

INNOVATIONS

Ethnic Political Conflicts in Ethiopia and Its Ramifications on the Neighboring States (1991-2019)

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Abstract: The article attempted to identify, explain and interprets themultidimensional security repercussion of ethnic politicalconflicts in Ethiopia on the neighboring countries in the period 1991-2019. The study specifically focused on the conflicts between the regime in power and Oromo/Somali ethnic based rebel groups. Key informant interview and FGD were employed to gather primary data which was substantiated by secondary data. The obtained data was analyzed using concepts of international dimensions of internal conflict viewed from African international relations perspective. In the period, armed conflicts between Oromo/Somali insurgent groups and the government kept the neighboring states on political instability, hostile state relations, economic insecurities, and refugee and small arms transfer. In the Horn of Africa, ethnic political conflicts could spill over and challenge the neighboring state's internal affairs as well as the good neighborhood. Similarly, distancing Oromo and Somali nations from the political scene of Ethiopia could destabilize Ethiopia and the neighboring states.

Key words: 1. Ethnic Conflict 2. Neighboring states 3. Conflict Ramifications

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

The state of Ethiopia and its neighboring countries are collectively known as the Horn region of Africa. It is bordered by Eritrea and Djibouti to the North, Somalia to the East, Kenya to the South, and Sudan and South Sudan to the West. Ethiopia is one of the largest countries in the Horn region both in landmass as well as population number (Hawas, 2018). Leta (2005) prefers to explain the geographical corner of the Horn of African as a 'common homeland' for people in the region

regardless of sovereign states boundary demarcation. In the postcolonial period, the region was experiencing political volatility facilitated by internal conflicts (Gelan, 2018). Therefore, in almost all countries of the region domestic problem in one country had reverberating effects on its neighboring countries (Mekonin, 2015). Different domestic conflict context studies on countries of the Horn of Africa indicated that, conflict in one state had direct or indirect implications on another regional state. In the region, the interplay between domestic politics and regional insecurity could be easily manifested by internal conflicts (Leta, 2005; Smith, 2007; Osondu, 2008; Marchal, 2010; Nguendi, 2012). Maio (2010, p.2) conceptualized internal conflict as the product of “domestic institutional arrangements and the context of competitive [regional] political relations”. In many states especially in the multiethnic ones, the politicization of attributes of ethnic groups was commonly generating competitive institutional arrangement that sometimes turned in to conflict (Gahi, 2000). In such states ethnic groups can get into conflict because of what people make of the differences; and how they are understood, interpreted and represented in particular circumstances and which was commonly regarded as internal conflict (Ake, 2000).

Several literatures on internal conflicts and its spillover effects in the neighboring countries of Ethiopia have focused on proxy aspects of war between states, resource competition, colonialism, irredentism, and the authoritarian nature of the regimes in taking the Horn of Africa as a unit of analysis (Cliffe, 1999; Mengisteab, 2011; Hawas, 2018). For instance, Maio (2010) in his study of the Darfur conflict in Sudan, concluded that the interplay between domestic situations and regional contexts directly contribute to the trans-nationalization of the civil war. He argued that the spillover of the war in Darfur to Chad and Central African Republic was a political calculation of the regime in Sudan to externalize domestic problem in the form of proxy war to neighboring states. Therefore, the study gave less attention for the transnational ethnic ties between Sudan and Chad as a sub-national actor for the spillover effect of the conflicts because the study emphasized on the state's systemic level analysis.

As indicated above, the previous researchers on politics of the Horn described that any internal conflict in the region had spillover effects to adjacent states and becomes part of the regional dimension (Nguendi, 2012). However, specific works on ethnic political conflicts and its neighboring states' repercussions were carried out less and if any it was done in cross cutting with other contexts and issues. In addition, the studies were dominated by systemic state level analysis and gave less attention or neglected ethnicity as sub state actors in politics of neighboring states. The general work of Keller (2002) on culture, politics and the trans-nationalization of ethnic conflict in Africa is partly the one that brought new insights towards political concepts and the context under study.

During the period under discussion, analyzing internal conflicts from the view of the peculiar context of states internal political developments vs. its implications for neighboring state as a unit

of analysis was given less attention, though what was going within states and between states influence one another to a greater degree than ever before and the states core functions have been overtaken by other actors (Clapham, 1996). The rise of local ethno-political conflicts in the regions such as the Balkan, central African and the Horn of Africa, which had fallen into the global geopolitical alteration zone, have given them an international character (Najafov, 2017). Nill (2012:215) argued in this regard that “everything is related to everything else, but near things are more related than distant things”. It implies that neighboring states share many things in common and especially states with transnational ethnic groups are more sensitive in connecting repercussions of ethnic conflicts (Keller, 2002; Bilgin, 2019). The studies by Brown (1996), Nill (2012) and Najafov (2017) confirmed and categorized the repercussions of ethnic conflict on neighboring states in to political, economic, refugee and arms transfer matters.

In territories of large multi ethnic states including the Horn of Africa and elsewhere in the world, ethnicity and ethnic nationalism has been becoming the defining characterises of their politics especially in the post ‘new world order’ (Cliffe, 1999; Salih, 2001). In Ethiopia too, in 1991, the Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), comprised of several ethnic based parties, Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) representing the Oromo ethnic group and Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) representing the Somali ethnic group over threw Mengistu’s dictatorial regime and formed a coalition of Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE). The TGE allowed the country to form ethnic-based federalism and multiparty democracy, but tensions started soon among the TGE coalition parties. In 1992, the OLF and ONLF withdrew from TGE that paved the way for the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF), a Tigrayan ethnic based party to dominate the state’s power exclusively in the name of EPRDF (Broussard, 2013). Soon the state rushed in to ethnic conflicts that continued up to 2018. The OLF & ONLF nationalist groups strongly opposed and waged war against the EPRDF regime that challenged Ethiopia and the neighboring countries (Nguendi, 2012; Gelan, 2018). Hence, the researcher argues that, in the period under study ethnically reinforced war between OLF/ONLF rebel forces and the government of Ethiopia had multidimensional political and socio-economic repercussions on the neighboring states.

1.2 Objective of the study: The objective of the study was to gain insights and ideas about the consequences of the conflicts between OLF/ONLF rebel forces and government in Ethiopia on the neighboring countries in the period 1991-2019.

1.3 Research questions:

- ✓ How did the conflicts between OLF/ONLF rebellion and the regime in Ethiopia spilled over and affected the neighboring countries within the indicated period?
- ✓ How did the conflicts affect the politics, economy and security of the neighbor states?

2 Methods and Materials

The article adopted an explanatory research design with the case study approach. Explanatory design is used to explain ‘why some phenomena occurred, interpreting a cause-and-effect

relationship between two or more variables' (McNabb, 2005, p. 106). Case study is also widely used in the studies of social sciences to discover a 'variety of social, cultural, and political factors potentially related to the phenomenon of interest that may not be known in advance' (Bhattacharjee, 2012, p. 40). Data were collected from primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected through interviews and focus group discussions. One key informant was interviewed and two focus group discussions (FGD) with seven and ten members each were held in the primary data collection. Semi-structured interview questions were designed and face to face in-depth personal interview was carried out with Mr. Kidanu Tadesse, who was an officer in Oromia regional national state security affairs bureau on April 28/ 2018. Similarly, face to face FGDs were carried out with OLF and ONLF veterans in Addis Ababa city on April 7/2018 and April 21, 2018 respectively. Mentioning name of the personal interviewee was up on his permission, while names of the FGD participants were kept confidential for institutional regulations matters. Secondary data were collected from books, journals, reports, newspaper, periodicals and electronic sources. The collected data was conceptualized and interpreted by using concepts of international dimensions of internal conflicts viewed from an African international relations perspective. Yin (2011, p. 93) argued that 'one of the common motives for doing qualitative research is the ability to study events within their real-world context'. Similarly, the African international relations' perspective assumes that 'alternative non-state and sub-state actors, such as nations, cultures, warlords and so forth, provide us new analytical tools with which to explain the behavior of African states as well as states elsewhere'. Likewise, the emergence of armed non-state actors 'within an internationally recognized state [in Africa] provides a unique opportunity to study important agents of state dissolution and state formation' (Odoom & Andrews, 2017, p. 49). The perspective considers domestic factors in the study of international relations (IR) in addition to the traditional systemic level analysis of IR study (Smith, 2009; Brown, 2012).

3 Results (Data Presentation and Analysis)

The major purpose of this study was to understand internal conflicts in Ethiopia and its repercussions on the neighboring states security in the period 1991-2019 GC. In order to achieve this objective, basic research questions were formulated. Data was collected via face to face interview and FGDs. In this way, the taped and transcribed data of the FGDs and key informant interview responses were developed into categories and sub categories through axial coding technique in addition to secondary data. The categories were analyzed in using explanatory approach. It is appropriate to such kind of research because as Bhattacharjee (2012) argues it enables researcher to form further categories. Thus, to understand and build the desired constructs of ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia and its consequences on neighboring states in the period under study, data were organized and presented in thematic manner. The subjects involved in this research article were Oromia national regional state security bureau; members of OLF and ONLF veterans. In the period under study, the results from FGDs and interview participant on the multidimensional regional repercussions of conflicts between OLF/ONLF insurgents and Ethiopia government forces

were organized, categorized and presented contextually in thematic way as political instability, economic insecurity, refugee, and transfer of small arms.

3.1 Political Instability Related Repercussions

It is factual that both Oromo and Somali are transnational ethnic groups to Ethiopia's neighboring states respectively to Kenya and Somalia (Leta, 2005). In the period under study, as the overall data sources from FGDs indicate, ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia spilled over borders and challenged political stability of the region. In the period ONLF insurgents had crossed Ethiopia boundary and fortified its military base in Somalia.

As one participant of FGD from ONLF veteran's discussion depicted, "the fortification of ONLF insurgent in the neighbor state of Somalia was related to the following strategic political opportunities. The Somali area transnational ethnic group to both Ethiopia and Somalia and therefore Somalia was thought as an ideal place for the front's power consolidation. Secondly, to form alliance with anti-Ethiopia government insurgent groups based in Somalia."

The key informant interview response also confirmed that "the Ogaden district of Ethiopia was the battle front between Ethiopia forces and Somalia insurgents especially in the years of 2006 & 2007. During the period Somalia based al-Ittihad and al-Islami insurgents were backing ONLF to fight against the Ethiopian government. In December 2006 Ethiopia government responded the alliance through an offensive military intervention in Somalia on the premises of self-defense." The Ethiopia military intervention in Somalia was resisted by wave of anti-Ethiopia government sentiment groups led by Al-Shabab and ONLF insurgent groups. He added that, there was also an alliance between OLF and Somalia based insurgents and that was why members of the OLF fighters were taking part in fighting against Ethiopian army in Somalia." As a result, Ogaden district and north western part of Somalia became 'a political market place' of OLF and ONLF rebel forces (Abbink, 2009). One participant of focus group discussion from OLF veteran similarly described "the agreement of OLF with ONLF and UIC was not only to form a strong front against the Ethiopia forces in Somalia but also to become strong and organized in the eastern front. The alliance helped OLF to get strong support and base from eastern Oromia like Harar and Bale provinces."

Correspondingly, Kenya was also part of the conflict circle between OLF and Ethiopian government in the period under study. Most of the conflict implications for Kenya were 'owned' to the presence of transnational Oromo ethnic groups in the two states (Regassa, 2016). Likewise, the interviewee of this study, Kidanu witnessed that, "the Oromo communities living in Kenya and Ethiopia were supporting and harboring the OLF insurgents. OLF insurgents had had sanctuary in Oromo inhabited area of Kenya. The presence of OLF insurgents in Ethiopia border of Kenya and an act of reversals by Ethiopia government were common in the region. He argued that, the silence of Kenyan government forced the government of Ethiopia to see Kenya in an eye of suspicion."

On the other hand, OLF focus group discussion participants put that “Ethiopian government was often accusing and harassing Oromo civilian who inhabit both in Ethiopia and Kenya for harboring the insurgents. In the period Ethiopia security forces were intermittently crossing the border to attack OLF forces in Kenya.” As emphasized by one OLF veterans in the FGD, “Ethiopia government was demanding and agitating the Kenya government to root out OLF forces from its territory on the premises that the exposure of Kenyan-Oromo to OLF objectives could initiate them for self-determination in Kenya too. In June, 2004 as reversal to Ethiopia diplomatic suspicion, Kenya joined the Ethiopia security forces against OLF. Of course, the cooperation of Kenya government was to contain the escalation further conflicts in the region.”

The Ethiopia-Eritrean war that broke out in 1998 was more complicated by domestic political conflict in Ethiopia (Mengisteab, 2011). Though, the conflict ended in the year 2000 peace treaty could not be reached between the two states until PM Abiy Ahmed came to power in Ethiopia. In this regard, the interviewee participant Kidanu described “though the hot war lasted only for two years the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea persisted for two decades through the invisible hand. The conflict was translated in to supporting each other’s opposition armed groups in adopting the principle of ‘the enemy of my enemy is my friend’”. He further elaborated that “OLF and ONLF insurgents had been taking military training in Eritrea and move into southern and western Ethiopia for operation. Eritrea was infiltrating fighters in to Ethiopia through Sudan and more importantly to Somalia and Kenya.”

The two veterans of FGD also confirmed that, “Eritrea was organizing and supporting OLF & ONLF insurgents in providing sanctuary and military assistance onwards from the outbreak of border war. Eritrea was also the destination for Ethiopia government higher official defector. In August 2006, Brigadier General Kamel Gelchu defected along with some one hundred troops to join the OLF military wing in Eritrea.”

Ethiopia-Sudan relations that rewind in 1991 started to deteriorate in 1995 (Cliffe, 1999). As portrayed by the interviewee “in 1998 Sudan blamed Ethiopia for the SPLA/M military gain along the Ethiopia border. As a balance Sudan was also encouraging OLF and ONLF to be active inside Ethiopia.” *The Reporter newspaper of 23 Dec 2003* indicated the forces behind the conflicts between Anywak and Nuer in 2003 in Gambella was triggered by members of the OLF, backed by Sudan. Subsequently, many people of Ethiopian Any-waa fled into the Pochalla county of Sudan (Gebremedin, 2003).

3.2 Economic Repercussions

Within the indicated period ethnic political conflicts in Ethiopia exacerbated the historically torn economy of the horn states. Concerning the economic challenges of the conflictual most every respondent of the FGDs and the key personal interview had the same response standings

described below. “Across Ethiopia-Kenya and Ethiopia-Somalia borders destructions of farming yields and property, contraband trade, concentration of livestock in small and unfavorable areas, livestock theft and environmental degradation were common.”

One of the participants in ONLF focus group stressed and indicated that, “in the period, economic integration of Somali speaking people was functioning through informal means though, the notion of ‘Greater-Somalia’ was weak on political fronts. Kidanu further discussed the regional economic interaction as “Somali region of Ethiopia is firmly surrounded in the larger Somalia political economy, different manufactured goods in the form of contraband imported from Somaliland and Somalia. Conversely cereals, vegetables, livestock & ‘Khat’ smuggled from Ethiopia to Somalia and Somaliland. In addition, illegal currency flight from Ethiopia to Somaliland and Somalia were common. These contraband economies were facilitated and backed by ONLF and OLF insurgents.” Actualizing mineral resources was another economic challenge of the conflict. The ONLF attack of April 2007 could be cited as the best example. The insurgents carried out a massive attack on a Chinese-run oil site in Ogaden in which 77 people died, 68 Ethiopians and nine Chinese (Smith, 2007). Concerning Ethiopia-Kenya border too, interview participant Kidanu indicated that “there was informal trade that backed by OLF rebel groups. Between the two border food commodities like cooking oil, pasta, electronics and used textile products were finding its way into southern Ethiopia while, livestock market was carried out on the reverse side. In March 2018 as a result of the conflict in Moyale town hundreds of livestock were killed and massive properties were distracted.”

3.3 Light Arms Proliferations and Refugee Related Repercussions

In the period under-study, ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia had worsened the proliferation of small arms and light weapons availability across the neighboring countries (Mengisteab, 2011). As indicated by the interviewee response “both ONLF and OLF insurgent groups were transferring small arms and light weapons in alliance with contrabandists across Somalia-Ethiopia and Ethiopia-Kenya borders. In addition, resource based local conflicts were frequent across these borders and the rate of arming oneself increased between the local communities. In the areas where civil wars were undergoing, the insurgents were availing the communities with market of small arms. In the period, Eritrea was the major sources of small arms and light weapons that circulated by the insurgent groups.” Across the Sudan and Ethiopia border too, the transfers of small arms were common since 1996 (Marchal, 2010).

The internal conflicts under study also resulted in refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) (Regassa, 2016). In the period, as a result of conflicts between government forces and OLF/ONLF insurgents, civilians were commonly crossing the Ethiopia boundary to Somaliland, Somalia and Kenya (HRW, 2008). As indicated by ONLF focus group “Oromo and Somali asylum seekers were regularly rushing in to Somaliland in seek of more security. Especially the Somali asylum seekers

were crossing the boundary with their herds that caused conflicts between them and the local herdsman over the scarce pastureland and water in Somaliland.”

In the wake of disturbances at Addis Ababa University in 2001 many Oromo students fled to Kenya either to join OLF or look for asylum in Europe, USA and Canada via Kenya (Vaughan, 2003). OLF veterans FGD agreed that “since 1993 conflicts between Ethiopia soldiers and OLF were common across Ethiopia-Kenya border and massive Oromo communities in southern Ethiopia were migrating to Kenya in search of more security. In March 2018 as a result of conflicts in Moyale town, Tuka, Aragale, Madiambo and Chamuq villages were distracted and many Oromo communities were forced to flee to Kenya. In the period Kenya was not only busy with Oromo asylum seekers but also challenged in identifying the local Oromo community from the refugees.”

3.4. Post-2015 Oromo Mass-Movement and Political Reform in Ethiopia

Onwards from 2015 political volatility worsened in Oromia both in depth and extent. In November, 2015 an Oromo mass uprising against the TPLF regime sparked from corner to corner. In this month 400 Oromo were killed and about 1000 were seriously injured by government forces with massive economic destructions. Consequently, Oromo People Democratic Organization (OPDO), an Oromo based party in the EPRDF coalition ignored the top down TPLF directives and took political stand of the Oromo people that opened a recognition door to OPDO from Oromo people since the beginning of its history. On the 13th of the EPRDF general congress, OPDO assumed both the chairpersonship of EPRDF & the country's PM post that signified an end to TPLF minority rule in Ethiopia (Gelan, 2018).

Under the new PM Abiy Ahmed, the country has undertaken deep & inclusive political reforms. Building participatory democracy, forming reconciliation with opposition armed political groups, freeing political prisoners and amendments of the different laws were among a few (Adem, 2018); (Tesfaye, 2019). As participants in the FGDs indicated, “both the OLF and ONLF rebel groups formed peaceful political reconciliation with the government and joined the country's reform process. Following the peace process the insurgents withdrew their fighters & closed offices from the neighboring countries and elsewhere in the world.” However, the anticipated political transformation of the 2018 Ethiopia couldn't stay for long. In less than two years period of time a hope for the state's political transformation to democracy was evaporated. The started political dialogue and conflict reconciliation process was aborted and an ethnically reinforced political conflicts again ignited from corner to corner from where temporarily stopped. Consequently, the government has put the majorities of OLF's higher officials in to prison custody or forced to flee. As a result since the end of 2019 remnants of the OLF fighters and other discontented Oromo youths back to bush and waged a fresh war against the central government (Belay, 2020).

4 Discussions

The study focused on internal conflicts in Ethiopia and its repercussions on the neighboring states security in the period 1991-2019. Drawing on the insights of regional dimensions of internal

conflicts viewed from an African international relations perspective; the study pointed out four multidimensional security repercussions, such as political, economy, refugee and proliferation of light weapons.

In Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) ethnic conflicts could jeopardize political stability of neighboring states. The problem was more pervasive in conditions associated in transnational ethnic groups.

Transnational ethnic groups could easily export or import conflicts and likewise provided insurgent groups to form their own base in another state. As previous study indicated, in 1998 in Kenya Bagalla, the Borana attacked the Degodia community, allegedly with help from the OLF, killing over 300 people (Markakis, 2004). Insurgent groups could also form an alliance with other insurgent groups in the neighboring state and challenge positive state neighborhood.

During the period ONLF formed strong alliance with Somalia based insurgents' al-Ittihad, al-Islamia and al-Shabab that forced Ethiopia to intervene in Somalia (Berhanu, 2013). In conditions of hostile neighboring states, ethnic conflict exacerbates political suspicion (security complex) between states. Ethnic conflicts therefore, could sustain hostile state relations and hinder peace processes between the neighbors since each of them were busy in organizing, supporting or arming opposing political groups to destabilize the other's internal system. In light of this, in the post 2000 the motto and practice of 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend' was used by both Eritrea and Ethiopia. In the period, Eritrea was supporting OLF and ONLF insurgents, while Ethiopia was sponsoring the Eritrean opposition (Berhanu, 2013). In the SSA, ethnic conflicts also threaten economies of the neighbor states. Especially, in countries where there are transnational communal economies, ethnic conflicts could easily impair and physically damage the economies and the traditional economic ties of communities around borders. For instance, in 2002 the ONLF destroyed 88 trucks owned by Somaliland traders which were operating in Somali region of Ethiopia as revenge to its political controversies with the Somaliland authorities (Eid, 2014). Besides, ethnic conflicts encourage illegal transfer of goods and commodities between states that cut-off governments' revenue bases. The study report by African Future Agriculture Consortium of the 2014 indicates that 50 to 60 % of livestock exported by Somaliland traded informally from Somali region of Ethiopia that amounted to more than US\$400m per year (Eid, 2014).

Furthermore, ethnic conflicts can give rise to refugees that endanger security of the host states. In SSA refugees compete over scarce resources with peoples in the host states and could be the reasons for other conflicts in the neighboring state. In transnational ethnic groups distinguishing between the refugee and the local people could be too difficult and easily challenge domestic law and security of the host state. In SSA, refugee camps were commonly the target of rebel groups for sanctuary and recruitment purposes and it could escalate the security dilemma between the neighbors. In 2008, Somaliland had nearly 6,000 registered Oromo asylum seekers and over 1,000 recognized refugees, allegedly accused of links to the OLF by Ethiopian government (Lindley, 2009). In the current study, as the FGD with the OLF veterans and other sources indicate the Moyale

incident of March 2018 alone forced about 10,000 civilians to flee for more protection in Kenya. In countries of the SSA, ethnic conflicts could also give rise to the proliferations of light and small armies that becoming a bottle neck for communal peace. In the region governments were weak enough in controlling their frontier effectively and this nature of the states helped the insurgents to transfer war weapons easily between the neighbor countries. The insurgents were also considering the transfer of weapons as a revenue means that challenged the nation's security and exacerbated the communal conflicts in the region. In the period, the OLF and ONLF rebels were transferring large quantities of military weapons from Eritrea both for themselves and their allies in Somalia (Berhanu, 2013). Besides, across the pastoral communities of Ethiopia-Kenya and Ethiopia-Somalia frontiers the traditional personal security protection weapons were commonly replaced with AK-47, in which its supply was reinforced by the conflicts under study (Abbink, 2009).

In the Horn of African (HoA) internal conflicts were common because governments were negatively sovereign to their population. In the region conflicts in one country directly or indirectly became implicated to the neighboring state (Keller, 2002; Ulf Engel, 2005; Abbink, 2009). In Ethiopia too the different successive regimes including the regime under study were illegitimate to citizens that caused ethnic conflicts in the country. Effects of the conflicts were not only limited to Ethiopia but also implicated to the neighboring states (Berhanu, 2013). In the region ethnic conflicts could easily instigate political instability in the neighbors (Cliffe, 1999). Ethiopia's intervention of Somalia in 2006 and the continued political unrest between Ethiopia and Eritrea after the border clash in 2000 were connected to ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia. States use political advantage of ethnic conflict to further their goal in relation to their rival (Nathan, 2006; Najafov, 2017). Similarly, Brown (2010, p. 96) puts that 'states might take advantage of ethnic troubles in neighboring states to further their own strategic and political ends.'

Ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia also challenged economic security of communities and states in the neighboring states. In the HoA communities around the frontiers are pastoralists and the conflicts caused them to be vulnerable to theft or death of herds and disengagements from their traditional economic style (Regassa, 2016). Ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia also facilitated black market economies that become a bottle neck to government's revenue base in the region. Similarly, Brown (1996) and Najafov (2017) argued that ethnic conflicts could challenge economic resource bases and economic ties of communities in the neighboring states. It could challenge formal trade, transportation, and communication across neighboring states.

Refugee problems and armies' transfers were another security threat that have been instigated by ethnic political conflict in Ethiopia in the period under discussion. Nill (2012) argued that since ethnic conflicts involve systematic attacks on civilian population it could generate refugees to move to the neighboring states that drawing the host country in to conflict. In 2018 Ethiopia solved

its internal conflicts in making national political reforms. An end to ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia conversely signified an end to hostility between Ethiopia and the neighboring states.

Throughout the course of this study, the current study researcher found out that distancing Oromo and Somali ethnic groups from political scene in Ethiopia not only affected the country's domestic affairs but also affected the affairs of the neighboring countries. In Ethiopia, Oromo is the core nation in terms of population, resource, strategy and territory; while Somali region is significant for its strategic geo-political location and resources. Hence, any political uncertainties in Somali and Oromia regional states have direct consequences both on Ethiopia and the neighboring countries. Therefore, the equal participation of Oromo and Somali with other ethnic groups in Ethiopia's political system along with their autonomy conversely means securing peace in both Ethiopia and the neighboring states.

5. Conclusions

The study focused on ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia in the period 1991-2019, in particular reference to Oromo and Somali ethnic political conflicts with the government and its repercussions on the neighboring states. Though the 1991 federalism-based state remaking process was hoped as an answer to the age long ethnic political conflicts in Ethiopia, ethnic conflicts continued to challenge both the country and neighboring states. In the period conflicts between OLF/ONLF insurgents and the Ethiopia government sounds a lot in affairs of the neighboring states. The conflicts spilled over from Mogadishu to Asmara and from Kenya and Sudan. Political insatiability, economic challenges, refugee and small arms proliferations were some of the repercussions that followed the conflicts. In 2018 TPLF minority rule ended and Ethiopia entered in to new democratic political reform with the hope of inclusive political making processes. Consequently, OLF and ONLF quietened their armed struggle and became part of the reform that symbolized a fresh political start between Ethiopia and the neighboring states. However, political reconciliation that formed between the OLF and the regime on power lasted only for a brief period of time.

Finally, the author concluded that the study demonstrated and added insights on the study of regional or neighboring states relations in SSA. In the post-cold war era, the functions of states in the SSA deteriorated that associated to internal or external factors. Internally non-state actors reinforced by ethnic political movements grown in extent and number in demanding autonomy and equal participation in supra states system. To deal with such demands regional states have been unfit to the modern state functions and mostly the demands turned to civil war that spill over beyond their boundary. In the region since the international has strong attachment to the internal, the interplay between the two are important in influencing interactions among states. Therefore, the study of politics of regionalism & neighboring states in SSA basically requires understanding and

substantiating states internal contexts to the systemic level analysis in the study of politics between states.

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