodox Christians during its staying in the transitional government erodes the smooth societal relation constructed among Ethiopians. Documents are also available about the participation of the OLF in assisting the Eritrean government during the 1998-2000 Ethio-Eritrean war. Helping the Eritrean government to control the borderlands of Ethiopia has had another implication beyond wishing to topple down the incumbent government in Ethiopia. Many news papers reported, by citing officials in Oromia, about the engagement of OLF in illegal income earning as it robbed 18 government and private banks. The recent result released by the American Federal Bureau of Investigation also confirmed the participation of the OLF in a plot to kill the prime minister.

NaMA as an ethnic political party is came up with an anomaly trend in the political history of Ethiopia. On the one hand, it stands to maintain the interest of the Amhara ethnic group. On the other hand, it advocates individual freedom that goes in line with civic nationalism. The widespread dispersed settlement of around 20 million Amhara nationals outside of the Amhara regional state forced the party to promote civic nationalism that treat individuals irrespective of their ethnic, religious and social backgrounds. This policy helps to consolidate the peaceful societal relation constructed between the Amhara and other ethnic groups for a century. It was formed on the basis of national oppression thesis and advocates the free movement of Amhara nationals in every corner of Ethiopia.

Its formation brought mixed reactions on Ethiopian unity. On the one side, NaMA helps to deter the activities of secessionist forces. This helps to an equilibrium bargaining process to be held between the unionist and secessionist forces. It serves as a controlling mechanism to impose a
limit on secessionist forces. The historical experiences on the Amhara based parties also reveal a similar output. For instance, though the AAPO was an ethnic based party, it served as a unionist party in defending the territorial integrity of Ethiopia. It was the first ethnic party that stands against the secession of Eritrea. In similar case, the joining of NaMA in to Ethiopian politics helps to maintain the balance of power among major ethnic groups. NaMA praise the previous rulers of Ethiopia for their effort to keep the independence of Ethiopia. The high value given for the defenders of Ethiopian sovereignty is an expression for its value to the continuity of Ethiopian statehood.

The proposed solution by NaMA as its destination is peaceful coexistence. NaMA accuses the FDRE constitution as a divisive document between the Amhara people and other ethnic groups. As a result, it recommends the need to amend the constitution and the federal structure the state organized. Its active participation in proposing alternative economic and legal policies already disproved the established trend of limiting ethnic parties to the extent of their locality alone. This is the clear difference with OLF that propose secession as a solution for the Oromo people.

NaMA cannot be a secessionist party even if it wants to do so because it is cumbersome and time taking to make the Amhara people an extreme nationalist. The culture and way of life of the Amhara ethnic group is strictly confined to retain with core Ethiopian values. Beside to this, the position of NaMA regarding Addis Ababa is more acceptable for the continuity of the state. As the city is home for diverse ethnic groups the city should represent the culture of all ethnic groups. On the other hand, the argument of the OLF to possess Addis Ababa as the sole land of Oromo people erodes national unity as the city forced to retain the reflection of Oromo identity alone.

On the other side, NaMA created a temporary shock in the eyes of other ethnic groups. The suspicion stems as NaMA started to possess the perceived core values and identities of Ethiopia as the identity of Amhara people only. For instance, previously the green, yellow and red flag, Emperors, victories, historical heritages, the Amharic letter and language altogether were perceived as common manifestations of all Ethiopians. The narration that the Amhara people takes a lion share in building Ethiopia and the reality shown about the eviction of Amhara
nationals created paradox among party leaders. Emotion laden speeches emanated from over trust on Ethiopian state hood erodes the sense of unity as it serve to diminish the role of other ethnic groups in state making. Beside to this, endorsing Amharic as the national language of Ethiopia create a dissent on others as many ethnic groups compete for power and supremacy.

**Recommendation**

On the basis of the above finding, the researcher would like to put the following recommendations. First, the government should revise the state structure and state institutions that endangered national unity. As the finding of this study explicitly revealed ethnic based federal structure of the state greatly contributed for the establishment of many ethno nationalist parties holding contradictory agendas.

Second, proper constitutional amendment process has come into effect. Lack of genuine ethnic representation during drafting and approving the FDRE constitution made consensus among ethno nationalist parties unachievable. Here, the process to enact a new legal document, to the maximum extent, must incorporate the interest of all ethnic groups. Not only this, until the coming of the amended or new constitution, the already stated provisions in the current constitution should be strictly implemented.

Third, very strict political party registration proclamation shall be formulated. Mere formulation of registration proclamation is not sufficient by itself. Rather, follow up its practice and related consequence on the relation among ethnic groups and unity of the state needs proper implementation. Finally, the government should prohibit those political parties that are found to be engaging in armed struggle and human rights violation from competition after critical investigation of the case. Political parties are alternatives for electorates. However, threatening the public through gun and bullet affects the healthy functioning of multi party democracy. As a result, the political landscape must be open and tolerant only for those political parties ready to compete peacefully.
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https://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/WOQ9av23al8enablejsapi=1origin=https%3A2F%
7. Appendices

Appendix A: In depth interview and Focus Group Discussion Questions

The intention behind the formulation of the following interview questions was to collect the necessary data about “Ethnic Based Political Parties and National Unity in the Post 1991 Ethiopia: a Comparative Case Study between OLF and NaMA”. Many of the questions asked for each party were similar. Readers should remind that the scope of the interview questions were very broad and deep. However, here the researcher presented only few of these questions for the sake of convenience. Beside to this, the researcher informed to all respondents to state their response for both parties differently.

I. Interview Questions for OLF

1. What were the factors instigated to establish OLF?

2. What was the claim of your party during its establishment period?/Colonial thesis, national oppression or class difference?

3. How do you explain the role of OLF in describing the interests of the Oromo people?

4. What are the agendas of OLF identified as the basic interests of the Oromo people?

5. How do you explain the role of OLF in consolidating the cohesion of Oromo?

6. What is the position of OLF regarding the national flag, constitution, regional borders, and history of Ethiopian state formation as well as the previous kings of Ethiopia?

7. What is the position of your party concerning secession?

8. How do you explain the interest of your party and other ethnic groups on Addis Ababa?

9. Is OLF strive to win peacefully or employ arm?

10. What is your reaction for associating OLF with mass killing, displacement and robbing?

II. Interview Questions for NaMA

1. What were the factors instigated to establish NaMA?

2. What was the claim of your party during its establishment period?/Colonial thesis, national oppression or class difference?
3. How do you explain the role of NaMA in describing the interests of the Amhara people?

4. What are the agendas of NaMA identified as the basic interests of the Amhara people?

5. How do you explain the role of NaMA in consolidating the cohesion of the Amharas?

6. What is the position of NaMA regarding the national flag, constitution, regional borders, and history of Ethiopian state formation as well as the previous kings of Ethiopia?

7. What is the position of your party concerning secession?

8. How do you explain the interest of your party and other ethnic groups on Addis Ababa?

9. Is NaMA strive to win peacefully or employ arm?

III. Interview questions for politicians, Journalists and political science scholars

1. What is the implication of OLF /NaMA on Ethiopian politics?

2. How do you evaluate the practice of OLF/NaMA in creating a common Ethiopia?

3. How it is possible to reconcile the contending interests of OLF and NaMA on Addis Ababa and regional borders with the interest of other ethnic groups?

4. Is it possible for a certain ethnic group to maintain its interest without forming ethnic based parties?

IV. Focus Group Discussion questions

1. You as an active member of OLF/NaMA, what is your reflection about Ethiopian unity?

2. Do you have a deep feeling towards Ethiopia? If you say yes, why you became a member of this ethnic based party?

3. Please depict your feeling about the unity of Ethiopia before and after you become member of this party.

4. Do you believe that this party genuinely incorporated the interests of your ethnic group?
Appendix B: List of key informants, focus group discussants, and language interpreter

A. List of party leaders

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<th>Date of interview</th>
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Key: KI means Key Informant
B. List of journalists

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C. List of Focus group Discussants

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Key: FGDO-Focus Group Disscussant OLF

FGDN-Focus Group Discussant NaMA
D. List of Political Scholars

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Appendix C: Maps and Logos

1. Map of OLF

   ![Map of OLF](http://www.Oromialiberationfront)

   Source: http://www.Oromialiberationfront

2. Logo of OLF

   ![Logo of OLF](Public domain)
3. Logo of NaMA
4. NaMA press conference