

Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding in Gambella Regional State, Ethiopia

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Abstract

The various levels of inter-communal violent conflicts in the Gambella regional state of Ethiopia have their root in the process of state formation, state-society interaction, sociopolitical, socioeconomic, sociocultural factors and state policies spanning over a century. The conflicts have intensified over the past 28 years. This is attributed mainly to the political transformation in Ethiopia in the early 1990 and the civil war in the Sudan and the South Sudan. In response to these violent conflicts that have occurred in the region, a number of attempts at peacebuilding were made at different times. This study investigates the conflict transformation efforts, their marked features and the processes and outcomes of the peacemaking activities as well as the challenges and prospects surrounding the overall process of peacebuilding in post-1991 Gambella. Following an interpretivist approach and using qualitative methods of inquiry, data gathered from members of the local community, experts and officials at regional and federal levels, were critically analyzed. The analysis is situated in the context of intra-state and inter-communal conflict, conflict transformation and peacebuilding within Ethiopia's post-1991 sociopolitical conditions and current policy framing and understanding of conflict and peace, taking the case of Gambella. The study shows that the conflict transformation effort in Gambella is a reactive one, containing violence after its occurrence, and often transient. The activities are focused on giving short-term solutions, treating the symptoms rather than addressing the underlying problems. The use of compensation as a conflict settlement procedure, intervention schemes coming at variance along ethnic lines and levels of conflict in the region and apathy as well as the tendency of complicating issues with politics have been noted as the defining characteristics of the peacemaking schemes. The peacebuilding process in Gambella, it is argued, is not effective both in terms of its response to the immediate peacebuilding needs and in working on the broader, systemic issues that foster and enhance the containment of violence sustainably. The process has not created a mutually beneficial sense of interdependence among the communities and groups involved in conflict in the region and embedded peacemaking activities into institutions that reinforce and sustain them. No fair, coherent and systematic procedures implemented and/or used to guide the process. Actions are governed by arbitrary rules and decisions are made based on undue pressures or emotions, rather than on their merit. As such, the findings of this study revealed that the conflict transformation efforts have been less successful, if not a total failure. And a range of factors militated against the process of peacebuilding in post-1991 Gambella, not least, the approach adopted in building peace; the nature and/or manner of third-party interventions; the nature of the political opportunity structure; the nature of the conflicts and the socioeconomic conditions in the region; leadership problems; the spillovers from the neighboring South Sudan as well as weak normative and institutional frameworks.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract-----	i
Acknowledgments-----	ii
Acronyms-----	ix
List of Tables-----	xi
List of Figures-----	xi

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION----- 1

1.1 Background-----	1
1.2 The Main Tents of the Study and State of Research: A Literature Review-----	5
1.2.1 The Conflict Situation in the Gambella-----	5
1.2.2 The Context of Peacebuilding: Practice and Process-----	11
1.2.3 Challenges and Prospects of Peacebuilding in Gambella-----	13
1.3 Statement of the Problem-----	15
1.4 Research Objectives-----	17
1.5 Research Questions-----	17
1.6 Significance of the Study-----	18
1.7 Scope and Limitation of the Study-----	20
1.8 Structure of the Dissertation-----	22

CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND STUDY AREA----- 26

2.1 Research Methodology-----	26
2.1.1 Theoretical Triangulation-----	26
2.1.2 The Qualitative Approach-----	30
2.1.3 Sources of Data, Sampling and Instruments-----	32
2.1.4 Methods of Data Analysis-----	40
2.1.5 Ethical Considerations-----	43
2.2 The Study Area: A Set of Factsheets about Gambella and its People-----	44
2.2.1 Location, Topography, and Climate-----	44
2.2.2 Administrative Structure-----	44
2.2.3 Population, Livelihood and Inter-Group Relations-----	46

CHAPTER THREE: CONFLICT, CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION AND PEACEBUILDING----- 51

3.1 Introduction-----	51
3.2 Conceptualizing Conflict and Conflict Analysis-----	51
3.2.1 The Nature of Conflict-----	51

3.2.2 Conflict Analysis: Some Conceptual Remark-----	57
3.3 Conceptualizing Peacebuilding-----	59
3.3.1 The Concept of Peacebuilding-----	59
3.3.2 Peacebuilding and the Conflict Spectrum-----	63
3.3.3 Approaches to Peacebuilding-----	67
3.4 Conceptualizing Conflict Transformation-----	72
3.4.1 The Origin and Concept of Conflict Transformation-----	72
3.4.2 Main Conceptual Issues on Conflict Transformation-----	75
3.5 Federalism as a Tool for Peacebuilding: Some Remark-----	81

CHAPTER FOUR: THE CONTEXT AND PRACTICE OF INTRA-STATE CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION AND PEACEBUILDING----- 86

4.1 Introduction-----	86
4.2 The Context of Intra-State Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding-----	89
4.2.1 Some Conceptual Perspectives on the Nature of the Conflicts-----	89
4.2.2 Analyzing Intra-State Social Conflicts: A Framework for Peacebuilding-----	94
4.2.3 Determinants of Sustainable Peace and the Dynamics of Peacebuilding-----	99
4.3 The Peacebuilding Practices and Forms-----	108
4.3.1 The Modern Approach-----	108
4.3.2 The Traditional Approach-----	113

CHAPTER FIVE: THE PRACTICE AND CONTEXT OF PEACEBUILDING AND PEACE IN CONTEMPORARY ETHIOPIA----- 118

5.1 Introduction-----	118
5.2 The Nature of Conflict in Contemporary Ethiopia: An Overview-----	119
5.3 The Practice and Concept of Peacebuilding and Peace in Contemporary Ethiopia-----	124
5.4 Challenges and Prospects of Peacebuilding in Contemporary Ethiopia-----	129
5.4.1 Challenges-----	129
5.4.2 Prospects-----	140
5.5 Conclusion-----	146

CHAPTER SIX: UNDERSTANDING THE CONFLICT SITUATION IN GAMBELLA----- 148

6.1 Introduction-----	148
6.2 The Structure and Dynamics of the Conflict-----	149
6.2.1 The Context of Conflict in Gambella: Setting the Precedent-----	149
6.2.2 Political Factors-----	158
6.2.3 Socioeconomic Factors-----	162
6.2.4 Cultural/Perceptual Factors-----	164

6.3 Main Actors, Issues, Goals, Relationships and Strategies -----	168
6.3.1 Main Actors -----	168
6.3.2 Issues, Relationships and Strategies -----	170
6.4 Conclusion -----	173

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION PRACTICE IN GAMBELLA: AN APPRAISAL----- 175

7.1 Introduction -----	175
7.2 Relational Dimension -----	176
7.2.1 Initiatives and Activities by Non-State Actors -----	178
7.2.2 Activities by State Actors-----	181
7.3 Structural Dimension -----	183
7.3.1 Resource, Economic and Political Structures -----	184
6.4 Cultural Dimension -----	186
7.4.1 Connecting Activities to Local Resources -----	189
7.4.2 Building Peace Constituency -----	190
7.5 Personal Dimension -----	192

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE PEACEBUILDING TERRAIN IN POST-1991 GAMBELLA: PROCESS AND OUTCOME ----- 196

8.1 Introduction -----	196
8.2 Major Features -----	197
8.2.1 Varying Mode of Intervention -----	197
8.2.2 Apathy and Delayed Response -----	201
8.2.3 Compensation as Dominant Conflict Settlement Procedure: Promoting the Culture of Impunity-----	205
8.2.4 Entanglement with Politics -----	209
8.3 The Process and Outcome of Peacebuilding in the GPNRS: The Absence of Conflict Sensitive Strategy and its Ramifications -----	212
8.3.1 Coverage, Resource and Coordination -----	213
8.3.2 Timing, Sustainability and Relevance -----	223
8.4 Conclusion -----	233

CHAPTER NINE: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF PEACEBUILDING IN GAMBELLA ----- 235

9.1 Introduction -----	235
9.2 Challenges -----	236
9.2.1 The Approach of Peacebuilding -----	236
9.2.2 The Mode of ‘External’ ‘Interference’: Third Party Intervention -----	237
9.2.3 The Political Opportunity Structure: The Main Fault-line -----	241
9.2.4 Subjective/Partial Security System -----	246
9.2.5 Unfavorable Socioeconomic Conditions -----	249

9.2.6 The Nature of Conflict	252
9.2.7 Erosion of Customary Peacebuilding Practices and Values	255
9.2.8 The Situation in Neighboring Southern Sudan	256
9.3 Prospects	261
9.3.1 Previous Experiences and Local Peace Potentials	261
9.3.2 Crisis Forced Developments: Anecdotes from Majang Zone and Gambella Town	266
9.3.3 The Existence of Institutional Structures and Frameworks for Peacebuilding at National and Regional Levels	270
9.3.4 New Political Developments Since April 2018	271
CHAPTER TEN: GENERAL CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	274
10.1 General Conclusion	274
10.2 Policy Implications: The Absence of a Conflict-Sensitive Approach and its Outcome	289
10.2.1 Agenda for Inclusive and Integrated Peacebuilding Approach	290
10.2.2 Addressing the Socioeconomic Problems in the Region	296
10.2.3 Political and Security Structures Enhancing Strategies and Measures	299
10.2.4 Addressing the Spillovers and Issues Connected with South Sudan	301
10.3 Areas for Further Research	304
References	307
Annex I: List of Informants	333
Annex II: List of Focus Group Discussions	335

Acronyms

ADP	Amhara Democratic Party
ANDM	Amhara National Democratic Movement
APDO	Anyuwa People Democratic Organization
CSA	Central Statistical Agency
CSOL	Civil Society Organizations Law
CUD	Coalition for Unity and Democracy
DOPO	Division of Partners Organization
E.C	Ethiopian Calendar
EGBP	Eastern Gambella Bethel Presbytery
ENA	Ethiopian News Agency
ENDF	Ethiopian National Defense Force
EPRDF	Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front
ETB	Ethiopian Birr
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
GoSS	Government of Southern Sudan
GPDC	Gambella Peace and Development Council
GPDC	Gambella People Democratic Congress
GPDF	Gambella People Democratic Front
GPDM	Gambella People Democratic Movement
GPDUM	Gambella People Democratic Unity Movement
GPDUP	Gambella People Democratic Unity Party
GPLF	Gambella People Liberation Front
GPLM	Gambella Peoples' Liberation Movement
GPNRS	Gambella People's National Regional State
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IDPs	Internally Displaced Peoples
INGOs	International Non-Governmental Organizations
IPE	International Political Economy
LRPP	Livelihood Restoration and Peacebuilding Project
LSLAs	Large-Scale Land Acquisitions
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPDO	Majangir People Democratic Organization
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NPDO	Nuer People Democratic Organization
ODP	Oromo Democratic Party
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
OPDO	Oromo People Democratic Organization
MOFA	Ministry of Federal Affairs
ORA	Office of Regional Affairs
RTL	Radio Télévision des Mille Collines
GOSS	Government of South Sudan
SEPDF	Southern Ethiopia Peoples Democratic Front
SEPDM	Southern Ethiopia Peoples Democratic Movement
SMNE	Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia
SP	Special Forces
SNNPR	Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region

SPLA/M	Sudan People’s Liberation Army/Movement
SSR	Security Sector Reform
TPLF	Tigrean People’s Liberation Front
TCRMs	Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNMIK	United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo
UNOCHA	United Nations Organization for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance
WGBP	Western Gambella Bethel Presbytery

List of Tables

TABLE 1 Population Distribution and Ethnic Composition in GPNRS (2007 Census)	48
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List of Figures

FIGURE 1: Administrative Map of GPNRS as of 17 August, 2017 (Downloaded from the UNOCHA Website, 2018).....	45
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Background

Over the past 28 years, Gambella Peoples' National Regional State (hereafter GPNRS) has been plagued by recurrent identity-based violent conflicts of virtually all dimensions.¹ This is a phenomenon, which attracted a number of scholarly works and grabbed the attention of the Ethiopian government as well as international agencies - particularly following the disputed killings of the Anyuwaa on December 13, 2003 by Highlander mobs in Gambella town, the regional capital. The frequency, magnitude and scope of inter-group violence have made the Gambella region to be reckoned as one of the most disastrous failures of the post-1991 governance arrangement in the country. As Dereje (2006) poignantly notes, "The blessing of federalism has turned to be a curse in a region in which it was expected to have a particularly strong ideological appeal" (Dereje, 2006a, p. 215). Such a view is also amplified by Turton (2006) who writes, "Gambella Regional State could be said to represent the worst nightmare of Ethiopia's experiment in ethnic federalism - an escalation, rather than an accommodation, of contending claims of ethnic groups, leading to violent conflict" (Turton, 2006, p. 26). What is striking is, despite the issue being in the spotlight the conundrums persist to date as the violence metastasizes in form and magnitude, to the extent that intermittent cycles of identity conflicts appear normal in GPNRS. In the context of post-1991 Ethiopia, this dissertation examines the conflict transformation practice and peacebuilding process in GPNRS - the efforts, main characteristics and outcomes of the

¹ (See Dereje, 2003, 2006, 2009, 2011; Medhane, 2007, Regassa, 2010).

conflict transformation as well as the overall picture of the process and the challenges and prospects presenting the peacebuilding terrain in post-1991 Gambella.

Contemporary literature affirms the inexorable relation that conflict and peace have, that the nature of a particular conflict demands a response deep-rooted in that context, and so does the course of action to sustainable peace. This theoretical orientation gained ground after the demise of the Cold War that subsumed every problem, including intra-state one under a bipolar viewpoint. As such, the surge in intra-state conflicts that revolve around identity in early 1990s, previously overshadowed in the realm of the Cold War struggle, posed difficulty to the scholars as they tried to make sense of the conflicts with the older lenses and orientations necessitating the quest for understanding the essences of the 'new wars' and methods of handling them. Scholars and practitioners realized that cessation of hostilities between warring parties and preventing the recurrence of hostilities are not sufficient for meaningful peace; rather, there should be a concerted effort for multifaceted peace support activities. In a concomitant development, the thinking that conflicts can be 'resolved' was fading among scholars instead shifting the spotlight towards an understanding of conflict as a dynamic and deep-rooted process (see Galtung, 1995; Rupesinghe, 1995a; Mitchell, 2002).

It is at the heart of these new developments in the conflict and peace research that we trace the emergence of conflict transformation school of thought and its approach to peacebuilding as well as the idea and approaches of the broader peacebuilding framework in general. Although it is difficult to clearly delineate, in a mutually exclusive way, overall one could systematically classify the writers and writings dealing with conflict transformation on issues and themes as regards those dealing with

the origin and concept of conflict transformation, the approach and main features, the process of transformation as well as core factors to be transformed (see Mitchell, 2002). For instance, as to the idea of conflict transformation, despite the difficulties facing the term in producing agreement around its meaning, as many have attested considerable consensus exist concerning the building blocks that define it. With commitment to positive change as its hallmark, essentially, conflict transformation as an approach signifies, both a process and an end state, implying the conception of some major change in some aspect of the conflict *per se* and the socio-political system in which the conflict is embedded (see Lederach, 1997, Mitchell, 2002; Galtung, 2004).

On the other hand, since Boutros-Ghali in *Agenda for Peace* (1992) brought it to attention of the UN the meaning of the term peacebuilding has broadened and become expansive term from a concept initially limited to post-conflict activities to a notion that stretches over the entire conflict spectrum, involving conflict prevention, conflict management and post-conflict reconstruction as important elements of its agenda (See Karbo, 2008; Omeje, 2008). As Patrick notes, the reflections on peacebuilding have led to a lucid understanding in three areas: (1) on the assertion that embedded cultures and economies of violence pose formidable barriers; (2) on the significance of post-conflict peacebuilding and the assumption that formal agreements should be underpinned by understandings on structures and long-term development frameworks; and (3) on the need for peacebuilding from below (Patrick, 2011).

Studies that touch on the aspects of peacebuilding in Ethiopia in the last 28 years reverberate mixed feelings - either praise or condemnation, the tendency, in most cases, tilting to the latter (see Abbink, 2011; UNDP, 2012). The commendable successes are reflected, not least, in rapid economic growth, promotion of local culture and self-

government, relative peace and security in the country for more than two decades (particularly compared to the debilitating civil war and political strife the country experienced during the 17 years of the Derg military rule). The shortcomings are in the areas of nurturing positive peace, ensuring infrastructure for equitability and equality, and working on faultiness in transforming conflict and planting a deep culture of peace (Abbink, 2011; Alagaw, 2012; UNDP, 2012).

Meanwhile, as to empirical literature on conflict transformation schemes in the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front's (EPRDF) Ethiopia scholarship has often emphasized the disproportionate focus on short term trajectories of compromise, lack of capacity on the part of officials at local level, narrow platform for grassroots participation, and absence of coordination between the formal course and traditional mechanisms of handling conflicts (see Assefa & Pankhurst, 2008; Dereje & Kirchmann, 2009; Antheneh, 2014).

Put simply, the state-of-the-art of the practice and concept of conflict transformation in post-1991 Ethiopia, (the different methods applied to resolve, manage, prevent or transform conflict) indicate that it is informed by the security approach to peace and geared towards minimalist condition of peace, where activities are limited to ending overt violence or their containment. The overall peacebuilding process reflect that peace is merely conceptualized as the removal, management of conflict, mostly oblivious of and leaving intact the social and material conditions, which cause tension and lead to conflict (for general overview see Abbink, 2006; Alagaw, 2012).

1.2 The Main Tents of the Study and State of Research: A Literature Review

The conflict phenomenon in post-1991 Gambella has received a considerable attention from academics, the international agencies, the media, activist and academics. However, very few studies dealt with the peacebuilding process in the period indicated. Understanding the context of peacebuilding in post-1991 GPNRS from the broader conception and approach to peacebuilding requires examining the qualities adopting three analytical tools. Cognizant of this fact, the study applied the conflict environment, peacebuilding practice and process as well as challenges and prospects of peacebuilding as a conceptual tool in the study of the context of peacebuilding in the GPNRS. The purpose of this section is to make a review of related literature. It sets to conceptualize the emphasis of the scholarships in order to identify the gaps in the accessible related bodies of literature, and demonstrate the contribution of this study to existing knowledge.

1.2.1 The Conflict Situation in the Gambella

Why the conflict phenomena? An explanatory note

Taking on a scholarly endeavor on the conflict situation in post-1991 Gambella is tantamount to reinventing the wheel given that it has been the object of considerable attention. The purpose of this research is the analysis of peacebuilding process albeit one of its research questions² is set to probe the conflict situation in the region. This did not come in oblivion. Its relevance is justified from three grounds. While the first factor has a methodological ground, the other two relate to the contribution of the study to the existing bodies of knowledge. Many (e.g. Hansen, 1987, pp. 3-4; Lederach, 1997, p. 64; Reychler, 2002, p. 29) reiterate that an endeavor on the evaluation of a

² See section 1.4 of this Chapter

peacebuilding effort should essentially put an insight into the nature of the conflict as its starting point as the first real condition for the achievement of peace lies on our understanding of the very nature and character of the conflict. In short, as Reychler notes, analysis of the conflict situation as essential conceptual tool constituting the evaluation of a peacebuilding effort gives an indication of the problems to be solved and the degree of difficulty that lies ahead (Reychler, 2002, p. 29).

Coming to the contribution of this study to the existing ample corpus of knowledge on the nature and dynamics of conflict in post-1991 GPNRS, the merit of this study could be seen from two angles. First, it situates the conflict environment in the region in a comprehensive framework of analysis. The study locates the issue in the context of (i) *state-society interaction and the history of statebuilding*, (ii) *identity as the locus of confrontation*, and (iii) *international connections or extra-state element*. Thus, the merit of this study lies in its attempt to bring the issue together into concepts, to understand various levels of inter-group violent conflicts in the Gambella region in a broader framework. Second is the persistence of the cycles of violence in the region as recent as 2018.³ Both of these incidents deserve attention. Therefore, adding to the repertoire of the available literature, this study has also included the most recent tensions, and violent conflicts in the region. In short, it captures the new and emerging dynamics in play as regards inter-group relationships and animosities in the GPNRS.

³ To mention the most conspicuous ones: in 2014, the GPNRS experienced one of the deadliest violent conflicts between the Majang and Highlanders. In 2016, there was an incidence of pernicious inter-ethnic violent conflict between the Anyuwaa and the Nuer.

State of the Art on the Nature of Conflict in the Gambella Region

A systematic understanding of the literature on the conflict formation in the GPNRS reveals the emphasis given by the scholarships better when divided into three (though not mutually exclusive) categories. In the first category we can group works that deal with inter-group relations and the dynamics of conflict. In the second category, we can place literature that focus on state policy and conflict particularly the relationship between the escalation of conflict and the federal mode of governance instituted since 1991. The literature in the third category can be those that emphasize the international aspects of the local conflicts in the Gambella region, particularly the spillovers from the Sudan and the South Sudan since 2011. Amid the works share qualities that traverse more than one category, due to their argument. However, this does not negate the attempt in categorizing the publications as a systematic understanding and presentation of the emphasis of the scholarships works is of the essence.

Inter-group relation and the dynamics of conflict

The literature dealing with the dynamics of conflict and inter-group relations in the GPNRS could be further divided into those that explore the issue within the intra indigenous realm, and those that analyze it at indigenous versus ‘migrants’ level. In the former group, Dereje Feyissa’s⁴ book: *‘Playing Different Games: The Paradox of Anyuwaa and Nuer Identification Strategies in the Gambella Region’* (2011)⁵ is the first of its kind. This book, which is a comparative study of the ethnic phenomena, investigates extensively the nature and pattern of interaction between the Anyuwaa and the Nuer, the two major contending groups in the region. The book explores the issue

⁴ Dereje has conducted research and authored a number of publications on the Gambella region. In fact, he is the most prolific writer on the Gambella region.

⁵ The book is a product of PhD dissertation research *‘Ethnic groups and conflict: The case of Anyuwaa and Nuer relations in the Gambella region (2003)*. Martin Luther University

by dwelling on two interrelated issues: the varying configurations of ethnic identity and the causes of ethnic conflict.⁶ Overall, this book by Dereje although a seminal contribution on the study of inter-group relational patterns of interaction in the region, its dwelling on the Anyuwaa – Nuer relation makes it to fall short in capturing the whole fabric of the dynamics of the issue as it appears in the GPNRS context. Also an ethnographic orientation and approach (on the study of social anthropology) upon which the study is guided while taking on the the issue means that it lacks the merit that could be could garnered by looking at the problem from a wider perspective and levels of social environment.

In the second strand of division, a PhD dissertation at Addis Ababa University by Seyoum, '*Federalism at the margins of the Ethiopian state: The lived experience of the Majang people*' (2015) is worth mentioning for its analysis of the Majang and Highlander relation. The author examines the issue from the 'prevailing' circumstance that the Majang are in, particularly the 'ethnic insecurity' bounding the Majang. The research gives useful information and analysis of the issue particularly as regards the Majang's sense of insecurity. Yet the study lacks a wider and 'balanced' perspective as it is underpinned by federal studies, and it approaches the problem from the Majang point of view. Another study worth mentioning in this regard is a short paper: '*A National Perspective on the Conflict in Gambella. In Proceedings of the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies (2009)*', again by Dereje. This paper is an important contribution as it tries to make an inventory of the types of conflict in the Gambella region. Dereje classified them into five categories: Inter-ethnic; intra-ethnic;

⁶ Dereje gives a very good narration and analysis of the conflictual relations between the two groups. According to Dereje at the heart of antagonism between the two groups is the contrasting mode of identity (the Anyuwaa primordialist identity formation and the Nuer constructive identity formation) construction, which creates value dissonance (See Dereje, 2011).

indigenes and migrants; the state against ethnic groups, and cross-border conflicts. This paper also falls short of a comprehensive analysis of the issue given that the analysis is purely built on the dynamics at the national level to explain local conflicts in Gambella.⁷

Overall, this research brings together these ample works into a comprehensive outlook particularly to show the picture particularly to shed light on identity as a basic unit of analysis. How identity waxes and wanes (interacting with other variables) whether it is at intra indigenous domain or at indigenous versus 'migrants' sphere, traversing every mode of classification and inter-group interaction in the region.

State Policy and Conflict

Coming to works that deal with state policy and conflict in the GPNRS there are a great deal of them. The works that addressed this theme are essentially concerned with how the political transformation in the country in 1991 and the ensuing political system based on ethnicity as the *modus operandi* instituted transformed the pattern of inter-communal conflict in the region. Dereje Feyissa's '*The experience of the Gambella regional state. In D. Turton (Ed.), Ethnic federalism: The Ethiopian experience in comparative perspective*' (2006a), and Medhane Tadesse's '*Gambella: The Impact of Local Conflict on Regional Security*' (2007) are the most widely cited works. While Dereje's paper is focused on making sense of the track record of the federalism vis-à-vis the conflict, Medhane takes it further to look into local conflicts in the region in their connection with the political and security issues in Sudan and Ethiopia, their impact on regional peace and security. In general, these are very useful and pioneering

⁷ Other works that deserves attention include: Dereje Feyissa's '*Decentralization as ethnic closure, with special reference to a declining negotiated access to natural resources in Western Ethiopia*' (2006b); Medhane Tadesse, '*Gambella: The Impact of Local Conflict on Regional Security*' (2007), as well as Dereje Feyissa's '*The experience of the Gambella regional state. In D. Turton (Ed.), Ethnic federalism: The Ethiopian experience in comparative perspective*' (2006a).

publications that unpack the experience of Gambella region as one of the regional states forming the FDRE, a decade after the institutionalization of the federal mode of governance. The works also provide very helpful background information and insight for the studies that came afterward. Yet inasmuch as they are groundbreaking publications on GPNRS studies, their dwelling on the mode of interaction between the Anyuwa and the Nuer, with only a casual reference to other groups to explain the context of the regional state makes them to suffer from forming a representative and inclusive picture. In addition, the articles are published in 2006 and 2007 respectively. Since 2007 the dynamics has changed a lot, with many issues and variables coming into play through time and under the changing circumstances, meaning that there should be a need for considering the changes and continuities.⁸

International dimensions of local conflicts⁹

Many of the works that deal on the nature of conflict in the Gambella tend to either emphasize or mention on passing the extra-state element inherent in the dynamics of conflict in the region.¹⁰ Moreover, they share similar findings: According to the

⁸ On this theme (i.e. state policy and conflict), other works that deserve attention include Dereje Feyissa's *'Decentralization as ethnic closure, with special reference to a declining negotiated access to natural resources in Western Ethiopia'* (2006b), and three other PhD dissertations at Addis Ababa University: (1) Seyuom Mesfin's *'Federalism at the Margins of the Ethiopian State: The Lived Experience of the Majang People'* (2015); (2) Ezra Abate's *'Dynamics of Ethnic Conflict in the Gambella Peoples National Regional State: The Majority-Minority Relations and the Quest for Power'* (2016); and (3) Fana Gebresenbet's *'The Political Economy of Land Investments Dispossession, Resistance and Territory-Making in Gambella, Western Ethiopia'* (2016). Particularly, Seyuom and Fana's research are worth considering for shedding light on the connection exhibited between socioeconomic engineering projects (e.g. commercial farming and large scale land acquisitions) and the patterns of inter-group dispute in the region. Overall, works dealing on the relationship between the political system and the inter-communal violent conflicts in post-1991 GPNRS reverberate the assertion that by altering the old existing traditional forms of competition and rivalry in the region the political change in Ethiopia 1991 has underwritten the escalation of conflict in Gambella (see for instance Dereje, 2006a; Medhane, 2007; Ezra, 2016).

⁹ A detail discussion and analysis of the spillover effects of the condition in the Sudan and Southern Sudan since 2011 on conflict and peace problematic in the GPNRS is given in Chapter Six and Chapter Nine.

¹⁰ As such, the international factor (i.e. the connections between the situation in the adjacent South Sudan and local conflicts in the Gambella of Ethiopia) is integral to inter-group violent conflicts in the GPNRS – a crucial element both as a building block and as a driver of violence in the region.

findings, the Sudanese civil war is one of the major factors that transformed the conflict in the GPNRS (for general overview on this see Dereje, 2006a; Medhane, 2007; Regassa, 2010).

1.2.2 The Context of Peacebuilding: Practice and Process

With regard to making sense of the practice and context of peacebuilding in the GPNRS, contributions emerged from Non-Government Organizations (NGOs).¹¹ More specifically, a critical amount of work in this regard emerged from Pact-Ethiopia. Published in 2009 under the title '*The Current Conflict Situation in the Gambella Region and Suggestions for Sustainable Peacebuilding: With a Special Reference to the Baro River*' documented the dialogue held among different stakeholder groups to create a common agenda in the wake of the 2009 intra-ethnic clan and political conflict among the Nuer. The report provides a good insight about the concern and need of various parties and factions involving the conflict situation in the Baro cluster. It figures out the main issues and points of consensus identified by the key stakeholders as necessary conditions for the creation of a meaningful and lasting peace. Overall, this is a document that contains important information that could serve as basis for more analytical works. However, it falls short of the theorizing and analysis required in academic works. In addition, the scope of work is limited to the intra-ethnic and political tension among the Nuer, particularly along the Baro cluster.

Earlier before this report Pact-Ethiopia published two other action-oriented research documents that contain a more critical amount of work on peacebuilding enhancement measures and strategies in the region: '*Strengthening Peace and Governance Initiatives*

¹¹ In particular, from the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) and Pact-Ethiopia as they engaged in peacebuilding support initiatives in the region

at the Sudan - Ethiopia Border (2006); and 'The Interface between National and Regional Level Decisions and Local Conflicts in the Gambella Region' (2007). The former explores the ways on which economic development and trade could be promoted along the ethio-sudan border. The document identifies the main issues linked with the border with the South Sudan and explores opportunities in various governance systems (both traditional and modern) to consolidate peace in the Gambella region. The latter, which is an update to the former report attempts to cover themes deemed essential for successful conflict transformation in the Gambella region. It does this with emphasis on the interface exhibited across the circumstances at local, regional, and national levels, and how the linkage across these levels is affecting peace in the region.¹² Furthermore, in the report attempt is made to map out a range of potential options that could help reduce the likelihood of conflict.¹³ Other works that deserve attention include a 10-page research report commissioned by Pax Christi Netherlands, again authored by Dereje Feyissa: *'Putting the GPDC House in Order' (2007)*. This short report identifies the main obstacles inhibiting the proper functioning of the Gambella Peace and Development Council (GPDC).

Overall, the aforementioned publications by the NGOs and civil societies contain important information that could serve as a basis for more analytical works. However, they fall short in the theorizing and analysis required in academic works. In essence, the publications are prepared with the purpose to support and enhance the peacebuilding and governance initiatives undertaken by the organizations in the region.

¹² (For general overview on this See Dereje, 2009, p. 27).

¹³ The research reports by Pact-Ethiopia discussed above are authored (written) by Dereje Feyissa

1.2.3 Challenges and Prospects of Peacebuilding in Gambella

With regard to the challenges and prospects of peacebuilding in post-1991 GPNRS there is a lack of a focused and coherent work. Discussions and reflections on the theme are found within works whose emphases are other issues. Worth mentioning pertinent to the challenges of peacebuilding in the GPNRS (particularly as regards the exogenous factor, extra-state element as a formidable challenge to the creation of meaningful peace and peacebuilding endeavor in the region) is Regassa Bayissa's book: *'War and Peace in the Sudan and its Impact On Ethiopia: The Case of Gambella 1955-2008'* (2007). Developed from the PhD work on the history of internal conflicts in Ethiopia and the Sudan, the book also documents with remarkable detail the spillovers of the war in the Sudan on Gambella - both through the influx of refugees that it precipitated and its impact on Anyuwa-Nuer relations as well as the relationship of the two groups with the central Ethiopian Government. As such, the book renders a useful background to build a more thorough and systematic understanding about conflict and peace problematic in the region to its 'international' connection. Yet the fact that it is a historiography, approaching the problem from the writings and methodology in history makes it to suffer from a more analytical and wider perspective in capturing the issue. Two other works¹⁴ also contain a very good analysis on how the political transition in Ethiopia and the ensuing mode of governance instituted in the country as well as the manner of third-party intervention has made the peacebuilding business in the region daunting and complex, throwing an enduring challenge the process of peacebuilding in post-1991 Gambella.

¹⁴ Dereje's *'The experience of the Gambella regional state. In D. Turton (Ed.), Ethnic federalism: The Ethiopian experience in comparative perspective'* (2006a), and Medhane's *'Gambella: The Impact of Local Conflict on Regional Security'* (2007).

In general, these studies and works form the base of the large picture as regards the challenges presenting the peacebuilding process in Gambella region. They suffer, however, from the lack of in-depth research and an inclusive perspective that places the phenomena within the broader peacebuilding framework and inter-communal conflict transformation to make sense of the circumstances under which the GPNRS and its people are.

In making sense of the prospects of/for peacebuilding in the GPNRS reflections are even more meager and scanty. In the research report by Pact Ethiopia '*Strengthening Peace and Governance Initiatives at the Sudan - Ethiopia Border*' (2006) and Regassa's '*War and Peace in the Sudan and its Impact On Ethiopia: The Case of Gambella 1955-2008*' (2007) there are discussions of the prospects created following the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in Sudan in 2005. These two works reflected on how the CPA promoted the resumption of trade along the border from Gambella of Ethiopia to adjacent Southern part of Sudan. In addition, in his study of the dynamics of conflict in the region Ezra¹⁵ also makes a highlighting remark for the promotion of dialogue and structural stability as determinant elements to prevent ethnic tensions in the region. Generally, however, the existing literature does not convincingly reflect upon this theme.

As it could be gleaned from the forgoing discussions, analysis of the practice conflict transformation and peacebuilding process in the GPNRS, the main objective of this dissertation is an issue that has not obtained critical attention from the scholarships in post-1991 GPNRS. Reflections upon these themes are not coherent. They are only

¹⁵ See Ezra, A. (2016). *Dynamics of ethnic conflict in the Gambella Peoples National Regional State: The majority-minority relations and the quest for power*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Addis Abeba University, Addis Abeba (pp. 273- 276).

found fragmented in the existing bodies of literature that are devoted to other issues, particularly within works emphasizing conflict. Moreover, the works have not addressed the issues from an analytical tool in the evaluation of a successful or less successful conflict transformation efforts. Thus, it is necessary to conduct a study that examines the peacebuilding process in the region in the context of inter-communal conflict transformation and the broader approach to peacebuilding. In other words, the researcher will espouse different perspective from the above approach and will address the problem from a more comprehensive framework, to make sense of the process and context of peacebuilding in the study area. In general, by using the previously mentioned three major investigative tools the researcher has offered and applied an alternative approach that is better to sense the problem comprehensively from wider socio-political, socioeconomic and sociocultural aspect.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The intra-state conflicts that became prominent since the early 1990s have ushered in new insight, orientation and approaches about the occurrence of conflicts and their transformation. Particularly, the idea that peace has to be considered beyond the mere absence of direct violence is accentuated. The assertion that unless and until ‘settlements’ are translated into meaningful, practical changes that address the root causes of war or violent conflict, it is unlikely that the ‘peace’ will be sustained. In concomitant development, the corresponding fields of peace studies and conflict resolution have seen themselves grew, giving birth to counterpart concepts, from conflict ‘settlement’ to ‘management’ to ‘resolution’ to ‘transformation’ on the one hand and ‘peacekeeping’ to ‘peacemaking’ and ‘peacebuilding’ on the other whilst

conflict transformation and peacebuilding receiving conspicuously growing appreciation within both fields.¹⁶ As Bangura & McCandless (2007) note:

Both areas of study have adopted the language of prevention and reflect a range of concepts intertwined with conservative and realist values and expectations at one end while moving towards comprehensive, relational, and societally embedded notions of transformation or peace on the other (Bangura & McCandless, 2007, p. 3).

Combining new theoretical perspectives on transforming intra-state conflicts and fieldwork, the dissertation investigates peacebuilding practice and process in Gambella regional state, Ethiopia. It specifically examines the peacemaking activities carried in response to the major inter-communal conflicts, their main feature, the process and outcomes of the peacebuilding efforts as well as the challenges and prospects of peacebuilding in the post-1991 Gambella. The analysis is situated within Ethiopia's post-1991 sociopolitical context and current framing and understanding of intra-state social conflict, conflict transformation and peacebuilding. As such, with a special focus on local level the study investigates the issue at local, national and international levels.

As demonstrated in the previous section, since the early 1990s, the Gambella region has experienced recurrent inter-group violent conflicts that received considerable scholarship attentions.¹⁷ Even if the conflicts have garnered attention and have been the objects of considerable scholarly works analysis of conflict transformation and peacebuilding process in the region is an issue that has not obtained critical attention.

¹⁶ (For instance, see Rupshinge, 1995a; Mitchell, 2002; Ramsbotham et al., 2011).

¹⁷ These series of inter-communal violent conflicts that have occurred in the Gambella region are responsible for considerable human cost and suffering, socioeconomic destructions as well as psychological and spiritual costs.

There is no study and comprehensive analysis on the nature of peacebuilding and inter-group conflict transformation process in the region. Therefore, the need to investigate conflict transformation effort as well as examine the qualities of the process of peacebuilding in Gambella regional state of Ethiopia (since the toppling of the Derg regime in 1991 by the EPRDF) is instigated by the absence of a focused and critical examination of the problem. By doing this the study contributes its own fair share in bridging the gaps in the existing bodies of knowledge. It also serves as a resource to promote successful conflict transformation effort and sustainable peacebuilding process in the region.

1.4 Research Objectives

The main objective of this PhD research is to investigate the practices and processes of conflict transformation and peacebuilding in post-1991 Gambella. The specific objectives are to:

- ✚ Examine the process of peacebuilding in post-1991 Ethiopia;
- ✚ Ascertain the practice of conflict transformation in GPNRS;
- ✚ Analyze the outcome and the process of peacebuilding in the GPNRS;
- ✚ Find out the challenges and prospects to peacebuilding in the GPNRS

1.5 Research Questions

The research questions underpinning this dissertation are:

1. What are the basic features of the conflict situation in GPNRS? What are the underlying structural conditions? Who are the main actors involved? How is the conflict dynamics in play?
2. What is the nature of the activities of conflict transformation efforts?

3. What are the results of the peacebuilding endeavors'? How do we evaluate the overall process?
4. What are the challenges and prospects of peacebuilding in the region?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This dissertation focuses on peace problematic in the context of multi-ethnic societies like Ethiopia. It attempts to examine the praxis of conflict transformation and peacebuilding in the post-1991 Ethiopian setting, taking the case of Gambella Regional State, with respect to the efforts made and the dominant characteristics of these conflict settlement mechanisms injected in order to deal with the main inter-communal violent conflicts that have recurred in the GPNRS, the outcomes and overall picture of the peacebuilding process as well as the challenges and prospects.

The benefits of this study can be considered at three levels: academic, policy and practice. At academic level, the consideration of the process from the local, national and international angles means the study contributes its fair share in bridging the gap in academic literature that accords undue focus to one-level analysis which diminishes the agency and importance of the others. Furthermore, the use of multiple levels in the analysis permits understanding of the rationale, strategies and actions of a range of actors including members of the local community, the regional government, the federal government and international actors. Accordingly, by bringing rich empirical evidence, from various levels, it contributes to the ongoing debates on the need to understand local contextual matters through empirical research. To put it in another way, by using emerging insights from critical scholarship to gain understanding on conflict and peace problematic, the study sheds light on the complex critical constructivist theoretical and methodological orientation particularly on the empirical realities on the ground.

Overall, the consideration of a range of factors, issues, actors, levels and dimensions to make sense of the occurrence of conflict formation and the development of the process of peacebuilding in GPNRS brings rich empirical evidence to the emerging dominant theoretical and conceptual outlook in peace and conflict research, multi-level analysis and engagement in the management and transformation of intra-state and inter-communal conflicts.

Furthermore, the dissertation addresses a timely and relevant topic with profound policy implications. The issues this study investigates are not only topical to multiethnic societies in the world but constitute the core problems to which communities in the Horn of Africa are experiencing and struggling to find solutions. The crises in Syria, Libya and Yemen, particularly the ensuing effects these civil wars on western countries caused by the influx of refugees, have increased the interest of the international community to intervene for the constructive management of intra-state conflicts, i.e. the legitimacy crisis, the increasing division countries are experiencing, vertically between the state and groups feeling sense of deprivation and resentment, and horizontally between cultural aggregates. Thus, the study and practice of peacebuilding is of enormous importance in that a better understanding of the process of conflict and peace is expected to help policymakers make the right choices.

Both at the policy and practical levels, the contribution of this study to the situation in contemporary Ethiopia and the GPNRS is paramount, given that the issues the study deals with are of the essence to circumstances being experienced in today's Ethiopia. The fact that, over the past three years, the country has experienced one of the most convulsive protests in its history and is going through a period of transition especially since March 2018 that has seen commendable political developments particularly since

in the meantime accompanied with a state of rapid, confusing and disruptive changes hindering this new political development, makes the study and practice of conflict transformation vital for the country.

As indicated above, Gambella is a region that has been beset by inter-communal violent conflicts that went unabated. While these conflicts have received scholarly research emphasis, the study of the practice of peacebuilding in the region has been left largely overlooked. Thus, this study comes having topical and timely relevance to the GPNRS in both academic and empirical thrust. In short, the study assists in bridging the gap - why the efforts made to contain inter-communal violence in GPNRS so far stumbled in light of conflict transformation approach and the broader peacebuilding approach to be tailored in that context and with that providing important policy input and direction to address the enduring menace in the region. As such, by doing this the study will have direct policy implication on one of the main intricate issues in GPNRS and the country at large, conflict, peace, and development.

1.7 Scope and Limitation of the Study

While major inter-communal violent conflicts in the region and the corollary response mechanisms to address them have a long history, stretching back to the Derg and imperial periods, the main thrust of the study is in the periods between the early 1990s, specifically 1991 (the year the decentralized system of governance was institutionalized in Ethiopia) to January 2019. In addition to the presence of other variables, the underlying reason for the selection of the year 1991 as a point of reference is that it is a turning point in the political history and accentuation of inter-communal violent conflict in the Gambella region. First, from being a remote and obscure part of the country and the very low sociopolitical position it got hitherto, Gambella was promoted

as one of the nine regions constituting the FDRE. Second and more importantly, the occurrence, magnitude and scope of inter-communal conflicts accompanied the decentralization project in an unprecedented manner. Accordingly, even if it tried to navigate the issues at stake particularly as regards the conflict phenomenon, the context and process of the conflicts as far back as the early 20th century, in the imperial Ethiopia, during the process of state formation when Gambella is introduced to be part of modern Ethiopia, the focus of the study is the most prominent inter-group violent conflicts in the region recurred in the GPNRS over the last quarter a century. These are the Anyuwaa-Nuer, Anyuwaa-Highlander, Majang-Highlander, Intra-Nuer clan and political conflicts, and the cross-border conflict. In short, the thesis addresses the conflict transformation efforts that have been in action to deal with these inter-communal violent conflicts and the overall processes of peacebuilding in the GPNRS as they appeared over the past 27 years. The process of the construction of the nuts and bolts of the research problem is however situated in a multi-level analysis framework, considering various levels, actors, issues, dimensions and domains stretching from micro, meso to macro levels.

As to the limitation of the study, few caveats are in order. First, because the study takes integrative and holistic engagement within the remits of the whole GPNRS, it lacks detail and specific investigation of the conflict transformation and peacebuilding activities undertaken in response to the individual cases of conflicts in the region. Second, even if a more extensive methodological triangulation especially incorporating anthropological methods could have improved the work, it has been abandoned given that the conduct of anthropological work requires as a requisite for the researcher to spend extended period of time in the field to get sufficient opportunities for observation from the grassroots community, which is a difficult endeavor given the security risk on

the ground. Third, it is important to note that the lack of adequate historical data has made it difficult to conduct historical analysis of peacemaking activities implicating the focus of the interpretive analysis on recent conflict transformation efforts.

1.8 Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation is organized into ten chapters.

Chapter one introduces the dissertation. It incorporates the background for the study, statement of the problem, research questions, and research objectives, significance of the study and the scope and limitations. Furthermore, included in this chapter is a review of literature on the main tents of the research and the state of the study from which the research objectives and questions are drawn.

Chapter two discusses the methodology; the methods followed in conducting the study. It points out and justifies the theoretical perspectives and methodological approach underpinning the study, discusses the method and design of the research and the data analysis procedures used in the study. This chapter also briefly describes the ethical principles that guided the study. In addition to the discussions on the research methods included in this chapter is a brief summary of the study area, GPNRS, including the climatic, geographic details, the administrative structure as well as the manner of inter-group interactions, social and political organization and livelihood of the communities inhabiting the Gambella region.

Chapter three and chapter four place the study in the wider academic milieu in the context of theoretical and conceptual outlooks as well as a literature review on the context and practice of intra-state conflict transformation and peacebuilding. Chapter three explores the theoretical debates and conceptual issues in conflict, conflict

transformation and peacebuilding. Chapter four takes the discussions further down to earth to link it with insights from the empirical analyses of scholarships on the practice and form of peacebuilding in contemporary conflicts, with emphasis on peacebuilding process in contemporary Africa. Chapter four also attempts to make sense of the main conceptual debates on the context and dynamics of peacebuilding in intra-state social conflicts. The author believes that the theoretical approaches outlined in the literature review had strengths and weaknesses in studying the issues under investigation. It is argued that the application of a single approach may not always lead to a reasonable inquiry of the problem. In light of these problems, the researcher attempted to make use of multiple approaches so as to give a better picture and more sensible elucidation of the problem under study.

In chapter five, an attempt is made to make sense of the process of peacebuilding in post-1991 Ethiopia. This is done by breaking the discussions into four categories. The first section reflects on the nature of conflict in contemporary Ethiopia. This is followed by a discussion and analysis which explores the practice, concept and process of conflict transformation and peacebuilding in the EPRDF Ethiopia. Section four considers the challenges and prospects presenting the process of peacebuilding in post-Derg Ethiopia. The last section ends the chapter by concluding the main debates and themes.

Chapter six analyzes the conflict situation in the Gambella region. It sets and analyzes the context, identifies the origins, and explains the key determinants of the major inter-communal violent conflicts in the GPNRS. The argument advanced is that the sources, drivers and aspects of the various inter-communal conflicts in the region are many and exhibit an interface between different factors, levels, actors, issues and domains marked

by circumstances where even individual conflicts are connected to the broader political, economic, resource, sociocultural, perceptual and security contexts and the history of state formation involving multiple actors, groups and interests and exhibiting national, regional and international dimensions.

Chapter seven is devoted to explaining the conflict transformation efforts that have been undertaken to address the recurring inter-group conflicts in GPNRS. The purpose of this chapter is to explicate the conceptual link between the theoretical and conceptual perspectives in conflict transformation and the practice in GPNRS. Even if the analysis benefits from diverse conceptual assertions and reflections from empirical experiences, the chapter uses Lederach's (1997) parameters on the dimension of conflict transformation as a conceptual framework, analytical lens to guide the chapter and to facilitate coherent communication.

Chapter eight presents an extensive discussion and analysis of the outcome of efforts and the overall peacebuilding process. The chapter also discusses the qualities mainly characterizing conflict settlement processes in the region. Based on the analysis from the empirical evidences following a set of measures, parameters and conceptual lenses employed the argument advanced is that the peacebuilding process is not instructive and effective both in its response to the immediate peacebuilding needs and the broader systemic issues that help strengthen and enhance the containment of violence sustainably.

Chapter nine explores the challenges and prospects of peacebuilding in post-1991 Gambella. The chapter contends that the pitfalls outweigh the opportunities present. A plethora of challenges ranging from the approach, manner of interference from the third

parties to institutional setbacks, political culture, and spill-over from neighboring country have militated against the peacebuilding terrain in GPNRS. Yet, the analysis from empirical evidences and situation in the region and institutional and political development at the national level for this research also reflects some potential opportunities for sustainable peacebuilding in GPNRS. The prospects lie in the existence of experiences in conflict transformation efforts (e.g. the experience of the Majang zone in 2014; peacemaking activities in response to the 2016 Anyuwaa-Nuer conflicts; the peacebuilding support project from the UNDP), where promoted particularly geared towards the improvement of the downsides could be merit to harness constructive conflict transformation in the GPNRS. Moreover, the existence of local peace potentials, indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms rooted to the local contexts, and institutions and structures that support the framework for peacebuilding both at regional and national levels as well as the new political developments in the country since March, 2018 that had already demonstrated its trickle-down effect in the GPNRS sociopolitical environment are potential for sustainable peacebuilding in the Gambella region.

The last chapter, chapter ten, puts the dissertation together with emphasis on the summary of findings of the dissertation and the general conclusion as well as a critical appraisal of the nature of peace in contemporary Ethiopia. This chapter also makes suggestions for policy implications on the ways forward towards constructive conflict transformation and sustainable peacebuilding in the GPNRS and hints at areas for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

Research Methodology and Study Area

2.1 Research Methodology

2.1.1 Theoretical Triangulation

In order to examine the practice of conflict transformation as well as the outcome and the peacebuilding process (i.e. post-1991) GPNRS and ascertain the challenges and prospects, this PhD research combines new theoretical perspectives on peacebuilding and fieldwork. Accordingly, the study adopted a complex critical constructivist peace theoretical and methodological approach¹⁸ for the underlying assumptions under this perspective are particularly suitable for comprehending how peacebuilding efforts interact with the grassroots.

¹⁸ *Critical constructivist peace theory* is a TRANSCEND approach which has its basis drawn from the Galtung's (1990) tridimensional theory of violence: direct, structural and cultural. It encompasses: what is violence, what is the conflict formation underlying the violence, what is the perspective of a peaceful solution and what is the way to conflict transformation and peacebuilding. As such, direct, structural and cultural violence as a theoretical model for violence goes beyond the common understanding of violence. According to Galtung 'structural violence' refers to violence of an insidious nature, such as exploitative and oppressive relationships typically built into the diverse social structures and institutions of a society. It stems from violence in the structure of society, rather than actor-generated personal and direct violence (Galtung, 1990, p. 173). Cultural violence is the deep-rooted constant which legitimates structural and direct violence, especially when there is a reaction (violent or not) against the structural violence by those who are victims of it. Galtung views cultural violence as norms or commonly held values which prohibit us from defining or seeing direct or structural violence. Galtung defines cultural violence as "...those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence – exemplified by religion, language and art, empirical science and formal science that can be used to justify or legitimise direct or structural violence" (Galtung, 1990, p. 291). As McCandless (2007) pointed out, generally, the critical constructivist peace theory posits that the majority of approaches to dealing with conflict are limited to the understanding of violence as direct violence. At best, the result can be a compromise that brings an end to direct violence. In general, the conflict is put on ice, until at some point it re-emerges. In the worst cases, of which there are a number, the violence is worse than before. There is, in any case, no sustainable peace to be had. Thus, the justice gap needs to be addressed; the violent structures and cultures need to be transformed (McCandless, 2007, p. 10).

Critical theory as a method of examination, according to Cox (1981) “stands apart from the prevailing order of the world and asks how that order came about” and as such, it “does not take institutions and social and power relations for granted but calls them into question by concerning itself with their origins and how and whether they might be in the process of changing” (Cox, 1981, p. 129).

Apparently, theory cannot be detached from socio-political life. It is crucial to recognize the background and context in which it is produced and used, and also whether the user intends to use it to maintain or change the status quo. In this regard, it is hard to maintain the fact-value dichotomy? A critical approach rejects the three basic tenets of positivism: an objective external reality; the subject/object distinction and value-free social science (Jackson & Sorensen, 1999, p. 248). Seale (1999) notes, “Positivist social scientists have attempted to replicate the success of the natural scientists in controlling the natural world, and so have been committed to approaches perceived to be characteristic of natural science”. Theories, in this case, are separated from observable facts so that their truth “can be tested in a world of these independently existing facts” (Seale, 1999, p. 21). However, critical theorists argue that the prevailing order should not be viewed as rational, inevitable and unchangeable, but a “construction of time and place” and thus historical” (Jackson & Sorensen, 1999, p. 248).

Meanwhile, unlike problem-solving theory that tends to serve particular interests (for example, state and nation), critical theoretical and methodological approach on peacebuilding attempts to capture those aspects of culture, custom, tradition, history and local contexts that can lead to human emancipation and in the context of this study, to the nature of conflict transformation activities and the overall picture of the peacebuilding i.e. post-1991 Gambella vis-à-vis theoretical and conceptual analytical

lenses and empirical examples relevant and akin to the study setting when it comes to the nuts and bolts to building constructive and sustainable peace or the condition under which successful conflict transformation process happens or otherwise.

Contrary to the assumption of realists and behaviorists' that see violent conflicts as essentially unavoidable and irresolvable, critical theorists espouse an alternative view. In other words, for the former group, violent conflict is considered ineradicable due to limited resources and human dispositions (as human being and its organizations are chiefly driven by self-interest) which made them focus on conflict management. For the latter group (critical theorists), however, resolving some conflicts is seen as not only desirable but also necessary. Articulating the premise of this school of thought, Omeje (2008) writes:

...conflict resolution is not only possible in certain conflicts, but also necessary and desirable for change, emancipation and transformation. There is a need for moving from conflict management to transforming the structure that feed the asymmetries in power distribution and correlated interests provided that conflict management agenda privileges the maintenance of the status-quo (Omeje, 2008, pp.69-70).

Furthermore, the usage of critical theoretical and/or methodological perspective for this study is imperative as the process of conflict transformation (which is the very thrust of this research) according to Miall, Ramsbotham & Woodhouse (1999) entails “engaging with and transforming the wider social, economic and political structures underlying a conflict, including transformation of the relationships, interests, discourse and, if necessary, the very constitution of society that supports the continuation of violent conflict” (Miall et al., 1999, p. 4).

With emphasis on the transformation of entrenched conflict-generating structures in society, such as unwholesome economic, social, legal and political structures, critical theory also incorporates the explanations of political economy approach as to the causes and drivers of deep-rooted divisive and violent conflicts and their transformation and sustainable way of building peace which makes it overarching to be used in the context of Johan Galtung's (1990) famous differentiation of 'structural violence'. As Miall (2004) notes, from the critical theorists' standpoint, different types and levels of conflict require different methods of resolution. For instance, direct violence can be resolved by changing conflict behaviors; structural violence by removing structural contradictions and injustices; and cultural violence by changing attitudes-it can be situated from the more open and visible forms of direct violence or violent conflict, such as war and civil unrest to latent and structural (Miall, 2004, p. 15). It is also worth noting that critical theoretical and methodological approach recognizes the ordinary people as one of the major actors in transforming conflicts and building peace unlike the liberal peace models that see them as mere recipients of resolution. To this end, therefore, the use of critical theory in this study is imperative for such an approach allows for peacebuilding that "neither dismisses nor denies structural factors, but allows a range of voices to speak" (Lowe & Short, 1990, p.13).

2.1.2 The Qualitative Approach

Research method is a way of conducting and implementing research. The investigator has to decide the types and combination of forms that best serves the goal of the study. He/she needs “to know which of these methods or techniques are relevant and which are not and what would they mean and indicate and why” (Kothari, 2004, p. 27). Owing to the purpose of the study, which attempts to shed light on the nature of conflict transformation and peacebuilding in post-1991 GPNRS under the social context it occurs, qualitative research approach is employed. As Gay and Peter (2000) noted, qualitative research is relevant to probe deeply into the research setting, in order to obtain in-depth understanding about the way things are, why they are that way, and how the participants in that context perceive them (Gay & Peter, 2000). Furthermore, qualitative research gives more space to interviewees or members of focus groups to express themselves in their own words rather than forcing on them a certain rigid scheme of response such as a number scale (Abdalla, 2014).

Using qualitative approach, the study explores the conflict transformation efforts, their marked features, the process and outcome as well as the challenges and prospects to the peacebuilding. Four stages are discernible as to the orientation of the study in taking the problem. First, an attempt is made to analyze and ascertain the conflict situation in the region to point out the matter and depth of problems. The second phase entailed an appraisal of the peacemaking practices as they respond to the inter-group violent conflicts in the region from a conceptual parameter in conflict transformation. The third stage embarked on an extensive discussion and analysis of the post-1991 peacebuilding landscape – the dominant features of the peacemaking schemes, the outcome of the efforts and the overall process of peacebuilding. In the final stage, attempt is made to

make sense of the challenges and prospects to peacebuilding in the region. All the way through inquiry the research problem is navigated from unobtrusive analytical and conceptual parameters. Thus, it is to indicate that as della Porta and Keating (2008) note, methodologically speaking, relative focus is given to meanings, and values as the methods selected are amenable to the task of seeking meaning (della Porta & Keating, 2008, p. 32). This is justified as, philosophically, the research is interpretivist. And qualitative research paradigm lies within an interpretative tradition, one that requires softer methods allowing for ambiguity and contingency and recognizing the interplay between the researcher and the object of the research, and which appreciates the meaning of human experience (della Porta & Keating, 2008, p. 26).

Under qualitative approach, the study followed a case study design¹⁹ in that detail study of cases suits best to measure the research questions and meet the objective-particularly to reflect on various contexts of the study. As Kothari (2004) rightly pointed out, the case study method is a very popular form of qualitative analysis provided that it involves a careful and complete observation of a social unit, be that unit a person, a family, an institution, a cultural group or even the entire community (Kothari, 2004). Put another way, it is a method of study in depth rather than breadth. Case study strategy is also of the essence to this study as i.e. the “researcher has little control over events, and [as] the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” (Yin, 2003, p. 1).

¹⁹ In this thesis, the notion of case study strategy connotes that given by Yin, “an all-encompassing method-covering the logic of design, data collection techniques, and specific approaches to data analysis (Yin, 2003, p. 14). In this regard, as Creswell pointed out, “it implies an all-inclusive research methodology, one that is not limited to a data collection instrument or the design aspect alone (Creswell, 2007, p. 73).

2.1.3 Sources of Data, Sampling and Instruments

Sources of Data

Corollary to the selection of case study strategy as research study design is the adoption of manifold sources of information.²⁰ The data for this research is drawn from multiple sources and levels given the fact that actors and stakeholders forming the conflict and peacemaking structures in the GPNRS are found at multiple levels, layers and domains. To make the process inclusive and representative, research participant from various agencies (government, civil societies, NGOs, INGOs etc.) and groups (ethnic, religious leaders, elders, youth, academics, military/security etc.) at local, regional and national levels were engaged. In short, the primary sources of data covered members of local community as well as participants from wide groups who share experience, have expertise and knowledge and are, directly or indirectly, connected to the issues under examination. Documents such as peace conference reports (by GPNRS, Administrative Council, 2016/2017) action plans, annual reports (from GPNRS Security and Administration Affairs Bureau (2003; 2004; 2005; 2016), and reports produced by INGOs (UNDP, 2012) were also collected as primary sources and systematically analyzed. The secondary source of data includes numerous published and unpublished documents, such as dissertations, theses, research reports, government policy documents, constitutions, publications, periodic and statistical reports, performance reports, annual plans, books, research papers, journals, and workshop proceedings, among others.

²⁰ (For overview of this literature see Yin, 2003; Creswell, 2007).

Sampling Techniques

To select relevant and appropriate participants for the purpose of the study, qualitative purposive sampling is adopted. Within the framework of qualitative purposive sampling, a combination of snowball, intensity and homogenous sampling²¹ was followed. Snowball sampling was used in order to track participants until sufficient data/ information was obtained particularly in sensitive issues where finding participants appeared difficult. Research participants were selected from the population in GPNRS and other areas based on their affiliations, knowledge, experience and concern about specific issues. In the process, due attention was given to exhaustive representations, involving stakeholders and diverse segments of the society deemed appropriate to the objective of the study.

Data Collection Techniques in the Field

Research techniques or instruments refer to the behavior and instruments used in performing research operations such as making observations, recording data, techniques of processing data and the like. In the process of primary data collection, the adoption of multiple techniques (overt and non-participant observations, unstructured interviews, and group discussions) in qualitative research approach allowed respondents to speak for themselves. It has also helped the researcher to capture respondents' feelings, perceptions and experiences about peacebuilding endeavors in the region and, develop a contextual explanation of the situation. Although the use of multiple methods rendered the undertaking of this research, to borrow the words of

²¹ **Intensity sampling** is a form of sampling that helps understand deeper feeling of people. For example, if you want to comprehend the feeling of a father who lost his family from Ebloa outbreak it will help you understand the scar. With this intensity sampling can allow you to understand the contrast and extreme cases. **Homogenous sampling** on the other hand is a type of sampling that can help you reveal subtle differences between homogenous groups, countries etc. (Abdalla, 2014).

Klandermans (2002), “demanding and expensive in time and resources”, the use of it has permitted the construction of a stronger hypothesis about the study setting.

Interviews

Interviews are helpful to collect information from individuals who have specific knowledge, interest or concern about the subject of inquiry, to go more in-depth with specific questions or issues and secure confidentiality and privacy (Abdalla, 2002; Williams, 1967). Unlike participant observation that furnishes data on current observable things, interview allows to gather data on both issues of the past and the present (Abdalla, 2002). Here, particularly, “key” informant interview was an important method.²² Accordingly, the selection of the interviewees was, for the most part dictated by their degree of relevance to the case and issues under investigation. For instance, those who view themselves as being deeply affected by the peacebuilding process, those who see their interest deeply affected and those who are direct victims of violence and those who are the objects of peacemaking activities and those who participated in the process of conflict transformation efforts could have better understanding than those who did not.

As shown above, the researcher selected participants purposively from a wide range of people to gather information in order to understand their experience on the nature of peacebuilding and inter-communal conflict transformation in post-1991 GPNRS. It involved participants from various levels, layers and domains (involving government officials, ex-government officials, individuals, academics, civil servants, and dissident groups, international organizations and, religious leaders, and elders, youth, women,

²² The concept of “key” informant in this research is taken to mean that adopted by Williams (1967) “key informants are “specialists” who can furnish better information on a particular issue (Williams, 1967, p. 27).

and victims of violence). As such, attempts were made to talk with people from a variety of background such as ethnic groups, regional, federal, local government officials and elders. Unstructured form of interview was adopted in a manner that makes participants respond freely while at the same time ensuring that the process went in line with the research objectives. As Bryman (2004) notes, a flexible interview process helps to gain a “genuine access to the world views” of the participants.

The practice of interviewing took many ways - some with the help of research assistants as translators, particularly in rural and remote areas where respondents lack acquaintance of Amharic thus used their vernacular language. In this case, the accuracy of the translation was enhanced by crosschecking with other translators and the researcher’s²³ knowledge. In towns, virtually all interviews were conducted in Amharic as all interviewee therein comprehend Amharic regardless of their ethnic origins.

As indicated above, the study seeks to bridge the gap in the literature on the experiences of conflict transformation and peacebuilding in post-1991 GPNRS. In this regard, interview was used to examine the conflict intervention and peacebuilding activities undertaken – the marked characteristics of the process, the outcomes and the overall picture of the peacebuilding process particularly in relation to the coverage, coordination, and timing and sustainability, relevance, and impact. Between April 2015 and July 2019, the researcher visited GPNRS five times and intensive data collection was conducted between early February to April 2017 with assistant. Even if GPNRS is the research area of the study, during fieldwork, focus has been accorded to certain areas in each three administrative zones of GPNRS.²⁴ Gambella town, Itang Special

²³ The researcher is good at Anyuwa and Nuer languages, which gave him extra advantage in this respect.

²⁴ About the administrative arrangement of the GPNRS see the next section of this chapter.

district, Makuie and Lare districts (Nuer Zone), Abol town (Anyuwaa Zone) Godere and Menegeshi districts (Majang Zone) are areas where the fieldwork was undertaken. The choice of these areas did not come in oblivion; it was dictated by the nature, intensity of the social and political interaction of the people being studied. In other ways, these places have been theatres of inter-communal violent conflicts in the region, the focus of peacemaking activities and convenient places to acquire information and gather data.

Gambella town is the regional capital and one of the main theaters of Anyuwaa-Nuer, Anyuwaa-Highlander and Intra-Nuer conflict and other, for example, political tension and conflict in the region. In short, the Gambella town exhibits all levels and forms of conflict in the region. It is also the spotlight of peacebuilding activities and a place where information about all forms of inter-group violence and peacemaking activities can be accessed provided that actors and stakeholders relevant to the study are found.

Itang special district is an intermingled settlement site and one of the main flashpoints in Anyuwaa-Nuer dispute. This district is also the foci of substantive and controversial issues in conflict and peace particularly between the Anyuwaa and the Nuer. *Itang Kiir*, *Achwa*, and *Pulkoth (Makot)* are the kebeles the researcher visited in Itang special districts with research assistant. During the fieldwork in these areas the researcher had to use *Bajaj*²⁵, and canoe to cross Baro River (for instance as a means of transport to reach *Itang Kirr kebele*) and travel hours on foot where no transport means is available. In Majang Zone the researcher visited and conducted interviews in both districts, (Godere and Mengeshi). Meti town (part of the Godere district and the capital of

²⁵ A three-tire transport small vehicle that is largely used as a means of taxi transport widely in the including in major towns of Ethiopia.

Majang Zone) has been used as a launching pad where the researcher spent most of the time as it is a convenient place to get information relevant to the Majang-Highlander conflict and the conflict settlement and peacebuilding activities. From Godere district, the researcher conducted interviews in Chemi and Akash *kebeles*. The former is mixed settlement area while the latter is Highlander dominant neighborhood. Kumi and Shoni are the *kebeles* from Mengeshi district where the researcher reached to undertake interviews. These areas exhibited fierce controversy and disputes on issues *surrounding* illegal land sales and occupation and the ‘movement’ of Highlanders into the Majang Zone areas. Kumi and Shoni *kebeles* were also the scene of the most vicious violence during the 2014 Majang and Highlander conflict.

Overall 44 interviews were conducted (for coding and other details, see annex 1) as a form of primary data gathering for this research. The interview sessions covered a broad range of issues and the duration depended on respondents’ experience or expertise.

Overt and Non-Participant Observations

The data collected from interviews was enriched by overt and non-participant observation²⁶ - attending workshops, peace conferences and observing the empirical setting. For instance, the researcher participated in a meeting at Akash kebele, Godere district, Majang zone, on the state of the progress of peace and security of the kebele, which brought together representatives of the neighborhood community. The researcher managed to get the permission to attend the meeting and, as a non-participant observer garnered insights that otherwise would have not been gathered. On Monday, February,

²⁶James Spradley, writing on participant observation identified two kinds of participants- ordinary participant and participant observer. The former represents a participant, whose intent and activity is limited to attending a meeting, merely coming to a certain situation to engage in a certain activity. The purpose of the latter, participant observer however is twofold, not only being an audience but also to observe and take part in the activity of a meeting (Spradley, 1980, pp. 53-54).

13 2017, the researcher was in Gambella town where peace bazaar and fundraising was underway for victims of cross border attack (particularly that of the April 15, 2016 heinous Murle onslaught²⁷) under a banner *Fiqir le Gambella* (love for Gambella) where the differential reactions and sentiments to the peace bazaar between ethnic groups is observed. Most of the Anyuwa and Highlanders showed their indifference to the occasion by refusing to wear the t-shirt distributed to the public service agencies where employees were obliged to buy for specified price to be deducted from their salary. On Friday, March 10, 2017, while traveling from Gambella town to Itang by bus, the extent of animosity between Anyuwa and Nuer could be observed from the gesture members of each group showed one another and repugnant disposition when compelled to share a seat. A notorious and particularly illustrative of this to which the researcher was caught thinking about long afterwards is the disposition from an Anyuwa girl - she showed contempt to a Nuer boy who inadvertently touched her as he comforted himself a seat. In Itang the researcher also saw burned houses in Anogta neighborhood, Achwa kebele and talked to IDPs which helped to collect data on the aspects, dimensions, outcomes and relevance of the peacemaking activities particularly as they are viewed from the local population's position. In this regard, field notes were helpful in capturing the essence of what was being observed.

Focus Group Discussions

Focus groups are useful to collect information from a group of individuals who have specific knowledge, interest or concern about the subject of inquiry, when group interaction is necessary or helpful for generating the information and to clarify issues (Abdalla, 2002). Lewis, who defined a group interview as “a group conversational

²⁷Detail of the cross-border cattle raid and attack and that of the 15 April is discussed in main (finding) chapters of this thesis to follow.

encounter with a research purpose”, noted that focus groups have several advantages over individual interview as they help “to reveal consensus views, verify research ideas or data gained through other methods and enhance reliability of [respondents’] responses (Lewis, 1992, p. 20). Owing to the communal nature of the social, political, economic milieu in GPNRS, the researcher assumes that a number of individual interviews may end up being group interviews which informs the relevance of this method. As such, in the undertaking of this research, focus group discussions (FGDs) were very instrumental in accessing data from various sections of groups and understanding their behavior, feelings and attitudes pertinent to the violent inter-communal conflicts in the region and the conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts. Group discussions were also helpful in correlating data presented through the interviews and in generating more reliable, accurate, and complete information through group cooperation.

The FGDs were conducted with homogenous and heterogeneous groups. Homogenously, for example, the sessions brought together people sharing affiliations, and common experience based on which they construct the best, reliable and accurate information through group cooperation. Heterogeneously, informants of different ethnic background, or of different opinion or sex, were placed together in order to arrive on a common representation of certain debatable issue. As much as possible, heterogeneity was carefully planned to ensure free environment for discussion, to avoid mutual inconvenience of communication among informants who would not fairly go together given the fact that the study involves sensitive issues that may drive participants emotional and suspicious. Appropriate representation of different ethnic groups was made. Totally, 12 FGDs (for coding and other details, see annex 2) ranging from 4 to 7 members in one FGD session were held with participants selected

purposively from various groups in various areas of the region. The process and structure of the FGDs roughly contained four parts: (1) basic information; (2) the conflict situation in the region (or in that particular case) in its structure, actors and dynamics; (3) the conflict transformation practice in terms of changes effected on the relational, structural, cultural and personal dimensions of the conflicts and (4) the outcome of the efforts and the overall picture of the peacebuilding process and (5) the challenges and prospects to the peacebuilding terrain in the GPNRS.

2.1.4 Methods of Data Analysis

The data obtained from interview, group discussions, and observations and secondary texts of various natures was analyzed using qualitative data analysis procedures. Three analytical strategies of qualitative analysis: content analysis, narrative analysis, and discourse analysis were used. *Content analysis* (often called ‘mother of all qualitative’ analysis) is “any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages” (Holsti, 1969, p. 14). *Narrative Analysis* is ‘a method of qualitative research in which the researcher listens to the stories of the research subjects, attempting to understand the relationships between the experiences of the individuals and their social framework’ (Jonas, 2005 in Abdalla, 2011, p. 9). *Critical Discourse Analysis* is the “study of the relations between discourse, power, dominance, social inequality and the position of the discourse analyst in such social relationships.... the way we approach these questions and dimensions is by focusing on *the role of discourse in the (re)production and challenge of dominance*” (Abdalla, 2011, p. 9).

The practice of the analysis also saw the integration and interpenetration of data collection and data analysis. As Coffey & Atkinson (1996) note, “we should never collect data without substantial analysis going on” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 2). As such, simultaneous data collection and data analysis builds on the strengths of building theory and interpretations from the perspective of the people being studied, and allows the analysis to be shaped by the participants in a more fundamental way than if analysis is left until after the data collection is completed.

In strict sense, analysis of the data collected from various sources, through different techniques went in conformity to Yin’s (2011) five-phased cycle of data analysis and interpretation. First, all the data were *compiled* and published in a single document, the researcher transcribed field notes, interviews and audio-recorded verbal interactions as they are collected. This is followed by *disaggregating* where the data is chopped into manageable pieces using labels/codes in the division into suitable sized chunks. The third stage involved was *reassembling*, the organization of the data into appropriate substantive themes. The reassembling stage paved the way for the *analysis and interpretation* stage and finally to the *concluding*.

In a nutshell, after collection of data, common themes and patterns emerged were identified, and organized into coherent categories with further deep analysis to draw additional patterns and connections between categories. In this regard, the analysis involved coding the data. The coding process took two forms, the coding of the data from fieldwork (including participants’ perceptions, concerns and interpretations) and theoretical knowledge. In addition, as Barbour (2008) reminds an attempt was made to compare and contrast interview texts, to find out, “who is saying what and in what context” (Barbour, 2008, p. 217).

Apparently, one of the main worth aspirations sought by all (PhD) researchers is validity of the research findings. By taking on the direction as suggested by Creswell (2009), i.e. considering opposing explanations to the same phenomenon dully, attempts were made to ensure credibility and maximize reliability. Provided that the researcher's positionality on the topic under investigation is a potential source of bias which affects the validity of findings inasmuch as possible attempt is made to minimize possible 'subjectivity', collaborate with another researcher when collecting and reviewing data, and examining unusual or contradictory results for explanation and comparing and triangulating multiple data collected from all sides and sources.

The data collected was then analyzed through differing concepts based on the frameworks used as analytical lenses to guide the analysis. The dissertation used and combined various conceptual frameworks and parameters to analyze the research questions and, throughout the process, a marked feature has been the interaction of empirical realities in the field with theory. For example, to analyze RQ 1, the conflict situation in the region, the strategic conflict assessment (CSA) is roughly used as a conceptual lens to organize the analysis enriched with theoretical and conceptual issues in the field to maximize validity. RQ 2, that is, the practice of conflict transformation in the region is analyzed using the four dimensions of conflict transformation practice (structural, personal, relational and cultural) as outlined by Lederach (1997) as conceptual lens. To address RQ 3, the researcher combined a set of yardsticks from various sources (e.g. Reychler, 2002; OECD, 2008) particularly to ascertain the outcome and process of the peacebuilding with relative focus being accorded to the context in which the research is situated.

2.1.5 Ethical Considerations

As Bryman (2004) notes, we cannot ignore ethical issues in research as they “relate directly to the integrity of a piece of research and of the disciplines that are involved” (Bryman, 2004, p. 26). The issues of ethic and cultural sensitivity are particularly compelling in peace and conflict researches. As noted earlier, the fieldwork of the research involved accessing and interviewing a wide range of participants who might be victimized for their participation. In this research, the issue of avoiding harm to respondents or third parties, protecting their rights, sensitivities, interests and privacy as well as the safety of the researcher is considered carefully. Cognizant of these points, the research is guided by four main ethical principles: 1) voluntary participation; 2) participant well-being; 3) confidentiality; and 4) the presentation of honest statements about the research findings. All respondents participated based on their consent. The researcher revealed about the confidentiality of the communication and their identities. Participants also got verbal and written information about the aims of the research and room was given for clarity and questions before the actual interview was conducted. All the research participants voluntarily consented to participate but names of some sources are withheld to guarantee personal safety of the informants. Furthermore, the researcher employed what Kovats-Bernat (2002) termed, ‘*localised ethic*’, taking into account the local population’s advice and recommendations in making decisions about the types of conversations (and silences) that are important. The researcher has taken care to respect norms of the community. All information generated from primary and secondary sources have been duly acknowledged as citation is central part of the ethical considerations in research.

2.2 The Study Area: A Set of Factsheets about Gambella and its People

2.2.1 Location, Topography, and Climate

GPNRS, the study area, is one of the nine regional states constituting the FDRE. It is located in the southwestern part of the country between latitudes of 6°22' and 8°30' north and longitudes of 33°10' and 35°50' east along the western escarpments of the Ethiopian highlands, straddling to the South Sudan-bordering Benishangul-Gumuz and Oromia regions to the north, SNNPRS and the South Sudan to the South, Oromia and SNNPRS to the east and South Sudan to the west. The Gambella regional state forms a total land area of 32,033.8 km² out of which only 1,209,164 ha is arable (GPNRS President Office, 2013). If one has to call out what markedly describes Gambella, nothing stands out more prominently than its physical and geopolitical features as they partly explain Gambella's socio-economic marginality and political sensitivity. As opposed to the adjacent highland regions, which rise as high as 3,000 metres, Gambella is one of the hottest lowlands in the country, with an average temperature of 37 degrees Celsius and an altitude of only 500 metres above sea level. Gambella's marginal position is also reflected in its geopolitical (as it shares Ethiopia's longest international border with the South Sudan, a condition that renders it susceptible to wider geopolitical processes) and socioeconomic (being one of Ethiopia's poorest regions in terms of infrastructure and social services) sense (Dereje, 2006b).

2.2.2 Administrative Structure

GPNRS is currently arranged into three administrative zones - Anyuwa Zone, Nuer Zone and Majang Zone (a classification built on the three main indigenous groups in

the region),²⁸ thirteen districts including one special district (Itang²⁹) and one town administration (Gambella town). The Anyuwa Zone has five districts (Abobo, Dima, Gambella Zuria, Gog, and Jor); so does the Nuer Zone (Akobo, Jikawo, Lare, Makoy, and Wanthua). Majang Zone has two districts (Godere and Mengeshi) (Gambella Regional State Council, 2015).



Figure 1: Administrative map of GPNRS as of 17 August 2017 (downloaded from the UNOCHA website, 2018).

²⁸ This arrangement in ethnic zonation is institutionalized 2003. According to Dereje (2006b) it came as part of a response mechanism to the recurring violent inter-communal conflicts in the region.

²⁹ Itang is designated as special district presumably due to its mixed settlement nature (particularly the two major groups, the Anyuwa and Nuer) confounding its enclosure into one of the two zones. Yet, the designation of Itang as a special district is still contentious issue. The Anyuwa especially defy the set up that designates Itang special district status. During the field visit to the area the opposition has been intimated by a range of informants and group discussion participants. For instance, “*Itang is Itang, there is no special district*”, said one informant.

2.2.3 Population, Livelihood and Inter-Group Relations

The Gambella region is made up of five titular ethnic groups, namely, Anyuwa, Nuer, Majang, Opo and Komo, formally designated ownership status of the region and an ethnic conglomerate, Highlander, a categorization institutionalized in early 1990s as Ethiopia is reconfigured with the federal structure.³⁰ Whereas the Anyuwa and the Nuer, the two dominant contending groups in the region belong to the Nilotic language family; the Majang, the Upo and the Komo form part of the Koman language group (Bender et al., 1976). The Highlanders speak a variety of Semitic, Cushitic and Omotic languages. Highlanders' also use Amharic, which is the working language in the region and the federal government³¹. As Dereje pointed out, the competency in Amharic has allowed Highlanders to be more competent and dominant in the civil service in the regional government (Dereje, 2006a). In recent years, however, the dynamism is changing as titular groups are increasingly making it into the regional government civil

³⁰ As stipulated in article 46 of the region's constitution these five ethnic groups are referred officially, as 'national minorities' coexisting in Gambella, founders of the GPNRS (GPNRS constitution, 2002). Despite their sizable demography, the second largest group in the region, the Highlanders have been reduced to a residual category by the new political order, in fact constitutionally entrenched. Arguably, it is based on a premise that Highlanders belong to/or are represented in one of the other eight regional states in the country. It is a mode of dispensation that comes in line with the federal *modus operandi*, institutionalized in the country in early 1990s. As Van der Beken (2012) pointed out, the federal dispensation ordained territorial autonomy of all ethnic groups establishing regional states based on ethnicity thereby proclaiming ownership of the regional state to the ethnic group/groups ordained in a particular region as owners 'or titular of a regional state and/or a Zone/Special Wereda, Wereda or Kebele excluding other inhabitants who are not officially part of the group or putting them ancillary to the entitlement (Van der Beken, 2012). In recent years, there is a developing trend of entitlement scheme for 'non-titular', taking into consideration the political representation of those born and raised in what legally is the territory of 'another' ethnic group dubbed as *tewelaj* (those born and raised in the territory, but of different descent) for instance as in Afar (see Mulugeta & Firehiwot, 2014). Pertaining to this development, in GPNRS Highlanders are represented under the banner *agar dirijit* and where they are grouped in one of the four flagship parties in the EPRDF coalition (OPDO/ODP, ANDM/ADP, TPLF and SEPDM), a direct reversal of what GPDUM, the incumbent leading party in GPNRS is referred to by EPRDF. The *agar dirijit's* have been offered some administrative posts particularly in city administration areas like Gambella town. This move has created a division among Highlanders and dissatisfaction from those Highlanders born and raised in GPNRS as those included in posts representing *agar dirijit* does not form this category of Highlanders of *tewelaj*. This has in fact brought about some changes as handful *tewelaj* Highlanders born and raised in the GPNRS are included in political appointments to form into members of regional council during the latest 2015 election.

³¹ Article 6(1) of the GPNRS constitution reads, "Amharic shall be the working language of the region" (GPNRS, 2002).

service albeit the Highlanders still possess overwhelming dominance in the business sector.

The latest national population and housing census puts the region's total population at 307,096 of which the Nuers represent 46.65 %, then the Highlanders 27.79%, the Anyuwaa 21.17%, the Majang 4% and the Opo and Komo 0.39% (CSA, 2007).³² As per the projected estimation of CSA in 2013 the region's population is estimated to reach 396,000 (Gambella Regional State Council, 2015).

An interesting development about the demographic dynamics in GPNRS is the rise of the region's population from internal population movement and refugee migration. The former represents Highlanders that moved into the region from various parts of the country at various times over the past several years. The majority of the Highlanders came to the Gambella region in the mid-1980s as part of the government's policy of resettling famine-affected people from the northern and southern highlands to the western lowlands. Most are ethnic Amhara, Oromo or Tigrean, but they also include a variety of ethnic groups from southern Ethiopia (Dereje, 2006; Regassa, 2010). Also, in a form of un-designed, natural population movement, Highlanders are increasingly making it into the region particularly in the last few years. The refugee flow into Gambella region is a repercussion of a civil war in next door, the Sudan, and South Sudan, since 2011. In mid 1980s, the refugee population in Gambella amounted to 300,000, a size that far outnumbered the then local population (see Dereje, 2006a; Medhane, 2007; Regassa, 2010). In another cycle of refugee 'influx' following the 2013

³² Pursuant to the pattern, the national population and housing census is carried out every decade, meaning the following was expected to be conducted in 2017. Yet due to irregularities of many kinds it has not been undertaken. According to a recent ruling by the federal house of people representatives the national census will be conducted from April 4 to 5, 2019.

South Sudan civil war, the Gambella region has again hosted a stunning number of refugees. According to a report by the Danish Refugee Council (2016), until April, 2016 Gambella region has hosted 220,000 South Sudanese refugees (predominantly ethnic Nuer).

Table 1 **Population Distribution and Ethnic Composition in GPNRS (2007 Census)**

Group	Urban	Percent	Rural	Percent	Total	Percent
“Indigenous” people						
Anyuwaa	20,092	25.8%	44,894	19.6%	64,986	21.2%
Nuer	25,950	33.3%	117,336	51.2%	143,286	46.7%
Mejenger	837	1%	11,443	5%	12,280	4%
Oppo and Komo	156	0.2%	1,072	0.5%	1,228	0.4%
Highlanders						
Amharas	10,972	14%	14,890	6.5%	25,862	8.4%
Kefficho	1,203	1.54%	14,287	6.2%	15,490	5%
SNNPR	5,112	6.56%	9,936	4.3%	15,048	4.9%
Oromos	9,605	12.3%	5,228	2.3%	14,833	4.8%
Shekecho	244	0.3%	6,732	2.9%	6,976	2.3%
Tigrayans	2,194	3%	1,858	0.8%	4,052	1.3%
Others	1,560	2%	1,495	0.7%	3,055	1%
Total	77,925	100%	229,171	100%	307,096	100%

Source: Population and Housing Census, 2007

Livelihood

Predominantly the livelihood of the titular groups can be subsumed into agriculture, and hunting and gathering. The Anyuwaa are mainly crop growers; the Nuer, traditionally being transhumant pastoralists, are turning increasingly to practicing agro-pastoralism; while the Opo and Komo are shifting cultivators, the Majang combine shifting cultivation with hunting and gathering, and apiculture (Stauder, 1971). As to the Highlanders, location determines their livelihood strategies. In the villages, they make living as cultivators whereas in the towns, Highlanders constitute the majority of the traders and make living as civil servants (Dereje, 2011, pp. 2-3).

The livelihood of varying groups inhabiting GPNRS tends to inform their sociopolitical organization and outlook. To the Anyuwaa, land is the focal point in the construction of identity, sociopolitical organization and worldview. The agrarian Anyuwaa had developed a more centralized political system, consisting of village states, whereas the agro-pastoral Nuer and the Majang, the Komo and Opo shifting cultivators were more egalitarian, with the political system based on meritocracy and gerontocracy. According to Dereje (2011a) “the Anyuwaa identity construction is landed,” implying the importance of territory is as they construct and deconstruct identity (Dereje, 2011a, p. 39). In a stark contrast, in the Nuer cosmology, land is considered as God-given, unrestricted to nobody’s possession rather to be accessed by all, with customary rules however governing its access and use. The Nuer do not identify with a particular territory, and could easily relocate if a greener pasture is captured and in as much as power allows, the Nuer intend to increase the land area their livestock could graze (Evans-Pritchard, 1940; 1947). The life of the Majang is deeply attached to forest, to the degree that they can be referred as people of the forest³³ (Stauder, 1971; Seyuom, 2016).

Arguably, the differing mode of livelihood strategies has also implicated on the ‘traditional’ governance systems. As captured by the prominent anthropologist Evans-Pritchard, whereas the Anyuwaa are reckoned to have developed well-established centralized village state, the other titular groups of Gambella appear more egalitarian and meritocratic (Evans-Pritchard, 1940). In a form of ethnology, he contrasted the Anyuwaa as *cephalous* (village state) with the Nuer system as *acephalous* (Evans-

³³ A typical illustration of this is the Majang saying- “A Majang outside the forest is like a fish out of water” (Seyuom, 2015).

Pritchard, 1956). As such, even if both are from the Nilotic language group, the Anyuwaa and Nuer are people of different worlds in their culture, social organization, and worldviews.

Inter-group Relations

When it comes to inter-group relation, although there have been elements of reciprocity and complementary socio-economic exchanges, conflict forms the preponderant pattern of interaction among various groups that inhabit in Gambella. Dereje aptly puts it:

In interpersonal and intergroup relations, friends and foes are represented in ethnic terms, and tension and violence are expressed in various fields of social interaction: from villages to churches, from schools to political parties. In cities, inter-ethnic hostility has resulted in segregated ethnic neighborhoods (Dereje, 2011, p. xii).

This condition becomes more noticeable when viewed from two angles: intra indigenous group interaction manner, and indigenous versus migrants' relationship mode. The former is reflected in the Anyuwaa-Nuer inter-ethnic relation, the most protracted conflict in the region; intra-Nuer clan interaction; and Majang-Anyuwaa relationship. The latter form of adversarial interaction is notably expressed in its violent form between the Anyuwaa and the Highlander and the Majang and the Highlander particularly in recent years. The Anyuwaa and the Nuer are the two major contending groups in the region, prominently reflecting the pattern of animosity as predominant form of inter-group interaction. As works attest, the conflictual relationship between these two ethnic groups is attributed to the eastward expansion of the Nuer from Sudan to the current Gambella region of Ethiopia (the detail is presented in the following sections).

CHAPTER THREE

Conflict, Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding

3.1 Introduction

The preceding two chapters demonstrated the purpose of the research and the methodology employed to address the problem. Chapter one gave an overview of the general background - the significance of the study, the limitation and scope, and the structure of the dissertation. Besides, Chapter One gives an extensively argued literature review to identify the gaps in the accessible related bodies of literature, and demonstrate the contribution of the study to existing knowledge. The following two Chapter Three and Chapter Four place the study within the wider academic milieu of the theoretical and conceptual debates as well the context and practices of conflict transformation and peacebuilding grounded to the study setting previous researches and experiences in order to help us navigate this thesis. Accordingly, this chapter conceptualizes conflict, conflict transformation, peacebuilding and other relevant issues in order to conceptually explicate the thesis.

3.2 Conceptualizing Conflict and Conflict Analysis

3.2.1 The Nature of Conflict

The word 'conflict' is a contested term that has seen numerous definitions in connection with 'fights, games and debates'. For some (e.g. Aubert, 1963), both '*consensual*', conflicts over interests and '*dissensual*', conflicts over values denote 'conflict. In the eyes of others (e.g. Burton, 1990a), the former signifies 'disputes' that require settlement and the term 'conflict' is reserved for a deeper struggle over unsatisfied human needs that require resolution. Deutsch (one of the seminal scholars in the field),

defined conflict as one that exists whenever incompatible activities occur (Deutsch, 1973, p.10). On his part, Mitchell viewed conflict as uneasy relationship or struggle prevalent between parties in pursuit of different or mutually incompatible goals. These goals can be values, interests, power and scarce resources, which can be based on real, imagined, misperceived, misunderstood, fabricated or exaggerated differences (Mitchell, 1981). As these, definitions allude to, conflict occurs, or is at least is likely to occur, if two or more parties seek exclusive possession or use of a resource or a given part of it.

Meanwhile, John Galtung (1969) in his model known as a ABC triangle described conflict as triangle encompassing three angles - *contradictions* (C), *attitude* (A) and *behavior* (B) (Galtung, 1969; see also Galtung, 1996, p. 72). Galtung framed conflict as a dynamic process in which structure, attitudes and behavior interact, continuously changing and reinforcing one another.

Contradiction points to the underlying conflict situation, the actual or perceived ‘incompatibility of goals’ between the parties in conflict.³⁴ Attitude refers to the parties’ perceptions and misperceptions of each other and of themselves, which could be positive or negative albeit in violent conflicts parties in conflict often resort to denigrating stereotypes against each other. The third component, behavior, involves cooperation or coercion gestures indicative of conciliation or hostility. Violent conflict behavior is characterized by threats, coercion and destructive attacks. Galtung argues that for full conflict to appear, all three components have to be present. Accordingly, a conflict structure without conflictual attitudes or behavior is a latent (or structural) one

³⁴ Christopher Mitchell dubbed *Contradiction* as ‘mis-match between social values and social structure’ (Mitchell, 1981a, p. 18).

(Galtung, 1996). What is striking about the ABC triangle is that it is a kind of postulation which, defines, and at the same time, points to the components, processes and spectrums of conflict.

The definition and conceptualization given by the scholars about conflict imply the weight they give either to the behavioral or cognitive aspect of conflict, a tendency that implicated the categorization of the various definitions into two main strands - those that see conflict mainly as a psychological state of affair and those that view conflict as a physical phenomenon (see, Bercovitch, Victor & Zartman, 2009). Grouped in the cognitive camp are scholars like Boulding (1962), Stanger (1956, 1967) and Hammond, (1965). For example, Boulding (1962) espouses that conflict refers to a particular situation *“in which the parties are aware of the incompatibility of potential future positions”* (Boulding, 1962, p. 5). Generally, as to this school of thought, conflict refers to a situation where parties perceive goal incompatibility but do not necessarily engage in behaviors which are mutually incompatible. It is an approach that ushered an examination of attitudes, emotional orientation, perceptual conditions and other psychological processes in conflict (Bercovitch et al., 2009, p.4).

On the other hand, a range of other scholars contend that even if parties can hold irreconcilable positions and proceed in that state, active conflict, that is, overt coercive behavior only sets in as they move from this passive or static position and start expanding efforts to prevail. From the schools of thought that propel the physical dimension of conflict Coser, Himes and Deutsch are eminent. For instance, Coser (1957) defined conflict as *“a struggle over values, and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate rivals”* (Coser, 1956, p. 7). On his part, Himes (1980) suggests that social conflict

“refers to purposeful struggle between collective actors who use social power to defeat or remove opponents and to gain status, power, resources and other scarce values” (Himes, 1980, p. 14). Thus, for those who accentuate the physical dimension conflict, occurs when two or more bodies move against each other-overt *and coercive behavior initiated by one contending party against another* (Bercovitch et al., 2009, p.4).

In a nutshell, as Mack & Snyder (1957) pointed out, the term conflict implies a range of empirical phenomena that may exist within and among individuals, groups or nations, involving four main properties (1) *the existence of two or more parties*, (2) *a situation of resource or position scarcity*, (3) *the presence of behavior that is designed to hurt or injure the other*, and (4) *mutually opposed goals* (Mack & Snyder, 1957). These properties have been invariably used by scholars as a basis to generate the plethora of classifications suggested as regards conflict situations and types of conflict (Bercovitch et al., 2009).

To this end, in this thesis the term ‘conflict’ is used to indicate the wider set of circumstances in which conflicting parties perceive that they have mutually incompatible interest. The use of this view about conflict is necessitated as it is a conception that encompasses and traverses both psychological and physical dimensions and that protracted social conflicts which the study deals with equally have psychosocial dimensions.

Feature and Process

By its very nature conflict is universal, ubiquitous and dynamic. It is universal because it is a common feature of humankind. Conflict is ubiquitous as it occurs in all facets of human relationships. Conflict is also inherently dynamic for it escalates and de-escalates and constitutes a complex interplay of situations.

Yet conflict never happens in a vacuum. Prior to their manifestations, conflicts underlie in some latent conditions, often in the form of feeling of injustice, from articulation of dissatisfaction or grievance (real or imagined) with an existing system or relationship, to normal set of cycles if unaddressed or badly managed at the inception (Ramsbotham et al., 2011, p. 12). Even if every conflict situation has its own specific dynamics, all conflicts still tend to share some general communalities as they gestate through a series of identifiable stages, comprising initiation, escalation, de-escalation, and cessation (Kriesberg, 1998; Mitchell, 1981; Jeong, 2008).

A necessary and indispensable condition while making sense of and constructing the context of a conflict environment is identification of the patterns of interaction between antagonists at various stages of the conflict. In this regard, anticipation and feedbacks, misperception, and the size, composition and ideological outlook of groups involved are powerful and enduring variables. As Sandole (2006) pointed out, anticipation and feedback sustain the conflict process by serving as instruments for self-stimulated action thus breeding counteractions and conflict spirals (Sandole, 2006). 'Misperception', particularly misperceptions of the capabilities and intentions of adversaries and third states is important (Levy, 1996; Miall et al., 1999). In misperception, actions are mutually interpreted in the most threatening light, attributing 'worst motivations to the other side', thereby shrinking the space for compromise and

accommodation (Miall et al., 1999, p. 75). Furthermore, the size, composition and ideological outlook of conflict groups are influential provided that they impact their strategy and choice. According to Kriesberg (1998) “continuously organized conflict groups enjoy a mobilization advantage over emergent conflict parties” (Kriesberg, 1998, p. 92). As one grapples with a certain conflict situation, an insight into the formation of the conflict groups, their perceived grievances, their goal formulation and pursuit to attain them is, therefore, vital.

Overall, what is striking about the process and dynamics of conflict is that it vacillates between constructive and destructive phases (Galtung, 1990). They can develop and change at astonishing speed. They can also take long periods of time to gestate unnoticed before they suddenly erupt into overt violence. New issues and conflict parties can emerge, internal power struggles can alter tactics and goals, deepen and spread generating secondary conflicts and spirals further complicating the situation and considerably complicating the task of addressing the original, core conflict. The same is true of de-escalation, with unexpected breakthroughs and setbacks changing the dynamics, with advances in one area or at one level being offset by relapses at others, and with the actions of third parties influencing the outcome in unforeseen ways (Ramsbotham et al., 2011, pp. 12-13). Therefore, in its very nature, the process of both conflict escalation and de-escalation is complex and unpredictable, and activities of conflict are organically related to each other in terms of their synergy. Jeong (2008) articulated the process of conflict escalation eloquently:

... Once conflict is initiated, it is exposed to various types of transformation, along with the proliferation of issues and an increase in the intensity of struggles. In general, bipolarization in the relationship tends to bring about a conflict of greater intensity and the simplification of each party's image with dehumanization. Inter-group polarization, meanwhile, is bound to consolidate positions of hawkish leaders with an emphasis on internal cohesion and unity. As such, various stages demonstrate typical behavioural patterns and psychological conditions. Dynamics of unrestrained escalation and polarization carry participants away from cooperative efforts by means of runaway responses to hostilities. And increasingly malign motives are reinforced within each party by stereotypes (Jeong, 2008, pp. 36- 37).

3.2.2 Conflict Analysis: Some Conceptual Remark

Scholars have increasingly reiterated the significance of a conceptual knowledge base that calls for a thorough understanding of conflict phenomena. It is this indelible consensus, as many note, (e.g. Fisher, 2000; Best, 2007; Jeong, 2008) that lend undertaking conflict analysis of a given conflict situation a requisite task prior to initiation of any effort of conflict settlement and resolution as it helps identify major theories relevant for a full grasp of real-world conflict situations, their sources and dynamics. A concomitant reason to situating conflicts or wars in perspective has been scholars' defiance against the hyper-simplified understanding about the causes of conflict - what Holsti (1989) termed 'tyranny of the single-cause', in the explanation of war. Needless to say, the mainstreaming of conflict analysis is a mundane practice of a large number of organizations operating in pre-conflict, conflict and post-conflict environments remarkably implicates the benefit of making conflict analysis for any endeavors of conflict intervention and investigation of a given peacebuilding architecture. Therefore, as Leonhardt (2001) notes, "the purpose of conflict analysis is to gain a good understanding of the problem areas in which external organisations can make a meaningful contribution to reducing the potential for conflict and advancing the peacebuilding process" (p. 63), a reason that also dictates this review in this dissertation.

Jeong (2008) conceptualized conflict analysis as “a systematic study of conflict with a view to understanding its history, underlying causes, actors and dynamics and how all of these can help in developing and deploying a conflict-sensitive intervention program” (Jeong, 2008, p. 10). The definition implies that conflict analysis is a mechanism that helps to make sense of the substantive aspects of a given conflict situation in order to enrich the development of an intervention mechanism essentially responsive and desirable - both theory and action - simultaneously.

As such, conflict analysis could be carried at various levels (local, sub-national, and national, regional, international) and, in the meantime, establish the connection between these levels. To that effect, a plethora of conflict assessment frameworks and methods have been proffered albeit none of them considered infallible and exhaustive. The existing literature propound for a kind of conflict analysis that feeds on a wide range of levels, perspectives, issues and dimensions and their triangulation. The consensual understanding is that whereas articulated in a comprehensive framework, the analysis of a given conflict phenomenon should be context-specific. A range of contextual factors affect the resolution framework, not least the nature of conflict issues, actors, underlying institutional structures and their dynamics; the nature of violence (whether the conflict is predominantly at level of structural violence or direct violence); the intensity of direct violence; and the role of parties in conflict and their allies (Fisher, 2000; Best, 2007; Jeong, 2008). In addition, even if every conflict situation possesses unique features, scholars agree over some key factors that traverse specificity in the analysis of any conflict situation - elements of conflict analysis which are helpful to enhance our understanding of the hidden and manifest issues embedded in a given

conflict context to enrich the examination of the conflict transformation and peacebuilding include *actors/parties, issues, goals, interest and context*.³⁵

To this end, it is imperative that conflict intervention and transformation strategies transcend policy recommendations to address issues of how solutions can be developed and implemented, by whom and under what conditions; are designed with assistance of specialist mediator or negotiator; involve parties help develop and agree on the role they can play, compromises and tradeoffs to be made, stages of implementation, the role of third parties; and monitoring and evaluation mechanism on the implementation processes. Overall, a good framework is marked by its capacity to anticipate potential challenges or setbacks and plan how to tackle it at various stages. Win-win solutions are most functional as opposed to win-lose solutions.

3.3 Conceptualizing Peacebuilding

3.3.1 The Concept of Peacebuilding

Since Boutros-Ghali brought it to attention of the UN, in 1992, in the *Agenda for Peace*, by defining it as “action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict,”³⁶ the concept of the term peacebuilding has broadened and become expansive term.³⁷ This definition, which essentially attributed peacebuilding to post-conflict activities aimed at the consolidation of peace enticed sharp criticisms from many academics, who consider that the concept should be broadened³⁸ (see Patrick, 2011; Omeje, 2014). In August 2000, in his report,

³⁵ (For detail discussion on these key factors in conflict analysis see Jeong, 2008, pp.-21-30).

³⁶ (Boutros-Ghali, 1992, p. 104).

³⁷ ‘Prior to Boutros-Ghali’s report, peacebuilding was restricted to activities designed to consolidate peace in *post-conflict countries* in order to avoid a relapse into conflict’ (Karbo, 2008, p. 114).

³⁸ In response to the criticisms, Boutros-Ghali broadened the remit of the concept of peacebuilding in subsequent publications (see Patrick, 2011; Omeje, 2014).

referred to peacebuilding as “activities undertaken on the far side of the conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and provide the tools for building on those foundations something that is more than just the absence of war (Brahimi, 2000, p. 3).” Again, in 2004, Kofi Annan, the then Secretary-General of the UN said peacebuilding required ‘sustained, cooperative work on the underlying economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems’ (Annan, 2004).

The implication of the policy documents discussed above is clear: like other empirical studies of peacebuilding, they link the concept of peacebuilding to post-conflict activity that starts after the end of conflict (see Ali & Mathews, 2004; Karbo, 2008). As Karbo (2008) notes, they “utilized a limited and narrow analysis with emphasis and focus on periods of transition which generally require short-term interventions in post-peace agreements” (Karbo, 2008, p. 114). Concurring with this assertion Hevia Dashwood observed that “the literature and governments such as Canada tend to approach peacebuilding in post conflict situations as a short-term proposition spanning two to three years” (Hevia Dashwood, in Karbo, 2008, p.114). Ali & Mathews (2004) who also agree with this assertion write:

the focus of this literature tends to be on the political negotiations and accommodation among leaders of the rival parties, with emphasis on such short-term tasks as the signing of a ceasefire, the demilitarization and reintegration of former combatants, the resettlement of displaced persons, the approval of a new or revised constitution, and the holding of elections (Ali & Mathews, 2004; in Karbo, 2008, p. 14).

Against the above backdrops, many maintain that the conception provided in policy circles espouses a myopic approach that limited the complex process of building sustainable peace to political aspects. According to critics the shortcomings of this

approach was demonstrated from the empirical examination of peacebuilding processes as observed in Angola, Somalia and Sudan. Karbo (2008) argues:

Peacebuilding should be much more than designing interventions at the political and economic levels; peacebuilding must be designed with a view to addressing the fundamental causes and conditions of the conflict. This requires sustained processes of designing programs that address the security and political realities of the country as well as looking at measures that will transform the personal, social, economic and cultural relationships of that country (Karbo, 2008, pp. 114-115).

Alternatively, critics suggest a broader and expansive conception of peacebuilding that cuts across the entire conflict spectrum: a long-term process that happens before conflict (pre-conflict phase), during conflict (violent conflict phase) and after violent conflict (post-conflict phase).³⁹ For example, the OECD defined peacebuilding as “a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundation for sustainable peace and development” (OECD, 2010, p. 45). Taking a resembling line of thought Lederach defined, peacebuilding as “a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates, and sustains the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflicts towards more sustainable peaceful relationships” (Lederach, 1997, p. 21). The broader notion of peacebuilding is built on the concept of negative peace (the absence of physical violence), and positive peace (the absence of structural violence) as provided by Galtung in 1969. As a concept that encapsulates both the idea of negative and positive peace, peacebuilding seeks to “address the root causes and effects of conflict by restoring broken relationships, promoting reconciliation, institution-building and political reform, as well as facilitating economic transformation” (Karbo, 2008, p. 115).

³⁹ (For general overview of this literature see Karbo, 2008, pp. 114-117; Ramsbotham et al., 2011).

From the above discussions on the notion of peacebuilding two main approaches could be gleaned: on the one hand is the view of peacebuilding that begins chiefly after the cessation of violent conflict – an understanding pervasive in the policy circles and in the eyes of many empirical studies. On the other hand, an understanding of peacebuilding in a broader sense, as a concept that encapsulates the whole spectrum of conflict – starting before violent conflict (latent stage) and continuing during the periods of overt violence as well as extending after the cessation of violence.

This thesis adopts an understanding of peacebuilding in the broader sense, as a concept that embraces activities before, during and after conflict, traversing the entire spectrum of conflict. The maximalist understanding of peacebuilding gives a room to capture local circumstances, and in the context of this study inter-communal conflict transformation efforts and peacebuilding process in the GPNRS vis-à-vis local conditions in the region. This helps fill some of the loopholes of the liberal peace approaches to peacebuilding the circumstances of protracted social conflicts. The conflict environment in the Gambella region of Ethiopia is characteristic of PSC (see Chapter Six) embodying a deep-seated relational aspect. This is compounded by the realities on the ground, as the groups locked in conflict in the Gambella region live in close geographical proximity harboring trauma and hatred. This requires the rebuilding of relationships at core of the peacebuilding process, asserting communal responsibility and solidarity.

3.3.2 Peacebuilding and the Conflict Spectrum

As given above scholars that tend to employ a broader understanding of peacebuilding equate the notion of peacebuilding as one that traverses the whole conflict cycle, that is to say, occurring before conflict (pre-conflict phase), during conflict (violent conflict phase) and after conflict (post-conflict phase). By using these three general stages of conflict as analytical division below attempt are made to review activities of peacebuilding considered suitable at each phases. Still it is important to note that as Ramsbotham et al., (2011) pointed out, generally speaking, tasks of peacebuilding deemed appropriate are located across the three stages of the of conflict spectrum. This however does not mean that the conflict stages as well as the peacebuilding measures are mutually exclusive. As such, conflict do not necessarily go through these phases so does the tasks of peacebuilding.

Pre-conflict phase: This stage entails peacebuilding measures applied before the occurrences of conflict in the first place or as Swanström & Weissmann (2005) note ‘to prevent a conflict from re-escalating in a post-conflict phase’ (p. 12). Put another way, it involves the task of conflict prevention designed at the latent stage of conflict so that the violence of insidious nature could not culminate into overt violence (Omeje, 2014; Swanström & Weissmann, 2005).

As regards peacebuilding measures happening at an early stage, before the occurrence of overt violence many distinguish between direct preventive measures and structural preventive measures.⁴⁰ According to Swanström & Weissmann (2005) direct

⁴⁰The distinction serves the purpose of making conflict prevention measures effective both at the levels of unstable and stable peace before a conflict has become manifest (see African Union, 2010; Swanström & Weissmann, 2005). This does not however mean that there is a clear border between structural and direct prevention measures rather aspects of the two are is still often overlapping (African Union, 2010; Swanström & Weissmann, 2005, p. 12).

preventive measures are measures “directed at issues with a shorter term goal in mind, i.e. to reduce tension and create trust between the actors” (p. 12). They can come as formal or informal workshops dealing with the possible conflict issues. They can also come with the aim of creating openness in certain fields such as the military, reducing military spending, or achieving cooperation in rescue operations. Problem solving workshops sanctions, and coercive diplomacy as well as dispatching of special envoys are also considered as other examples of direct preventive measures (Swanström & Weissmann, 2005, p. 12). As Wallensteen notes, “ although direct prevention action may reduce or eliminate violence they don’t necessarily eliminate the conflict as such or its underlying causes” (Wallensteen 2002, p. 213). They must always be supported by long term structural approaches that tackle the deep roots, or causes of conflict such as poverty, underdevelopment, proliferation of arms, denial of human rights and the like. This is what makes structural prevention of paramount importance becomes important (African Union, 2010, pp. 19-20).

Structural prevention entails addressing the building blocks of violence underlying sources of violence not least discrimination and economic deprivation, societal stress, military threats and sources of insecurity, and various environmental and resource degradation problems that may contribute to political instability and conflict (African Union, 2010, p. 19; Wallensteen 2002, p. 148). The benefit of dealing with issues which are at the root of the occurrence of violent conflict is that it gives an opportunity for an early response (African Union, 2010). As Swanström & Weissmann, (2005) pointed out applying structural measures early has the advantage of increasing the acceptance

of preventive measures so that afterwards a far-reaching and institutional measures can be carried out. Overall, as Cockell (2002) states:

without such strategies aimed at structural transformation, the operational (i.e., proximate) manipulation of political processes can be futile as the underlying differences in social identities and material interests continue to erode society (Cockell, 2002, p. 187, in African Union, 2010, p. 20).

The violent conflict phase. Because overt violence has already broken out the main objective of peacebuilding during this stage is the mitigation of violent conflict (both in terms of alleviating the intensity of violence as well as in constraining the conflict from spreading geographically) while working in tandem in bringing it to an end, stopping violent conflict (see Swanström & Weissmann, 2005; Ramsbotham et al., 2011). Thus, contrary to the conflict prevention measures in the pre-conflict stage the tasks of peacebuilding in the violent phase is mainly characteristic of the substances and ethos of conflict settlement⁴¹ and conflict management. Focus is given on elite peacemaking, where the aim is to enable political elites settle their differences by peaceful ways, by creating incentives (Ramsbotham et al., 2011). As Omeje pointed out, because political power is always at the center of the process, the outcomes of conflict settlement in this stage often ‘reflect the power relations between actors involved’. This means that there is a likelihood for the conflict to re-appear ‘if power relations between parties change or if grievances accumulate heavily’ (Omeje, 2014).

In general, the violent phase involves third party actors that assist in ending violence by adjusting and monitoring the concern and interests of the actors involved in the conflict situation. It is also important to note that although a range of different measures

⁴¹ Conflict settlement “corresponds to what we call ‘elite peacemaking’ – in other words, negotiation or mediation among the main protagonists with a view to reaching a mutually acceptable agreement” (Ramsbotham et al., 2011, pp. 13-14).

are applied in this stage only few these tend to be peaceful (Omeje, 2014; Swanström & Weissmann, 2005).

Post-violence phase. This is the last stage of the peacebuilding. It is the de-escalation phase where the aim is not only to ensure that violence does not relapse but also the conflict is transformed sustainably ‘into peaceful processes of political and social change, including reconstruction and reconciliation’ (Ramsbotham et al., 2011, p. 33). Post-conflict peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts are often financially costly and require enormous political and economic commitment from the actors involved as well as other stakeholder than proactive measures in the escalation phase. This is not to mention the economic and social costs that affect the population at large, but especially the poorer sections of society. Furthermore, the fact that the post-violence peacebuilding and reconstructions are carried in an environment that lacks trust makes the tasks daunting and complex, if not impossible. As such, in the real world, there are often no, or limited, trust until the peace consolidation phase has been initiated (Swanström & Weissmann, 2005, p. 14). They argued:

In general, the measures used in the de-escalation phase are often much more financially and politically demanding than pro-active measures in the escalation phase. Furthermore, measures taken after a war often have to involve third parties, actors that can guarantee security for all actors involved, which is not needed to the same extent in the escalation phase. This takes a lot of political compromises and intense negotiations in an environment that lacks trust (Swanström & Weissmann, 2005, p. 14).

Finally, with regard to peacebuilding measures in general (as well as with respect to the direction adopted in this thesis) it is imperative to have a highlighting remark: that the above discussed peacebuilding measures may be initiated at all levels of the conflict cycles, and that as the space narrows or widens in conflict escalation and de-escalation

different peacebuilding responses become more or less appropriate (see Swanström & Weissmann, 2005, pp. 14-15; Ramsbotham et al., 2011, p. 13).

3.3.3 Approaches to Peacebuilding

An insight into theoretical discourses in peacebuilding broadly informs two strands of intellectual approaches: *the structural approach* and *the conflict transformation approach* (see Karbo, 2008; Omeje, 2008).

I) The Structural Approach

The structural approach propounds for peacebuilding akin to statebuilding marked by a generic and developmental orientation to building a meaningful peace. Proponents of this approach (e.g. Call, 2008a; Newman, 2009) maintain that the creation of “peace” that makes sense to host societies requires an approach geared toward addressing the systemic structural conditions that foster violent conflict *inter alia* issues of bad governance, state failure, state-society-citizen relations, political legitimacy, representation and inclusion, poverty, development and human rights. As Ball (2005) pointed out, the precepts of this approach emanates from the understanding that occurrences of violent intra-state conflicts, their root causes are mainly linked to issues of governance and the functioning of the state, especially its relationship with the citizens, legitimacy and ability to provide basic services and modes of governance. This indicates that such conflicts occur at different levels of political and economic development, with diverse political and social systems and varying physical and human resource endowment, culture and historical experiences⁴² (Ball, 2005).

⁴² Parallel to these political realities of a country in conflict, the economic and social structures are also generally characterized by unique features that work to intensify conflict (Karbo, 2008, p. 121). For instance, the experience of Rwandan is illustrative of case where causes of the conflict lie in the structures of society. One explanation for the cause of tension between the Hutus and Tutsis was the structural issues relating to the unequal distribution of resources between the two groups. These inequities required

As regards the execution of the process, the structural approach gives priority to strengthening the capacity of the government in order to assist it undertake its key tasks - the return of internally displaced persons and external refugees, rehabilitation of infrastructure and state institutions, conducting constitutional and judicial reviews, stabilization of the national currency, removal of landmines, termination of extralegal forms of recruitment to the security sector, restructuring of the security sector based on the principle of civil management, and oversight of the security forces (Ball, 2005; Karbo, 2008).

The structural approach is criticized for being overly ambitious. As Call, (2008a) argues although it helps to show the complex and integrated nature of peacebuilding, it is, considered “too inclusive to be useful” and even idealistic for more developed countries that are considered peaceful (Call, 2008a, p.170). The major defect within this approach, according to Call, relates to its failure to give attention to underlying sources of conflict such as horizontal inequalities, social injustice and unemployment, which according to Call are “risk factors that shape outcomes (Call, 2008b, p. 174). Many also cite the Weberian notion of state of the West it prescribes and sets as standard for other states and societies as limitation (see Paris, 2003; Hebert, 2009). As Paris stresses, from the line of this approach, peacebuilding is increasingly seen as a new mission *civilisatrice*, as an ‘act to bring war-shattered states into conformity with the international system’s prevailing standards of domestic governance’ (Paris, 2002, p. 638).

few proximate causes to trigger off the genocide. They were further compounded by the weakness of the state, unresponsive leadership, colonial legacies, constitutional inadequacies and age-old hatred between Hutus and Tutsis (Ali & Mathews, 2004, in Karbo, 2004, p. 121).

II) The Conflict Transformation Approach

Scholars in this approach maintain that peacebuilding activities should transcend beyond ending overt violence to transforming deep-rooted conflicts into peaceful ones by fundamentally transforming the conflict in various aspect. The conflict transformation approach views peace as a process of social change and peacebuilding as both processual and dynamic, like the social relationships it seeks to transform (Dugan, 1997). This is based on the assumption that an enduring peace effort requires more than cessation of hostilities - changing the parties, their relationships and the conditions that precipitated the conflict (Rupesinghe, 1995; Mitchell, 2002). The undesired situations are overcome by building something desired through the transformation of relationships and construction of the conditions for peace (Karbo, 2008). Thus, one of the main differences of the transformational approach from the structural lies in the emphasis it gives on fundamentally transforming *relationships*. And the broken relationship is rebuilt through *reconciliation*, the emphasis of the process being on reconciliation within society as well as on strengthening their (society's) peacebuilding potentials (see also Karbo, 2008).

As Lederach maintains reconciliation has vital role for it serves as a locus of encounter. A place of contact which creates ways of engaging in 'relations with other human beings' where groups locked in conflict partake on the painful exercise of looking back and acknowledging a hurtful past, and put their concern about the past and the future. This process helps the contending groups to see the interdependence between them and envision a shared sense of future without getting trapped in the past (Lederach, 1999). Lederach is also of adamant belief that the situation in violent societal conflicts beg a wider perspective of reconciliation than the international political traditions, discourse and operational modalities. This is due to the reason that contemporary social conflicts

embody an essential feature which do not permit the creation of sustainable peace drawn at the negotiation table as for instance with heads of governments. He writes:

The immediacy of hatred and prejudice, or racism and xenophobia, as primary factors and motivators of the conflict means that its transformation must be rooted in social-psychological and spiritual dimensions that traditionally have been seen as either irrelevant or outside the competency of international diplomacy (Lederach, 1999, p. 29).

Accordingly, for Lederach, it is at this very point that the conceptual paradigm and practice of peacebuilding needs to create movement away from a concern with the resolution of issues towards a frame of reference that focuses on the restoration and rebuilding of relationships (see Lederach, 1997).

Criticism

The conflict transformation approach is criticized as being ‘utopian’, rising doubts about its applicability. Many are also wary about the commitment embedded to transformation which could potentially lead to dis-respect for indigenous cultures, as it reflects ‘we know best’ attitude (Ryan, 2007). Popper takes this further and is emphatic: “it is inherently dangerous and irrational, because the knowledge that informs the utopian impulse is not properly tested, it cannot learn from its mistakes because the possibilities of errors are not written into the plan, and as a result it is uncompromising and takes a dim attitude towards criticisms” (Popper, 1961, p. 66). Furthermore, in the eyes of the votaries of the resolution school of thought, the transformational approach is not as groundbreaking and a significant step as it sought to be; rather, it represents the deepest level of conflict resolution (Mitchell, 2002; Ramsbotham et al., 2011). As Ramsbotham et al., (2011) put forward, conflict transformation corresponds to the deepest level of action in conflict resolution. They write:

It [conflict transformation] implies a deep transformation in the institutions and discourses that reproduce violence, as well as in the conflict parties themselves and their relationships. It corresponds to the underlying tasks of structural and cultural peacebuilding. Where this becomes manifest across global cultures, linking the personal, societal, global and ecological spheres-we call this cosmopolitan conflict resolution (Ramsbotham et al., 2011, pp. 31-32).

It suffices to say that although regarded as being too idealistic and ambitious, generally, the conflict transformation has not been subject to major critique compared to other schools of thought and it has become a leading school of thought in the field. Many scholars (e.g. Mitchell, 2002; Paffenholz & Spurk, 2006; Jeong, 2008) hold that conflict transformation builds on the limitations of conflict management and conflict resolution schools of thought as it attempts to reconcile the dilemma between short-term conflict management and long-term relationship building and the resolution of the root causes of conflicts. For this reasons, it is suitable for all sorts of conflict - open, latent and surface conflicts, including structural and cultural violence.

To this end, this thesis uses peacebuilding in the context of the conflict transformational approach. The use of this approach is particularly dictated by two main reasons. First, the transformational approach is suitable to internal and protracted conflicts embedded in identity marked by a situation where groups in conflict share geographical proximity which relates to the very focus of this study. Secondly, the approach is relevant for the purpose of this research for it combines in-country peacebuilding with peacebuilding advocacy at the international level and thereby conceptually links the debate on global civil society. And it is particularly relevant to the aim of this research - how the conflict interventions and peacebuilding efforts have been connected and responded to wider aspects of issues and levels of actors particularly at the grassroots. Lederach (1999) notes: “peacebuilding is a processual, multifaceted and holistic concept that should be tied to society’s social, cultural, political, spiritual, economic and developmental

fabrics; that it is not be limited to the so-called concrete markers of peace, such as the signing of agreements, or the cessation of hostilities” (Lederach, 1999, p. 35).

3.4 Conceptualizing Conflict Transformation

3.4.1 The Origin and Concept of Conflict Transformation

As already indicated, the emergence of the idea of conflict transformation is rooted in the search for a meaningful terminology to capture the peacemaking process as many grapple to fill the ‘loophole’ of the ‘classical’ methods which failed in the face of the post-cold world war circumstances. Many cast their doubts on the viability and relevance of mediation movement to the problems of disempowerment, division and alienation that lie at the heart of societal tragedies thus unleashing the need for ‘transformation’ rather than ‘resolution’. Thus, recognizing the existence of irresolvable conflicts advocates of the perspective sought replacing the term conflict resolution with the term conflict transformation (Rupesinghe, 1995; Mitchell, 2002). This conception, that peacebuilding is processual and dynamic necessitates the recognition about the existence of irresolvable conflicts, and consequently the replacement of the term conflict resolution with the term conflict transformation (Dugan, 1996).

A further explanation as regards the recognition of conflict transformation (particularly in the face of theory and praxis of conflict resolution) concerns the better result the approach envisages for dealing with protracted social conflicts (Yuksel, 2006). Needless to say, despite the variegated propositions by advocates of conflict transformation regarding the process of transformation, what ‘transformation’ involves and how, when and by whom it can be brought and the criticism the school of thought invited from its detractors, one thing remains invariably clear - a consensus by most

writers and practitioners about the potential of the transformational approach for coping with protracted social conflicts (see Mitchell, 2002).

Amid shared views about the major features and underpinnings, conflict transformation, both as concept and an approach, is defined differently by different scholars. For example, Galtung (2004) defined conflict transformation as a concept that indicates all matters regarding conflict, such as the general framing of the situation, the contending parties, the issues at stake, the process and predicaments or structures affecting any of the aforementioned components (Galtung, 2004). On his part, Miall (2004) explained conflict transformation as “a process of engaging with and transforming the relationships, interests, discourses and, if necessary, the very constitution of society that supports the continuation of violent conflicts” (Miall, 2004, p. 4). In the quest for the notion, approach and process of the conflict transformation an in-depth seminal analysis has been provided by Lederach who put together methodology and modalities to conflict transformation. According to Lederach (1997) conflict transformation entails “a process of building peace by transforming a violent system into peaceful one through long term endeavors involving multifaceted changes in the personal, structural, relational and cultural aspects of conflict” (Lederach, 1997, p. 22). As it could be drawn from these definitions, conflict transformation entails alterations in attitudes, behaviors and contradictions. In other words, these explanations connote that conflict transformation seeks to deal with both direct and structural violence, an outcome, process and structure oriented long-term peacebuilding.

This dissertation adopts the definition of conflict transformation provided by Lederach as the assertion is empirically grounded particularly informed by the concept and practice of peacebuilding in the context of multiethnic and divided societies. Moreover,

the definition views conflict transformation simultaneously as multi-dimensional and long-lasting efforts, a holistic approach towards positive peace.

Philosophy and Essence

As such, conflict transformation represents both a theoretical perspective and one strand in the approach and debates relevant to peacebuilding. The main theoretical departure for the Tenets and Assumptions for the exponents of transformational school is the argument that addressing conflicts, particularly, societal conflicts, require more than the reframing of positions and win-win outcomes as the relationship and structure of groups in a conflict may extend beyond contradictory relationship in particular sites of conflicts. Put another way, as proponents of this paradigm argue because such conflicts are recurrent phenomenon marked by a situation where groups involved live in a geographical closeness at the same time harboring experiences of violence and hatred, their transformation is fundamental – with orientation towards the future the need for restoration and rebuilding of the relationship and structure of the groups.⁴³ Overall, undergird by a multidimensional understanding of conflict this approach seeks to transform deep-rooted conflicts into peaceful ones. In this regard, rebuilding destroyed relationships by focusing on reconciliation within society and strengthening of society's peacebuilding potential is considered vital complemented with cultural sensitivity, long-term time frame of intervention strategies, and the coordination of peace efforts across multiple levels. The transformational approach is also critical of the role of third party throughout the peacebuilding efforts (Mitchell, 2002; Lederach, 2003; Jeong, 2008).

⁴³ (for overview of this literature see Mitchell, 2002; Swanstron & Weissmann, 2005; Reimann, 2005).

As Schmid (2000) observed the conflict transformation approach is mainly characterized by - focus on developmental process of a conflict rather than on its end point; recognition of the ways through which conflict transforms relationships, communication and perceptions; the desire to transform the destructive nature of conflicts to constructive imperatives; focus on structural transformative imperatives; and the involvement of wide range of actors including the conflicting parties themselves, local individuals and communities and third parties (Schmid, 2000). Schmid also affirms one of the inherent beliefs in the transformational paradigm to peacebuilding that the best possible outcomes of conflict are achieved when solutions are mutually satisfactory – the development of cooperation lies in the concerted efforts to stop vacillating between controlled and destructive phases. Put all together, with commitment to positive change as its hallmark, essentially, conflict transformation as an approach signifies, both a process and an end state, implying the conception of some major change in some aspect of the conflict *per se* and the socio-political system in which the conflict is embedded (Lederach, 1997, Mitchell, 2002; Galtung, 2004).

3.4.2 Main Conceptual Issues on Conflict Transformation

Although it is difficult to clearly delineate in a mutually exclusive manner given the broad array of issues addressed by the literature, a systematic categorization of the emphasis of scholarships pertaining to what is involved in conflict transformation *the process of transformation, core aspects to be transformed, the role of external actors and its effect on protracted conflicts* stand out as the dominant theoretical issues (see Mitchell, 2002).

The Process of Transformation

As Reiman (2007) pointed out, in its pursuit for constructive (just) outcome, the process of conflict transformation is mainly discernible by two stages. The first entails a process-oriented approach that addresses mutually negative attitudes and values in order to facilitate communication and cooperation between parties. The second phase entails a change-oriented approach that stresses the political imperatives to recognize and empower victims (Reiman, 2007). Cognizant of this broader outlook, when some scholars suggest generic modalities other go deep to reflect on the qualities of the process to atomic level. For example, Schmid (2000) prescribes incremental process. In contrast, Francis (2009) proffers a course of action rooted on the specific kind of problem. Yet it appears a general consensus has emerged about the process of transformation that is discernible by reversal of negative forms of change that occur within the conflict and the social system in which it is embedded towards that which brings 'reciprocity and equality' to unjust relationships, especially in asymmetric conflicts. Equal emphasis is also accorded that the process tends to be slow as the movement from transient compromises to more durable settlements takes time particularly to bring about new levels of mutual understanding (see Miall et al., 1999, 2003a; Schmid, 2000; Francis, 2009).

Core Factors to be Transformed

One enduring element in the writings of conflict transformation reflected with variety of answers from scholars is what transformation transforms, the main issues involved in the transformation. For instance, Vayrynen (1991) provided four substantive aspects: *actor transformation* (major internal changes within the parties to the conflict), *issue transformation* (alteration of the political agenda of the conflict), *rule transformation* (change in the norms involved in the conflict and the limits within which the parties

conduct their relations) and *structural transformation* (change in the whole structure of inter-party relations) (Vayrynen, 1991). Miall contends that five issues of emphasis' can be distilled from the from the theoretical discourses in conflict transformation on the changing nature of conflict: *context* (change in the meanings of stakes in conflict), *structure* (the relationship between actors and institutions), *actors* (as results of interests and mental formations), *changes of goals* (affecting the incompatibilities in conflict), *the level of events* (referring to behaviors, communications, perceptions and cognition of all actors) (Miall, 2007). Lederach suggested for transformation along four main dimensions: *relational, structural, cultural and personal* (Lederach, 1997).

As it can be drawn from these examples, despite the variation they exhibit in numbers and the language they attach, the propositions among scholars regarding central aspects to be transformed reflect complementarities, and shared views about some substantive issues. Below attempt is made to discuss the core factors to be transformed in the process of conflict transformation using the taxonomy of Mitchell from his article in 2002 entitled: "Beyond Resolution: What Does Conflict Transformation Actually Transform? *A Journal of the Network of Peace and Conflict Studies*, 9(1), 1-23. In this article, Mitchell gives an extensive review of the writings and writers of conflict transformation and identified three main aspects (*personal changes, structural changes; and relationship changes*) that many share about what aspects ought to be *transformed* if a meaningful outcome is desired.

Transforming Persons

Mutual effort from participants to define the elusive idea and what exactly a just solution to their conflict would look like will make individuals to become willing to change their usually monocular view of 'justice' and develop their concern for social justice. According to Boege (2006), the process of transforming adversaries should principally address the prevailing negative attitudes and values between parties, combined with change-oriented approach towards the recognition and empowerment of victims. On their part, Baruch & Jay (1996) maintain that interpersonal change between individual parties directly involved in the conflict is required. Other scholars like Bush & Folger (1996) propound for major change in the individuals involved for inter-group, intercommunity and international conflicts both at the level of leaders and followers. It is noted that relationship formation is brought about by and is a cumulative effect of a vast range of activities. For example, in circumstances which resolution endeavors sound difficult to be adjusted and are ineffective conflict may still be ameliorated by various initiatives to reduce destructive violence. Even in a bleak situation, rare moments of positive personal contact between deadly adversaries might be able to stimulate critical moments and generate hope. Generally, the dominant understanding points towards promotion of mutual empathy and understanding between parties, among leaders, opinion makers and grass roots individuals concurrently with vigilance to the origins and dynamics of the conflict (see Lederach, 1997; Mitchell, 2002; Boege, 2006).

Transforming Structures

As Mitchell (2002) pointed out explicit adherence and commitment to 'structural' change is the bottom line in *transformational* camp for commentators contend, only through major changes underlying the conflicts that future violence could be altered

permanently and the people involved and their relationships thereof. He writes, “for transformationists, the central objective of the process is structural change, for all else flows from that” (p. 20). In this regard, Rupesinghe (1995) identified two main strands in the scholarly thinking about structural transformation. The first strand of thinking involves those scholars that proffer “...sustainable structural and attitudinal changes...within society and new institutions...to address outstanding issues...” (p. 14). In the second strand of thinking are those who propel for, “... the building and/or revival of indigenous political, social and economic mechanisms and attitudes which militate against the issue of violence to resolve conflicts...” (p. 14). Strictly speaking, the need for long term structural change and revival of neglected traditional method form the core idea in the writings and writers of conflict transformation (see Rupesinghe 1995, Lederach, 1997; 2003a; Mitchell, 2002). To recap, despite the varying emphasis accorded to different issues one factor that arises clearly in most is the need for a major change in the socio-political and economic systems from which the conflict originated. This is put most clearly by Juha Auvinen & Timo Kivimaki (1996) when they argue that:

the philosophy of the conflict transformation approach is that in conflicts there are causes or reasons more fundamental than are expressed on the level of disputes. Often conflicts are structurally caused by economic, political, identitive, discursive and other structures which then give rise to concrete disputes... (Auvinen & Kivimaki, 1996, p. 3).

Therefore, one clear implication of this approach is that in the first place, transformation involves the principle that structures that feed the conflicts from beneath for the occurrence of violence are some of the things that have to be changed.

Transforming Relationships

Transforming relationship is presumed vital on the ground that the relationship of parties may be embedded beyond contradictions at the particular site of a conflict; that means a lasting transformation requires a move from ‘unpeaceful’ to ‘peaceful’ relationships as its central feature, if it is to be successful (Curle, 1971; Swanstron & Weissmann, 2005). The necessary processes involved in such a change are vital for they move a society from a social order based upon hierarchy and coercion to one based upon equality, respect, participation, voluntarism and mutual enrichment (Hiskias, 1993). It is worth noting that transforming relationships between former adversaries are considered in their totality, cognizant of their dynamism. For instance, under circumstances where adversaries are equally aware of the nature of the goal incompatibility, and are roughly equal in their capacity to harm each other in pursuit of their interests, negotiation, mediation or conciliation could well be relevant processes for achieving a new and stable relationship, whereas in cases where the adversaries are conscious of their conflict but capability is one sided, processes aimed at equalization are appropriate (Mitchell, 2002).

Meanwhile, what makes transforming relationships between erstwhile adversaries gain currency among scholars is its potential efficacy for protracted conflicts. In this regard, building on empirical experiences from Nicaragua, Spain and Somalia, John Paul Lederach disclosed a complex set of reconciliation process viable for many protracted conflicts, a seminal work that combined important points unnoticed hitherto. He wrote, “...it is simply not possible for the adversaries to disengage and have little or nothing to do with one another once a particular set of contested issues has been ‘solved’, because relationship is both the basis of the conflict and of its long- term solution” (Lederach, 1997, p. 26). As the method of reconciliation prescribes, first the underlying

issues currently in contention should be mutually delineated, followed by successful preparation to change the manner of interaction and the basic nature of the relationship that links those involved in the future. Lederach is also of the view that, because the futures of those who are fighting are ultimately linked and interdependent, opportunity must be given for people to look forward and envision their shared future.

To this end, as it can be discerned from the above discussions, the idea that relationships need to be replaced and rebuilt through deliberate and directed effort is intrinsic to constructive transformation of conflicts. Many uphold that without this aspect of change, even major structural alterations may prove fruitless in heading off future disputes, clashes, crises and conflicts. A further emphasis shared by scholars is the argument that the process of transforming relationships depends to a large degree on the type of conflict existing in the society. As Jeong (2008) pointed out, it is to be heeded that conflict transformation approaches are not prone to be satisfied with merely reframing positions in a search for a ‘win–win’ outcome, given the fact that the manifested phenomenon at the site of conflict most often does not reveal the very nature of parties and relationships. Thus, transformation is apt to highlight the wider social and political sources of a conflict in seeking to break the perpetuating cycle of oppression and resistance (Jeong, 2008, p. 243).

3.5 Federalism as a Tool for Peacebuilding: Some Remark

Many commentators maintain that federalism, a form of non-centralized mode of organizing a polity, may serve as a tool for peacebuilding provided that reflection, choice and consent are central to its formation (Burgess, 2006; Kymlicka, 2005). For instance, posits Tsegaye (2010) that federalism can serve as a way to get out of political quandaries and build the culture of peace under circumstances where a polity is beset

by conflicts involving recognition of diversity, accommodation of difference, fair participation in the political life of a nation, and autonomy to govern oneself. He notes: “the federal pact regulates the relationship between the various groups that negotiated the federal dispensation by changing the rule of the game, replacing old rivalries with violent/military expression with a constitutional-legal mode” (Tsegaye, 2010, p. 76).

Nevertheless, federalism is no panacea by itself. Its solubility for the perils of multinational states is relative, contingent and circumstantial (see Anderson & Erk, 2011 Burgess, 2006; Kymlicka, 2005). Reinforcing this view Kymlicka (2005) attested that federalism *per se* is not sufficient to accommodate diversity and promote stable peace: it all depends on how the federal boundaries are drawn and power are shared, the extent to which the federal structure takes a heed of the variations in territory, diversity and interest of groups in autonomy, and thoughtfulness that the success of accommodating diversity and minority do not give impetus for greater autonomy through secession or confederation (Kymlicka, 2005, p. 273).

Even more, by comparing Africa and Western Europe Kymlicka (2006) tried to demonstrate how social, economic and political realities determine the success of federalism, particularly multinational federalism. He contends multinational federations in the west such as Belgium and Spain have proven success, not only managed the conflicts arising from competing national identities in peaceful and democratic way but have secured high degree of economic freedom and individual freedom (positive peace) in their country. In contrast, Kymlicka showed skepticism on the success of federalism in multinational African states. Why? This is because according Kymlicka there is roughly an absence of two major conditions in Africa that made it possible for multinational federalism to be successful and peaceful in the west: *the de-securitization*

of ethnic relations and the widespread consensus in liberal values. The absence of these conditions in Africa means that multination federalism is more likely to emerge there from ‘barrel of the gun’ than it is from democratic politics. It follows that we are likely to witness a prolonged period of ethnic turbulence in which political settlement is more likely to be the result of force than peaceful and democratic change (Kymlicka, 2006, p. 53).

Overall, there tends to be a consensus among theorists that, in a situation where federalism is adopted in response to the recognition of diversity and conflicts embedded in identity, its foundation and success hinges on the following: Groups willingness to compromise, inclusion of all warring parties especially at the ‘center’ and, subnational level, a meaningful fair participation in decision-making at the “center”, a guarantee against the danger of centralization, and commitment from ‘stakeholders’ to a political/diplomatic solution to their stalemates among others to determine its direction (see Anderson & Erk, 2011; Kymlicka, 2005, 2006; Tsegaye, 2010).

In the same vein, the relevance of federalism in transforming conflicts is also highlighted by many scholars. As it is already indicated, by creating the means for political maneuvers federalism can make conflicts to take a trajectory that helps build a nation in a new direction. However, the process demands a strong and vibrant legal and political culture infused with hope and optimism (see Anderson & Erk, 2011; McGarry & O’Leary, 2004). Assefa Fisseha observed that the adoption of federalism, particularly as a conflict management device requires serious state restructuring to create new political units that enable ethnonationalist groups to gain a majority at regional state level as it has implications and complications on inter-group conflicts (Assefa, 2011). As others have noted addressing the issues of identity, power and resource issue alone does not suffice. Robust institutions that become a bulwark for

economic opportunity, political power and social prestige/status should be built around the identities. In short, there should be a need that seeks to transform the economic opportunity, political powers and social status available to bearers of that identity (Kymlicka, 2007, p. 81).

Altogether, the dominant assertion to date maintains that for countries with deep divisions (where ethno-nationalist groups are politically mobilized and identity is politically salient) with all its pitfalls conceded, federalism may help prevent conflicts, facilitate and promote peacebuilding process (for general overview see Lijphart, 1979; McGarry & O'Leary, 2004; Simeon, 2008).

On Federalism and Ethnic Conflicts

Scholars are divided pertaining the role of federalism in ethnic conflicts, whether it exacerbates or mitigates identity conflicts. For some, federalism exacerbates ethnic conflicts. For instance, Snyder (2000) maintains that in late developing and transitional societies ethno-federalism could provide strong incentive for elites to mobilize substantial support around ethnic premises, increase the possibility of conflict and even could lead to secession under some circumstances like the soviet federations (Snyder, 2000). In contrast, others adhere to its positive role and posit that federalism helps mitigate ethnic conflicts as federal institutions promote successful accommodation of diversity and manage ethnic differences (see Anderson & Erk, 2011; McGarry & O'Leary, 2004). In between these paradoxical stances, many see the potential of federalism is contingent up on various variables as essentially has both potentials (Anderson & Erk, 2009; Hurwitz, 1985; Ghai, 2000). According Hurwitz (1985) the most potent bulwark to see that federalism or regional autonomy will not become just a step to secession is to reinforce those specific interests that groups have in the

undivided state. In general, as Anderson and Erk noted it suffices to say that on its own, federalism is not a panacea for conflict. Nor, however, it is simply the next step on the road to secessionist conflict. They write:

it is, at once, a problem and a solution. Whether it is one or the other seems to depend a great deal on factors that are external to the design of federalism itself—the un/codified factors (Anderson & Erk 2009, p. 199).

To this end, for countries with deep divisions where ethno-nationalists are politically mobilized and identity is politically salient federalism is suggested by many as a tool that can potentially accommodate ethnic nationalist groups and lay the foundation for sustainable as consent lies at the heart of its foundation. Yet, adopting federalism for the maligned in divided societies, by itself, is not an antidote. Its potency hinges on the specific historical, economic, and socio-cultural contexts, and the existence of strong vibrant legal and political culture guided by efficient normative, institutional, and procedural framework among others (see Hurwitz 1985; Kymlicka, 2005, 2006; Anderson & Erk 2009). Therefore, whatever the ground or justification it is laid upon, as Neumann puts it, “the value of federalism can be determined by solely through an empirical analysis of a given political system as the federal arrangement operates always within a specific social, political and cultural setting” (Neumann, 2005, p. 208).

CHAPTER FOUR

The Context and Practice of Intra-State Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding

4.1 Introduction

The surge in intra-state conflicts that revolve around identity in the early 1990s have led to a paradigm shift in the field of conflict and peace, a reorientation in conceptualizing conflicts and their transformation (Galtung, 1995; Rupeshinge, 1995; Mitchell, 2002).⁴⁴ Scholars and practitioners realized stopping overt violence between groups in conflict and preventing the recurrence of hostilities are not sufficient for meaningful peace; rather, there should be a concerted effort for multifaceted peace support activities.

In a concomitant development, the thinking that conflicts can be ‘resolved’ was fading among scholars instead shifting the spotlight towards an understanding of conflict as a dynamic and deep-rooted process (see Galtung, 1995; Rupesinghe, 1995; Mitchell, 2002). For example, in line of this thought Rupesinghe (1995) asserts, “...the notion of being able to resolve them once and for all has been superseded by an understanding that such dynamic and deep-rooted processes call for dynamic and sustained responses...” (Rupesinghe, 1995, p. 19). Concurring to this view Galtung adds:

...conflicts are generally not solved...What survives after a conflict has disappeared from the agenda is conflict energy reproduced and produced by the conflict. Then energy does not die...it attaches itself to one or more conflicts, possibly also the old one... (Galtung 1995, p. 53).

⁴⁴ These new developments have suggested a more nuanced model of conflict emergence and transformation. This model sees conflict formations arising out of social change, leading to a process of violent or non-violent conflict transformation, and resulting in further social change in which hitherto suppressed or marginalized individuals or groups come to articulate their interests and challenge existing norms and power structures (Ramsbotham et al., 2011, p. 25).

Overall, as Ramsbotham et al., (2011) note as opposed to a single uni-polar interpretation in the Cold War period, an understanding of conflict as a dynamic and deep-rooted process takes forth - a disposition of seeing and analyzing conflict in context, in their social reality the became preponderant outlook (Ramsbotham et al., 2011, pp. 25-26).

The new developments have also brought about new understanding, orientation and approaches about the transformation of conflict leading to a consensus as to the need for new processes that take into consideration broad new issues (see Mitchell, 2002; Ramsbotham et al., 2011). Particularly, the idea that peace has to be considered beyond the mere absence of direct violence is accentuated – the notion that unless and until ‘settlements’ are translated into meaningful, practical changes that address the root causes of war or violent conflict, it is unlikely that the ‘peace’ will be sustained. Ramsbotham et al., (2011) capture and bring together the essences in these new ways of thinking and perspectives that have become leading in conflict and peace research:

The new patterns of conflict that became prominent since the early 1990s have ushered new understanding, orientation and approaches about the occurrence of conflict and their transformations. Two things prominently stand out in this paradigm shift. The first concerns the differentiation and broadening in the scope of third- party intervention. In general, there has been a shift from seeing third- party intervention as the primary responsibility of external agencies towards appreciating the role of internal ‘third parties’ or indigenous peacemakers. The importance of building constituencies and capacity within societies and learning from domestic cultures on how to manage conflicts over time is also accentuated. Whereas classical conflict resolution was concerned mainly with entry into the conflict itself and with how to enable parties to violent conflict to resolve the issues between them in non-violent ways, the contemporary approach takes wider view of the timing and nature of the intervention. The second major shift relates to the tendency of seeing and analyzing conflict in context, in their social reality as opposed to a single uni-polar interpretation. The benefit of viewing the drivers of conflict and their transformation functioning at the same time across several interrelated spheres

gained emphasis. And this interpenetration of ecological, global, societal and personal space has increasingly characterized the conflict field (Ramsbotham et al., 2011, pp. 26-29).

Overall, the following points have been reiterated: a wider view in the timing and nature of the intervention; differentiation and broadening in the scope of third-party intervention including the need for peacebuilding from below; an emphasis for comprehensive, relational, and societally embedded notions of transformation or peace; the importance of building constituencies and capacity within societies and learning from domestic cultures on how to manage conflicts over time (of the vast literature on intra-state social conflict and their transformation, see, e.g., Lederach, 1997; Darby & Mac Ginty, 2000; Ramsbotham et al., 2011, pp. 26-29).

Meanwhile, studies on peacebuilding and conflict transformation in multiethnic states point to the potential dangers unless they are underpinned and directed by comprehensive principles and processes. For instance, Oberschal (2007) warns that conflict and conciliation dynamics between erstwhile adversaries in multiethnic societies could put the accent on obstacles to peacebuilding, the result being making society more divided than before the violent conflict (Oberschal, 2007, p. 28). Darby & Mac Ginty are of the view that for a genuine peace process in divided or multiethnic societies to take place, it should be marked by: (1) a negotiation built on trust which should not be halted with preconditions and non-negotiable demands, (2) involvement of key players in the process, (3) response to vital issues in the conflict, (4) absence of coercion from players while pursuing their goals, (5) commitment to sustained process, and (6) intervention of external stakeholders to assist implementation of the settlement

(Darby & Mac Ginty, 2000). Overall, as leading scholars⁴⁵ in the field maintain, an insight into the vulnerability of ethnic groups to conflict and the circumstances that initiate change from nonviolent to violent modes, or the other way round, requires a kind of response mechanisms and strategies linked to the very nature of the conflicts as they are significant to unravel the bottlenecks, to transform the conflicts and build sustainable peace.

The remaining of this chapter is organized in two sections. The first discusses the main conceptual debates involving the dynamics of peacebuilding in intra-state social conflict. It sets the context for understanding the process of conflict transformation and peacebuilding in contemporary intra-state conflicts. The second section is a literature review on the peacebuilding processes. By focusing on the practice and concepts of peacebuilding in contemporary Africa it attempts to makes sense of the nature of the conflict transformation practices as well as the form of the peacemaking processes.

4.2 The Context of Intra-State Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding

4.2.1 Some Conceptual Perspectives on the Nature of the Conflicts

A coincidental development with the end of the Cold War in 1990s and the early 2000s, has been an accentuation of the incidence of intra-state conflicts in Africa horizontally between different socio-ethnic and cultural aggregates within a national territory, and vertically, between groups who feel excluded and marginalized from existing power structures on the one hand, and the central authority on the other (Egwu, 2007, p. 406). In an attempt at explaining the boom in violence in contemporary Africa, two dominant perspectives have been delineated - *ethnic conflicts* (Primordialsim and

⁴⁵ (E.g. Lederach, 1997; Mitchell, 2002; Oberschal, 2007).

Instrumentalism) and *the resource war hypothesis or political ecology and conflict goods theories*.

Ethnic Conflict

Ethnic conflict has become the most fashionable term that virtually all succumb to explain contemporary social conflicts to the extent that it appears to be a buzz word.

There are two main orientations to explaining the dynamics of ethnic conflict - the *primordial approach* and the *instrumentalist approach*.

Primordialist: The primordialist approach posits that conflicts naturally result from ethnic divisions are rooted in ascribed immutable traits, reinforced by centuries of past practice. Proponents of this approach view primordial differences as basis for discrimination, segregation, stereotyping, and ultimately, violent conflicts, and the basis for political patronage (Fisher, 2000; Omeje, 2008). Accordingly, as to the view of primordialists approach, violent conflicts in contemporary Africa are the sequel of ancient primitive unrestrained inter-communal warfare reincarnated by the incongruous elements in the formation of post-colonial African states and the neopartimomial nature of the political structure. Omeje (2008) has succinctly captured the postulation of primordialism when he writes:

... the fact that African states were formed based on the diktat of western colonial structures, merging different groups on the line of the concept of modern state and as politics in post- colonial African state built on patrimonial structures, the old untamed primitive warfare impulse resurged. In other words, the patrimonial political cultures in contemporary Africa have called on the resurgence of primordial inter-communal strife (Omeje, 2008, p. 71).

Instrumentalist: As opposed to the primordialist proponents of the instrumentalist approach posit that even if primordial identities are *fait accompli* they do not produce conflicts on their own but rather for this to happen, domestic political structures and human agencies should be there as intervening variables to activate and convert primordial identities into conflict-relevant variables. Here ethnicity is seen as an instrument, a contextual, fluid and negotiable aspect of identity and a function of structural conditions in society, “a tool used by individuals, groups, or elites to obtain some larger, typically material end” (Lake & Rothchild, 1998). *Instrumentalists* argue that ethnic identities, “... wax and wane, contingent on a wide variety of variables, including the capacity and skills of political entrepreneurs who can effectively mobilize groups for collective aims and articulate beliefs about common ancestry and destiny” (Sisk, 1996, p. 12). It follows that the proliferation of inter-group violence and armed conflicts in post-colonial Africa is the outcome of elites’ instrumenatalization of the primordial differences, invariably, for their interest. “Depending on how they are played out and the virulence of the key players, low-, medium- or high-intensity conflict could ensue, ultimately culminating in the phenomena of failed state, collapsed state and societal fragmentation” (Omeje, 2008, p. 72).

The extent to which scholars consider ethnicity as immutable and innate or socially constructed phenomenon has impacted their exposition about the type of political systems that can best ameliorate conflict along ethnic lines, giving rise to ‘*constructivist*’ approach. According to the constructive approach to ethnic conflict “ethnicity is not something that can be decided upon by individuals at will, like other political affiliations, but is embedded within and controlled by the larger society” and therefore it can only be understood within a ‘relational framework’ (Lake & Rothchild, 1998, p. 38). As such, contemporary conflict analysis has gradually realized that they

“are not mutually exclusive and can in fact be describing different sides of the same coin” (Porto, 2008). Accordingly, by conceptualizing ethnic identity as both primordialist, and instrumentalist we are better placed to understand its role, importance, development and dynamic nature in identity-based and armed conflict situations, a path and orientation to which this thesis subscribes to.

Political Ecology and Conflict Goods Theories

By building on the lopsided extractive structure and fragility of most post-colonial economies, some have come up with a theory generally referred to as the ‘resource wars’ hypothesis which partakes in explaining the conflicts and civil war in Africa as one essentially driven by economic agendas.⁴⁶ As protagonists of the resource-based conflict school such as Homer-Dixon (1994, 1998), Karl (1997), Watts (1999), Collier & Hoeffler (2000) and Ross (2003) believe, in essence, African conflicts are predatory conflicts where the politics of who controls the strategic natural resources and the accruing revenues functions as either the conflict-instigating factor or principal catalyst. A prominent strand in the resource-based conflict perspective is Collier & Hoeffler’s ‘greed theory’, with its explicit adherence-the civil war and violent conflicts are essentially driven by economic gains. They wrote:

... greed and [economic] opportunities’ rather than ‘genuine grievances’ account for the proliferation of predatory and militant groups in many conflict-affected countries of Africa and the Third World, and that the prevalence of lootable natural resources like diamonds, cobalt, etc., is likely to increase the duration and intensity of armed conflicts, as well as the chances of a relapse into war in the post-conflict dispensation (Collier & Hoeffler, 2000, pp.7-8).

⁴⁶ Proponents of this theory have often used the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) war in Sierra Leone, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) war in Liberia, and the perennial civil war in DRC as cases to support their argument.

The major point that came out of this thesis is the proposition that economic gains are central to understanding why civil wars get going, or conflicts are far more likely to be caused by economic opportunities than by grievance.

The greed theory has generated a backlash and fierce debate in what came to be known as the ‘greed versus grievance’ discourse. Critics argue that the theory is charged with “astonishing over-simplification”, false empiricism – statistics of questionable validity; undue dichotomy between greed and grievance and presumption of direction of causality exclusively based on national data that masks regional dynamics, and the like. For example, Kabia (2008) equated the greed theory with a neo-elitist, ‘rebel-centric’ theory that tends to ignore the often decisive role of the state’s irresponsible behavior (massive corruption and repression) in provoking rebel movements and insurgencies in the first place (Kabia, 2008). Many also attacked the very idea of expected-utility theory rooted in the greed thesis -the proposition that rebels will conduct a civil war if the perceived benefits outweigh the costs of rebellion by saying that it is tautology than something which the authors tried to portray it as something new in conflict research; it has been there (for instance in works of Thomas Schelling, 1960; Holsti, 1990; Jabri, 1997) appearing as rational- choice model of decision making and game theory where rationality is posited as a very ambiguous concept. Yet, it is to be noted that inasmuch as it is controversial, the greed hypothesis is groundbreaking in that the statistical findings are important as regards understanding some of the factors that affect the probability of the occurrence of violent conflict. In particular, it sheds light on how natural resources can strongly affect the probability of armed conflicts, their duration, course and impact.

4.2.2 Analyzing Intra-State Social Conflicts: A Framework for Peacebuilding

As it is indicated, to get grip of these variously termed intra-state conflicts, the spotlight is increasingly tilting to circumstances at state level particularly to the weakness of state – the crisis of legitimacy:- nature of intra-state relations and the capacity of the state, the central government to keep to the path of state-formation⁴⁷ (see Van de Goor, 1996; Hébert, 2009). Problematic history of state building and the legacies of colonialism are particularly considered as variables confounding the vulnerability to conflict. Snyder (1993) for example, relates the development of ethnic nationalism to situations “when institutions collapse, when existing institutions are not fulfilling people’s basic needs and when satisfactory alternative structures are not readily available. These situations, state weakness and state collapse compel individuals and groups to provide for their own needs (Snyder, 1993, p. 27).

The other dominant issue about intra-state conflicts involves the point of departure in analyzing and ascertaining their marked features. In this regard, the preponderant view has been linked to ‘group’ level as a basic unit of analysis; particularly the groups involved in the conflict and their claims. This is chiefly due to the fact that identity is presented as the basis of struggle and violence in most of these conflicts (see Porto, 2008). According to Edward Azar (1986), the leading scholar, the most important factors in *Protracted Social Conflicts (PSC)*, as he prefers to call them are identity groups, which are primordial and non-negotiable natural needs reflected around religious, cultural or ethnic communal identity. Azar argues that the real source of PSC

⁴⁷ Amid some scholars (e.g. Zartman, 1995; Boulder, 1995) argue that this articulation is mainly drawn from the fact that overwhelming numbers of these internal conflicts occur in ‘underdeveloped’ countries.

is the denial of those human needs that are common to all and whose pursuit is an ontological drive. He wrote:

the source of protracted social conflict is the denial of those elements required in the development of all peoples and societies, and whose pursuit is a compelling need in all. These are security, distinctive identity, social recognition of identity, and effective participation in the processes that determine conditions of security and identity, and other such developmental requirements (Azar, 1986, p. 186).

As Azar notes, the basic problem lies in connecting these conflicts inherently to material interests, advantage and resource competition though ‘they are not just that’. Alternatively, for him, to make sense of contemporary conflicts and their essential elements, it is of the essence to have an insight about the manner in which the groups involved organize themselves as they become aware that they are in opposition with another group or groups. As this process of self-awareness in-opposition-to-other is reflective of the fact that that common interest alone does not define a group and conflictual interactions; rather, it hinges on communication and interaction (Azar, 1986).

Against these backdrops, two points of emphasis are distilled from the conceptual debates pertinent to contemporary conflicts particularly in multi-ethnic and divided societies like Africa. First, they are chiefly the results of circumstances at state level, the capacity of government institutions in exercising control over the population and totality of the territory under their jurisdiction. Second, for the most part these conflicts revolve around identity as center of strife (see Porto, 2008).

Amid, having their context situated and framed from these two angles, a range of underlying as well as proximate factors account to the occurrence of these conflicts – a point I shall now turn on briefly.

Political Factors

Political factors are integral to intra-state violent conflicts. The type of regime and political system, its ideological underpinnings, the legitimacy and representativeness it enjoys strongly affects the patterns and types of relations combined with other societal actors. Many (e.g. Azar, 1986; Snyder, 1993; Rupshingne, 1998) argue that exclusionary regime ideologies based on ethnic, religious, political and class distinctions contribute to the discrimination of sectors of society by preventing the “state from responding to, and meeting, the needs of various constituents thereby creating dissent and increasing the propensity for conflict provided that the ideological underpinnings affect the way in which the regimes relate to the various societal groups as well as the way in which conflicts are resolved. As Miall et al., (1999) pointed out, these situations particularly become acute in heterogeneous states where no overarching tradition of common and juridical egalitarian citizenship prevails” (Miall et al., 1999, p 86.). Studies have substantiated that “... most states in protracted social conflict-laden countries are hardly neutral” in that “political authority tends to be monopolized by a dominant identity group or a coalition of identity groups” that tend to use the state as an instrument for maximizing their interests at the expense of others⁴⁸ (Porto, 2008). In strict a sense, the extent to which government institutions are discriminatory or are based on exclusionary ideologies are particularly important variables in informing the escalation of conflicts to violence or to the point where violence can be used in connection with the political system.

⁴⁸ The experience of post-1991 Ethiopia is reflective of this condition (see for instance Pausewang, Tronvoll, & Aalen, 2002; Merera, 2003; Abbink, 2009).

Economic Factors

Economic issues often associated with the patterns of underdevelopment or uneven developments have also acted out as crucial elements, both as the root-causes as well as drivers of violence. The likelihood for the economic factors in heightening militancy and the occurrences of violence increases in the situation where they are accompanied with patterns of discrimination between or along groups; rapid transitions amid poverty and social exclusion, and high unemployment. As pointed out by Porto (2008) “the perception by some groups that there are strong unequal economic opportunities and access to resources as well as vast differences in standards of living (sense of relative deprivation and rising expectations) between groups, will contribute to a sense of grievance” as it affects groups culturally and socially (Porto, 2008, p. 27).

In addition to distributional conflicts within societies associated with resource scarcity, the existence of natural resources that may be easily extracted and traded (e.g. timber, minerals, oil) may also potentialise the vulnerability to conflict. As Brown (1995b) points out, “... unemployment, inflation, and resource competitions, especially for land, contribute to societal frustrations and tensions, and can provide the breeding ground for conflict (Brown, 1995b). Other variables that increase the propensity for the occurrence of intra-state violent conflict include the effects of modernization process, profound structural changes (e.g. migration and urbanization), access to education, recognition of minority languages and costumes, social stereotyping and scapegoating based on cultural and groups social environment (see Azar, 1986; Snyder, 1993; Rupshignge, 1998).

Other Factors and Dimensions

In addition to the aforementioned variables, a thorough and comprehensive understanding of intra-state and inter-communal conflicts in divided societies requires consideration of the regional connection - the way in which things in the regional as well as international levels affect a particular conflict-what Edward Azar called “*international linkages*”.⁴⁹ The conflicts in the sub-Saharan Africa are the epitome of these conditions. In this part of the sub-continent where Ethiopia is located, strikingly intra-state conflicts assume regional dimensions and inter-state conflicts aggravate into intra-state inter-communal violence due to various historical, sociological, ecological and economic factors. It is to be reckoned that civil war in South Sudan that erupted in December 2013 has dragged neighboring states into complicating the peace process. For example, Uganda had to deploy a military reinforcement to back President Salva Kiir’s force. In recent years, a strong connection has also been observed between ecology and conflict in Africa; specifically, the role resources, both scarce and abundant play among other variables in the onset and escalation of the violent conflicts. For instance, as conflicts in Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia have exhibited powerful linkages with land and natural resource use systems.⁵⁰

To this end, an important aspect of such intra-state conflicts is the interface and interconnection exhibited across multiple factors, issues, levels and actors. Generally, isolated conflicts are, in reality, intimately linked to broader political and economic contexts involving multiple, and often times, competing individuals and groups actors,

⁴⁹ More often than not, impact of neighboring states in the intra-state conflicts is discernible through ‘spillover’ and ‘contagion’ as well as by effects of actions and policies as refugee problems, economic problems (disruption of regional trade, communications, and production networks), military problems (the use of a neighboring state’s territory for the trans-shipment of arms and supplies; the use of a neighbors territory by rebel groups as bases of operations and sanctuaries; the launch of attacks from neighboring states) (Kriesberg, 1982,1998).

⁵⁰ Porto, 2008.

and interests. The institutions, policies and legal regimes governing these, moreover, are overlapping and mixed. For all these reasons, therefore, this study finds it imperative, having the nucleus of its analysis mainly at factors to state level to locate the conflict and the operation of conflict transformation in the study setting within a framework that encompasses different levels, from societal and local (identity groups, individuals), state, to international (regional) level. Because the internal and external dimensions impact the situation at the societal and state level due to paradoxes in the state, the main actors as well as internal social need and context, the workings of conflict transformation and peacebuilding has to be extended simultaneously at all these levels.

4.2.3 Determinants of Sustainable Peace and the Dynamics of Peacebuilding

Scholars in the field (e.g. Kriesberg, 1998; Reyhler, 2002; Datyon & Kriesberg, 2009) reiterate that an insight into the factors that influence the movement toward or against non-violent means is a requisite bottom line to unlock the building-blocks and main variables in the process of sustainable peacebuilding. This inquiry and examination on the locus of sustainable peace process from which other things flow have broadly informed two orientations along with their sympathizers from scholars. On the one hand is a group of scholars who espouse that making changes on the material dynamics of the conflict is of the essence, and thus should be the paramount endeavor whereas, on the other hand, is other group of scholars who accentuate the alteration on psychopolitical dynamics of the conflict as the motor from which the process of constructive conflict transformation follows.

I. Changes on the Material and Structural Aspects of the Conflict

One of the two integral elements considered to impacting the movement away from violence is the changes made to improve the structural and material aspects surrounding the conflict. A range of case studies have demonstrated a correlation between high levels of structural violence, low economic or educational opportunities and institutional disparities in access to power and deep conflicts cycle and heightened militancy on the part of the population. Alongside, experiences and empirical evidences have indicated that improving the economic condition of the communities, expanding educational and employment opportunities, and liberalizing access to power in formal political structure will make it less likely that groups in conflict will pursue their aims through violence (see Dayton & Kriesberg, 2009, p.4)

II. Changes on the Relational Aspects of the Conflict

The other major recurring theme that scholars increasingly reiterate as the necessary condition for meaningful and lasting transformation is the need for relationship building - transforming the general cognitive and emotional dynamics that sustain inter-group violence for the reason that violent conflicts are partly the result of social-psychological processes involving dehumanization, stereotyping and negative attribution to the motivation of one's adversary and positive attribution to the motivation of one's own side. Deliberate effort and alteration on the subjective aspects of the conflicts is particularly sounds vital as most of these contemporary internal social conflicts are marked by a situation where groups in conflict live in a close geographical proximity harboring direct experience of violent trauma often associated with their perceived enemies; histories of grievances and enmity; and long-standing cycles of hostility charged with intense animosity, fear and severe stereotyping meaning that peacebuilding must be rooted in and responsive to experiential and subjective realities

that shape people perspectives and needs what Curle calls “change of heart” (Lederach, 1997; Reychler, 2002; Dayton & Kriesberg, 2009). In this case, as Dayton & Kriesberg (2009) argue “re-humanizing one’s enemy, for instance, by creating super-ordinant identity among conflicting parties is imperative to create conditions where peacemaking is possible. By extension, it is argued, the absence of contact across the group only serves to concertize negative stereotyping and dehumanization and makes more likely the use of violence to achieve political objectives” (Dayton & Kriesberg 2009, p.4).

In any case, it is worth to reckon that despite the difference among scholars in emphasis they give advocate of both strands of proposition still resonate some cross-cutting themes as existing in the dynamics of peacemaking.

The Dynamics of Peacebuilding

Internal Politics

One issues that has proved itself in impacting both de-escalation and escalation of conflict are changes in internal politics. Expected or sudden leadership transitions and the splitting of the movement into different factions could influence the move toward or away from violence as the internal political dynamics play important role in shaping the choice of protagonists (see Bartoli, A., Civico, A. & Gianturco, L. 2009; Dayton & Kriesberg, 2009). For example, in Ethiopia, the leadership change in March, 2018 when Abiy Ahmed assumed the premiership position has implicated on inter-communal conflicts both negatively and positively. Immediately after this political development in the country the border-conflict between Oromia and Somali regional states aggravated into a whole-scale inter-communal violent conflicts between the Oromo and Somali community with reports of the involvement of the security forces of the two

region. The conflict between the Guji and Gedeo communities also saw escalation in the immediate months following the leadership transitions within the EPRDF. In contrary, the popular protest that permeated the two main regional states (Oromia and Amhara) dictating the issuing of Martial Law in the country saw a de-escalation in an astonishing speed leading to the abolishment of the state of emergency afterwards. Thus, the change in the internal politics of the EPRDF is the epitome of the impact of internal political developments on the dynamics of conflict escalation and de-escalation with unexpected breakthroughs and setbacks, changing the dynamics both negatively and positively.

Leadership Styles

Leadership is important in defining the course and outcome of peacebuilding process, bearing on both its positive and negative development (Reychler, 2002; Dayton & Kriesberg, 2009). Without a critical mass of external and internal leadership, who motivates, guides and commits people to the peacebuilding process, the chances of successful peacebuilding are very low (Reychler, 2002, p. 32). For instance, as Lodge (2009) observed, the vital role of leadership in peace process is revealed in South Africa as the Afrikaner government and the white generally came to accept the political right for all South Africans as insisted by the ANC leaderships and the blacks. As Lodge pointed out, violence was recognized by large number of people on all sides as likely to ultimately fail and have shared destructive consequences augmented by the multidimensional developments (such as the process of the transformation of the ANC into mass party which helped it to cover the expectation of its followers) that converged to provide the assurance needed for mutually acceptable sequences (Lodge, 2009, p. 162).

As such, as Reychler (2002) notes, the critical mass of leadership needed for successful conflict transformation depends on the specific conflict context: “it could include internal and external leadership; some conflicts can be transformed successfully with internal leadership; others necessitate external leadership to support the process. For example, internal leadership could be situated at different levels. The top level comprises the key political and military leaders in the conflict. These people are the highest representative leaders of the government and opposition movements or present themselves as such. The middle range leadership is not necessarily connected to or controlled by the authority or structures of the formal or major opposition movements. They could be highly respected individuals or persons who occupy formal positions of leadership in sectors such as education, business, religion, agriculture, health or humanitarian organizations. The grassroots leadership includes people who are involved in local communities, members of indigenous non-governmental organizations carrying out relief projects for local populations, health officials and refugee camp leaders” (Reychler, 2002, p. 32).

Third-Party Intervention: The Impact of External Parties

Another variable in impacting the dynamics of inter-communal conflict transformation both positively and negatively external intervention (Dayton & Kriesberg, 2009; Ramsbotham et al., 2011). The role of external or third parties may also impact the trajectory of intra-state conflicts as parties in intra-state or social conflicts frequently seek and depend on the resource of external actors. For instance, material support from diaspora communities, opposition movements, and government support from other state may among others shift attitude and pressure both towards peace and violence (Dayton & Kriesberg, 2009, pp. 4-5). Third parties bring additional resources, skills and perspectives to the conflict process and too often their presence rubs off on and

changes the relational structure, physical dynamics and outcomes of conflicts (Omeje, 2008, p. 81). The impact of external actors on the peacemaking process particularly becomes enormous with the entry of ‘powerful’ third party. This is because as Ramsbotham et al., (2011) note:

The entry of powerful external party affects not only the communication structure but also the power balance provided that such third parties may change the parties’ behavior as well as their communications by judicious use of the carrot and the stick (positive and negative inducement); and they may support one outcome rather than another- course (Ramsbotham et al., 2011, pp. 21-22).

Meanwhile, in his analysis of conflict resolution practice in contemporary Africa Omeje observed the track-record of third-party intervention in African conflict as mixed. According to him ‘some of the factors that could positively or negatively affect the outcome include the nature of the conflict and how well the intervener understands it, the motive and credibility of the intervener and how acceptable he is (and continues to be) to the conflicting parties, the timing and suitability of intervention methods, the availability/efficient use of (sufficient) funds and other logistical resources, as well as the role of other third-party agents and how an intervener relates to them’ (Omeje, 2008, p. 82).

The Nature of Conflict: The Social Context Groups are in

One formidable challenge in managing inter-group violence relates to the way groups locked in conflict and contending parties frame the conflict. As Mitchell (1981) pointed out, “parties involved often disagree on what the conflict is ‘really’ about, one side defining the issues as being a set of salient problems (to them), makes the other claiming the actual core issues as something completely different” (Mitchell, 1981). This makes the peacebuilding efforts problematic as one has to struggle to discern conflicting issues which may constitute only a fraction of the overall issues present or may also constitute

the core of the relationship (Mitchell, 1981; Kriesberg, 1982). Under this circumstance, entertaining *interdependence* can be viable as it opens channels of communication allowing parties to more openly debate their differences and influence one another (Porto, 2008).

Meanwhile, the conflict situation in that particular context pertinent to power differential and relationship among adversaries - whether the relationship is *asymmetric* or *symmetric*⁵¹ is a strong variable in the dynamics of peace. Such conditions affect the manner in which groups in conflict perceive their power to their adversary and the resources available at their disposal to use coercive, rewarding, or persuasive inducements. For instance, in situation where the relationship is asymmetric Ramsbotham et al., (2011) gave:

In asymmetric conflicts the structure is such that the top dog always wins, the underdog always loses. The only way to resolve the conflict is to change the structure, but this can never be in the interests of the top dog. So there are no win-win outcomes, and the third party has to join forces with the underdog to bring about a resolution. From another point of view, however, even asymmetric conflicts impose costs on both parties. There are costs for the top dogs in sustaining themselves in power and keeping the underdogs down. In severe asymmetric conflicts the cost of the relationship becomes unbearable for both sides. This then opens the possibility for conflict resolution through a shift from the existing structure of relationships to another (Ramsbotham et al., 2011, p. 24)

Generally, as Dayton & Kriesberg (2009) asserted, differences in power affect the way parties formulate goals, anticipate consequences of their actions and eventually conceptualize possible outcomes of their actions and interactions with other parties in the conflict. This is to implicate that the social system adversaries find themselves, as

⁵¹Symmetric conflicts are conflicts of interest between relatively similar parties. Yet Conflict may also arise between dissimilar parties, such as between a majority and a minority, an established government and a group of rebels, a master and his servant, an employer and her employees. These are asymmetric conflicts. Here the root of the conflict lies not in particular issues or interests that may divide the parties, but in the very structure of who they are and the relationship between them (Ramsbotham et al 2011, p. 24)

Miall et al (1999) underscores, is not only the centerpiece of their discontent but also provides the criteria for evaluating conditions and possible changes. According to Kriesberg (1982) within the group's context, the extent to which conflict regulation appears institutionalized is integral in characterizing relations between antagonists. Kriesberg went on to say:

... if there are generally supported and well-understood procedure for handling disputes, matters of possible contention tend to be viewed as competitive, and not conflicting, or as part of a larger exchange relationship, and not simply as a zero-sum relationship (Kriesberg, 1982, p. 105).

By extending the notion of *security dilemma*⁵² to intra-state conflicts, Duffy argued that even in internal conflicts the *dilemma can arise in anarchic contexts* where political units (typically ethnic groups in intra-state settings) must fend for themselves (self-help) - to the extent that incumbent regimes lack governance capacity the political contest is effectively anarchic and groups must engage in self-help. Therefore, intra-state security dilemma most likely arises then, in situations in which inter-group animosities fester within the context of a regime without or with vanishingly little capacity rendering insecurity at beneath-the-surface rhetoric thus complicating peacebuilding. Duffy contends that in most societal conflicts feelings of insecurities are found among the elites and mass constituencies of one or more communities (see Duffy, 2009, p.108). Overall, many (e.g. Miall et al. 1999; Kriesberg & Dayton, 2009) maintain that, under circumstances where the social context groups are both the source of discontent and channel of their action, it is important to move up one level from the conflict group's level provided that the origin of "protracted social conflict" (as Edward

⁵² The concept of security dilemma as first used by Herz & Butterfield, (1951) attests that because no institutions exist to police the activities of states, the international system is essentially anarchical. Thus, they believe in 'self-help' - each state is responsible for its own survival and also for its own defense. Put in a metaphor, the idea is that in addressing its own perceived insecurity state 'A' unwittingly (unintentionally) render itself more insecure.

Azar reiterates) is entrenched within the particular state with communal content, deprivation of human needs, governance and the state's role, and international linkages essentially determining their transformation to high levels of intensity.

Put in a nut shell, espousing goals and methods that do not threaten the survival identity or virginity of the opposing side will tend to increase prospects for constructive engagement. Because the resort to violence in societal conflicts is the result of various and complex factors, alternative non-violent strategy or limited violence, in scope or duration may at times be effective; while extreme goals, denigrating the enemy and its members' needs, tend to be associated with extreme method of conducting a conflict and are more often unattainable than more modest goals. It is therefore, imperative to expand other platforms that address grievance and issues. For example, it is important that peacemaking efforts make the legitimacy at the local level a key element, that is to say, establishing peacebuilding process that puts the issue of legitimacy at its center.⁵³

In line with this argument particularly relevant to enticing and sustaining peace in Africa Chopra, (1996) boldly underlined that peacemaking efforts “must establish a center of gravity around which local individuals and institutions coalesce authority structure tied with local legitimacy and determined leadership” (Chopra, 1996, p. 339).

To this end, it suffices to say that more often than not, the path to accomplishing the process of sustainable peace is long and difficult. As such, ending violence is the first half and the fragile peace may relapse back to violence if they are not accompanied by post-conflict social integration, economic development, committed leadership and the

⁵³ By tracing the debates back in the mid-1990s informing on evolution of peacebuilding operations and fiascos prominently in Balkan regions and Africa (Rwanda and Somalia) scholars (e.g. Mazrui, 1994; Hebert, 2009) have uncovered the relation between the means employed by an outside actor in the statebuilding process and its legitimacy.

de-militarization of politics. Put another way, sustainable peacebuilding requires transformation across multiple fronts including changed attitudes and perceptions, changed behaviors and changes to structural inequalities that provide uneven benefit within the political system.

4.3 The Peacebuilding Practices and Forms

A critical analysis of peacebuilding processes in Africa both in response to *horizontal conflict between* different socio-ethnic and cultural aggregates, and *vertical conflict*, between groups who feel excluded and marginalized from existing power structures, and the government, particularly the central government reveals some shared patterns and trend (see Karbo, 2008, p. 113). In making sense of the peacebuilding process in contemporary Africa scholars tend to classify them into two broad albeit not mutually exclusive dimensions – the modern and the traditional approaches (see Murthi, 2008; Omeje, 2008).

4.3.1 The Modern Approach

State and Peacebuilding

As violent social conflicts occur it is evident that for the most part the first intervention measure comes from the state and its apparatus. Works that attend to peacebuilding practices and measures by the African states emphasize that they are essentially driven by conflict management ethos, characterized by undue emphasis on conflict control by force or repressive actions – establishing fragile and cosmetics arrangements based on political expediency that are in dissonance with the developments on the ground (see Karbo, 2008; Omeje, 2008). In his analysis of the response mechanisms of the EPRDF, a regime that has ruled Ethiopia since May 1991 Abbink (2006) observed that the peacemaking activities by the regime resound the inherent fixations to short-term

remedies for a return to order and stability - transitory trajectories of compromise rather than meaningful attempts at long-term structural and deep seated changes. He argues:

The administrative machinery ruling the country has identified 'restoring order' by all means as its main ethos, an overdue emphasis on the containment of conflicts by force and repressive action, establishing only fragile and cosmetic arrangements based on political ideology which are in dissonance with developments on the ground (Abbink, 2006, p. 615).

Meanwhile, as Omeje (2008) pointed out, identified as marked methods of the state-centered conflict resolution practices in contemporary Africa are *conflict control through repression*, and *cooption* (Omeje, 2008). As such, the use of military repression invariably appears as the main ethos of most African states in post-independence period particularly as they respond to state-centered armed and violent conflicts. And this virtually automatic disposition for a military crackdown, according to Omeje, only exacerbated the conflict.⁵⁴ He writes:

This initial tendency by the state to resort to a military crackdown and to dismiss insurgents' motives as baseless has almost invariably aggravated the conflict by maintaining local and external support for the plight of helpless populations the 'persecuted insurgents' claim to represent, and accentuating the conflict – acting the like the use gasoline to put out fire (Omeje, 2008, p. 78).

As shown above the other prominent method that most African states are reckoned for in their dealing of conflict arising within their territory is the use of cooption (particularly elite cooption).⁵⁵ The outcome of co-optation as strategy to control and contain conflict by the administrative wing running the state has proved dismaying with

⁵⁴ In this regard, some of the prominent examples include: the crackdown by Mobutu (former president of DRC) against the popular protest; the crackdown on peaceful protesters (mostly women) by Senegalese government in Ziguinchor in December 1982; the repeated action of President Paul Biya against growing discontent and protests from the minority anglophone region of Cameroon. (For discussion and illustrations on these and other conspicuous instances see Omeje, 2008, pp. 76-78). One can also recall the repression and crackdown of the Ethiopian government against the popular protest in the country in 2016.

⁵⁵ In his analysis of the practice and concept of conflict resolution in contemporary Africa Omeje has illustrated some conspicuous examples: how the regimes in Nigeria (under Babangida), Uganda (under Musuveni) Kenya (under Arap Moi) and Cameroun (under Paul Biya) among others used cooption to extend their rule, and the interest that maintains the status quo (see Omeje, 2008, pp. 79 – 81).

profound repercussions on the peacebuilding terrain and sociopolitical cohesion. It has weakened dissent and merely created a kind of consensus that maintains the status quo (see Omeje, 2008; Pankhurst & Assefa, 2008). This is chiefly due to the purpose for which cooption is essentially designed for, and the manner in which the process is executed. As Omeje (2008) notes, the overriding aim is political expediency and the process devoid of the spirit of conciliation and consensus. For this reason, it could not address the resentment of the mass as well as the need and concern of the local populations. Omeje even takes the predicaments associated with the use of cooption as a strategy of conflict control in Africa further when he writes: ‘being largely an instrument for elite politics, it (cooption) cannot address the legitimate needs and grievances of the masses’ (p. 80) ... And he argues:

...this is why a large number of seemingly intractable low-intensity conflicts and incidents of urban violence in Africa today are led by aggrieved militant youths, lawless guerrillas and ragtag militias, who, to a large extent, articulate the discontent and hopelessness of the bulk of the deprived and powerless subalterns (Omeje, 2008, pp. 80-81).

In general, it suffices to say that the peacebuilding efforts by the African regimes in their dealing with conflicts occurring within their territory are informed by a short-sighted and militaristic approach. Schemes are essentially driven by/and limited to finding a quick, short-term solution for a return to order and stability – creating transient and fragile outcomes without any meaningful effort to sustain the process and bring about structural and deep seated changes to transform the conflict sustainably. This is a shared pattern that the analysis of peacebuilding processes in contemporary Africa reveal (see Karbo, 2008; Omeje, 2008).

Non-government Organizations and Peacebuilding

Another dimension in the aspects of peacebuilding efforts, is one carried by the NGOs and other civil society organizations. As Karbo (2008) notes, a large number of non-

state agencies that exhibited a significant degree of effectiveness across them have engaged in peacebuilding activities in Africa. Especially, the roles of NGOs have been instrumental in the development of early warning systems, as well as in the implementation of the liberal peace project in Africa (see Karbo, 2008).

In most cases however, the peacebuilding schemes by the international NGOs in Africa have been the object of criticisms, noted to suffering from limitations. One fundamental shortcoming according to critics is that often the initiatives are not linked or connected to the grassroots community, a corollary of which is the absence of local ownership of the peace processes (Karbo, 2008; Murthi, 2008). As Murthi notes, this is because, the process of the internationally driven peacebuilding effort to resolve conflicts tend to focus on promoting dialogue at high-level (official diplomacy) based on the assumption that these are the legitimate representatives of the people – which means the schemes are not essentially grounded to the realities at local level so that they could effectively address the concerns of the local population (Murthi, 2008). Concurring to this assertion Karbo argues that the NGOs engage in peacebuilding activities without seeking sustainable solutions at the grassroots level. This has posed a formidable challenge to the achievement of constructive conflict transformation as it makes the processes to lack local ownership (Karbo, 2008). He went on to say:

The international NGOs who manage peacebuilding very often have no intimate acquaintance with the local environment. Peacebuilding programs are designed by northern NGOs with specific strategies for implementation. This approach has problems in the sense that designers and implementers are not accountable to members of communities where such programs are implemented. Communities have no ownership of peacebuilding processes designed in the North, minimizing the possibilities of anyone having to account to members of local communities (Karbo, 2008, p. 126).

Meanwhile, in his analysis of the context of peacebuilding in Africa Karbo (2008) contends that the top-down approach adopted by the promoters of liberal peace project has created a formidable for peacebuilding in Africa. For him, the peacebuilding schemes that come from the NGOs and Civil Society Organizations from the North do not generally match specific local contexts, and do not address local problems. The mere existence of many of these organizations which are oblivious in taking a long-range view based on developmental peacebuilding and in utilizing conflict-sensitive approaches in their programs also means that the problem is compounds further. Put succinctly: “Their goal is often to complete projects and programs based on timelines stipulated by donors” (Karbo, 2008, p. 128). Part of the limitation of the international peace initiatives is also linked to the tendency of implementers of peacebuilding programs in not seeking to address specific development challenges that might have been at the root of the conflict. According Karbo notes, “They do not have a clear understanding of the type of development that countries and societies need to build sustainable peace” (Karbo, 2008, p. 128).

Critics also censure the peacemaking initiatives from NGOs from the ground that *they do not coordinate their efforts with governmental institutions*. Even more, the peacebuilding schemes from the NGOs have revealed as stages of competitive relations by exacerbating the adversarial relations between civil society and the state. Karbo gave: “in many cases, NGOs are the preferred outlet for donor funds and support, and they end up ‘competing’ with the government.” In addition, the increasing proliferation of NGOs on the peacebuilding terrain has rendered the duplication, commercialization of peacebuilding, and diminished the efficacy of these international actors, a process which is an outcome of what Orjuela (2004) calls ‘*NGOization*’ (Orjuela, 2004, p. 225; see also Karbo, 2008, pp. 122-123).

4.3.2 The Traditional Approach

Applied alongside the so-called ‘modern’ approach to resolve contemporary inter-group conflicts in Africa is the traditional approach to peacebuilding. In this regard the Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms (TCRMs) have played a significant role in maintaining order and ensuring the peaceful coexistence of groups (see Yakubu, 1995; Murthi, 2008). Even if they have a significant degree of differences and are diverse and dynamic, TCRMs across a large number of communities and regions’ in all corners of Africa exhibit a wide range of cross-cutting and overlapping features in their philosophy, methods and practices (see Omeje, 2008; Yakubu, 1995). As Omeje (2008) pointed out, “generally, they emphasize the significant role of culture, and are guided by the principle of consensus, collective responsibility and communal solidarity” (Omeje, 2008, p. 91; also see Murthi, 2008). This signifies that the processes of the traditional approach to peacebuilding show their marked feature a shared sense of peacebuilding by the members of the communities, a collective responsibility for the harmony and discord caused by their members.

As many⁵⁶ have reiterated the guiding philosophy underlying the methods of TCRMs in Africa could be essentially subsumed under Ubuntu,⁵⁷ an idea that stands opposite to the notion of the irresolvability of conflict which is inherent to the dominant Western-centric theories (see Murthi, 2008, p. 24; Omeje, 2008, p. 89). Therefore, contrary to the dominant western-centered philosophy the traditional peacebuilding approaches in

⁵⁶ (See for instance, Murthi, 2008; Omeje, 2008; Yakubu, 1995).

⁵⁷ *Ubuntu* is an overarching, multidimensional philosophy that invokes the idiom and images of group cooperation, generosity, tolerance, respect, sharing, solidarity, forgiveness and conciliation (see Omeje, 2008, p. 89). *Ubuntu* subsumes the African interpretation of both ‘negative’ and ‘positive’ peace, and as an indigenous conflict prevention and peacebuilding concept it embraces the notion of acknowledgement of guilt, showing of remorse and repentance by perpetrators of injustice, asking for and receiving forgiveness, and paying compensation or reparation as a prelude for reconciliation and peaceful coexistence (see Francis 2007, p. 26; Omeje, 2008, p. 89).

Africa are founded upon the idea that conflicts can be resolved both constructively and permanently (Omeje, 2008). Omeje argues:

Viewed from the perspective of dominant paradigms, the practice and strategies of conflict management in Africa are profoundly nuanced, reflecting not only the complex nature of the conflicts, interests and actors, but also the complexity of post-colonial systems and politics on a world stage dominated by the powerful industrialized Western countries (Omeje, 2008, p. 91).

Overall, as Murthi (2008) underlined what we can glean from the methods of this approach is that, “their emphasis and the value that they place on achieving peace through forgiveness, healing, reconciliation and restorative justice” (Murthi, 2008, p. 16).

The potency of the traditional African approach to peacebuilding has been observed in many instances as they are applied in contemporary conflicts. Tim Murthi observed that in 1994, in Nigeria when the central government faltered in the face of the protracted communal clashes involving the Kusuv community and the Ikurav-Tiev it was the mediation process that informed on the Jir traditional conflict resolution mechanism that brought a workable solution. According to Murthi “rather than legal or political codes or laws, the Tiv relied on cultural norms, values and the communal moral conscience to inform the resolution of conflict” (Murthi, 2008, p. 19). In 1991, in the wake of the collapse of the Somali state, Somaliland, the breakaway territory in the northern Somalia had to tap into the indigenous process under the *guurti* system to make peace, which proved successful (For general overview on this see Murthi, 2008, pp. 20-21; Omeje, 2008, pp. 90-91). The reconciliation process through the *Mato Oput* in Northern Uganda, and the culturally inspired reconciliation process with *Ubuntu* orientation carried in South Africa are also worth mentioning for their contribution in

finding a workable mechanism in the midst of the fragmentation of social cohesion (see Murthi, 2008, pp. 21-23).

Meanwhile it is imperative to note that the traditional approach to peacebuilding has its own advantage and disadvantage. From his discussion of the traditional approach to conflict resolution in Africa Tim Murthi identifies six key strengths that they embody and are of relevant to contemporary circumstances. The first is linked to the outcomes that the processes of the TCRMs generate. According to Murthi the process produce results whose likelihood of being internalized by the actors involved is higher given that they are familiar to the communities where they are being utilized. “Indigenous and endogenous processes have been internalized by years of tradition and therefore the values and practices that they propose do not seem to be strange to their referent community” (p. 17). Second, the traditional methods of handling conflicts have the advantage of seeking consensus in addressing the underlying causes of conflict as their processes promote public participation and are often inclusive. The third advantage of the TCRMs according to Murthi is the extra quality which they possess in sustaining peace – they are built upon local cultural values, and norms that guarantee local ownership of peace processes. Fourth, the reliance on locally available resources makes them makes their process cost effective. The experience from Somaliland is illustrative of this. Essentially, “such a degree of self-sufficiency and self-sustainability can also protect a peace process from external pressures of resource mobilization” (p. 27). Fifth, the emphasis that the indigenous approaches place between mediation and reconciliation rather than seeing them as distinct and separate processes is also another merit. Finally, as seen in the Borama conference, in Somaliland which happened for more than five months, the traditional approaches to peacebuilding emphasize the importance of a sustained and continuous peace effort, a feature that contrasts the so

called modern or official process which is often sporadic and episodic (for general discussions on the advantage of the traditional African Approaches to peacebuilding see Murthi, 2008, pp. 27-28).

This does not however mean that the indigenous processes do not suffer from inherent limitations that inhibit their viability and efficacy particularly as they are applied to address contemporary intra-state social conflicts. Murthi (2008) emphasizes two of these elements: the first is associated with the duration the indigenous peacemaking processes take, and the second with the nature of the practices that tend to be gender-insensitiveness. According to Murthi (2008) the duration of the traditional peacemaking is considered as a limitation in that the time that takes to arrive at a consensus depends of the on the willingness of parties to achieve consensus which renders the process to be indefinite. He argues:

Even though indigenous processes are more inclusive they tend to be slow in bringing about agreement because they proceed on the basis of consensus-building which means often they do not necessarily proceed on the basis of socio-political expediency (Murthi, 2008, p. 28).

Secondly, the inherent tendencies of not being gender sensitive⁵⁸ (in their processes and practices) have an attendant consequence of undermining the role of women in the processes of peacemaking (Murthi, 2008, p. 28). As such, the traditional African approaches to conflict resolutions have also been criticized from other grounds such as that linked with the sanction they impose which tends to be arbitrary and disproportionate as well as from the ground of their importance casting doubt on their viability in the face of the complexities of the social structures in contemporary Africa (see Omeje, 2008, p. 88).

⁵⁸ As such, the disposition of not essentially being gender sensitive is not unique to the traditional methods as even in the 'modern' or official peace processes consider women's concerns are considered merely 'as an afterthought' (International Crisis Group, 2006).

To this end, it suffices to say that despite the aforementioned weakness the traditional peacemaking processes possess progressive values that can be gleaned to inform conflict resolution processes to date (Murthi, 2008, p. 30). In an endeavor of mitigating the limitations recent direction of research has shed light and suggested for an approach that hybridizes by taking best practices from indigenous and so called ‘modern’ or official approaches to peace and conflict resolution, a path also adopted by this research. The merit of a ‘hybrid approach’ for the purpose of this research is that as Murthi puts forward a hybrid approach:

... would rely upon a combination of official and indigenous values, principles and norms. Such an approach would encourage parallel forums and interactive problem-solving workshops, utilizing indigenous and official approaches, to bring together key opinion leaders and civil society at the regional, national or local levels. Ultimately, a hybrid approach would strive to facilitate national peace talks, which can be sequenced to complement an official mediation process and can also bring community leaders and civil society into the process (Murthi, 2008, p. 29).

CHAPTER FIVE

The Practice and Context of Peacebuilding and Peace in Contemporary Ethiopia

5.1 Introduction

In a country like Ethiopia where the nuts and bolts of sociopolitical development mirrors the core and dominant political culture at the center and its ethos; where one main strand of scholarships about post-1991 Ethiopia has its focus on center-periphery relation the study of the practice of conflict intervention and peacebuilding of a given case does not hold water without the proper analysis of the overall situation and the context at the macro, national level. Accordingly, this chapter sets the context for understanding peace and conflict in the GPNRS over the past 28 years by reflecting on the process of peacebuilding in post-1991 Ethiopia and thereby address research objective # 1 (examine the process of peacebuilding in post-1991 Ethiopia). As Francis (2008) notes, the benefit in setting the context for understanding peace and conflict particularly in Africa is that it “demonstrates that peace and conflict do not exist or operate in a vacuum or isolation, but essentially interact with and are influenced by specific historical and sociocultural forces, the nature of domestic politics and its international dimensions” (Francis, 2008, p.14).

Today Ethiopia is in a state of rapid, confusing and disruptive changes. Pertinent to peace and security, the change the country is undergoing over the past three years and particularly since April 2018 inasmuch as they promise openness and democratization they contain perils and present predicaments. As such, a commentary on the peace and

conflict problematic in contemporary Ethiopia would at least require a revisit examination of the process since the early 1990s, specifically since the year 1991.

The remaining of this chapter is organized in four sections. The first discusses the conflict situation in contemporary Ethiopia and concludes by highlighting that the sources and drivers of conflict in contemporary Ethiopia are diverse and complex marked by a situation where isolated conflicts are strongly connected to the broader political and economic context involving multiple, and often times, competing individuals and group actors and interests. The second section deals with the practice and concept of conflict transformation and peacebuilding in the EPRDF Ethiopia. This section reviews and reflects on the available literature focusing on the main traits of the conflict intervention schemes as well as the overall picture of the process of peacebuilding in post-1991 Ethiopia. The third section identifies and elucidates the challenges and prospects of peacebuilding in contemporary Ethiopia. The last section concludes the chapter, by following contours of change and continuity throughout the peacebuilding process in post Derg Ethiopia.

5.2 The Nature of Conflict in Contemporary Ethiopia: An Overview

The incidence of conflicts in contemporary Ethiopia could be classified along two dimensions - *horizontally* between different socio-ethnic and cultural aggregates, and *vertically*, between groups who feel excluded and marginalized from existing power structures, and the government, particularly the central government. The former, inter-communal violent-conflict has been the dominant feature of post-1991 Ethiopia. As Abbink (2006) pointed out, in the post-1991 period, even if the country has not witnessed large-scale civil war between the government and insurgent groups as under the Mengistu regime, inter-group relations among various groups in the country have

remained largely conflictual (Abbink, 2006). The latter, the conflict between the state and society, between civilian protesters or groups that are driven by the sense of deprivation and the EPRDF manifested itself conspicuously during the 2005 election and the ensuing crisis. Yet since 2015, this form of confrontation has been an increasing phenomenon with indelible mark on the sociopolitical history and path of the country.

Having its root as a protest against the Addis Ababa master plan, particularly between 2015 – March, 2017, the nature of conflict in Ethiopia has chiefly taken vertical dimension - a confrontation between groups who feel excluded and marginalized from the existing power and socioeconomic structures on the one hand and the incumbent government on the other. Between 2015 and March, 2017 the country has experienced one of the most convulsive events in its political history when popular protests that began in Oromia Regional State metastasized and engulfed the two elephant regional states in the federation (Oromia and Amhara) and their respective ethnic groups. The grievances and senses of relative deprivation of these arguably disfranchised groups seen in light of the political dispensation and the facts on the ground has seen itself converted to massive popular protest posing fear, uncertainties, and danger to the integrity of the country to the extent that a nation-wide state of emergency had to be issued.

In short, it can be said that while the causes of conflicts of both kinds are complex and multidimensional, exhibiting interface and interconnection between different levels, actors and domains; as many (e.g. Dereje, 2010; UNDP, 2012) posit the inter-communal violent conflicts are mainly driven by and linked with competition over resources like land, pasture and water; clashing livelihood strategies; heightened awareness of ethnic identity; and border and administrative related disputes between

and within regional states. The sources and drivers of the conflict between the central authority and groups who feel disfranchised are however largely linked with the challenges of state formation and nationbuilding - the crisis of legitimacy. To help us better navigate through the practice and concept of conflict transformation in post-1991 Ethiopia, a brief discussion of the main types of conflict in the country is given below.

Inter-communal (Inter-clan/ethnic) Conflicts

As shown already conflicts centered on identity have been the dominant ones that saw proliferation in post-1991 Ethiopia especially in multi-ethnic regional states due to their demographic and political structure. The main factor often cited for the intensification of identity based conflicts is the institutionalization of ethnically based political structure as it heightened the manipulation of identity for political ends, the instrumental use of ‘ethnicity’ for political benefit (see Basi, 2010; UNDP, 2012). The most conspicuous inter-group violent conflicts in the post-1991 Ethiopia include the Silte- Gurage conflict, the Wagagoda language conflict, the Sheko-Megengir conflict, the Anyuwaa-Nuer conflict, the Berta-Gumuz conflicts, the Gedeo-Guji conflict, the Oromo-Amhara conflict, the Borana-Gerri conflict, and the Oromo-Somali conflict and the conflict between groups of ‘migrant’ people often referred to as ‘settlers’ or ‘Highlanders’ (e.g. the conflict between the Anyuwaa and Highlander in the GPNRS and the conflict involving the ‘natives’ and the ‘migrants’ in Benishangul Gumuz regional state) (see Dereje, 2010).

Border Disputes and Conflicts

Although Ethiopia is one administrative unit, inter and intraregional border demarcation have development implications with regard to resource appropriation, mobilization and distribution. As the Ethiopian ethnic federal dispensation heightens

ethnic self-consciousness and grounded ethnicity, where ethnicity has been landed, the obsession has also transformed historical resource conflicts between pastoral communities in the lowland regions of the country into inter-regional boundary conflicts and border disputes between communities and regional states (Medhane, 2007; Fekadu, 2009; UNDP, 2012). The fact that most of the borders in the newly created regional states are not clearly defined has generated territorial conflicts. In relation to this, the protracted conflict between the Oromo and the Somali in the contested Mieiso woreda in the Eastern Ethiopia are notable (Fekadu, 2009; Basi, 2010). What is striking about border-related conflicts in the country is their escalation in recent years. Particularly, the past three years have seen a mounting politicization and escalation of border dispute between regional states engulfing the government apparatus and the communities into it, leaving indelible scars of human suffering, death and large-scale displacement.⁵⁹ Today, there are border related tensions, and conflict between the Amhara and Tigray regional states, that have become a flashpoint and extensions of the political conflict and polarization among the member parties within the EPRDF coalition.

Conflicts over Natural Resource

Conflict over natural resource is common in sub-Saharan Africa. Case studies have provided a stark correlation between conflict and ecology particularly in the Horn of Africa.⁶⁰ In Ethiopia, the causes and occurrences of natural resource conflict are mainly associated with the lack of a properly implemented land use system, natural resource

⁵⁹ A glaring illustration of this is the border conflict between the Oromia and Somali regional states which turned appalling (especially between 2016 and 2018) permeating and straddling throughout the whole areas that these two regions share border, engulfing the two communities and the administrative and security apparatus of the two regions into it. The Oromia- Somali border conflict has also been a major problematic issue to the central government and within the EPRDF coalition.

⁶⁰ See Porto, 2008.

degradation, population growth, increasing numbers of livestock produced for export, deforestation, bush encroachment, and invasive species, increasing pressure and competition over shared and shrinking resources such as land (Dereje, 2006b; UNDP, 2012).

The dynamics of natural resource conflicts in Ethiopia are worsened by the diverse settlement pattern as the communities inhabit different ecological zones and possess diverse livelihood orientations, which make the construction of a clear and defined property rights system difficult (Dereje, 2010; UNDP, 2012). For instance, Dereje observed how the history of change among the land users (Ittu Oromo) of common property as an income diversification strategy has become a threat to others (Issa Somali) who wish to sustain pastoralism as livelihood and eventually evolved into violence in the contested district of Meiso (Dereje, 2010). As such, conflicts over natural resource in Ethiopia largely occur among pastoralist communities owing to the increasing pressure from natural disasters such as drought and flooding, and compounded by climate change.

Religious Conflicts

Because it deepens mistrust within and between communities and contributes to the outbreak of violence and acts of terrorism, in all its variant form extremism is considered both a cause and a consequence of conflict. Yet scholarships on religious radicalism emphasize that extremism might be symptoms of deeper levels of political and socio-economic discontent. Ethiopia is a country favorably reckoned for secularism and mutual respect and religious tolerance yet there is increasing indications of religious radicalization (New Business Ethiopia, 2011). Dispositions of inter-religious and sectarian conflicts in the country are discernible in their violent form, for instance,

in 2006, in Jimma Zone of Oromia regional state. Abiy (2017) has observed the dynamics of religious radicalization and violence in Jimma zone.

To this end, it is imperative that we mention two points about the nature of conflicts in contemporary Ethiopia. First, the sources and drivers of the conflicts are more diverse and complex than resource competition, identity, or elite manipulation of collective memories or instrumentalization of popular feelings of relative deprivation in the pursuit of political power. Second, individual conflicts in the country are strongly connected to the broader sociopolitical and socioeconomic context and conditions of the country.

5.3 The Practice and Concept of Peacebuilding and Peace in Contemporary Ethiopia

Literature, both theoretical reflections and empirical case studies on conflict work and peacemaking activities in post-1991 Ethiopia aptly resound about the inherent fixations to short-term remedies for a return to order and stability - transitory trajectories of compromise rather than meaningful attempts at long-term structural and deep seated changes (see, Abbink, 2006; Pankhurst & Assefa, 2008; Anteneh, 2014). Put another way, the conflict intervention schemes from the EPRDF in dealing with the incidences of violent inter-group conflicts and popular protests against the regime is for the most part propelled by the ethos of conflict management, ending overt violence largely through the use of carrot and stick tempered with the obsessions to bringing the perpetrators to court of law and narrow platform for grassroots participation. As Abbink (2006) pointed out, the administrative machinery ruling the country has identified 'restoring order' by all means as its main ethos, an overdue emphasis on the containment of conflicts by force and repressive action, establishing only fragile and

cosmetic arrangements based on political ideology which are in dissonance with developments on the ground. As Pankhurst & Assefa (2008) noted, the federal government is yet to come up with more creative ways of partnership than co-option of local institutions (Pankhurst & Assefa, 2008). Overall, the outcomes of the conflict transformation efforts are ineffective and unsatisfactory. Nothing characterizes this than the realities on the ground. Today's Ethiopia is a tinderbox, replete with festering wounds, untransformed and uneasy relations among various groups with intermittent eruption into violence, and potentially capable of devouring. Over the past one year alone, there were numerous fatal targeting attacks and violent conflicts across the country. To mention some of the most prominent: on September 14, 2018 in what was ethnically targeted attack more than twenty-three civilians⁶¹ were killed and thousands displaced in Burayu, 19 Km west of the capital Addis Ababa. As such, the sporadic cycle of violence and attack in the country between March 2018 and July 2019 has costed the life of many civilians and caused the displacement of thousands, if not millions. The perplexing problem in Gedeo of the SNNP and West Guji of Oromia has inflicted a colossal humanitarian crisis.⁶² The long fraught statehood quest of the Sidama Zone (part of the SNNP region) culminated in massive human and material cost in July 2019. According to *The Reporter*, a widely read bi-weekly newspaper, the Sidama zone police has confirmed the death of least 53 during the recent violence in Sidama zone in July 2019. The violence began following a call by the Sidama to unilaterally declare statehood under the federal government on July 18, 2019. Following this, the region, with the intervention of the federal security forces have

⁶¹ (<http://www.addisstanadard.com/news-more-than-twenty-three-killed-in-a-spate-of-mob-attack-in-burayu-thousands-displaced/>: accessed on 19 October 2018).

⁶² According to a report by reliefweb as of March 2019 an estimated 620, 747 are displaced due to the conflict in Gedeo (SNNP region) West Guji(Oromia region)(<http://www.reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/ethiopia-gedeo-and-west-guji-displacement-snapshot-march-2019/>: accessed on 19 August 2019).

managed to avert possible confrontations in Hawassa city, the regions capital. However, the violence has spread to towns and villages outside Hawassa, within Sidama Zone with most of the casualties reported from there.⁶³

The broader picture of the peacebuilding process in Ethiopia in the past quarter century indicates that peace has been merely conceptualized in its minimal sense. As such, one would best attribute the extant situation to negative peace. The country's track record in social justice, ensuring equality and equitability, working on fault lines in transforming conflict and planting a deep culture of peace are indicators of this. Melaku (2008) contends that although the country is hailed by international financial and monetary institutions, and has apparently appeared to be one of the fastest growing nations, reports still aptly indicate limitations particularly as regards poverty reduction and the distribution of the benefit of the development to the mass. The policy EPRDF espoused since 1991 registered only minimal result. After more than a decade rule the country grossly fell short in political democracy amid still to grapple with unchecked population growth and the crisis of rural development which are posing challenges (Dereje, 2010).

A glimpse into the justice sector in contemporary Ethiopia reveals the prevalence of partiality and discrimination. Although Ethiopia received massive foreign aid and financial support under the pretense of "justice system reform program", the reform remains mystery to the vast majority of Ethiopians. On the contrary, the justice reform program has been used as a pretext by the political elites to systematically create a more dependent and parasitic judicial system (UNESCO, 2010; Henok, 2013). The report

⁶³ (<https://www.thereporterethiopia.com/article/sidama-zone-police-confirm-death-injuries/>: accessed on 14 September 2019).

from the UNESCO fiercely states that the global motive behind the “justice reform” initiative continues to elude practical application when it comes to Ethiopia (UNESCO, 2010). Laws and statutes are enacted in arbitrary and unjust ways primarily to further the political agenda of the government and simply to encroach on peoples’ freedoms and liberties.⁶⁴

A particularly problematic condition of the post-1991 socioeconomic and political (discussed in detail in the following section) trajectories of Ethiopia concerns the manner in which the nation has been structured as regards the distribution of resources and benefits along group lines, a condition which many have been wary about⁶⁵ and a nightmare that turned real when, a year after the regime declared virtually 100% election victory in 2014 the country is inundated by protests stemming from the sense of relative deprivation. Merera (2003b) squarely writes, “.... the TPLF seems to have failed to make a radical break with the country’s authoritarian past. Instead, what it has achieved is “a tyranny of a minority over majorities and minorities” (Merera, 2003b, p. 162).

To this end, the existence of deep structural violence, structural inequality, festering tensions and intermittent violent conflicts in various forms, at different levels and parts of the country aptly informs the inadequacy in the process of the peacebuilding. As Young (2010) pointed out, even if social and historical factors of suppression, alienation, differentiation and exclusion account to the rise of ethnic solidarity in

⁶⁴ The 2012 anti-terrorism law is strikingly reflective of this condition.

⁶⁵ One of them, Dereje, wrote, “the impressive economic growth that Ethiopia has registered for the past decade of somewhere between 8% and 10% is overshadowed by the growing economic inequality that could undermine the political stability and popular legitimacy provided that the question who benefits from economic growth is a much contested issue in contemporary Ethiopia which is exacerbated by the emergence of new economic elites through rentier activity and clientelism” (Dereje, 2014).

Ethiopia the liberalization of the country since the early 1990's which has also been accompanied by charges of ethnic favoritism and cronyism has left indelible conundrum (Young, 2010). Therefore, it is imperative to say that, even if the TPLF led regime managed to secure extensive external resource and international acceptance, it has not been backed by social and political legitimacy internally. Overall, the lack of peace dividends in some areas and disproportionate dividends and sense of relative deprivation among some groups in the country point to structural explanations to the persistence of violence and civil disobedience in recent years and, social exclusion and inadequacy of the peacebuilding process. The Ethiopian state is also increasingly divided along various cleavages, including ethnic and geographic/regional meaning that peacebuilding ought to struggle to mend such fault lines. This challenge is exacerbated further as the political and economic structures are fissured and shattered in tandem with the erosion of state legitimacy, massive human and capital flight, absence of rule of law, poor governance structures, decline in public services and corruption. What are the challenges behind this unsatisfactory track-record as well as the prospects and potential opportunities on which the process of sustainable peace could be laid and enhanced in contemporary Ethiopia is a point we shall turn our attention to?

5.4 Challenges and Prospects of Peacebuilding in Contemporary Ethiopia

5.4.1 Challenges

Generally, the major challenges to peacebuilding in post-1991 Ethiopia are attributed to historical, sociopolitical, and socioeconomic factors as well as issues pertaining to the inadequacy of normative frameworks, institutional constraints, and the capacity to implement.

Sociopolitical Challenges

Competing Narratives of Statehood: Problematic and Unsettled Nation-building Business

Fundamentally the path to sustainable peace and democratization in Ethiopia is constrained by the history of state formation problematic and unsettled narratives of statehood. Arguably, the inability to work out effective formula that reconciles the competing claims of the main forces and groups in the country has presented the most formidable and enduring challenge to the peacebuilding terrain. As a result, the country has to oscillate, at one time one brand becoming the dominant mainstream narrative while the other is subjugated and so forth. To this day, the failure to create a sense of shared understanding and direction about the image of the Ethiopian state – a mutually benefiting sense of interdependence to embed the peacebuilding into institutions that reinforce and sustain the process and create regular patterns of political succession - has long undermined political stability in Ethiopia. In strict sense, pathologies in the making and unmaking of Ethiopia through the historical evolution of the Ethiopian state are the bottom lines in issues of problematic peace in the country.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ (For overview of this literature see Merera, 2003, 2007, pp.144-152; Habtamu, 2017).

Since it took power by toppling the military junta, *Derg*, in May 1991, the TPLF-led EPRDF has made no meaningful effort to address these sociopolitical pathologies, to harmonize the various competing and contending claims and interests and with that promote the process of sustainable peace. Rather adding to the problem, EPRDF complicated the functions of peacebuilding and sociopolitical cohesion of the state and society in Ethiopia by imposing its brand of statehood narrative and project, turning the other dominant forces into subsidiary position. Merera (2007) articulates the condition in the following way:

... It is important to note from the outset that when the TPLF captured state-power in May 1991, it neither had any meaningful alliance with any of the political groups in Ethiopia, except the EPLF nor created a broader national consensus needed for a successful state transformation. Its Ethiopian novelty was creation of the PDOs, putting political groups, which have neither an independent existence of their own nor a legitimate representation from the very people they claimed to liberate. ***By promoting ethnicity to the center of state policy-making and using it as instrument of divide and rule, it has further deepened and widened the old lines of political polarization while adding the new ones...***The political landscape has begun to be infested by more demagogues, hustlers and opportunists of all types while intellectuals, especially those who have remained in the country generally watching the political drama from the side lines (Merera, 2007, p.11).

The change EPRDF effected has negatively affected its legitimacy particularly from core groups and actors in the country. Put another way, the fact that the TPLF-led EPRDF carried an institutional reconstruction of the state in its way has left lasting consequences on the national cohesion given that other narratives (particularly the two dominant forces in the Ethiopian politics: The Pan-Ethiopian narratives of the largely Amhara centered elites and the OLF (the Oromo Liberation Front), the core group in then Oromo politics) were subjugated, subordinated to abysmal position. In short, in early 1990s as the ethnic federalism was imposed in Ethiopia by the elites from the minority Tigre ethnic groups these core forces with strong support base among the

Oromo and Amhara, the two largest ethnic groups in the country respectively have found themselves alienated from the process and with that their constituency, more than half of the Ethiopian population.⁶⁷

Un-demilitarized Politics: Exclusionary political culture and the absence of inclusive institutions

The inability to work out a win-win formula that accommodates the contending narratives and create an enabling environment for democratic structures and sustainable peace among the Ethiopian political elites and fronts are linked with the long-standing political culture of the country - the absence of non-violent transformation of politics and ensuing limited and exclusionary political landscape. As many (e.g. Manning, 2008; Sisk & Jarstad, 2008; Lyons, 2009) note and the experiences of countries emerging out of conflict suggest, by themselves, elections do not provide the basis for

⁶⁷ Resembling instances of the impacts of institutional reconfiguration on the cohesion of the larger society and the sociopolitical cohesion in every aspect of statebuilding interventions is observed by Hebert (2009) from his analysis on the experiences of the post-Sadam Iraq and Kosovo. Hebert argues that “the intermingling between state and society in the modern age makes it problematic to understand the state in exclusively institutional terms, without questioning its ability to successfully enforce a social contract that will ensure the cohesion of the larger social entity it governs” (p. 29). In Iraq, the state institutions that the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) helped to build in partnership with the Shiite-dominated Iraqi government have come to be increasingly seen by the Sunni population as an organ of Shiite power. In this case, the weakness of the state is not rooted so much in the poor performance of state institutions rather as in these institutions’ inability to represent Iraqi society as a whole. As such, responsible for the crisis and the birth of Sunni insurgents in post-Saddam Iraq is the de-Baathification architecture and the ensuing marginalization of the Sunni community from state institutions. The experience of Kosovo is even more profound in its resemblances with the post-1991 Ethiopia. In the context of Kosovo, the multilateral mandated agency, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), was a successful in many regards. It established a modicum of stability, reduced the murder rate and inter-ethnic violence, and facilitated the return of most of the Kosovo Albanian refugees from the war. Yet through its policy it strongly impeded a successful statebuilding process in Kosovo. The two communities certainly did not need the help of the UNMIK to feel different from each other. But what is certain is that UNMIK, as an entrepreneur of identity, has been more engaged in a ‘community-building’ process than a ‘nation-building’ one. It has successfully built institutions for an independent Kosovo but has failed to link them with a common meaning around an inclusive notion of Kosovar citizenship. Instead, UNMIK has actually helped entrench the ethnic divisions that divide Kosovar society. In the light of these experiences, Hebert (2009) maintains that given that ‘the state makes the nation’, it is impossible to avoid nationbuilding activities in statebuilding processes centered on institutions. To the contrary, the creation of institutions has concrete repercussions on the nature of the socio-political cohesion. A better option in framing statebuilding interventions is therefore to grapple with this reality, rather than avoiding it (Hebert, 2009, pp. 29-32).

sustainable peace. For a successful peacebuilding to be possible, the politics should be demilitarized. In other words, elections should be preceded by key process to demilitarize politics. Lyons (2009) notes that, “it is not the events in the election day rather the process leading up to election and the kind of incentives and opportunities developed that encourage the warring parties to shift their strategies from violence to electoral politics” (Lyons, 2009, p.2). As such, a sustained shift from violence to non-violence electoral process requires the transformation of institutions of war into institution that can sustain peace.

The political order in post-1991 Ethiopia is an epitome of a situation where the legacies of protracted armed struggle and the exigencies of the war-to-peace transition shaped (negatively) the postwar political order. Lyons (2019) wrote:

The transition in Ethiopia began with military victory, not a negotiated peace settlement. The EPRDF, along with the insurgent Eritrean People’s Liberation Front and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), met with the remnants of the old regime in London in May 1991, but military facts on the ground rather than negotiations or external powers determined the outcome. Instead of building the conditions for more democratic regimes, this kind of path dependency leads victorious insurgents to build on the successful models that contributed to their victory and to seize opportunities during the war-to-peace transition to consolidate power (Lyons, 2019, p. 5).

In post-1991 Ethiopia, during the transitional period leading up to election after the fall of *Derg*, the politics was not de-militarized and the necessary infrastructural conditions for the conduct of free and fair election were not made. During the transitional process (1991-1995) the institutions bases of war were not transformed into structures that can sustain peaceful electoral competitions, the result of which has been the consolidation of power by EPRDF, the dominant victorious insurgent group during the civil war that led to removal of *Derg* from power. As a result, elections in post-1991 Ethiopia served merely to strengthen EPRDF and embellish the party’s image. As Lyons (2019) argues

this dependency path has led the victorious insurgent, the EPRDF to build on the successful models that contributed to its victory and to seize opportunities during the war-to-peace transition to consolidate power.⁶⁸ In short, the process leading to elections in the past a quarter century in Ethiopia have been largely problematic. In early 1990s dissatisfied by the process the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), one of the major groups, abandoned the transition and took up arms again.

In the aftermath that followed the 2005 election, Professor Birhanu Nega and other prominent figures in the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD), one of the major opposition group parties during the election had to change their strategy from electoral competition to violent means of struggle through a front known as *Patriotic Ginbot 7 Movement for Unity and Democracy*.⁶⁹ Evidently, the anticipation that future changes are impossible through democratic process from the circumstances of the 2005 election outcome and the ensuing crisis may have impacted the choice of armed-struggle as political strategy. To capture the tragedy of the 2005 election, in what appears to be history repeating itself, true to the Ethiopian history of political culture, when opportunities that could be a turning point for a democratic political transition were aborted, Donald Levin said this: “the aftermath of the May 2005 elections plucked disaster out of the jaws of triumph, yielding a fresh polarization of political attitudes” (Levin, 2013, p.5).

⁶⁸ Ethiopian politics for nearly thirty years have been shaped by how the TPLF won the protracted civil war in 1991 and how the legacies of that war were linked to the mechanisms through which the EPRDF ruled. Civil wars that end in rebel victory generally follow distinct war-to-peace transitions. The transition in Ethiopia, as well as in cases such as Uganda and Rwanda, emphasized power consolidation rather than power sharing and focused on transforming the armed insurgent group into an authoritarian political party. In Ethiopia, the EPRDF used the war-to-peace transition to transform its armed insurgent movement into such a party and to consolidate power. Even transitional processes such as post-conflict elections, transitional justice, and demobilization served as effective instruments of power consolidation. And these legacies continue to shape reform efforts in 2018 (Lyons, 2019, pp. 4-5).

⁶⁹ As part of the political developments in the country since March 2018 Ginbot 7 and its leaders have returned to the country officially declaring the abandonment of armed struggle in favor of peaceful political struggle to operate as political party.

What existed to date in Ethiopia are merely periodic elections with a range of electoral process and outcome manipulations by the ruling party which make it difficult for the opposition political parties to use the liberal democratic legal and institutional framework to challenge the dominance of the ruling party. As many (Tesfaye, 2002; Vaughan & Tronvoll, 2003; Merera, 2007) maintain at best, EPRDF has created a hybrid political system that combined deep-rooted authoritarian tendencies with democratic dispositions which has impaired the peacebuilding terrain and democratic outcomes in Ethiopia. The TPLF ruled the country adamantly adhering to exclusionary policies particularly against the pan Ethiopian groups, by reorganizing the country on ethnic basis through the creation of assortment of ethnic parties, collectively known as EPRDF. It conducted elections in 1995, 2000, 2005, and 2015 all of which it won and claimed to be democratic despite the existence of evident testimonies of the frauds involved. However democratic the regime claims to be, its victories did not dampen the crisis, which erupted in mass demonstrations during the general elections of 2005 to which EPRDF reacted by detaining the leaders and supporters of the opposition, and cracking down on pro-democracy militants, the press, and human rights activists and more recently in 2016 a year after the regime declared 100% victory in the 2015 election.

At this juncture it is worth to emphasize that the circumstances of the current Ethiopia are resembling to the early 1990s: the country is in the state of transition. Particularly after the vent in April 2018 brought about by the convulsive countrywide protest between 2016 and 2018. Therefore, it is important to take heed that the vicious cycles unrepeated or the mismanagement of the transitional process after the fall of the Derg unrepeated. Accordingly, before the up-coming election in 2020 it is very important that greater emphasis placed on the development of a process that can demilitarize the

politics and build strong inclusive institutions. A kind of process geared toward shaping the way various contending groups and parties in the country relate to each other and through the joint decision making can set the precedent in order to initiate the institutional basis for sustainable peace in the country. As Lyons (2009) recounts it is to be noted that, “to the extent that a process to demilitarize politics can be initiated, the precedents and institutional basis for sustainable peace and democratization can be supported” (Lyons, 2009, p 103).

Socioeconomic Challenges

The prevailing socioeconomic circumstances which the country is under particularly the mounting economic problems, and uneven economic gains and inequality along ethnic lines also reflect the complicated ground on which the peacebuilding activities are laid meaning that the process of peacebuilding in Ethiopia had to grapple with these setbacks. If one has to call out a marked point critics share about the downside of the EPRDF’s 27 years’ rule is the assertion that the governance structure has created uneven peace dividends along group lines, creating a layer of the “gots” and “left outs”. As Berhanu (2007) pointed out, since 1991, the federal government in Ethiopia has been described as a Tigrayan dominated government and thus various ethnic movements are rising to challenge the alleged domination of the Tigrayan group on the principle of ethnic solidarity (Berhanu, 2007).

Amid many others have already bemoaned the financial costs of implementing parallel political and economic institutions across Ethiopia’s reorganized ethnic “states” and have been wary about the threat ethnic divisions present to Ethiopian unity despite the continuing assertion from the ruling EPRDF that it is intent on addressing the claims of ethnic groups to build a multiethnic democracy (see for instance Ishiyama, 2010;

Dereje, 2014). As such, the increasing economic inequality and the question over who benefits from economic growth in contemporary Ethiopia have continued to undermine political stability and popular legitimacy even before it is translated into a massive popular protest that inundated the country between 2016 and 2018 particularly in the two elephant regional states of Oromia and Amhara respectively over the alleged discrimination that heightened the sense of relative deprivation. What is striking is the persistence of these socioeconomic anomalies even after the landmark events of political development in the country in April 2018 thus continuing to challenge, stumbling the process.

Peace dividend, incentives of various kind, for example the role of economic and social benefit on the dynamics of peace have been widely reiterated (see Vayren, 1997; Selikat, 1998; Atashi, 2009). As Zaher (2003) argues the structure of benefit (the socioeconomic condition) and the way the state is organized in this regard could lock parties and groups in conflict to peace or the other wise. Particularly writing on the expectations on the ground from the majority population, how peace dividend (benefits) affect peace Atashi (2009) maintains that peace benefits in the form of minimal opportunities after the conflict may lead to an increase in public frustration and a possible weakening of support (Atashi, 2009). The circumstances in today's Ethiopia is an epitome of this. After the macro political change in April 2018 that has seen unprecedented public support for the newly elected prime minster have dropped in astonishing way. This is because people experienced very little, if not worse improvements in their life. The living costs in the country is increasing at spike and reflections of the dissatisfactions the public over the new leadership are easily observable especially in the capital Addis Ababa.

This will continue to challenge the newly created hope and derail peace in Ethiopia. The continuation of socioeconomic problems and insecurity in the country over the past year would continue to shape the expectation of the people to withdraw support to Abiy administration or the overall transition process. This decline of the capacity of the government in providing social services and maintaining order (security), the inability to provide the people's minimum expectation becomes particularly worrisome as it may strengthen rise of the ethnic hardliners in the country. The lack of order which is increasingly being witnessed in the country over the past year has already resulted in the perception from the people that the new administration is ineffective and incapable to exercise power and authority in the country, and thus it is weak.⁷⁰ In addition to the depressing socioeconomic condition therefore one major problem and challenge in Ethiopia today is the feeling of insecurity and uncertainty due to the ineffective police force to protect all citizens and the lack of order. This points towards the structural explanation connected with persistence of violence, inadequacy in transformation

⁷⁰ For instance, since April 2018, in their most glaring form, reflections of this are witnessed in west Wellega of the Oromia Regional State and the Benishangul Gumuz Regional State (BGRS) areas. Particularly, the paramilitary activities in west Welega and the failure from the government to protect citizens and the increasing crime activities in the area was glaring. In April/May 2019 a notorious instance of the sense of longing for safety and protection is observable from the 'reaction' of the Amhara popular political elites and activists following an attack on ethnic Amharas in various localities of Metekel zone, BGRS, and its aftermath. In what appeared to be a 'retaliatory' attack for the killing of 'Amharhas' in Metekel zone of the BGRS several people, ethnic Gumuz were killed by unidentified armed men in Jawi District of the Amhara Regional State. Addis Standard May 3, 2019 reads: "In what is described as "retaliation" for the killing of at 18 people in various localities of Metekel zone in Benishangul Gumuz (BG) regional state, "several dozens" were killed in the last two days in Jawi Wereda, part of bordering BG regional state". (<http://addisstandard.com/news-several-dozens-killed-in-jawi-woreda-amhara-regional-state-deputy-pm-demeke-describes-it-a-tragic-retaliation/>: accessed on 21 June 2019). It is evident that the uncertainties, ineffective police forces and lack of order could increase the levels of insecurity within communities' particularly in post-agreement and transitional periods. As it is to be recalled during the 2015-2017 popular protests in Ethiopia, in various occasions when the federal security system and its core forces came to be infamously remembered for repression and crackdown the SP's of the Amhara and Oromia regional states have resisted ENDF and the Federal Police to which they were considered as heroes protecting civilians from the repressive actions of the national security forces. In the midst of the feelings of insecurity and prevalent perception that the national security apparatus is 'partial' the regional SP's 'provided' a sense of safety, protection and psychological security for the communities.

strategies which is a dangerous pattern and could lead to increasing frustrations and another cycle of crisis.

Against these backdrops, one could argue that in current Ethiopia there is an urgent need for exploring the complex structure of the post April 2018 transition process and developments vis-à-vis the expectations, perceptions and satisfactions on the ground, from the people. This examination would allow to determine the focus of security and social and economic strategies on the ground. Tangible resource and measures at the grassroots including the issues of safety and security and addressing the increasing living costs and youth unemployment should be a priority to reinforce trust on the new administration and deal with the uncertainties about the stability of the country and salvage these good political developments from derailing. Unless the government makes strenuous to provide these minimum expectations and conditions the potential these circumstances to upset the whole system cannot not be underestimated. In short, in current Ethiopia there is an urgent need to balance issues of restoring political institutions (election) with issues of addressing the peoples' expectation on the ground.⁷¹

Normative and Institutional Challenges

In addition, the peacebuilding landscape in post-1991 Ethiopia have been faced with challenges as regards inadequacy of the normative frameworks, institutional constraints, poor implementation capacity and coordination (Pankhurst & Assefa, 2008;

⁷¹ It is imperative to note that elections are the means rather than an end to bring about tangible improvements on the ground. As Mani (2002) argues, that political power and holding of post-conflict elections do not necessarily lead to economic equality for certain sections of society that had traditionally been excluded. Furthermore, electoral power and political equality may not be a priority for all people in society. This suggest that following a peace, exploring peoples' expectation from a peace process can be useful (Mani, 2002, in Atashi, 2009, p.50).

Dereje & Kirchmann, 2009; UNDP, 2012). The articulation of values, principles, norms and policy actions on conflict prevention and management in the various policy instruments has been characterized by absence of a coordinated approach. There has been no coherent and comprehensive national peacebuilding strategy and the efforts were by and large fragmented. Moreover, the peacebuilding endeavors were not comprehensive and equitable especially in areas of human development and entitlement. As such, the absence of clear normative and institutional arrangements in responding to conflicts, lack of meaningful research capacity, and weak inter-governmental relations and coordination between basic local structures and intermediate government hierarchies in both the regional and the federal governments have presented a formidable challenge to the conflict transformation architectures in post-1991 Ethiopia (MoFA, 2009). For instance, both at national and regional levels a framework for conflict transformation was only introduced in 2009 and it still suffers from the lack of coherent activities and synergy across various actors, levels, and domains (MoFA, 2009). As Dereje & Krichmann (2009) noted, the institutional void is particularly evident in the developing regional states where state formation is still incipient, with relatively weak and almost nonfunctioning institutions and rampant corruption (Dereje & Kirchmann, 2009).

5.5.2 Prospects

As discussed above, the peacebuilding landscape in Ethiopia has faced a myriad of challenges that hampered the development of constructive conflict transformation. Overall, the track-record of the post-1991 Ethiopia is not a success story when it comes to nurturing positive peace and social justice. Yet this does not mean that there are no achievements worth noting and potential opportunities for sustainable peacebuilding in the future in Ethiopia. Not least the promotion of sociocultural rights and self-determination, the relative peace and security for more than two decades and the remarkable economic growth the country has registered, as well as the creation of institutions and structures that support the framework for peace and security, and emerging political developments, particularly since April, 2018, are positive developments and potential opportunities to foster and enhance sustainable peacebuilding process in Ethiopia.

The Promotion of Self-determination, Relative Peace and Security and Economic Growth

Many (e.g. Fasil, 1997; Tsegaye, 2010; Assefa, 2012) argue that the decentralized governance system adopted in early 1990s in Ethiopia, which came against the long history of centralized form of governance, has played a positive role in opening up a political space for the ethno-nationalist forces, hitherto marginalized, particularly in the area of language, culture, local self-government, including the promotion of one's history. According to Assefa (2012) by doing this the country has managed to Ethiopia's age-old problems and guaranteed peace and stability. He writes:

...Ethiopian federalism has played a positive role as it has opened up a political space for the ethno-nationalist forces, hitherto marginalized groups, particularly in the area of language, culture, local self-government, including the promotion of one's history. The federation has diffused the various conflicts out into local

arenas, making them less a threat to the center, compared, for example, with the political situation in 1991. The federation's ability to deliver services, such as access to education, health (albeit at the risk of compromising quality) and infrastructure (roads, telephone, electricity), is promising as well. It is this factor that maintains the peripheral regional states' high stake in the system. The networks of economic infrastructure and age-old cross-cutting bonds are hoped to cement unity among the several groups (Assefa, 2012, p. 463).

Particularly the last decade has been monumental for Ethiopia as the country has been hailed by international financial institutions for the impressive economic growth it registered. Alemayehu Geda, one of the most prominent economists in the country affirms, "a dramatic improvement was seen in economic terms. The country has ranked among the ten fastest-growing economies in Africa" (Alemayehu, 2004, p. 26). The effect of this progress has been evident in the capacity of the EPRDF government to cope with the 2015 drought, where, unlike the droughts the country experienced in previous regimes, (the EPRDF) government was able at least to avert the impending descent into famine and the loss of lives. It is to be recalled that drought, particularly the 1984/85, and the ensuing famine during the Derg regime has caused catastrophic human suffering and death, leaving indelible mark on Ethiopia's image when picture and films of emaciated Ethiopians dominated the international media to the degree that the country was used by the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary to illustrate the word 'famine'. Even if the country experienced one of the worst draughts in history in 2015, reported to be worst in fifty years - much more severe than the droughts encountered in 1984/85, one thing is certain: in 2015, the EPRDF government was able contain a potentially massive catastrophe. Under the EPRDF, Ethiopia's development efforts have also been praised internationally for meeting some of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), particularly in the areas of universal primary education and reduction of infant and maternal mortality. According to UNDP (2012) the progress the country has made towards achieving its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

is attributed not only to the rapid economic growth recorded over the last decade but also to consistent efforts towards ensuring peace and security. It reads: “without lasting peace, the MDGs would remain a tapestry of aspirations and an enduring reference for Ethiopia’s development challenges” (UNDP, 2012, p. 4). Even if the justifications vary, the idea that the EPRDF was able to achieve relative internal peace compared to the situation in Derg period is a shared view (see Geda, 2004; Clapham, 2009). As opposed to what happened in Monrovia and Mogadishu, the transfer of power in Addis Ababa in May 1991 took place with relatively a minimum of bloodshed, creating a conducive condition to the commendable process that followed. As Mesay (2015) pointed out, this is because as opposed to the experiences in Mogadishu and Monrovia the process in Addis was able to discourage the incentive of returning to war by combatants and restored key state functions (Mesay, 2015). Christopher Clapham, a prolific writer of the post-1991 Ethiopia argues, the EPRDF “rapidly succeeded in placing Ethiopia in a highly advantageous position within the global and continental networks that emerged in the aftermath of the Cold War, and using this position both to become a favored recipient of international aid, and to pursue its own regional and domestic political agendas” (Clapham, 2009, p. 189).

The Existence of Institutions and Structures for Peace and Security

Particularly where geared towards rectifying the limitation (i.e. as regards coordination, and synergy), the existence of various normative and institutional structures that recognize the framework for peacebuilding in the country means that it could add to the repertoire of prospects to enhance the conflict prevention, management and transformation practice in contemporary Ethiopia. There are a number of legal provisions relevant to conflict prevention and management at national level contained in the Constitution through the Bill of Rights and provisions relating to rights of

Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples. In addition, Criminal Code and sectoral policies such as the Ethiopian Water Policy, Environment Policy, Foreign Affairs and National Security Strategy, and Rural and Agricultural Development Policy and Strategy contain related provisions that bear on conflict situations. As UNDP (2012) notes, these existing normative frameworks would be helpful and strengthen mainly if they are supported with peacebuilding policy given that their workability is constrained by the absence of a coherent policy on conflict prevention and management as the implementation of these policy pronouncements relies heavily on the formal legal system, despite the fact that increasingly, the majority of communal conflicts are settled through traditional mechanisms, meaning that the formulation of a coherent peacebuilding policy would bridge the loopholes (UNDP, 2012, p. 8).

Moreover, recently, the establishment of the *Ministry of Peace, Border and Identity Commission*, and *National Reconciliation Commission* presents additional opportunities for peace and security in Ethiopia as the mainstreaming of peacebuilding tasks would help address one of the downsides in the processes of conflict transformation in the country, lack of clarity of purpose in peacemaking activities. On October 16, 2018 while disclosing his cabinet and ministerial reshuffles prime minister Abiy announced the creation of a new Ministry of Peace and sought to tackle a wave of ethnic violence. “The main problem in this country is the lack of peace. This (peace) ministry will be working hard to ensure it prevails,” Abiy told lawmakers. During an interview with the Ethiopian News Agency (ENA) Muferiat Kamil, Minister of the newly formed Ministry of Peace maintains that the Ministry will work to enhance the people-to-people harmonious relationship that existed over the centuries. Muferiat noted:

Ethiopians have been sharing values, culture, living conditions, and many other things... Ministry of Peace will work actively to boost those values and strive to ascertain peace among the people.” The ministry will also exert effort to strengthen love, rule of law and forgiveness among the people. “We are aiming to work a participatory system that enhances the involvement of all Ethiopians in creating a peaceful country where citizens want to live happily and foreigners to visit.⁷²

According to the proclamation issued to define the powers and duties of executive organs the peace ministry will work in cooperation with concerned federal and regional state government organs, religious figures, political parties as well as other bodies to ensure the maintenance of public order, develop strategies, and undertake awareness creation and sensitization activities to ensure the peace, security and freedom of the country and its people.⁷³ Overall, the above policy interventions reflect progress achieved and indicate the political will and commitment from the government to move forward with the peacebuilding agenda.

The Political Developments since April 2018

The history of Ethiopia is dominated by the conflict between the monarchy and the aristocracies, between the people and the rulers, and between different factions fighting for power, between the government and insurgent groups and between elites and citizens. Yet, these contentious interactions have not been translated to strengthen the power of those who held it, the people and created the development of the path to democratization and sustainable peace. In other words, the political conflicts and revolutions the country had been going through did not translate into shaping institutions towards the process of constructive and inclusive political path and its

⁷² (<https://www.ena.et/en/2018/october/16/newly-formed-ministry-of-peace-aims-to-enhance-cherished-values-of-peace-among-public/> accessed on 5 November 2018).

⁷³ (FDRE Federal Negarit Gazette 25th Year No. 29 Proclamation No. 1101/2019).

sustenance. The opportunities created have only been aborted or mishandled, throwing the country into vicious cycles of extractive and oppressive sociopolitical environments. Donald Levine (2013) pointed out five such opportunities that appeared over the past half-century, and mishandled, moving in suboptimal directions: (1) the abortive coup of December 1960; (2) the ferment of 1974; (3) the regime change of 1991; (4) the Eritrean war of 1998; and (5) the May 2005 national election (Levine, 2013, p. 5).

For the past three years (2015/16-18/19), Ethiopia is in another state of critical juncture and massive social change that combines swiftness and violence. These wrenching events have already implicated on steps towards the alterations of violent deep structures in favor of pluralism and democratic political structure. Even if it is quite fragile, mixed with formidable challenges and predicaments, and the country is far from realizing inclusive political and economic institutions, unlike the previously lost opportunities, the political conflicts and popular protests in Ethiopia since 2015 have produced commendable political reforms. The period since March, 2018 has been an eventful time for Ethiopia's politics. Under Abiy Ahmed Ali, who became Prime Minister in April 2018, the government has eased its previous authoritarian stance on various key issues. A national state of emergency imposed by Abiy's predecessor has been lifted and thousands of prisoners have been released. Exiled opposition leaders and armed groups have been allowed back into the country; media outlets now operate relatively freely; rapprochement with Eritrea is in full swing; and initiatives for national reconciliation are underway. Commendable moves have been taken to strengthen political institutions. For example, the action of making accountable former officials has, to some extent, restored the trust on the shattered justice system. In the October 2018 ministerial cabinet reshuffle women received half of the senior positions in the

government. Institutional framework relevant for peacebuilding, such as the National Reconciliation Commission and the Border and Identity Commission, has been established. The peacebuilding task is formally institutionalized with the formation of peace ministry. In the light of the history of repression, human rights violations decay and corruption of the ruling party EPRDF, the BBC remarked that it was “almost like observing a different country.” Overall, amidst the challenges it could be imperative to say that in the past ten months, the exclusionary and closed political landscape has been widened and commendable actions that could potentially help to build on to foster and enhance the democratic governance and sustainable peace have been taken, creating hope that democracy may flourish in Ethiopia.

5.5 Conclusion

It is evident from the analysis of this chapter that the conflict transformation efforts in the EPRDF Ethiopia, in response to the incidences of both horizontal, inter-group violent conflicts and vertical, conflicts between groups who feel excluded and marginalized and the existing state power structure is propelled by the ethos of conflict management, ending overt violence largely through the use of carrot and stick. Overall, the outcomes have appeared ineffective and unsatisfactory when it comes to durability and relevance. Nothing characterizes this than the realities on the ground. Today’s Ethiopia is a tinderbox, replete with festering wounds, untransformed and uneasy relations among various groups with intermittent eruption into violence, potentially capable of devouring. Amid, the broader picture of the process of peacebuilding in Ethiopia in the past a quarter century indicates that peace has merely been conceptualized in its minimal sense. One would best attribute the extant situation to negative peace. A plethora of challenges ranging from historical, sociopolitical, and socioeconomic factors to normative and institutional setback, and ill-capacity to

implement have militated against the peacebuilding terrain of contemporary Ethiopia. However, this does not mean that it is an utter failure story, or that the process has seen no prospect or worth considering potentials for sustainable peacebuilding process in the country in the future. Not least the promotion of sociocultural rights and self-determination, the relative peace and security for more than two decades and the remarkable economic growth the country has registered, as well as the existence of institutions and structures that support the framework for peace and security, and the emerging political developments, particularly since March, 2018, are positive developments are also suggestive the chances for sustainable peace are within reach for the country.

CHAPTER SIX

Understanding the Conflict Situation in Gambella

6.1 Introduction

...Those who study social conflict from a scientific point of view and those who wish to find practical ways of dealing with it more constructively are interested in the characteristics of conflict and the patterns that it follows (Lederach, 1997, p. 64).

An endeavor on the evaluation of a conflict transformation effort or a comparative analysis of a successful or less successful peacebuilding architecture involves an insight into the nature of the conflict as its starting point. This is because of the reason that the first real condition for the achievement of peace lies on our understanding of the very nature and character of the conflict. As Reychler (2002) pointed out, the analysis and evaluation of the conflict gives an indication of the problems to be solved and the degree of difficulty to be expected. She writes, “it gives us an idea of the type of conflict one is confronted with, and also allows us to estimate the costs and difficulty of the conflict transformation efforts” (Reychler, 2002, p. 29). On his part, writing on the strategies on peace and development in Africa Emmanuel Hansen, (1987) maintains that we should foresee the task of an insight into the nature of conflict as the pre-requisite. This entails two things: an identification of the salient issues and adoption of the appropriate methods. On the question of issues some of the important ones to consider might be; the causes of conflict, the nature and dynamics of conflict, the patterns of conflict, the effect of conflict, the involvement of external powers in Africa’s conflict, the style and nature of this involvement and what it entails for the peace and security not only of the country or countries directly involved but for the peace and security of the sub-region (Hansen, 1987, p. 3-4).

This chapter probes the nature of conflict in GPNRS (and address RQ, 1). Its broader aim is to examine the basic features of the conflict situation in the Gambella region. It begins by setting the background and context to the conflict phenomenon in post-1991 GPNRS; and goes on to discuss and analyze the root causes of the conflicts, underlying structural conditions feeding the occurrences of violent inter-communal conflicts in the region and how the conflict dynamics are played out. The discussion in this chapter also illuminates on the main actors involved in the conflict, and their strategies as well as the issues, goals and strategies. The chapter ends with a set of observation and conclusions from the forgoing discussions.

6.2 The Structure and Dynamics of the Conflict

6.2.1 The Context of Conflict in Gambella: Setting the Precedent

Situating issues in context is one valued method in social sciences for constructing a reliable and objective analysis of a given situation. The escalation of inter-group violent conflict in post-1991 Gambella is not a matter exclusive to developments since the early 1990s; it far stretches to circumstances deeply embedded in the historical, socio-cultural, geopolitical and economic setting of the region. Therefore, locating the current issues in the following contexts would allow a better grasp of the warp and woof of conflict and peace in contemporary GPNRS.

History of State formation and State-Society Interaction

Inter-group violent conflicts in GPNRS fundamentally stem from crises of state legitimacy, that is, the capacity of the state to keep to the path of state-formation, the problematic process of statebuilding by successive Ethiopian regimes. To put it in another way, the history of state-society interaction since Gambella was incorporated into the Ethiopian state in early 20th century allows explaining the situation under which

conflict occurs in the region as it appears largely problematic, negatively affecting the nature of inter-group interaction in the Gambella region. The statebuilding process by successive Ethiopian regimes in Gambella has not performed the functions of statehood both in terms of institutional and instrumental capacity and in the realm of socio-political cohesion of the society.⁷⁴ Nothing is illustrative of this than that manner of identity construction and inter-group relation in the GPNRS which also reflects the nature of state-society relation in the region. For example, the apparent dichotomy between the Highlanders and the lowlanders, or the titular, even if it looks ecological when viewed at face value, it has a strong political meaning with bearing on the inter-group relation. Dereje (2006b) writes:

Ecologically, a Highlander is one who is not from Gambella and comes from a highland region. Above all, this line of distinction represents a ‘physical’ boundary. The ‘black’ people (the Nilotic lowlanders) are contrasted with the ‘red’ people (the Highlanders). Politically speaking, the term Highlander signifies state power, for the Highlanders have been identified with the Ethiopian state ever since the incorporation of the Gambela region in the late nineteenth century. In fact, both the Anywaaa and the Nuer use the same term (*gala* and *bouny*, respectively) to refer to the Ethiopian state as well” (Dereje 2006b, pp. 244-245).

As such, the long fraught process of statebuilding, the conducts of successive Ethiopian regimes since Gambella is incorporated into the Ethiopian state have negatively affected the way various groups inhabiting the region relate to each other, the way the regimes relate to varying groups as well as the way inhabiting groups relate to the Ethiopian state, lingering to this day.

⁷⁴ To the period of the military *Derg* rule (1974-1991) in most parts of the region social services were virtually bare and they were undertaken by missionaries, to the degree that the missionaries were considered the de facto state (Dereje, 2006a). Informants (e.g. RCI-02) also attested to Dereje’s assertion that since the imperial regimes the Ethiopian state is rarely known by the local people, and that infrastructure and social services were virtually bare and they were undertaken missionaries- that it was the missionaries that provided facilities of social services like education and health.

Imperial Ethiopia: From Late 19th Century to 1974

Studies inform that, from its very arrival, the Ethiopian state is known for its reckless approach to the local communities in Gambella region (Birhanu, 1973; Bahru, 1987). During imperial Ethiopia when Gambella was incorporated into Ethiopia,⁷⁵ although there had been a strong economic interest in the region, the local inhabitants were marginalized, starkly missing from the lucrative trade. The largesse of this rewarding trade mainly went to the British colonial agency in Sudan, Ethiopia's imperial representatives in Gambella, neighboring Highlanders and expatriate traders (Bahru, 1987). The region was represented by Highlander officials and despite the economic significance the region assumed and their strategic location along the trade route, neither the Anyuwaa village chiefs nor the Nuer clan elders were integrated into the political economy. Even worse, their reaction to the alienation deepened the marginalization, augmented by slave raid camouflaged under the so-called pacification campaigns.⁷⁶ As such, the exclusion and repression contributed to the discrimination of the 'local population', and prevented the state from responding to, and meeting, their needs. Regassa summed it up:

In short, for ordinary people of the region the advent of modern state meant the loss of political autonomy, marginalization and often enslavement which left lasting impression on their mode of incorporation in to the Ethiopian state (Regassa, 2010, p. 58).

⁷⁵ The Gambella region and its people were incorporated into Ethiopian state at the turn of twentieth century, specifically after the 1902 boundary agreement between British colonial Sudan and imperial Ethiopia. At the time of the incorporation, the region and the adjacent territories in what is present day southern Sudan were inhabited by various Nilotic-speaking communities built around different modes of governance and pursuing different livelihood strategies (Evans-Pritchard, 1940a; Dereje, 2006a). The 1902 agreement divided these communities (particularly the two main groups in the region, the Anyuwaa and the Nuer) between Ethiopia and Sudan and as Dereje (2006a) pointed out the agreement placed most of the Anyuwaa on Ethiopian side while situating most of the Nuer in the Sudan side, a condition to shape the nature of inter-group relation between the Anyuwaa and Nuer and the turbulent politics of the Gambella region since the early 1990s.

⁷⁶ (For instance, see Bahru, 1974; Birhanu, 1973; Dereje, 2006a).

The above anecdote indicates a corrosive state-society relation and infliction of all forms of violence that left an enduring scar that continues to shape the turbulent history of Gambella to date.

More is evident as continuity of history than change by the government of the post-liberation imperial Ethiopia (1941-1974). Back from exile, the Hailese II regime made little effort to alter the malign integration process. Even if few Anyuwa and Nuer elites were bestowed with imperial titles it fell far short compared to the realities in other parts of the country. What could be invoked as a marked phenomenon of this period is the substitution of expatriates by Highlanders as traders and the predatory character of imperial authorities governing the region.⁷⁷ Therefore, by the time the imperial regime abandoned the country, the process of statebuilding in Gambella remained nascent and pathetic and the region was weakly integrated with the national center.

The Derg Regime 1974-1991

The military-socialist regime's attempt to narrow the deficiencies of its predecessors ended up being more rhetorical than elicited (see Dereje, 2003; 2006b; Medhane, 2007; Regassa, 2010). In fact, the Derg carried out practical measures relevant to political empowerment and recognition⁷⁸ although its policies and projects overwhelmed the positive gestures, leading to further alienation and dissatisfaction from the local

⁷⁷ As an informant noted a governor of Jikaw district during imperial regime used to collect very large number of cattle as punishment (RCI-02).

⁷⁸ Attempts were made to promote both local languages (Anyuwa and Nuer) through the literacy campaign, and the representation of locals in regional administration. In 1978 the Anyuwa and Nuer were appointed vice-administrators of the Gambella district. Moreover, when limited form of regional autonomy was introduced in 1987, the involvement of local people in the region's politics significantly increased, with locals ultimately occupying the two key posts of the regional administrator and party secretary. The frequent visit of the Derg's head of state, Mengistu Hailemariam to the region also contributed to the mentality of recognition, a gesture which earned Mengistu Hailemariam an affective Anyuwa name, *Wora Ariat*, meaning 'the son of a firstborn Anyuwa woman' (Dereje, 2006a, pp. 211-212).

people.⁷⁹ Driven by Marxist orientation, the Derg uprooted the local culture and desecrated its authorities. In what came to be known as ‘cultural revolution’, traditional power structures were tagged as ‘backward’ and bottlenecks. This was disastrous and dismaying to the local population. The resentment to incongruous elements of the Derg’s socialism to the local cultural setting and ‘ethnocentric’ approach is further exacerbated by ill-designed and hastily imposed resettlement program. As part of the response mechanism to one of the notorious famines (1984-85) in the history of the country, more than 60,000 highland farmers from the northern and southern Ethiopia were resettled in Gambella (most of them in Anyuwaa area), further alienating the local people (Dereje, 2006a; Medhane, 2007; Regassa, 2010). As Dereje (2006a) contends, the resettlement is the source for Anyuwaa discourse of ethnic extinction. This was further confounded by the civil war in Sudan and the policy of the *Derg* towards that.

The post-1991 federal set up has gone far in addressing and responding to the lacuna and shortcomings of the integration process hitherto. In what appears to be a complete U-turn Gambella was transformed instantly from an obscure peripheral district into one of the nine constituent regions of the FDRE. Viewed in the light of the historical marginalization and largely dismal integration efforts of the previous Ethiopian regimes, the introduction of ethnic federalism created a new political space and institutional design to encourage local empowerment. Young (1999) eloquently remarks:

Regardless of whatever criteria were used to delineate regional states under the new federal system, the promotion of the previous Gambella district to an autonomous regional state became one of the most prominent political steps ever taken by successive Ethiopian regimes to empower peripheral regions and integrate minorities into the mainstream Ethiopian polity (Young, 1999, p. 331).

⁷⁹ The resentment is particularly felt by the Anyuwaa whose elite later joined EPRDF forming GPLM to topple the *Derg*.

The transformation of Gambella into a regional state also brought many visible changes both in terms of political representation and social development. In stark contrast to the imperial and Derg periods, under the ethnic federal system administration of the region was almost entirely owned by the local people. In the area of social development, education has showed tremendous improvement in terms of facilities and student enrolment. For instance, in the first 10 years of ethnic federalism, the number of elementary schools and student population in the Gambella region had increased by 80% and 75%, respectively. The number of secondary schools in the region rose from one to six. In order to supply teachers for the new junior secondary schools, the capacity of the then Gambella Teachers Training Institute (GTTI) was upgraded to college level, offering diploma programs in education and health. Health facilities were set up, with new health centers constructed in rural areas (GPNRS Education Bureau, 2002). As part of local empowerment, especially in the regional job market, affirmative actions were introduced to increase the number of indigenous peoples in public sector jobs, a preferential treatment of the indigenous peoples vis-à-vis Highlanders (Ojot, 2013).

However, the moves of the post-1991 political structure were not holistic and carry with them exclusionary elements, failure to create a platform that accommodates the interest of various group in the region, and thereby rendering the intensification and recurrence of inter-group violent conflict in the Gambella region both in its form and intensity.

As such, the multiple layers of positive discrimination and political empowerment, access and opportunities brought about by the post-1991 federal structure have further damaged the process of inter-group reconciliation' in GPNRS. The focus on multi-ethnicity, as the core of the peacebuilding process increased divisions rather than improving inter-group relations. Various groups inhabiting the GPNRS have become

far more apart than before. Ethnicity being out-and-out unit from the outset, enforced a particular identity by making it a crucial factor in the apportioning of power thus rendering the region a ‘tinderbox’ to the extent of being depicted as typical hallmark of the darker side of the ‘Ethiopian ethnic model of federalism.’⁸⁰ In a strict sense, the creation of political structure with ethnicity as a *fait accompli* has concrete repercussions on the nature of the socio-political cohesion in the region. As an entrepreneur of identity, various groups and elites had to engage in self-help rather than building common meaning and environment on an inclusive notion, further entrenching the ethnic divisions. In this case, therefore, it should be noted that the ‘weakness of the state’ is not only rooted in the poor performance of state institutions but also in its inability to represent all groups and create a sociopolitical cohesion among communities residing in Gambella region.

Identity as the Helm of Confrontation

If one has to find a vantage point through which the conflict situation in GPNRS would be better understood, nothing is more appropriate than ‘identity’. Identity has invariably appeared the centerpiece around which all contentious interactions and violent conflicts have gathered and revolved around. Whether it is political conflict, resource or cross-border conflict, all of them are revolved around identity as their locus. What is striking is the manner in which the construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of identity wax and wane according to the situations. For example, as the Anyuwaa-Nuer inter-ethnic conflict pits all Anyuwaa and Nuer against each other, the intra-ethnic conflict brings the Nuer clans into collision. And when the confrontation is between Anyuwaa

⁸⁰ “In short, Gambella regional state could be said to represent the worst nightmare of Ethiopia’s experiment in ethnic federalism-an escalation, rather than an accommodation of the contending claims of rival ethnic groups, leading to violent conflict between Anyuwaa and Nuer and between Highlanders and lowlanders” (Turton, 2006, p. 26).

and the Highlanders, irrespective of their ethnic differences, all Highlanders come together against the Anyuwaa. In a kind of stark illustration of the fluidity of identity, Highlanders, who may be positioned in adversarial camps in the context of the conflict situation in other parts of the country, in GPNRS they had to be in one camp. Even more intricate, at times, such variant of confrontation involves the federal government and its security apparatus on the side of Highlanders or is at least perceived that way, reminiscent of the identification of the Highlanders with the Ethiopian state, the central government.⁸¹ At times the way adversaries are positioned could bring a member of indigenous group to an alliance with Highlanders against another and indigenous group, as reflected in Anyuwaa joining the Highlanders in one camp against Nuer. In 2016, a kind of marriage has been witnessed between the Anyuwaa and Highlanders against the Nuer during the tension involving the Highlander and the Nuer.⁸²

International Connections: Spill-over Effects

For most part, the borders that separate the countries of the Horn of Africa are ‘artificial’ in the sense that they separate groups with similar ethnic affinity and sociocultural elements, leaving them straddling across countries. In Ethiopia’s case, for example, this is particularly true to its border with Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, and Eritrea. That is

⁸¹ A critical issue in the Gambella region concerns the way the security system (both the regional and federal) are related vis-à-vis the groups in the region. The federal security systems, the ENDF and the federal police are considered to represent the Highlanders or seen related in this way. The regional security apparatus (the Regional Police and the Special Force (SP)) are largely related to the specific ethnic group members they are from. As such, this is not a phenomenon that appeared in vacuum. Instances that illustrate the subjectivity of core members of the security system are observed in various occasions. For example, the involvement and complicity of ENDF in the onslaught against the Anyuwaa civilian in Gambella town on December 13, 2003 by the Highlander mob is intimated by eyewitness and national and international groups like the Human Right Watch. Starkly data from group discussions for this study have attested to this. Reflecting on the 2014 violence between the Majang and Highlanders ... “as the federal police and the ENDF headed up front, the Highlanders were following behind with machetes”, invoked participants of the group discussion (ethnic Majang), in Chemi kebele. On the other side, as a resident of Akash kebele (Highlanders) asserted, “... the SP are custodian of the Majang who killed many Highlanders, we fear that the SP would exterminate use” (RCI-05).

⁸² This incident as an illustration of this phenomenon is discussed in subsequent chapters of the dissertation.

why in this part of the region, quite often, intra-state conflicts translate into an inter-state one and vice versa or have their effect spill over to the other. In this part of the sub-continent, strikingly, intra-state conflicts assume a regional dimension and inter-state conflicts aggravate intra-state inter-communal violence, due to various sociological, political, ecological and economic factors. The violence in Gambella over the past three decades has been profoundly and intricately connected to developments in neighboring Sudan (South Sudan since 2011). Arguably, the conflict situation in GPNRS is a typical example that explains the regionalization of intra-state conflicts in Ethiopia.

The spillover effect from the southern Sudan to the sociopolitical developments and security situation on Gambella region of Ethiopia are mainly discernible through refugee influx and its repercussions (population pressure, alteration of inter-group demographic dynamics and resource scarcity), the policy of Ethiopian governments (particularly Derg, as it supported the SPLM, allowing the insurgency movement in Gambella as its stronghold), proliferation of small arms and militarization of the society, weak security situation and open border (increasing vulnerability of local people), *economic problems* (impacting local production and work culture), and *military problems* (the extension of the war close to border and the use of the territory for the trans-shipment of arms and supplies; as a base of operations and sanctuary for rebel groups and using the region as the launch of attack).⁸³

⁸³ Detail discussion and analysis of these conditions is presented in Chapter Nine, section 8.2.8

6.2.2 Political Factors

Political factors are integral to and formidable elements in the GPNRS's conflict situation.⁸⁴ The ideological underpinnings and political culture of successive Ethiopian regimes, marked by exclusionary ideologies and discriminatory and narrow political institutions, have affected the relationship between groups inhabiting the region, the way the regimes relate to these groups and the way in which conflicts are resolved. As shown previously, the ideological orientations and political landscape during the imperial and *Derg* regimes were predatory and exclusionary to local people.

Political Transition: Ethnicization of Politics and Intensifying Leadership Struggles

The year 1991 is a turning point in the political history of Ethiopia. In a diametric opposition to the culture of a highly centralized form of governance system, a federal mode of structure was institutionalized. What is startling, is however, not, the adoption of federalism alone, rather the form it took, as ethnicity was used as the chief basis of the federal arrangement structure. The change was immediately felt in Gambella. Overnight, Gambella was transformed from an obscure entity to one of the regional states constituting the FDRE. Sadly, however, the political transition and transformation of Gambella as one of regional states in the country was accompanied with the transformation of the inter-group violence in the region. The new political development, which brought with it new structures and actors of conflict, has drastically changed the nature and intensity of conflict among the communities in Gambella region, as the decentralization largely came to pronounce elite political competition at

⁸⁴ The conflict in Gambella is attributed to weakly institutionalized political systems; unrepresentative political arrangements (real and perceived); a sense of alienation and marginalization; the presence of weak political parties, including their political exploitation of ethnic differences; and weak conflict management institutions and mechanisms (Medhane, 2007, p.11).

the expense of local forms of integration. Medhane (2007) provides an insightful observation of the situation as follows:

Historically, resource-based clashes and small-scale skirmishes attributed to values embedded in identity and culture have been common in the area. What is striking, however, is the transformation in the nature and intensity of conflicts over the last two decades. The major defining moments that transformed the conflict in Gambella were the Sudanese civil war and *the political transformation in Ethiopia in the early 1990s* (Medhane, 2007, p.1).

Presumably, as part of a response gesture to the alliance of the GPLM with the EPRDF in the struggle to topple the Derg, when EPRDF took power in 1991, it left the GPNRS to total control of the GPLM and by extension to Anyuwaa political elites. The GPLM followed a policy of exclusion and dominated the region's political landscape disproportionately, at the expense of other groups in the area. The Anyuwaa, who (through GPLM) controlled the government instrumentalities (they held the regional presidency and other key posts), used this position to repress 'others', particularly the Nuer. The new regional leaders, the Anyuwaa, immediately claimed that Gambella is Anyuwaa land and the Nuer should not be allowed to live there, let alone engage in regional politics. The Anyuwaa typically viewed the region as a whole, particularly Gambella town, as their own territory and the Nuer as interlopers and Sudanese (see Dereje, 2003, 2006a; Kong, 2006; Medhane, 2007). Furthermore, despite their sizeable population and prominent role in pre-1991 political set up, in the new political order the Highlanders were reduced to a residual category, in fact, entrenched in the GPNRS constitution.

Put another way, the political space in the GPNRS in the immediate years of the federal dispensation became dominated by Anyuwaa elites, the dominant forces in the GPLM. As a result, the political landscape failed to integrate and articulate the interest of

various groups and be open to other actors. A corollary development has been an exclusionary political platform, ethnicization of politics manifesting itself mainly through intensifying leadership struggles, group competition and conflict. As Dereje (2006a) notes, conflict has occurred between these groups for a long time but, since 1991, it has assumed a more violent form, further identifying the boundary-making process (Dereje, 2006a).⁸⁵

In a kind of reversal in recent years (particularly since 2013 when an ethnic Nuer assumed the regional presidency position) is an emerging trend and consciousness about the alleged ‘Nuer dominance’. The situation is particularly felt by the Anyuwaa and Highlander evidently reflected through the process into the 2016 crisis (notably in the 2016 Anyuwaa-Nuer conflict and the Highlander-Nuer tension) and contemporary situation in the region as asserted during many interview sessions and group discussions.⁸⁶ The resentment of the Anyuwaa and Highlander⁸⁷ on what is alleged

⁸⁵ Between 1991 and 2003 there were series incidents of violent conflicts. In 1991, a number of educated Nuer as well as villagers were killed when a political claiming to represent the Anyuwaa took control of the GPNRS. In the same year, hundreds of resettlers’ of highland farmers were killed by their Anyuwaa neighbor in Ukuna village, Abobo district (Kurimoto, 1997). In 1992 the Highlander business community in Itang district perished in numbers when a Nuer prophet from southern Sudan campaigned to liberate Gambella from the ‘red people.’ Feeling threatened and angered by the killings, the Highlanders exploded into mob violence killing any ‘black people’ in Gambella town. Meanwhile, in 1992, a series of violent confrontations erupted between the Anyuwaa and the Nuer, which lasted until 2002. These clashes cost the lives of many people, destroyed entire villages and produced thousands of internally displaced people. Since 2003 there has been renewed tension between the Anyuwaa and Highlanders, which culminated in the killing of hundreds of Anyuwaa in Gambella town on 13 December 2003 (Dereje, 2006, pp.214-215).

⁸⁶ The Nuers’ are using every opportunity to their benefit at the expense of others. Even they do not comply with authoritative decisions. The issues concerning the people (Nuer) in Gambella town 02 kebele whose relocation to 03 kebele was instructed as the area they inhabit was included into the site of the construction of Gambella University is remarkable. They were given alternative land and compensation for building house at 03 Kebele. But they sold all the lands they were given at 03 Kebele and returned back to the former area around the university site, holding the land and defying to move. This is one of the phenomenon witnessed before the outburst of the 2016 Anyuwaa-Nuer violence. The Anyuwaa were disgruntled by this action because first the relocation site is in Anyuwaa neighborhood, aimed at a launching pad for expansion, more encroachment of Anyuwaa land. Secondly, they returned to the first area still holding the land they were given as substitute; even worse inhibiting the university construction process and nothing was done by authorities to rectify this (KIIG-06). Many others (e.g. KIIG-09; FGD-01; FGD-07) also expressed similar views.

⁸⁷ In a personal communication a Highlander sarcastically referred to the Nuer as ‘*royal families*’.

disproportionate benefit of the Nuer in various sectors like administrative posts and encroachment of land over the past few years is pervasive and widely felt so much so that some offices are referred by ethnicity-*Nuer's bureau*, a kind of ethnization of civil service.

Whatever the circumstances of instances considered above, in a strict sense, in the Gambella region inter-group animosities have festered and become entangled within the regional and the EPRDF political context. Particularly the governance apparatus in the GPNRS has failed to create strong political leadership and form a workable political community that articulates and accommodates the interests various groups in the region.⁸⁸ The absence of governance capacity that addresses the interest of various groups created a kind of anarchic context where ethnic groups in the region must fend for themselves in self-help – rendering asymmetric relationship and structural inequality among groups. In other ways, weak government capacity to deliver and lack of democratization and rule of law has rendered disproportion flow along group lines where political authority tends to be monopolized by a dominant identity group, clans, factions and cronies whose interest is maximized at the expense of others. Therefore, in the absence of inclusive, participatory and fair political space that holds parties together, contending violent approach and strategy was *rationalized*⁸⁹ and became the rule of the game, transforming the nature of conflicts by metastasizing and engulfing all members of ethnic groups in conflict thus transforming the nature of the traditional

⁸⁸ The local actors have proved to be parochial, corrupt and incapable, and are locked in conflicting strategies of entitlement, the net result of which is the escalation of rivalries at various levels as fragments of the regional state are captured by one group or another, causing structural paralysis (Medhane, 2007, p.15).

⁸⁹ For instance, representative of Komo, one of the five indigenous groups in Gambella had to secure seat only after he fired a pistol in the regional council. Likewise, the Majang are reported to have said to have their claim, “*should we have to throw a stone like the Nuers*”. The appeal of the Nuer gained attention following the ‘gallant’ contribution of the ‘Nuers’ in Ethio-Eritrean war (Dereje, 2006a)

pattern of conflict. The failure to create a platform to appeal to, achieve and cherish one's concern partly explains the tendency to resort to violence as the only means in GPNRS. This has been witnessed throughout the Anyuwaa, Nuer, Highlander, and Majang strategies and response mechanisms.

6.2.3 Socioeconomic Factors

Another essential element simultaneously acting as a root and proximate cause of conflict in the GPNRS are socioeconomic factors. Particularly, competition over resources, mounting economic problems accompanied with the growing economic inequality along group lines, population pressure, scarcity of resources, increasing practices of socioeconomic engineering and changes (commercial farming and large scale land acquisitions) have accentuated the occurrences of inter-group violence in Gambella region. One common source and driver of inter-communal violent conflicts in the GPNRS is land and its permanent occupation as a vital resource, the intensity and its tendency of causing recurring violence aggravated by population movement, scarcity and large-scale land acquisitions. For example, as studies (e.g. Duany, 1992a; Dereje, 2006b; Gizachew, 2011) affirm, grazing land and resource depletion is central in intra-ethnic conflict among Nuer. It is also an enduring element in the Anyuwaa-Nuer conflict. Recently, the 2014 violent conflict between the Highlander and the Majang is both essentially and directly connected with land. Because the area is suitable for the production of cash crops like coffee, it has seen mounting population 'influx' and 'land sells and lease', particularly in the past few years, implicating resource depletion, fear, a sense of relative deprivation and frustration, thereby altering the stability of inter-group relations. As Seyuom (2015) pointed out, the indigenous Majang who also inhabit alongside with Highlanders in Majang zone areas of the GPNRS are few and outnumbered by the 'settlers', a process happening to in an overwhelming

trend. The region has attracted influx of the Highlanders owing to its rich natural resource. It grows cash crops like coffee. The Highlanders have increased their appearance in the region through purchase of land from indigenous groups. They grow coffee and other cash crops and amassed wealth. Yet, as land is venerated and became increasingly scarce, things started to change and eventually unleashed violence. As such, the conflicts between investors and the indigenous and the Highlanders and the indigenes indicate a new area of conflict (Seyuom, 2015).

Competition over natural resources is compounded by the nature and culture of the governance system. As Dereje (2005b) pointed out, the new political arrangement has altered the dynamics of resource competition and inter-group relationships by tainting the old patterns of compromise and understanding over the use of and access to natural resources as it stoked social stereotyping and scapegoating based on cultural and social characteristics. This is partly the outcome of the contradiction - decentralization and ownership of land. On the one hand, ethnicity is territorialized; on the other hand, land, which is the major means of production, is ultimately placed under the ownership of the state (Dereje, 2005b). This has complicated the land tenure system particularly the status and process of land use and management to be further confounded by the absence of juridical culture and rule of law in the region. As a corollary, decentralization came to pronounce elite political competition at the expense of local forms of integration, a phenomenon that has resonated across Ethiopia, in the post-1991 socio-political arena.

An informant notes:

the process of land allocation (particularly in Gambella town) is not controlled by the town municipality. For instance, in a situation where someone bears a legalized 'land', authorized on which to construct a house, a certain Anyuwaa or Nuer person would come and insist that it is his/her property and as the controversy comes to its attention the administration does nothing to. You know, like what it used to be in feudal Ethiopia when land is owned by the

landlords now land is under the control of an ethnic group or considered as the possession of a certain ethnic group (RCI-02).

6.2.4 Cultural/Perceptual Factors

Any conflict situation has its own specific context of cultural underpinning within which the conflict is embedded. Culture affects the development and management of conflict in many ways. The cultural patterns of a group affect the way people in that setting understand and respond to conflict. According to Ross (2004) the culture of conflict entails culturally specific norms, practices, and institutions associated with conflict in a society. As Galtung (1990) espouses cultural violence refers to “...those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence – exemplified by religion, language and art, empirical science and formal science that can be *used to justify of legitimise direct or structural violence*” (Galtung, 1990, p. 291). In short, culture affects what people fight about, why and how they go about it.

Virtually all traditional, pastoral or inter-group conflicts in Horn of Africa have values embedded in identity and culture, which acted as one of the major causes, a contributing factor (Ross, 2004). And the GPNRS is no exception. As such, one perpetual building block, a common denominator across the recurrent inter-group violent conflicts in the region is culture – the social organization, worldview and values entrenched in identity.⁹⁰ The different ways of life and values of the various groups inhabiting the region have a bearing on the nature of conflict in Gambella.⁹¹ The Nuer’s inherent emic

⁹⁰ (See Evans-Pritchard, 1940a; Dereje, 2011).

⁹¹ For instance, the main protracted conflict in the region, the Anyuwa-Nuer ethnic conflict essentially has cultural dimensions, attributed to the way of life and social organization of the two groups (see among others Evans-Pritchard, 1940a; Young, 1999; Dereje, 2003, 2006a, 2006b, 2009). Dereje (2011) elucidates how the contrasting identity formation creates value dissonance and underwrites the antagonism between the two groups. “... the polarization of identity based on ethnicity was originally based on conflicting modes of production between the largely transhumant pastoral Nuer and the sedentary agriculturalist and fishery---dependent Anuak-as the cattle keeper Nuers first moved into the

view considers that *natural resources belong to Kwoth (God)*, justifying expansion, a pattern which enabled them to acquire more lands as the Anyuwaa often left their land before the Nuer settled (Johnson, 1986; Dereje, 2003). As Choul (2001) pointed out, the persistent incursion of the Nuer into the Anyuwaa land gained momentum by the Anyuwaa action, making them more vulnerable. The main driver of Murle cross-border raid is their cultural assumption and entrenched value for cattle.⁹² As demonstrated by Seyoum (2015) and reiterated in interviews and group discussions, the Majang, are people having strong attachment to forest, with prime significance to their ancestral forestland. In short, the Majang way of life (livelihood), sense of identity and culture is inextricably linked with the forest. As discussed previously this, has been at heart of the Majang-Highlander violence. Intra-ethnic conflict among the Nuers is also essentially linked to identity and definition over what is right, fair or just (see Evans Pritchard, 1940; Duany, 1992).⁹³ Needless to say, the main groups in the region share cultural norms and values for revenge. Therefore, group culture has affected violence and peacemaking in the GPNRS.

Generally, the different ways of life and values of the various groups inhabiting the region have a bearing on conflict in the region as it has affected their understanding about conflict, their response to it and their perceptions and relation to one another. For

Gambella region in the late 1800s, clashed with the riverine populations and the agrarian Anyuwaa over land usage. The clashing mode of livelihood is also accompanied with the inherent contradiction in their worldview. For the agrarian Anywaaa, ethnic identity is territorialized, and is the basis for interethnic exchanges. The identity discourse of the Nuer, embedded in their pastoral lifestyle, is mobile – a contrast which is also evident in the constitution of their local communities. Unlike the Anyuwaa villages Nuer local communities can be transplanted into new territories with new members who can claim full membership. The inherent formation of Nuer culture is geared towards the dissolution of other ethnic boundaries, resulting in their own territorial and demographic expansion and eliciting from the Anyuwaa an even more extreme reiteration of their primordialist self-understanding” (Dereje, 2011, pp. 20-21).

⁹² The Murle have a cultural assumption that all cattle belong to them and thus they should retribute them. In addition, in the Murle’s cosmology cattle raid is a form of rite of passage and initiation ceremony from boyhood to man hood (NGI-03; KIIG-08).

⁹³ Duany (1992) discusses how conflicts at different levels of social organization among Nuer society arise from matters of honor, intra-family dynamics, and inter-family relations (Duany, 1992, p. 234).

example, for the Anyuwaa and Majang, the conflicts are perceived as an existential threat and both groups prefer to live in isolated neighborhoods. In the eyes of the Nuer, the Anyuwaa are seen as *not-peace loving* and complicit, havens to the perpetrators of violence and spoilers.⁹⁴ On the part of Anyuwaa, the Nuers are regarded as invasive, with a motive to exterminate Anyuwaa thus not ones to live with. These situations have impacted the way groups relate to each other thereby making relationship an integral aspect of the conflicts as manifested in the divergent perception groups espouse - at times accompanied by denigrating attitudes and ethnic bashing. Intimations of such social environment are invoked in various personal interviews and group discussions.⁹⁵

To this end, it is imperative to say that at the bottom of these pervasive negative stereotype, mistrust and suspiciousness in the region is found *insecurity*. For instance, if we take the Anyuwaa-Nuer conflict, the circumstances from the early 1990s to mid-2000s, the Anyuwaa feared that the Nuer would jettison them from various life and political situations, like assuming the regional presidential position. On their part, during these years, the Nuer were threatened by the exclusion. On the contrary, since

⁹⁴ (RCI-01; KIIG-05).

⁹⁵ The intention of the Nuer is to dislocate the Anyuwaa. The Anyuwaa do not want to share neighborhood with Nuer or live mixed with them. The Anyuwaa have a conviction that because our antagonism with Nuer dates back longer in time we don't share neighborhoods with the Nuer (KIIG-06). The Anyuwaa are complicit, they don't disclose the wrongdoers. Even at school they don't identify misbehaved student when asked they have a belief that they would be cursed. Even it is hardliners that are promoted to leadership positions, they elect those who say Anyuwaa first (KIIG-05). During group discussion in Chemi Kebele, Gdere Wereda, Majang zone participants (ethnic Majang) put their frustrations in this manner: "we have nothing to say. We are tormented by the recurring problems and miseries which left us helpless. When children of the same father quarrel the father reconciles the children and punishes the wrongdoer. In 2014 members of government security forces (the federal police and the ENDF) were attacking and killing the Majang and the Highlanders following behind them with machetes. We don't foresee any resolution; we have been decimated (FGD-11). A Highlander in Meti town, the seat of Majang zone said, "These (referring to Majang) are impure; they are deplorable" (PCI-04). Particularly, this culture of *labeling* is both chronic and acute. For instance, the 'perception' that the Anyuwaa are 'covert' is pervasive, you hear this everywhere. Arguably, it is this 'perception', Anyuwaa are *shifita* that partly lead the way for the December 13, 2003 'massacre' and the complicity and involvement of the ENDF during the incidence, sidelining the 'Highlander mob'. This *guilt by association* is creating huge mess in GPNRS.

2013 Nuer fear that the Anyuwaa would reassume the presidential position.⁹⁶ Insecurity characterizes the 2014 Majang-Highlander conflict. Inasmuch as the Majang sense of ethnic insecurity augmented and solicited ‘self-awareness’, i.e. are in-opposition with the other groups, through sharing measures of grievances and dissatisfaction⁹⁷; it raised the Highlander consciousness *rationalizing* the organization and resort to violence. The issue of insecurity is also evident in the 2016 Anyuwaa-Nuer conflict. The Anyuwaa deep sense feeling of being under danger due the expansions of Nuer settlement and growing number of Nuer population (aggravated by the second wave of refugee influx into Gambella region, following the outbreak of civil war in the South Sudan in December 2013) have heightened their anxiety, unleashing response mechanisms like never before - a form of violence involving various methods and aspects which were not there before to contain Nuer expansion in the Gambella town particularly into the Anyuwaa neighborhood. In Itang (see Chapter Seven) it is reported that neighboring Nuer communities have deterred the repatriation process of the Anyuwaa IDPs, presumably as part of an attempt to expand their access to vital resources. Overall, in GPNRS, insecurity as a driver of conflict is more often manifested in the desire to achieve, or in the fear of losing group’s self-determination.

⁹⁶ Replacing Omod Obang, Gatluak Tut (ethnic Nuer) was sworn in April 2013 as the first Nuer president of the GPNRS since 1991 until he was succeeded by Omod Ojulu (ethnic Anyuwaa) in October 2018.

⁹⁷ As Seyuom (2015) and Fana (2016) have observed, the levels of frustration sparked a new form of aggression by the Majang.

6.3 Main Actors, Issues, Goals, Relationships and Strategies

6.3.1 Main Actors

As it could be drawn from the preceding discussions, the conflict situation in the GPNRS involves a range of local, regional, national and international actors, (as individuals, groups and agencies) as primary and secondary parties.

Local and Regional Actors

The main parties at local and regional level include the various communities in Gambella (both indigenous and Highlanders) that are locked into a protracted and intermittent history of violence, the government authorities, elites, political parties, and members of the regional police and security forces. The groups inhabiting Gambella region (mainly the Anyuwaa, Nuer, Majang and the Highlanders) share cycles of long inter-communal violence - at inter-ethnic (Anyuwaa-Nuer), intra-ethnic (Intra-Nuer clan) and other forms of inter-communal (chiefly Anyuwaa-Highlander and Majang-Highlander) conflicts.

National Actors

The practice, culture, and intent of the federal government particularly as a third body in 'arbitrating' parties at regional level have made the EPRDF and its authorities as one of the key actors in the conflict environment since the early 1990s. The central government has intervened to address the inter-communal and political conflicts in the region often sidelining sensitivities. The EPRDF (the benefactor of the political environment) has not been far from the GPNRS and persistently remained to be a 'king maker' and checkmate ending up as one of the main parties to the conflict in the region. The other key players in the GPNRS conflict environment are the federal security apparatus, the ENDF and the federal police. As already shown previously, members of

the ENDF have particularly been accused of siding with ‘one’.⁹⁸ Given that most of the federal security members are ethnic Highlanders, in the local group taxonomy, they are often considered by ‘indigenous’ groups as representing the Highlanders. The apathy of the ENDF to protect civilians from cross-border incursion has also reinforced their role in the inter-group conflict in the region.⁹⁹

International Actors

In addition to the identified actors, because of the goal they pursue, their attitude and reactions towards issues in the conflict in Gambella region, their affiliations of various kinds and their capacities to manage relationships with other actors, a range of international actors i.e. the refugees, neighboring governments and communities, diasporas, NGOs and INGOs have appeared as sub-systems in the process of conflict in the region. Provided that the overwhelming majority of refugees from the neighboring South Sudan also form the largest ethnic groups in the GPNRS, their presence has accentuated the inter-ethnic tension and is an enduring element and issue in the conflict environment of Gambella, particularly in the Anyuwaa-Nuer antagonism. Groups from neighboring South Sudan (the Luo Nuer and the Murle) who are locked into a cycle of repeated cross-border cattle raid into the region are formidable participants. In fact, as already shown one type of conflict in the region - the cross-border conflict - is associated with this. Fana (2016) has documented the immense role of the diaspora, mainly the Anyuwaa diaspora, particularly as they react to the LSLAs and villagisation in the region.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ The December 13, 2003 incident between Anyuwaa and Highlander is a striking indication of this

⁹⁹ Also see Chapter Eight, section, 7.2.2

¹⁰⁰ (See Fana, 2016, pp. 259-288).

6.3.2 Issues, Relationships and Strategies

At the grassroots (local communities) level, the main issues and contradictions that underpin the adversarial relationships and violent confrontations largely pertain to sociocultural factors (values embedded in identity, worldview and livelihood orientations) and scarcity of resources and competitions over land and grazing pasture, complicated by the groups' attitude, strategy and response. For Anyuwaa and Majang communities, the conflict is seen as an existential threat to their very survival, their cultural and distinctive ethnic. For the Nuer and the Highlander, it is mainly about the right of self-determination. Overall, whereas at communities' level the conflicts are largely protracted social conflicts revolving around identity and competition over key and scarce natural resources the political tension and conflict among elites is mainly driven by interests for sharing power albeit there is an interface and intricate relationship at the grassroots level and political conflict among elites, particularly after the institutionalization of an ethnic brand of federalism in the country.¹⁰¹ The political conflict is apt to be transformed and connected to resources and social conflicts and vice versa. On the one hand, the politicians want to gain power by manipulating the situation in the communities; on the other hand, when faced with resource and social conflicts, the communities appeal to their fellow 'clansmen' at the political arena to take them out of their predicaments. In this sense, there appears a clear linkage across issues at political and inter-communal levels.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ For example, as Dereje (2009) pointed out, "...communities are vulnerable to manipulation by the political elites engaged in the regional power game hoping that siding with one or the other faction might alleviate their problems. ...In fact, genuine and legitimate community issues such as natural resource scarcity has become a forum where the interests of the various political actors are acted out. To date, none of the political actors have shown interest in community issues for what they are but what they can offer in power politics. If the power holders sideline the resource issue as a manifestation of the power struggle, those in the opposition use the resource card to discredit the incumbent (Dereje, 2009, p. 28).

¹⁰² For further discussion on the interface between the various levels of conflict in the region particularly between the resource, inter-communal conflicts and political conflict see Dereje, 2007; Gizachew, 2011, pp. 52-54).

The relationship between actors varies as to the level and nature of conflict and parties involved. It is asymmetric when it comes to conflict between the locals and the federal government (for instance, as witnessed between the Anyuwaa insurgents and the federal government between 2002 and 2005) and political tension and competition among local and regional elites at various domains, favoring the top dog, the dominant faction in the political opportunity structure, owing to the unequal and unbalanced power structure. The conflict relation between the Anyuwaa and the Nuer has shown a pattern from *asymmetric* (from the early 1990s to the early 2000s) favoring the Anyuwaa and *asymmetric* (particularly since 2012) favoring the Nuer. The period in between could be referred to as a period of equilibrium and limbo.

Meanwhile, it is to be noted that, often, the conflicts in the GPNRS have not been a clear-cut inter-ethnic or inter-group (particularly at elite level), but rather dynamic, and changes across issues and incidents, where former conflictant groups and elites from ‘conflictual’ or differing identity group form alliance, in a sort of ‘the enemy of my enemy is my friend’ gesture, to use opportunities.¹⁰³ As informants affirmed, during the Nuer-Highlander tension following the incident at Jawi refugee camp on Thursday, May 21, 2016, the Anyuwaa reportedly joined the Highlander mob in Gambella town against the Nuer.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ For instance, situation of the Anyuwaa-Nuer tension surrounding the relocation of refugee from Latchor Nuer area to Jawi kebele, Anyuwaa area in 2015 is prominently suggestive. In Latchor-to-Jawi refugee relocation phenomenon we see an interface of interest transcending ‘hostility’ lines as elites from protagonist camp, Anyuwaa and Nuer came together, sharing the same interest and adding to the dimension of relationship between parties in conflict across various spectrums and circumstances. As this thesis is developing this tendency has been observed over the past roughly six months in the process of opposition against the regional administration officials until it was culminated in the resignation of the president of the GPNRS Gatluak Tut (ethnic Nuer) and the vice president, Senay Akwor (ethnic Anyuwaa) in October 2018. Here disgruntled Anyuwaa and Nuer political elites and the youth from both groups came together in a kind of alliance.

¹⁰⁴ In fact, this happened as a string of Anyuwaa-Nuer conflict was already there and did not subside.

In order to advance their interest and achieve their goal, protagonists involved in the GPNRS conflict setting have adopted various covert mechanisms and overt violent tactics. The former tactic ranges from various competing narratives (mainly history of settlement, demographic size, citizenship, narratives of relative deprivation, victim of injustice and ‘rightful’ claims)¹⁰⁵ and fabrications (such as fabricated corruption charges), arrest without due process of law, labeling, and scapegoating to other forms of repression and crackdown (systematic discriminations and targeted harassments and attack) using security, intelligence and justice apparatuses. In the latter form, the violent tactics involve car ambush, arson, organized raids, revenge etc. In recent years, it has assumed a more heinous form (as the 21 April 2016 attack on Highlander workers by the South Sudan refugees in Jawi refugee camp) previously unseen trends (e.g., the attack on inmates in state prisons in Gambella and Abobo towns in January 2016) and the increasing ‘involvement’ of members of the security forces in the inter-communal conflicts siding ‘their’ ethnic affiliate inasmuch as getting divided along ethnic lines and fighting and the transgression of norms such as attacking women and children and prolonged blockade (as seen in the 2016 Anyuwaa-Nuer conflict) and ambush in towns. Reflecting on the dire and pathetic developments during the 2016 incidence of the Anyuwaa-Nuer conflict, a religious leader vehemently stated:

The 2016 conflict is comparable to the situation in Rwanda: revenge killings including officials, children and women which was not there before. To your surprise, prisoners were killed in jails, state prison centers; displacement occurred greatly as many people from peripheries migrated to towns, churches and their ethnic groups’ homelands so much so that we were compelled to make people receive health service in this church compound. Sabotage, burning and looting of homes and government offices is also unknown before. To your

¹⁰⁵ This is particularly true to the Anyuwaa and the Nuer competing strategies of confrontation (see Dereje, 2006, pp. 215-222). And generally, in the antagonism between the indigenous and ‘migrant’ as seen in the 2014 Majang-Highlander conflict. In the process through the violence and peacemaking processes the issue pertaining the ‘rightful’ ownership of land and its occupation has been an enduring element.

surprise as ‘unidentified’ attackers ransacked the regional Agriculture Research Institute and its facilities, they had to smash the separate seat (chair) of the institute’s head from an emotion that it is Nuer’s seat as the head is ethnic Nuer. Different style of fighting as they were attacking each other with whatever things they could get - this was not there before. Previously, the confrontation was face-to-face; they do not lurk and attack. Gossip, false information (bubble) and wild lies were circulated to an unprecedented degree. For instance, the Anyuwaa were moving children and women to mainland areas due to the widely circulated rumor that the Nuer are marching to exterminate them. School and government offices were closed for months, and blockade of neighborhoods was also very prolonged, in a way that is unseen before.¹⁰⁶

6.4 Conclusion

As the review and analysis of the structure, dynamics and actors demonstrates the conflict environment in post-1991 GPNRS is the functions of many things. It occurs at different (sociopolitical, socioeconomic, sociocultural) domains and historical experiences. Altogether, the various levels of inter-communal violent conflicts in the Gambella region are linked to the broader political, economic, resource, sociocultural, perceptual and security contexts and the history of state formation and state building involving multiple actors, groups and interests. With identity forming the basic unit in the struggle the operation of local inter-communal violent conflicts in GPNRS exhibit national, regional and international dimensions. Yet what is striking about the inter-group conflicts that have long been in the Gambella region is their transformation in scope, intensity and form since the early 1990s. After the institutionalization of a federal mode of governance based on ethnicity in the country in the early 1990s, the competitive pattern of interaction deteriorated astoundingly malign and violent. As Dereje (2006a) pointed out, “the federal arrangement fueled the situation by providing a platform for —older patterns of competitive inter-ethnic relations [to be] elaborated, and asymmetrical local power relations contested and renegotiated” (Dereje, 2006a, p.

¹⁰⁶ (RCI-02).

223). What was not at the beginning political issue politicized; what was not essentially a socio-economic resource competition phenomenon magnified as existential threat disrupting functional inter-group interaction and the entire social fabric. Overall, as this chapter has shown the sources, key determinants, drivers and aspects of the conflict in Gambella are many and exhibit interface between different factors, levels, actors, issues and domains.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conflict Transformation Practice in Gambella: An Appraisal

7.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explicate the conceptual link between the theoretical and conceptual perspectives in conflict transformation and the efforts that have been undertaken in response to the recurrent inter-communal violent conflicts in GPNRS (thereby address specific objective # 2). In doing so, it makes use of the parameters proposed by Lederach, on the dimension of the practice of conflict transformation (i.e. *structural, relational, cultural, and personal*), as analytical lenses, just for analytical simplicity and convenience (of discussion). Accordingly, excluding the background, the chapter is organized into four sections. Section one examines the conflict transformation efforts pertinent to changes introduced to address the *relational* aspects of the conflicts. Section two reviews the efforts that have been made to address *structural* factors feeding the violence – activities and actions that are undertaken to respond to the root causes of the conflict and the social conditions that perpetuate violence in the region. Put another way, it explores the conflict transformation efforts relevant to substantive issues and generally in the promotion and development of non-violent forms of struggle in GPNRS. The subsequent two sections, i.e. section three and section four, investigate the conflict transformation practice in the region, in relation to *cultural* and *personal* dimensions, respectively.

7.2 Relational Dimension

A successful and lasting conflict transformation effort entails a move from ‘*unpeaceful*’ to ‘*peaceful*’ relationships as its essential element. More importantly, transforming relationships is imperative in social conflict settings, where the relationship and structure of groups in conflict transcends contradictions at a particular site of a conflict. As many (e.g. Hiskias, 1993; Lederach, 1997; Mitchell, 2002) note, the necessary process involved in such a change are vital for they move a society from a social order based upon hierarchy and coercion to one based upon equality, respect, participation, voluntarism and mutual enrichment. According to Lederach (1997), a relational transformation represents “intentional intervention that minimizes a poorly functioning communication and maximizes mutual understanding, and that brings to the surface the relational fears, hopes, and goals of the people involved in terms of affectivity and interdependence” (Lederach, 1997, pp. 83-84). Put another way, a relational transformation entails reconciliations focused on *building relationship between antagonists* - it involves the emotional and psychological aspects of the conflict and the need to recognize past grievances and explore future interdependence. As Lederach (1997) notes, reconciliation is a locus which creates a space for encounter by the parties, a place where the diverse but connected energies and concerns driving the conflict can meet, including the paradoxes of truth and mercy, justice and peace. Reconciliation as a concept and a praxis endeavors to reframe the conflict so that the parties are no longer preoccupied with focusing on the issues in a direct, cognitive manner. As such, its primary goal and key contribution is to seek innovative ways to create a time and a place, within various levels of the affected population, to address, integrate, and embrace the painful past and the necessary shared future as a means of dealing with the present (Lederach, 1997, pp. 34-35).

As indicated in the previous chapter, *relationship* is intrinsic to all kinds of inter-communal conflicts in the Gambella region. Living in a geographical proximity, the various communities in the Gambella region have a long history of cycles of violence, grievances and animosities, a condition that affected the pattern of communication and interaction between the groups inhabiting the GPNRS. These circumstances have particularly impacted the perception the groups espouse about the conflict, their manner of interaction with one another (the way the various groups in the region relate to one another), their hopes and expectations, in effect interfering with peacemaking activities and inhibiting the development of positive communication and a conducive environment for amicable inter-group relations. In a strict sense, the intensity of the violence in the region has left pernicious scar on the relational and emotional dynamics of the communities within the (Gambella) region, on the manner of interaction between them, and on the way things are framed and interpreted (see Chapter Six). Needless to say, these situations have impacted the way groups relate to each other thereby making *relationship* an integral aspect of the conflicts, as manifested in the divergent perceptions that groups espouse - at times accompanied by denigrating attitudes, ethnic bashing and propagandizing.

Some efforts and local-to-local initiatives aimed at mending the relational barriers are discernible both from non-governmental and governmental bodies.

7.2.1 Initiatives and Activities by Non-State Actors

It is undeniable that non-combatant groups and civil societies play an essential role in building peace. Their role, as Duffy (2009) noted, is particularly important in improving trust. Non-state actors like women, confessional groups, traditional figures and others could facilitate the consideration of issues and collective aspirations broader than those over which groups fight. As such, they could help in introducing cross-cutting cleavages conducive environment in making peace across conflicting groups and extend the benefits to the grass root population thereby improving the sustaining peace (Duffy, 2009, p.119). In this respect, the recent gesture of peace by Gamo elders and the response of the youth in Arbaminch town clearly indicates the role of traditional figures in bridging the relational barriers and improving the chances for maintaining peace. Embittered and frustrated by the incident in Burayu town on 14 September 2018 where civilians (particularly ethnic Gamos) were attacked by a lynching mob (see Chapter Five) the youth in Arbaminch town burst into outraged mobs to take ‘retaliatory’ attacks targeting any establishment or property having ‘affiliation’ with Oromo. As the mob in the town roamed for ‘retaliatory’ action the Gamo elders in Arbaminch town lined against the buildings which the mob rushed to attack, holding reeds - a traditional symbol of obedience and respect in Gamo society which members of the community should obey - and begging the mob that they travel along their corpse if they had to ‘attack’ the buildings to which the youth mob conceded and refrained from the destructive impulse of damaging the properties. This gesture has been responsible for the positive reaction and community healing programs as it prompted the Oromo traditional figures including the Abba Gadda’s and representatives of the Oromo youth who came to Arbaminch town pleading forgiveness and repenting for

what happened in Burayu consequently easing the tension and nurturing sentiments of cooperation and interdependence over the antagonistic and conflictual one.

In the wake of the 2002 Anyuwaa-Nuer inter-ethnic conflict, the (Ethiopian) Mekaneyesus Church, especially through the two Synods in Gambella town, the Eastern (Anyuwaa) Gambella Bethel Presbytery (EGBP) and the Western (Nuer) Gambella Bethel Presbytery (WGBP), was engaged in sustained activities of mediation and reconciliation between the two communities. Through the agency set up by the Church, the Joint Peace Office¹⁰⁷, efforts aimed at bridging societal cleavages and strengthening bonds and fostering social cohesion between the two communities in conflict were undertaken for three consecutive years, from 2002 to 2004. The activities include peace conferences, peace marches in different parts of the region where the two conflicting groups inhabit and negotiating displaced to return to their homes. As the president of EGBP noted, “efforts were even extended to involve other stakeholders including the government. After we dealt with issue at the Church Synod level, we made community peace dialogues in Gambella town and Itang” (RCI-02).¹⁰⁸ The EGBP and the WGBP have also conducted supportive peacemaking activities in 2016, will be seen in Chapter Nine.

¹⁰⁷ The Joint Peace Office established for the purpose of reconciliation of the two groups is comprised of members from Eastern Synagogue (representing Anyuwaa) and Western Synagogue (representing Nuer) churches in Gambella, the EGBP and WGBP respectively.

¹⁰⁸ Religious leaders from both conflicting groups ate together. They become role models. ... We made peace conferences between the two communities. We also carried peace marches into each side areas and neighborhood to show solidarity. Overall, I dare to say that the activities that were undertaken by the church from 2002 to 2004 have implicated on the normalization of relationship between the two groups (RCI-02).

Another worth noting scheme from non-state agencies in enhancing amicable relationship among the communities in GPNRS has come with the support of the UNDP (funded by Japan government) under the project dubbed Livelihood Restoration and Peacebuilding Project (LRPP). Having the civil war that erupted in South Sudan in December 2013 as its *raison d'être* in the sense that it would result in a flow of refugees into the Gambella region (as has already happened) that may potentially lead to a conflict between the incoming refugees and the host communities, the LRPP started functioning in July 2016. With the aim of enhancing harmonious relationship and coexistence between the refugees and the host communities the LRPP has undertaken peace activities such as creating peace structures and activities aimed at empowering the capacity of the local population in four districts (i.e. Gog, Gambella Zuria, Itang, and Lare¹⁰⁹) of the GPNRS where the refugee camps are established and there is a close geographical contact and interaction between them. For example, in Itang special district, as the project coordinator pointed out, peace support structures were established in four (i.e. *Pulkoth, Wanke, Itang Kir, and Adong*) *kebeles* selected for their proximity to the refugee camp sites. A 'Peace Committee' composed of ten members was established in each of these *kebeles*. Members of the Peace Committee were selected from various layers and segments of the communities, including five from the local *kebele* leadership and five from among religious leaders, elders, youth, and women. Members of the Peace Committee took part in trainings and workshops that were intended to foster and enhance amicable interaction and repair relationships as well as on how to address the causes of conflict between the refugees and the host communities.

¹⁰⁹ Lare District does not host refugees. No facility or refugee camp is present in the district yet as informants concurred the selection of Lare as one of the engagement areas is made possible by the fact that the district forms the main gate to the incoming South Sudanese refugees into the Gambella region of Ethiopia.

The same structure and activities were also undertaken in three refugee camps (Kule 1, Kule 2, and Kule 3) found in the Itang special district areas.

Inter-group relational activities of peacebuilding support by the LRPP have also been extended to the Anyuwaa-Nuer conflict, given the fact that the disputes between the host communities and the refugees is, by extension and in strict sense, a conflict between the Anyuwaa and the Nuer, as the refugee camp sites in the region are located in Anyuwaa areas and the overwhelming majority that make up refugees in the region are ethnic Nuer; and the Anyuwaa-Nuer ethnic conflict is the main and the most protracted one. As such, there is an intricate relationship between the refugee-host community dispute and the Anyuwaa-Nuer conflict in the GPNRS.

7.2.2 Activities by State Actors

Peacemaking activities in response to the 2014 Majang-Highlander conflict saw some purposeful tasks in mending the relational barriers and enhancing mutual understanding between the two communities. The process saw the identification of potential interaction capacities useful to the improvement of trust, such as denouncing denigrating and dehumanizing horatories and opening negotiation to other stakeholders. Efforts were made to create what Duffy calls “*parity of esteem*”¹¹⁰ wherein cross-group demonization was tabooed by key figures in the community and other external figures.

¹¹⁰ According to Duffy ‘parity of esteem’ involves “creating ways to indicate the unacceptability of cross-group demonization- stopping name-calling and labeling opponents (e.g. terrorist, colonist) and preventing hard-liners within respective communities from hijacking policy by portraying moderation as betrayal” (Duffy, 2009, p. 119).

In a kind of *confessional exhortations*, name-calling and labeling opponents were cursed and excommunicated. As many research participants shared (e.g. RCI-05; KIIG-11; FGD-10), in subsequent peace conferences especially during the peace conference in Meti town on September 12, 2014 a solemn procession was made and people vowed never to repeat such heinous violence, cursing those who will resort to such practices in confessional ways according to traditions and religious values of both communities.

This experience from the Majang Zone represents a commendable example of local-local peace initiative in rebuilding inter-group relation and reconciliation where the communities took a leading role in the peace dialogues, and engaged in bonfire truth-telling which facilitated reconciliation. A key informant notes, “because the communities deliberated and discussed on the issues responsible for the occurrence of the violence, and the ways to solve the violence and deter its relapse in the future, in a candid and transparent way, now the situation is relatively good” (RCI-05).

Notwithstanding the aforementioned separate and fragmented activities, for a large part, the conflict transformation efforts in GPNRS lack deliberate and meaningful engagement in addressing the relational barriers between communities locked into conflict, to promote a sense of interdependence and maximize mutual understanding between them. Over the past 27/28 years, there has not been a robust intervention in place to minimize and mend poorly functioning communication and maximize mutual understanding among various contending groups in the region. Empirical data generated from interviews, FGDs, personal communications and observation and the overall situation on the ground highly attest to this. In mixed settlement areas and towns (e.g. Gambella town, Meti, and Itang) ethnic neighborhoods have been formed. In Gambella town, for instance, the Nuer live in *Newland*, a neighborhood in the eastern

part of the city. It is now common to see the blockade and restriction of movement of the Anyuwaa and Nuer towards the east and towards the west of *Jejebe*¹¹¹ *Bridge*, respectively, whenever an episode of conflict between the two groups hits. A year after the 2016 conflict between the two groups, the Nuer and Anyuwaa in parts of the town whose residence is in the other's neighborhood who were forced to move to the mainland of their ethnic affiliate have not returned. In Metti town, ethnic Majang authorities and civil servants still locate their families at Majang mainland villages, as the trauma of the 2014 violence still persists.

7.3 Structural Dimension

Explicit adherence and commitment to 'structural' change, is the bottom line for a constructive and sustainable conflict transformation in that only through major changes underlying the conflicts that future violence could be altered permanently and the people involved and their relationships thereof (Mitchell, 2002). Transforming structures involves effecting major changes on the socio-political and economic systems that feed the violence from beneath. They are linked to efforts to tackle the more fundamental issues - the root causes of the conflict.

As shown in previous chapter the preceding chapters, the conflict situation in Gambella is a function of many things, nourished by the extant socio-economic, political, and historical anomalies that require peacebuilding activities and response strategies at systemic levels for the development of non-violent mechanisms of struggle and sustainable peace process in the region.

¹¹¹ A small seasonal river with a long gorge straddling Gambella town from north east to the center to join Baro River.

7.3.1 Resource, Economic and Political Structures

One common source and driver of conflict in GPNRS is the control over resources - resource competition. Especially land and its permanent occupation as a vital resource is an essential element on the main inter-communal violent conflicts in the region. Grazing land and resource depletion is central in intra-ethnic conflicts among the Nuer. Land along the river banks with alluvial soil is an enduring element in the Anyuwa-Nuer confrontation. The Highlander-Majang conflict, and notably the 2014 violence, is essentially linked to land as the area is suitable for the production of cash crops like coffee and have seen mounting population pressure, 'land sells and lease', implicating resource scarcity, fear, and a sense of frustration aggression.

During the peace process in response to the 2014 Majang-Highlander conflict, some efforts were made to delineate the intrinsic issues and social conditions underlying the occurrence of violence. Issues pertaining to the ownership of land, illegal land occupation and land sale were identified and recognized as being the principal drivers of the conflict. A decision was made that all 'land' under 'effective' control by anyone in whatever form remain temporarily under the possession of the bearer. This moratorium kept the situation intact and temporarily contained violence. However, the actions and efforts were not meaningful when it comes to sustainability and practically effecting change. They could be typically seen as efforts that kept a lid on the conflict, temporary intervention to halt the spread and intensity of the violence as nothing followed afterwards.¹¹²

¹¹² Also see Chapter Eight, section 8.3.1

It is evident that exclusionary political ideologies, discrimination and weak political and administrative institutions combined with the elite manipulation and ethnicization of politics and chronic corruption have joined to turn the GPNRS into something ‘tinder box’, volatile and malleable to identity-based violent conflicts. In this regard, some activities and steps aimed at addressing issues in the political opportunity structure contributing to the violence are discernible. The peace conferences, public discussions, and trainings (particularly in 2014 and 2016) have shed light on pathologies in the governance structure, such as the culture of impunity, discrimination along ethnic lines, and corruption. Issues such as the tradition of giving covers to criminals and the need for ensuring accountability of criminals were deliberated upon. Measures were taken to enhance accountability and rule of law.¹¹³ Comparing the post-violence situation with the conditions during and before the eruption of violence in 2014, an informant noted, “now when a problem occurs, you do not see this disposition of linking issues with ethnicity (a tendency that had been pervasive before the two communities succumbed to the violence) but to seek legal recourse in a lawsuit. Because of the measures that were taken, including the removal of the authorities that stoked animosities and the conflict, the process of bringing perpetrators to a court of law and holding them accountable as well as activities in creating awareness to communities to ameliorate their pliability from stereotypes and rhetoric, it is somehow better. Previously, wherever you go and appeal, the response was an arbitrarily ‘return the land’ as the officials were not held accountable. Now the governance apparatus is responsive to some level albeit insufficient” (RCI-05). Before the conflict, the rule of law was at stake and it was totally shattered during the conflict. Now, restoring governmental structures, procedures and

¹¹³ (RCI-01; NGI-04; FGD-10).

functions are ongoing; however, the issue of ensuring the rule of law is not sufficient (NGI-04).

Security sector reform activities to the regional core security actors, the regional police and the Special Forces (SP), were also observed. In mid and late 2016, a rehabilitation training aimed at professionalizing the regional security service, and addressing the deficiencies in relation to impartiality, motivation, the rule of law, human rights and civilian oversight and civil-military relations were given to the security personnel. As such, in the wake of the 2014 Majang-Highlander and the 2016 Anyuwaa-Nuer conflicts, rehabilitation and trainings were given for members of the region's police and security services to bridge the gaps and enhance capacities about human rights protection (KIIG-04; KIIG-05). As part of security sector reform, especially to address the issue of partiality and siding to one's ethnic affiliates, the process of allocation of members of the regional security forces across the areas of the GPNRS was revised. Since July 2016, peacebuilding enhancement activities and programs are underway for the GPNRS Security and Administrative Affairs Bureau, with the support of the LRPP.

6.4 Cultural Dimension

A veritable conflict transformation endeavor hinges on the local communities and their culture. In fact, the task of conflict management requires an understanding of the way conflict is processed in another culture and how the interests at stake are validated in the particular social environment. As Avruch (2002) pointed out, the importance of taking the cultural and societal background of conflicts into account during conflict transformation work is particularly informed by four main factors: (1) by suggesting their high value and relative scarcity and thereby indicating what sorts of resources are

objects of dispute and competition, culture frames the contexts in which conflict occurs; (2) culture stipulates rules, sometimes precise but usually less so, for how conflicts should be pursued, including how to begin and when and how to end them; (3) culture provides individuals with cognitive, symbolic, and affective frameworks for interpreting the behavior and motives of others and themselves; and (4) culture links individual and collective identities, providing symbols to conflicts (Avruch, 2002, p.78). In these manners, culture gets implicated in ethnic, religious, nationalist, or other communal conflicts. This entails the need to connect conflict transformation efforts to the cultural and contextual resources available for peace and conflict resolution within the setting.

Groups and communities living in Gambella have traditional methods of managing conflict. The Anyuwaa have a customary dispute settling mechanism tied to their leadership system, the *nyieye* (nobles or kings) and *kwaaro* (village headmen, or other leaders). According to Kurimoto (1992), these leaders – the *nyieye* holding the royal emblems, play a crucial role in all major affairs of Anyuwaa social life, and with that in conflict resolution¹¹⁴ (Kurimoto, 1992, p. 43). Even if this tradition looks limited to the management of conflict within the Anyuwaa community, it could be extended to conflict with other groups, provided, that it all depends on the initiative of the leaders.

¹¹⁴ As Monika (2016) pointed for example in cases of homicide the perpetrator may seek refuge in the home of the *nyieye* or *kwaaro*. This is a safe haven for him to escape from revenge action of the victim's family. Once he enters the house of the king, any retaliation will be unjustified. The next step is *Kuor*, literally "paying for the crime". It is the negotiation phase. The victim's family defines its claim, and then the family of the perpetrator is called. The king will urge them to pay. The "advance" or guarantee, already paid by the *nyieye* has to be refunded, too. Traditional payment is done by *demuy* (nowadays also in currency), in cattle breeding areas also by cattle. Another common practice is to use a future bride price for a daughter to pay the debts. *The peace ceremony* After payment, the agreement will be settled and sealed by a major ceremony with both families/clans. During this ceremony the story of the lineage will be explained again, and elders from both sides will talk. A bull – or another animal – will be ritually slaughtered, divided into two parts, one half for each clan. The spear-tips (one from each family) are blunted and bent, and the spears are kept as a witness for the agreement in the inside of the roof of the king's house (Monika, 2016, pp. 61-63).

For instance, a peace agreement between the Anyuwaa and the Majang, roughly followed this tradition of peacemaking procedures (Monika, 2016).

The Nuer also have a TCRMs that handles conflict between the Nuer and their different clans, a process that puts elders at the center, who initiate and discuss an issue that has become a problem for the community.¹¹⁵ The conflict settlement procedure involves the payment of cattle as compensation and a deliberation between the disputant groups, on how sustainable peace could be achieved between them, and culminates with the sacrificial killing of oxen, which takes the function of scapegoat and, a joint feast (Koang, 2010). Other conflicts in the community, such as those between neighbors, in marriages and others, are settled through negotiation and payment of cows or oxen. As Monika (2016) noted, particularly the ceremonial sealing of agreement serves part of conflict prevention because once an agreement is found and accepted by the spirits in the ceremony, it is considered sacrosanct, secured by the religious sanction from violation, infringement or encroachment. A typical example to be recalled is an agreement that has lasted for more than 20 years unbroken after sealed by this ceremony from Thiang clan (Monika, 2016, p.63).

Even if they come from a very different background – social, economic, cultural and ethnic - the Highlander communities in GPNRS still possess a shared sense of traditional conflict coping mechanism that revolves around religious or other elements and a shared sense of humanity, as that of *Ubuntu*, like the rest of African traditions.

¹¹⁵ (For details see Monika, 2016, pp. 63-64).

7.4.1 Connecting Activities to Local Resources

Relevant to the utilization of local resources and peace potentials available in the GPNRS conflict situation, some efforts are discernible. During peace conferences, community dialogues and discussions, attempts were made to reflect on the cultural patterns contributing to the occurrences of violence or confounding the situations. The culture of revenge, culture of being a safe haven for criminals, and undue role of the government authorities in stoking violence were recognized as issues contributing to conflict. For instance, in public discussions and peace conferences in 2014 and 2016, which were organized as part of the intervention to Majang-Highlander and Anyuwaa-Nuer conflicts, respectively, issues of hiding perpetrators and exposing them were widely discussed and a common understanding was created about the role of political elites and the leadership in stoking animosities and violence among communities. Traditional figures, elders and religious leaders joined for abomination, cursing and blessing according to the local traditions (RCI-05; KIIG-11). A local elder who participated in the September 2014 peace conference in Meti town said, “The reconciliation is made according to local traditions. As a symbol of the reconciliation between the two groups, oxen were slaughtered, we jumped on the blood of the slain oxen and started eating together on the spot” (RCI-05). The peace conferences and public dialogues in Gambella town and Itang also tapped into the customary ways of conflict resolution among the Anyuwaa and Nuer communities, like bending spear as a traditional symbol of reconciliation. An informant, a religious figure, adds:

Thorough discussions and negotiations were held as to what the problems are essentially about and how it should be tackled. All communities in Gambella condemned the violence. Religious groups and leaders did prayers and fasting, and advice (particularly to the youth) given. Activities like giving shelter for the

IDPs and burials and mourning for the dead were undertaken by the Ethiopian religious council.¹¹⁶

7.4.2 Building Peace Constituency

Consistent to building on cultural resources is the need for building *peace constituency*. As such a key element in the transformational approach to peacebuilding is the emphasis on peace constituencies, with a focus on a bottom-up approach. An illustration of this in the GPNRS is the *Youth Peace Forum*, and its role in the peacemaking activities during the 2016 Anyuwaa-Nuer conflict.¹¹⁷ The creation of the forum played an instrumental role in the process of managing the violence as the forum helped connect the peacemaking activities to the most active section of the community – the youth - during the violence. Attempts were made to initiate and empower the youth.¹¹⁸ Open discussions were made on these matters and others (e.g. about youth unemployment). One of my informants, a member of the youth forum, noted, “The youth were empowered. They say: as you are the one suffering the brunt of the violence most, you are also the one who should resolve the problems - you are both the main victims and redeemers of the situation” (KIIG-04). Though limited to just Gambella town, the Youth Peace Forum has helped in the development of a framework for reconciliation and in containing violence in that particular instance. By acting as peace champions, the representatives were partly able to impact the wider youth to forego violence since they acted as a middle-level actor between the top-level and grassroots.

¹¹⁶ (RCI-01).

¹¹⁷ Part of the peacemaking activities in response to the 2016 Anyuwaa-Nuer conflict was the creation of youth peace forum in Gambella town comprised of 52 members (26 from Anyuwaa and 26 from Nuer).

¹¹⁸ The forum identified direct conflict zones, flashpoints and areas (such as bus stations, river banks) that show up and are grounds of unfair treatments, negative stereotypical and dehumanizing depictions between the group members fomenting animosities and grievances (KIIG-04).

This particular instance reflects the tendency of seeing citizen-based peacemaking as an instrumental and an integral part to the conflict transformation process. In a strict sense, during the 2016 Anyuwaa-Nuer conflict, the youth forum and its members have acted as core peace constituency in containing and mitigating the violence, particularly in Gambella town. This is partly due to their empowerment which makes members to entertain a sense of vision as peacemakers (peace champions), by building bridges across the lines of conflict using their networks, their understandings of the sensibilities and nuances of the setting, and their immediate and continuing accessibility to the key players. A resident of Gambella town recalls:

You know what happened, the youth (both the Anyuwaa and Nuer) in Gambella town were given the opportunity to select members to represent them as part of the peacemaking process, and they selected the most vocal ones and hardliners as their voices. When government agencies and other stakeholders approached the representatives in an interactive ways and on an equal ground to articulate their concern, it appeared that, as these representatives addressed the larger youth in the town, filled with positive discourses that generate hope, longing for peace rather than speech and discourses that stoke animosity and division, the violence started subsiding and stopped afterwards as it influenced the active youth in the town to shun the resort to violence.¹¹⁹

In hindsight, resources, not only financial and material but also socioeconomic and sociocultural, are necessary to entice, foster and sustain constructive conflict transformation. A synthesis of the conflict transformation efforts in the GPNRS, with regard to addressing the cultural aspects in the conflict and exploring the local resources that enrich the process reveal the existence of sporadic and ephemeral synchronization to the local peace potentials - the youth peace platform in Gambella town and the peace conferences in Majang zone being typical for their vitality.

¹¹⁹ (KIIG-05).

7.5 Personal Dimension

Peacebuilding is not only about construction, but also about deconstruction - identifying and dismantling '*senti-mental walls*, concepts, theories, dogmas, attitudes, habits, emotions and inclinations that hinder democratic transition and constructive transformation by lowering the motivation to act and increasing the propensity of misperceiving and misevaluating the situation and by doing so impeding the development of necessary skills and know-how to overcome conflicts (Reychler, 2002, p. 31-32). Comparative studies on genocide have illuminated that these conditions distort the behavior of all actors. For example, a research conducted by Harvard University found out about 10% (an estimated 51, 000.00) of the perpetrators who participated in the Rwandan genocide were motivated by [Radio Télévision des Mille Collines \(RTLM\)](#), as its propaganda affected participation in violence, making worse the already malign nature of social interactions (Yanagizawa, 2014).

Transforming persons constitutes pertinent changes at individual levels- it entails intentional intervention to address the emotional, perceptual, and spiritual aspects of conflict in order to ameliorate the destructive effects of social conflict and enhance its potentialities for personal growth at physical, emotional, and spiritual levels (Lederach, 1997). Mutual effort by participants in defining elusive ideas, indicating what exactly a just solution to their conflict could and should be imperative as it will make, individuals to become willing to change their usually monocular view of 'justice' and develop their concern for social justice (e.g. Mitchell, 2002; Galtung, 2004; Boege, 2006).

The conflict in Gambella is not only about divergent positions, but equally accompanied with divergent perceptions, and denigrating attitudes stamping on peacebuilding efforts. The intensity of animosity and polarized sentiment is so deep that it is diffuse, entangles every aspect (see Chapter Six). In this regard, albeit far from being sustainable and ‘meaningful’ in altering people’s perception and understanding and deterring the resort to violence, there are efforts resembling conflict mitigation. As such, intermittent activities as a response to the recurrent inter-group violent conflicts in the GPNRS were able to restore peace and normalize relationships such that the resumption of life’s usual business and freedom of movement, allowing people to run their day-to-day activities and social life.

Activities like taking elders to the areas of victims, forming platforms for peace constituency like the youth forum, public peace dialogues and peace conferences, rehabilitating victims, returning displaced people and constructing houses for the adversary groups, and undertaking joint peace march (involving both group members) into various neighborhoods, have helped promote mutual empathy and understanding between parties, among leaders, opinion makers and grassroots individuals, to some extent. For example, the peacemaking activities in the GPNRS in 2002, 2014 and 2016 exhibited a change oriented approach that puts communities and victims of the violence at the helm of the process, allowing participants to realize the interdependence between them, that it is mutually destructive, paving the way for a shared sense of peace. Informants recalled how the intensity of crisis forced some developments as they raised a consciousness about the damage it inflicted, impacting both groups to seek and own the peace.¹²⁰ For instance, according to one of my key informants, a resident of Akash

¹²⁰ (E.g. KIIG-04; KIIG-05; RCI-01).

kebele, Meti town, “The communities took the initiative to reconciliation and are now happy about the peace made, given the fact that the violence was pernicious, and both groups felt the adversities that followed. The Majang fled into the forest, cut off from access to various services. Likewise, many Highlanders had to find themselves displaced, seeking refuge in various areas - thus both groups counting the cost” (LCI-07).

Strictly speaking, however, the conflict transformation practices that have been undertaken to deal with the recurring inter-group violent conflicts in the region in the past 28 years did not produce, or for that matter promote, real improvement in stopping the resort to violence and fostering amicable interpersonal relationships.¹²¹ The feeling of insecurity is still felt deeply by individuals. A year after the 2016 Anyuwaa-Nuer (as I was in fieldwork) conflict, repatriation of IDPs is not undertaken. The Anyuwaa communities in Itang special district displaced (particularly from four kebeles, namely, *Ajhu*, *Adima*, *Alang* and *Berhanesalam*) due to the violence have not returned to their villages and resumed their normal activity; they took refuge across the mainland. Overall, there is no robust, let alone significant *interpersonal change* in place between individual parties directly involved in the conflict, among the communities involved in cycles of violent conflict, by conflict intervention activities and conflict transformation efforts in post-1991 GPNRS. What has been in the motion is the suspension of concerns and questions of conflictants, and when it is utmost, the creation of a kind of negative peace, leaving things to a breathing space before the occurrence of another cycle of violence. Although an incident like the December 13, 2003 genocide of the Anyuwaa requires recognition, community healing and reconciliation schemes, nothing followed

¹²¹ (Vehemently reiterated through NGI-02; NGI-03; NGI-05; RCI-02; KIIG-06; FGD-07; FGD-10; FGD-11).

from the state or other stakeholders, a situation that partly explains the pervasive resentment of the Anyuwaa and the worrisome grudge and heightened militancy of the Anyuwaa youth, their untamed impulse for violence in Gambella today, which has now become a mundane activity in the regional capital, Gambella town.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Peacebuilding Terrain in Post-1991 Gambella: Process and Outcome

8.1 Introduction

Within the frame of conceptual perspectives and comparative studies in conflict transformation, particularly using the taxonomy of Lederach (1997) as a lens, the preceding chapter examined the practices of conflict transformation in the GPNRS - it expounded the conceptual link between theory and practice. This chapter is a sequel, and a more extensive and thorough investigation of the preceding one - it explores the outcomes of the conflict transformation efforts as well as set to analyze the overall peacebuilding process in post-1991 Gambella.

The chapter situates the evaluation of the results of the peacemaking architecture and the process of peacebuilding in the GPNRS within the context of current peacebuilding discourse and practices, with an emphasis to situations of protracted social conflicts. Excluding this background section, the chapter has three sections. The first section gives an overview of the main traits of the conflict settlement endeavors in the region. The second section is devoted to an extensive discussion on the outcomes and the broader picture of the peacebuilding process, using a set of variables and themes that help to gauge the effectiveness of the peacebuilding efforts and processes. The last section concludes the chapter based on the arguments made in the preceding discussions.

8.2 Major Features

As the author was able to discern from informal talks, formal interviews, and focus group discussions held with the participants as well as his personal observations, the conflict intervention schemes in Gambella are predominantly characterized by a differential mode of response, apathy and negligence; using compensation as a dominant method of conflict settlement, enmeshing up issues with politics; and short-term peacemaking activities that focus on symptoms.

8.2.1 Varying Mode of Intervention

The April 15, 2016 cross-border raid as a mirror

On Friday, April 15, 2016, the Murle of the South Sudan carried out a raid into Ethiopia's Gambella region, killing more than 200 people, abducting more than 100 children and taking more than 2000 head of livestock.¹²² What is striking about this episode is the extent of the assault and the area it covered. Unlike previous incursions, the Murle came deep into the GPNRS region in unprecedented manner, penetrating deep into three districts of the Nuer Zone (*Lare, Jikow and Makuie*). The incident was on the spotlight. It grabbed national attention and generated a nationwide anger, leading to a three-day national mourning, as graphic pictures of the victims were circulated and went viral across social media, and inducing the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) to cross the border to chase the perpetrators and rescue the abducted children. According to the Sudan Tribune, 56 abducted children were recovered, returned to Ethiopia.¹²³

¹²² (<http://www.theguardian.com> (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/April/18/Ethiopian-forces-hunt-south-sudan-gunmen-who-killed-208-in-raid/>: accessed on 28 September 2018).

¹²³(<http://www.sudantribune.com/spip/.php?article59027/2016/May/21murle-community-returns-56-abducted-children-to-Ethiopia/>: accessed on 28 September 2018).

Participants of the research (e.g. KIIG-3; LCI-02; PCI-01) are of conviction that the conflict intervention and reconstruction activities in response to this incident came equally in a stark dissonance to the practice and culture of peacemaking in the GPNRS, be it in the content of activities, the attention accorded, the approach, the timing and coordination. For example, fund raising programs were organized both at the regional and national levels including a contribution where civil servants in GPNRS donated a specified amount of percentage (mostly 10%) from their salary for the rehabilitation of orphan children who lost their parents by the incident and other victims. A televised fund-raising program transmitted live on the national state TV from the Sheraton Addis was organized. Ad hoc secretariat composed of various bodies of government and other agencies was established for the purpose of rehabilitation of the orphan children. Subsequent trilateral meetings involving the Upper Nile State of the South Sudan, the Gambella Regional State of Ethiopia and the Ethiopian National Defense Force were held on joint-border security and peace and on how to tackle the issues of illicit arms flow across the border. Viewed in light of the practice and pattern of humanitarian and crisis management activities in the region in addressing victims, the response to this particular incident was swift. In an analogous remark, an expert at the regional Disaster and Risk Management Agency (DRM) assents to the situation in the following way:

Although the humanitarian law urges response to victims of natural and manmade calamities in 72 hours, this has never been there or does not happen in our case. It takes around two months to go through the process and come to the help of those in need. I can assure you here victims never get response before one month from the incident. What has been exception in this case is the April 15, 2016 massive and ferocious cross border onslaught into three districts of the Nuer zone. Victims of this particular attack received aid in two weeks. Here the federal government also involved lobbied as the event received widespread media coverage. In contrary, the January 23, 2017 similar cross border Murle attack on Anyuwaa zone of Jor district did not even receive attention to be broadcasted in radio. As I am speaking (i.e. February 17, 2017, the day the interview is conducted) we have not yet responded to January 23, 2017 incident

to address victims, we are still on preparation stage depart to the area, to make a joint assessment.¹²⁴

Meanwhile, as discussed earlier, a year after the event, repatriation for the (Anyuwaa) IDPs displaced due to the 2016 Anyuwaa-Nuer ethnic conflict has not yet materialized. Efforts have been faltering for a number of reasons which informants and group discussion participants are not convinced about/of¹²⁵ and instead consider it to be a ‘conspiracy,’ especially given that in some villages of the IDPs, the nearby Nuer communities are taking foothold, grazing their cattle and ploughing.¹²⁶

In general, even if a combination of local, national and international factors may have prompted the attention given to April 15 incident, one thing is clear: it has penetrated at the sensitivities of inter-group animosities at local level in Gambella, becoming the center stage of power and inter-group relation. It also becomes an illustration and reflections of the interpretations concerning social inequality relative to others. From the discussions, it can be gleaned that even peacebuilding efforts, policies or strategies deemed instructive should be carried in a prudent manner in the sense that they may end up adding a gasoline on the fire that has been burning in the region for long - complicating further the dimensions of local problems and inter-group relational frameworks in the GPNRS. Thus, the operation of peacemaking in the region should be carried out cognizant of the local context: the properties of the social relations in the

¹²⁴ (KIIG-03).

¹²⁵ Although conferences involving regional cabinet members were held, and ad hoc council was established, to address the problem, to run the process of repatriation and rehabilitation, nothing is changed on the ground. For example, once the process was obstructed and members of the council returned to Gambella town following the killing of Gadet (ethnic Nuer), deputy head of the GPNRS Road Authority in Abobo District (Anyuwaa zone). In another instance, the process of repatriation of the IDPs was halted when a regional SP member (ethnic Anyuwaa) on duty for the enforcement of the process was killed allegedly by ‘Nuer’ nearby, purportedly as part of the resistance to the process of the repatriation (KIIG-09; LCI-05; FGD-07).

¹²⁶ (For example, KIIG-09; FGD-07).

Gambella - how (the way) the various groups respond to and interpret activities and actions particularly relative to the other.

The opposing mode of intervention is also reflected in the practice of disarmament, where some groups are disarmed and left vulnerable while others are ‘exempted’. Such a ‘one-sided’ disarmament has increased the vulnerability of some communities in the midst of inter-group violence in the region. Explaining their sense of insecurity, the participants of group discussion (Anyuwaa) stated “...the disarmament was not uniform. On our part, we have disarmed two kebeles’ but no disarmament is conducted on the Nuer part. The others (referring to the Nuer) are armed, they easily acquire guns from *Phagak*¹²⁷ while the other (referring to the Anyuwaa) is without gun, exposed and helpless. Therefore, what is the guarantee of the farmers (IDPs) if they are to return? During the previous (*Derg*) regime, the government would involve resolve, now it is pathetic that most of the Anyuwaa kebeles in Itang Special District are empty (FGD-07).”¹²⁸

What is striking about the differential mode of response therefore is that it takes side along ethnic lines. Disproportionate attention and peacemaking activities in the GPNRS are deepening the chasm between groups, further deteriorating the already dire inter-group relations in the region. This scenario was witnessed extensively by the researcher, in the early days of February 2017 in Gambella town, when a fundraising (under the motto *Fiqir le Gambella* - Love for Gambella) was underway as part of a rehabilitation activity for victims of the April 15, 2016 Murle attack. Part of the event was a t-shirt

¹²⁷ Phagak is an area in South Sudan just not beyond 30 kilometers from Korgan, the capital of Lare District of the Nuer Zone, GPNRS. Phagak has been a stronghold of the SPLM/IO which is led by Reik Machar, and an area with massive military related activity throughout the civil war in South Sudan that broke out in December 2013.

¹²⁸ (This is also a view shared by KIIG-08; RCI-0).

that civil servants were obliged to buy through their respective government office units and a bazaar organized in Gambella town, Ras Gobena Primary School. In what appears to be a disobedience, almost all Anyuwaas and Highlanders refrained from wearing the t-shirt, and particularly the Anyuwaa, boycotted the bazaar event to which they felt as indifferent, given the Murle raid on Anyuwaa kebeles, accompanied by the killing of people and abducting of children, fell on deaf ears.¹²⁹ On the contrary, the Nuer took the bazaar and fundraising program seriously and propagated the issue.

Needless to say, such differential and one-sided peacemaking efforts and responses (often sidelining the sensitivities and interests of the conflicting parties) have alienated and dismayed some groups, further deepening the grievances and hindering the development of constructive conflict transformation in the region.

8.2.2 Apathy and Delayed Response

A persistent hallmark of the peacebuilding aura in post-1991 GPNRS with profound negative effects on the process of conflict and nature of sociopolitical cohesion in the region also concerns the delayed responses, and lack of interest exhibited by the regional and federal governments to deal with the problems. This is a theme entertained by the research participants for this study as well as secondary sources. Save the April 15, 2016 incident, in many instances the failure of the regional and federal governments to give redress to the plea of their citizens from cross-border incursions was observed. In his analysis of the national perspective on the conflict in GPNRS Dereje gives an eloquent and piercing remark on the issues surrounding the Murle raid and the inability

¹²⁹ I reckon an Anyuwaa youth saying “the blood of Anyuwaa is not seen as blood”

of the ENDF stationed nearby to protect the communities from the repeated attack by the Murle. He writes:

... Whatever the reasons for the escalation of the Murle cattle raiding might be one thing is certain: None of the villages attacked got support from any of the military establishments in the region. Nor has the Federal government responded to the plea despite the existence of constitutional provisions for a federal intervention. Community leaders and the various levels of the regional government have appealed to the federal government to put an end to the havoc the Murle are raking on the Anyuwaa and Nuer pastoralist communities. Despite the deployment of a sizeable federal army in the region with a principal mandate of giving protection to the oil company located near to the villages subjected to the raids, none of the local communities got the protection they badly needed. Rebuffed by the federal army and the regional government, a number of people have fled the region and crossed the border to southern Sudan hoping that they would be safer near the SPLA (Southern Sudanese Liberation Army). Although the effectiveness of the SPLA in 'disciplining' the Murle remains to be seen, its political will to deliver the protection the people seek could have a legitimating effect on the SPLA's latent claim over the Gambella region and its 'black' people. Some of the disaffected local elites are now making sense of the prevailing insecurity through a conspiratorial scheme of interpretation. The inaction of the federal government is made intelligible as a subtle yet cost effective means of displacing the local population from the oil exploration areas (Dereje, 2009, pp. 646-647).

In the same line of thought Medhane Tadesse observed the failure of the national governments since the time of the Derg military rule to establish police and military garrisons in the contested areas and along the most volatile border regions and the complaint the locals (particularly the Anyuwaa) put forward:

... They recall that during the Haile Selassie period there were garrisons along the border, which were effective in controlling the situation. Well, the problem was not as grave as it is at present, but at least there was some mechanism. The situation became more complicated when the Derg left the border to the whips of a foreign force, the SPLA. Locals say that dealing with instability and displacement of civilians along the border areas should have been the priority of the Ethiopian government and its army (Medhane, 2007, p. 20).

According to key informants the indifference occurs despite the knowledge that most inter-communal conflicts and cross-border raids in the region occur in dry seasons, and ‘information’ consistently provided (KIIG-02; KIIG-08). For example, as the Murle set out from Buma, South Sudan, to carry out raid, ‘information’ often comes to the attention of government authorities as there are traders and Anyuwaa communities in South Sudan who communicate information using the available telecommunication network. But the authorities in Ethiopia remain negligent and/or do not take it seriously. Surprisingly enough, during my stay in Pungudo town for fieldwork, the Murle have carried out cattle raid three times; they have even gone as far as coming deeper into Pungudo town to buy meals and carrying out cattle raids in broad day light, at mid-day (KIIG-08).¹³⁰

The repercussion of such inherent tendencies in apathy and the lack of proactive engagements have been observed in various occasions. The December 13, 2003 Anyuwaa civilian massacre by the Highlanders lynching mob in Gambella town (triggered by the attack of a UN-plated van, and which killed eight Highlander officials and workers of ARRA)¹³¹ was preceded by a series of indiscriminate killings of the Highlanders (see Dereje, 2004; Medhane, 2007; Regassa, 2010). Dereje argues:

... during the months of August and November, more than 20 Highlanders were ambushed along the Itang and Pinyudo road. In early September, the Highlanders petitioned to the regional council to stop the killing and they expressed their anger at what they called the unwillingness of the Anyuwaa dominated regional council to ensure the safety of the Highlanders and bring the perpetrators to justice. It is this bitterness which contributed to the mob violence that culminated on December 13 (Dereje, 2004, p. 1).

¹³⁰ As the research was in Gambella for fieldwork from mid-April to March 2017 the issues of the Murle causing havoc in unprecedented manner was the dominant issue of public discourse.

¹³¹ ARRA (Administration for Refugee Affairs) is a government partner organization to the UNHCR.

Hence save other underlying and proximate explanations that could be in play through the process, from the aforementioned discussions one thing is evident about the December 13 incident in Gambella town: the incident could have been prevented had measures been taken to address the series of car ambush and killing beforehand. Before they gestated into polarized sentiments between the two groups, and the sense of frustration and the feeling that the regional government is an accomplice and thus unwilling to stop the problem and the ensuing feeling of ‘injustice’. As such, the latent festering wounds brewed in the form of feeling of injustice, from articulation of dissatisfaction, whether real or imagined, with the extant system or relationship that went unaddressed and badly managed have contributed to the occurrence of the Anyuwaa civilian onslaught on December 13.

On another instance, the 2014 awful Majang-Highlander violence is partly linked with the inability to address sporadic incidents of killings despite repeated pleas by the people before its eruption into whole scale intercommunal violence (see also Seyuom, 2015). In Yeri Kebele, Menegshi district, the epicenter of the most ferocious violence, the situation was exacerbated by the absence of demarcation between Godere and Yeri districts when Majang Zone was divided into two districts in 2013. The vacuum created a condition for ‘illegal’ land sale and possession and an increased ‘settlement’ of Highlanders into the area. As it was considered a no-man’s-land, it was up for ‘infiltration’ and expansion, consequently complicating the ethnic federal mode of administration and confounding an ‘ownership’ contestation, the already problematic issue thus exacerbating the conflict (NGI-04; also amplified in FGD-06). This case is also reflected in Itang Special District, during the 2013 administrative reorganization (particularly at district levels) in the region and the process of repatriation of IDPs displaced during the 2016 violence involving the Anyuwaa and the Nuer to their

villages. As shown previously, the failure to repatriate IDPs in Itang Special District had already resulted in the seizure of the lands by the adjacent Nuer communities who have also reportedly been creating havoc to derail the process. It is also to be noted that the indifference from the ENDF, that was stationed nearby, in protecting locals from cross-border attacks, despite the repeated pleas from the communities, has reinforced the way the federal security forces are framed in the inter-group relation and conflict in the Gambella region.

8.2.3 Compensation as Dominant Conflict Settlement Procedure:

Promoting the Culture of Impunity

As the findings from the analysis of empirical data for this research aptly demonstrated, compensation has been used mainly for conflict settlement purposes in the region, especially over the last few years. In fact, compensation as a traditional conflict settlement mechanism is a long practice in the Gambella region (see Chapter Seven). What is different is the manner in which compensation procedures have been incorporated, supported and used by the government and the administrative machineries in recent years. Prominently observed in December 2011 when 91, 000 Ethiopian Birr (ETB) per head was paid by the regional administration as reparation to families/parents of the victims of a car ambush¹³² this disposition of blending compensation with statutory set up has been increasingly used, largely unconsidered about its modalities, the conditions and means of applicability, as well as the consequences. First, it is deepening the culture of impunity and jeopardizing the viability of the traditional reconciliation mechanisms. This is because, for one thing,

¹³² The ambush (allegedly carried by Anyuwaa insurgents) happened around a place called *Jawi*, some 20 KMs south of Gambella town against a passenger car traveling from Meti to Gambella town. 19 Highlanders (most of them students of Gambella Teachers Training and Health Science College) were killed by the attackers.

compensation is paid by the ‘community, clan’ or residents of a kebele which the ‘perpetrator’ is assumed to be part of. And often the direct perpetrator of the crime evades accountability or no attempt is made to identify suspect(s) once the compensation process is settled (FGD-03; FGD-07). Although it is the wrongdoer who should be accountable, what is being done actually is collective punishment. For example, one of my key informants, an expert, Itang Special District, Security and Administrative Affairs Office asserted, “When someone kills somebody or when a person is murdered, whoever the perpetrator is the community clan or sub-clan members to whom the alleged suspect belongs are forced to pay compensation. This is what perpetuates the problems as the communities are coerced to pay reparation where the identity of the offender is unidentified (KIIG-09).¹³³ Thus, what is problematic of the compensation practice and modalities in the region is it is promoting the culture of impunity as the process is compromising accountability.

Furthermore, sanctions are exerted arbitrary and disproportionate relative to the offence. The amount of sanctions, both in kind and in cash, are not consistent and congruent to the realities on the ground, not informed on the empirical circumstances – a condition that rendered the process to be the cause and object of controversies and resentment. As such, there is no uniform and coherent custom to govern the compensation procedure; it all depends on the circumstances and the interests of the power holders (LCI-01; NGI-03). Many informants and group discussion participants have expressed their disapproval of and indifference towards the compensation modalities.¹³⁴ For instance, in one of the group discussions participants noted: “The

¹³³ This is an assertion which is starkly resonated across informants and FGD participants during the field work and data collection in GPNRS

¹³⁴ (For instance, NGI-03; KIIG-08; FGD-6; FGD-07).

process is discriminatory along ethnic lines. No compensation followed as nine persons (ethnic Anyuwaa) were murdered in different spots but they insist for compensation when one Nuer is killed (FGD-07).” On another level, the participants of group discussions in Nuer kebele invoked “... 150 heads of livestock are paid for the murder of an Anyuwaa but when a Nuer is killed, they said, “Leave them, they don’t have cattle (FGD-6).” Another informant went on to say “...for instance, if you see the value of livestock given to Anyuwaa as reparation, it is not good, they are mediocre (LCI-05).”

The above reflections and discourse of the research participant on the practice of compensation procedure indicates that conflict settlement practices are not mere activities on their own rather they also mirror the nature of social interactions as themes of power, dominance and social inequality are channeled out in the doings of the peacemaking. This issues concerning compensation also reflective of the nature of group interaction between the two groups that it is diffuse, as ethnic relations are generally represented by the discourses. Thus, the reactions on the compensation practice are not mere reflections unique to that particularly circumstance rather it also explains the larger properties of social interaction between the Anyuwaa and the Nuer. As such, the process of peacemaking activities have acted out as an arena, representing the complex system of social interaction in the region given that the conflictual pattern of inter-group relationships are reproduced by the texts of the research participants.

Controversial reactions on the practice surrounding the compensation procedure also revealed on the very ‘unit’/item used as a means to settle the procedure. Livestock is used for compensation in kind, particularly in conflicts involving the Anyuwaa and the Nuer. The problem here is the Nuer are cattle herders which makes it easy to contribute and pay cattle levied while the Anyuwaa are crop growers, posing difficulties when any

Anyuwaa kebele is due to pay cattle. And equally important, cattle are more expensive than crops. This has raised discontentment particularly from the Anyuwaa. In one of the FGDs held in Anyuwaa village participants said that the Nuer are cattle herders, and they can easily contribute cattle whereas we are crop growers which makes it for us to pay cattle as a compensation (FGD-07).

The problematic compensation settlement methods as a collective responsibility and punishment in the GPNRS are also compounded further as the process is extended to government bureaucracy. First, this is leading to the redirecting of state resources to issues other than the intended purpose, and more importantly, the extension and conflation of negative attribution to a particular group (a prevalent disposition observed among the people in Gambella as indicated in Chapter Six) to the government administrative structures (e.g. zone, district) as administrative structures in the region are essentially arranged along ethnic lines. One informant noted:

Earlier, the tradition among the communities was either to instruct for compensation or take revenge against the family or ‘clan’ of the felony but now, the fact that the government is taking responsibility is compounding the situation. For example, as Itang Special District appeared to be incapable to execute the reparation levied on the district for the car ambush in late December 2016¹³⁵, it was referred to the Anyuwaa Zone to share the burden out of the presumption that the perpetrators are Anyuwaa, which is complicating the situation by labeling certain groups as trouble makers.¹³⁶

The following is also emphatic:

The other factor contributing to the violence is the emerging pattern of compensation. In response to the December 2016 car ambush around Illiya and the ensuing damage, when Itang Special District proved incapable to cover the reparation on its own, Anyuwaa Zone was obliged to share the burden. *This is*

¹³⁵ On December 28, 2016 a passenger bus traveling to Nyinignagn, capital of Nuer Zone from Gambella town was ambushed by a group of armed men (particularly targeting Nuer travelers) around Illiya Kebele of Itang Special District.

¹³⁶ LCI-05

*happening in a situation where the suspects are not caught and brought into custody, simply from a sheer labeling that the perpetrators are Anyuwa.*¹³⁷

8.2.4 Entanglement with Politics

Nothing is more characteristic of the peacemaking activities in the GPNRS than its embroilment with the government in power, both at the regional and the federal levels, to the extent that political expediency has remained the principal reason for intervention. The peace business is carried out by politicians and everything is politicized; all issues are entangled with politics and the survival of the ‘power holders,’ and it barely participates conflict resolution personnel. While peacebuilding effort would be enhanced when it embodies synergy between what Reychler (2002) dubbed the *speculari* and *operari* (‘thinkers’ and ‘doers’), the architecture in the GPNRS is devoid of this. This has been amplified on numerous instances during personal interviews and group discussions.¹³⁸ For instance, a Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding Core Business Process Owner, Regional Security and Administrative Affairs Bureau (KIIG-08) said, “When we identify problems and bring them to the attention of political authorities to help them enrich their understanding as they make decisions, it falls on deaf ears.” Concurring to this view, an expert at zonal level stated, “...experts, professionals do not participate; it is the administrative council that addresses problems, solely in its own way. They do not involve us; everything in the conferences and other works during violence as part of peacemaking activities are all political and secret” (KIIG-13).

¹³⁷ (KIIG-08).

¹³⁸ (E.g. KIIG-08; KIIG-13; FDG-2; FDG-4).

Libelous and isolatory language and terminologies like *tsere selam hayeloch* (anti-peace forces), *kiray sebsabiwoch* (rent seekers) are used to repress oppositions and deflect the main issues and factors responsible for the onset of violence in tandem with scapegoating measures. One of the most conspicuous illustrations is the 1998 party merger and its consequence, particularly the manner in which the Anyuwaa-based Gambella People's Democratic Congress (GPDC) (often referred to as Congress) was subdued. In what appears to be an imposed one, the EPRDF presided over the merger between the Anyuwaa-based Gambella People's Liberation Movement (GPLM), and the Nuer-based Gambella People's Democratic Unity Party (GPDUP), to form an When Anyuwaa intellectuals embittered by the merger formed the GPDC, they were met by a fierce crackdown and repressive moves from the EPRDF affiliated GPDF, with the 'justification' that the Congress members were anti-peace elements and represent the militant Anyuwaa whose project was to get rid of the Nuer and the Highlanders from Gambella.¹³⁹ In the run up to the 2000 election, members of the GPDC were imprisoned and their electoral successes in some districts cancelled. Instead of serving as a new platform for building confidence and trust between the two conflict-ridden communities, the political motif of the GPDF ended up being the elimination of Congress (Dereje, 2006a; Medhane, 2007).

As Medhane (2007) notes, no serious effort as such was made to strike a political bargain and reconcile the interests between the competing elites. And, with the violent suppression of the Congress, the first attempt at a meaningful opposition to the ruling

¹³⁹ Although some ordinary Nuer and Highlanders entertained a similar fear, the GPDC never had the chance to go public. If, at all, there is anything with which to judge its political credibility, its spectacular rise to pre-eminence, at least among the Anuak in the 2000 election, suggests that it is a political force with a wider social base than its label as anti-peace and narrow by the GPDF suggests (Human Right Watch, 2005, p.18).

GPDF was nipped in the bud, leaving an embittered constituency of largely Anyuwaa extraction. He captures the aftermaths of the above development and the post-2000 election in the region in the following manner:

Anyuwaas' felt increasingly marginalized from political reconstruction in Gambella region. This will lead to the deterioration of relations with the EPRDF and the Highlander community at large, spiraling mutual hatred and hostilities. Having removed an opposition, the GPDF fractured into its units and ultimately dissolved in 2003 in the wake of the killings in Gambella town. This particular incident further alienated the Anyuwaas. A large population of students and pupils from the Anyuwaa, between 5,000 and 8,000, fled the country (Ministry of Federal Affairs 2004). Most Congress members crossed the border to start a new rebellion, GPLF II. The result was immediate in that an organised Anyuwaa rebel group started to operate along the border areas and engage in brutal retaliatory attacks against civilians, most of whom were Highlanders (Medhane, 2007, p. 17).

As it could be aptly discerned from the foregoing discussions, instead of being a platform for reconciling the competing claims, the merger created a further division and became the source of another conflict - an action meant to address one conflict has created another one. Overall, the dominant ethos of conflating the peace business and politics in the region has clouded a robust understanding about the conflict situation and thus the construction of an informed and flexible approach. As such the preponderant purpose is the maintenance of the status quo rather than the reconciliation of competing needs and settlement of dispute among conflicting groups and reconciliation of communities.

8.3 The Process and Outcome of Peacebuilding in the GPNRS: The Absence of Conflict Sensitive Strategy and its Ramifications

As the analyses and insights from empirical evidence collected for this research suggests, the process of peacebuilding in the GPNRS over the past 28 years is not instructive, both in the sense of its response to the immediate peacebuilding needs and the broader systemic issues that foster and enhance the containment of violence sustainably. The process has not created a mutually benefiting sense of interdependence among the communities and groups involved in conflict in the region, and embedded peacemaking activities into institutions that reinforce and sustain them, a corollary of which is the recurrence of violence in the post-1991 Gambella, that has gone unabated. As such no fair, coherent and systematic procedures were implemented and/or used to guide the peacemaking process. Activities are governed by arbitrary rules and decisions are made on the bases of pressures or emotions, rather than on their merit. The unsuccessful efforts are attributed to a range of factors in the process pertaining to: the inclusion of actors and stakeholders; the nature of communication; the levels on which the efforts focused; the issues addressed; the commitment of time and means; as well as coherence and coordination.

8.3.1 Coverage, Resource and Coordination

Coverage

As personal interviews and group discussions invariably indicated, essentially, the peace process in the Gambella region has not been designed to be inclusive. Activities were not stretched to incorporate the main beneficiaries and other important parties and stakeholders. Undue focus was accorded to some levels of actors, conflicts and areas which rendered the process ineffective as many felt alienated and the processes have continually failed to invite local support and ownership.¹⁴⁰ Expressing their dissatisfaction with the peacemaking activities, participants of FGD in Itang Special District, Itang Kir Kebele noted, “[t]he politicians (leadership) do not talk to the community. They consult each other at the regional level, coerce us to do this or that” (FGD-07). To this tone, an informant concurred, “[m]ain beneficiaries and victims are not engaged to participate during conflict intervention efforts.” He went on to say “... [t]he farmers (the communities) ought to be a central part of the solution; mediators should not be decision makers” (KIIG-08). On his part, reflecting on the Majang-Highlander conflict, an informant holds, “[t]here is this problem of not making community dialogue and discussion. It is not an Anyuwaa or a Nuer that solves the problem of the Majang, it is the communities” (NGI-04).

As the views above from the participants of this study aptly indicates the process of the peacemaking are not connected to the grassroots. In other words, the processes are focused on elite or political level which means activities are not essentially grounded to the realities at local level so that they could effectively address the concerns of the

¹⁴⁰ (For example, KIIG-01; KIIG-03; KIIG-08; NGI-04; FGD-02; FGD-07; FGD-11).

local population. In short, the peacemaking activities are conducted without having a notion that seeks to find meaningful solutions at the grassroots level.

Apart from few instances,¹⁴¹ the process has not been instructive in the sense that the nature of communication appeared to be prescriptive, not informed by effective methods that good relations and long-lasting outcomes. Decisions were made through pressure. The President of the Eastern (Anyuwaa) Gambella Bethel Presbytery Synods (EGBP), Mekaneyesus Church, said “[w]e were once called by the government and they said, ‘You go and do this’ but we said we had to talk about it. And they replied “Take your hands away from this, do as we instruct you to do. In short, the dialogue was not truly participatory; our attendance (invitation) was nominal, we were not active participants, rather mere recipients or audiences” (RCI-02).

At times, it goes even further, accompanied with repressive measures such as stifling dissent, and victimizing people for raising their concerns. In 2013, community representatives from Itang were arrested as they put forth the communities’ concerns about the status of Itang district, the complaint about the reorganization of Itang district into Itang special district. In 2016, the inhabitants of Makot Kebele (Nuer kebele), Itang Special District, were flogged by the regional security forces, in a sort of bizarre form of collective torture to force them expose the ‘perpetrators’ in the crime involving the murder of two persons (ethnic Anyuwaa) (NGI-03; LCI-01). According to one

¹⁴¹ For instance, the peacemaking process in response to the 2014 Majang-Highlander saw participatory effort as it allowed the participation of people deeply affected from both groups to openly express their needs, interest, fears and hopes, to the degree that it enabled the communities to exploit the interdependence between them through the decision making process. During the successive community dialogues and peace conferences direct beneficiaries (the local communities from both groups) took part mutually in delineating the underlying issues in contention which to a certain degree, at least, for normalization purpose helped in facilitating the preparation to change the manner of interaction and thereof the nature of the relationship that links these two groups, those involved in the future (RCI-05; KIIG-11; FGD-10).

informant, "...[t]he flogging was carried out following a direction from the Regional State Administrative Council, specifically the President's office, from a 'belief' that inhabitants of the kebele would reveal 'perpetrators' when 'firm' measures are taken (NGI-03)."

In a strict sense, the peacebuilding process in the GPNRS over the past three decades has not been attentive to the needs of the people at grassroots level. One of the key informants, a lecturer at Gambella University, notes:

The main fault line relates to the failure to address problems at the grassroots level. Even if there were some interventions, they were not based on the needs of the grassroots. For the forum to be sustainable, the members should be volunteers or they should volunteer. The civil societies should be independent; they should advocate; they should be proactive and take measures by identifying the problems.¹⁴²

It is apparent that where the emphasis is not on reconciliation within the community, the construction of successful transformation is hardly possible. The failure to integrate the local communities and people deeply affected at the center of decision-making process during the peacebuilding efforts in the GPNRS has impinged on the success of the endeavors. The following is typically incisive and emphatic:

The main actors, beneficiaries and victims were not engaged and participated during the peacemaking efforts. It was the farmers (the grassroots communities) that ought to be a central part of the solution; mediators should not be decision makers. Actions based on pressure are not good, they do not bear fruit. When the beneficiaries are not part of the decision-making process, when the people are not consulted, rather decided solely by a third body and when mediators make discriminatory action, coercing people to obey, the communities will not reconcile. If you stifle the main issues and concerns of the communities and victimize their representatives, and do other such things, it is very problematic. The problem of Gambella is dismaying, except with divine intervention I see no prospect.¹⁴³

¹⁴² (KIIG-04).

¹⁴³ (KIIG-08).

The efforts also faltered in their coverage of the areas in need as some direct conflict zones, and levels of conflicts were excluded while a disproportionate attention was given to some areas and levels of conflict.¹⁴⁴ Although the 2016 Anyuwaa-Nuer inter-ethnic conflict permeated all areas of the GPNRS where the two groups share territory, the amount of the attention of conflict management activities revealed a stark contrast, as they specifically focused on Gambella town, the regional capital. Between January and April 2016, more than six community dialogues and peace conferences were held in Gambella town. Meaningful steps, such as the creation of youth peace forum that acted as peace building constituency (as discussed in Chapter Six) in the town, which helped the containment of violence, were taken. On the contrary, although it is one of the main flashpoints and a main scene of the Anyuwaa-Nuer conflict, Itang received less attention. For instance, it was the youth champions from Gambella town that went to Itang to extend their role of peace constituency in Gambella town. In this respect, one of my informants noted, “the problems of the youth in Itang could not be solved by the youth of/from Gambella town” (KIIG-04).

Meanwhile, the LRPP project launched in 2016 in the region with the aim to building peace infrastructure, had its activities limited to the refugee-host communities’ relation and the Anyuwaa-Nuer conflict¹⁴⁵ and its geographical area to four districts (Gog, Gambella, Itang and Lare). An expert and Program Coordinator of the peacebuilding support project in the region, responding as to why endeavors are not extended to other levels of inter-group conflict in the region (for example Majang-Highlander) said, “it is

¹⁴⁴ (for instance, mainly reiterated through KIIG-04; KIIG-08; LCI-09; FGD-07; FGD-11).

¹⁴⁵ Arguably, this is because of the fact that the dispute between the host communities and the refugee in GPNRS is also in a strict sense is a conflict between the Anyuwaa and Nuer as the refugee camps in the Gambella region are located in Anyuwaa areas and the overwhelming majority that make up refugees in the region are ethnic Nuers.

not a hotspot and the most serious conflict in the GPNRS is between Anyuwaa and Nuer.”¹⁴⁶ Focus has been accorded to the Anyuwaa-Nuer inter-ethnic conflict. No equal attention was given to various levels of conflicts in the GPNRS. For instance, the Majang Zone areas and the Majang-Highlander conflict, which has been overlooked by the initiative, is a conflict-ridden zone, equally critical and simultaneously acute and chronic as that of the Anyuwaa-Nuer conflict, particularly during the past few years. At least the peacebuilding support infrastructure by the LRPP to the Regional Security and Administrative Affairs Bureau and similar administrative structures at district levels (like Gog, Itang and Lare districts) ought to be extended to the Majang Zone. Thus it is understandable from this example that donor policies of peacebuilding initiatives in the region are not designed in a way to effectively cover direct conflict zones and levels of conflicts potentially no less devastating, adding to the already existing limitations of the culture of peacemaking in the GPNRS by other government agencies and other stakeholders.

Therefore, from the foregoing discussions, it could be deduced that the peacebuilding process in the GPNRS has not been inclusive in reaching all direct conflict zones, levels of conflicts and communities in need when empirical realities require immediate response as well as long-term measures.

¹⁴⁶ (NGI-02).

Resource, Capacity and Coordination

Empirical examination of the peacebuilding architectures in post-1991 Gambella reveals that the processes were not informed by accurate and up-to-date analyses of the conflict situation in the region. No robust comprehensive or contextual analysis has been conducted to enhance understanding about the distinctive features of the various levels of inter-communal violent conflicts and conflict zones in the region in order to guide the process of peacebuilding. Where there is little attempt (i.e. RLPP¹⁴⁷), it was in vain as no meaningful action followed to enrich activities based on the outcome of the assessment since the commencement of the project. Experts working with the RLPP project, both in Gambella town and Itang Special District, affirmed that the process and contents of the peacemaking activities are entirely guided by the manual from the Ministry of Federal Affairs. The document and manual from the federal ministry has been used for the purpose of training and organizing peace constituencies and stakeholders.¹⁴⁸ Interestingly, the regional project coordinator of the RLPP asserted, “we do not contextualize, we use the manual from the Ministry of Federal Affairs entirely for training purpose. The document is all-embracing and can be adapted and extended to the problem in the GPNRS” (NGI-02). Even if the guideline from the federal government ministry is overarching to embrace essential features about the nature of conflict and strategies for conflict management in contemporary Ethiopia, it would have been imperative to take things down to earth to link with the conflict environment in Gambella. The GPNRS exhibits characteristics that are context-specific to its local setting, even with noticeable peculiarities across locations and levels of conflict within the region (see Chapter Six). In short, no attempt was made to connect

¹⁴⁷ The peacebuilding support by UNDP in the region through RLPP project which is launched in 2016 was preceded by baseline conflict assessment (NGI-02; KIIG-02)

¹⁴⁸ (KIIG-02; KIIG-03; NGI-02; KIIG-09).

the process to the features in the GPNRS setting and the peculiarities of the conflict zones in the region. The tendency has barred a meaningful understanding of the nature of inter-communal violence in the Gambella region, with its attendant consequence, the failure to generate productive intervention. A former government official maintains, “there is no system as such that helps to uncover the root cause of the conflicts. Both the regional and federal authorities are not keen in finding a genuine and veritable solution about the conflict in Gambella and that is why peace becomes elusive in the region (NGI-03).

On the contrary, the main issues in the conflict are deflected with quite different explanations attached as opposed to the actual elements in the occurrence and onset of violence (NGI-03; KIIG-08). In analogous manner, one of the key informants provided the following incisive account of such a pattern:

If you see the inter-ethnic conflict between the Anyuwaa and the Nuer in Gambella region, it is a long and protracted one, going as far back as the imperial periods. Previously, particularly during the Derg military period, it was managed successfully. But since 1991, it has become increasingly dangerous and complicated. Take for example the 2016 incident: it is the tension that mounted in the events surrounding the celebration of the Nations, Nationalities and People’s day in December 2014 that ultimately exploded in January, 2016. In the absence of an open-minded disposition to look for alternatives, it is difficult to attain peace. There is this syndrome of concealing, evading and deflecting the main issues in the conflict, completely different from what they essentially are. You need to inquire: who are the perpetrators of the car ambush? And keenly address the problem. Attributing responsibility to a certain group and labeling the whole group as criminals is not proper - there is no delegation to crime. Furthermore, linking the issues with the crisis in the other parts of the country that led to the declaration of a state of emergency nationwide is inappropriate. The issues and the current crisis in the other part of Ethiopia do not constitute a major problem here. The Anyuwaa-Nuer contentious interaction is discrete and a long existing phenomenon.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ (KIIG-08).

Among the key elements that make a difference between a successful and unsuccessful peacebuilding effort are coherence, the nature of coordination, the existence of vibrant institutions and the capacity of the personnel during the process.¹⁵⁰ An interesting pattern among the respondents of this study in this regard revealed the absence of integrative peace efforts and activities in diverse domains, levels and layers. When measures were taken in the political sphere they were not tuned to the socioeconomic situation and synchronized on what to follow in the short-term, middle range and long-term alterations. For example, one of the key informants pointed out: one major problem is the awareness gap. And on top of this there is no institutional mechanism to foster lasting peace. There are actions in the form of rehabilitation and training, investigations and some measures but there is no organizational structure that put in place to address the conflict sustainably. For instance, once agents of a certain organization came from the regional level, gave training and organized and established peace committee and structures to help the containment of conflict in each kebele albeit nothing followed afterwards and the scheme is left fragmented and irrelevant (KIIG-09).

When efforts were made at regional level, they were not well-connected to the grassroots and to the realities on the ground so that it would not fall short. In other words, the peacebuilding strategies in the GPNRS have not been designed to link activities to various segments of the communities, particularly to the grassroots population. This has produced what Atashi called “*uneven peace*” implicating the fragility and short-livedness as reconciliations invariably remain under severe stress and in danger of outright collapse. For instance, when reconciliation and conferences were made at the

¹⁵⁰ (See Reychler, 2002).

level of elites, community representatives and other figures, the youth and members of security forces form obstacles to the conflict settlement endeavors, acting as spoilers. In 2016 the regional SP enforcement members in Jor district, Anyuwaa Zone fought divided along ethnic lines, Anyuwaa versus Nuer. In another instance in the same year, shortly after the ethnically motivated attack on inmates in Gambella town, the main regional prison administration facility, a similar attack was carried in Abobo town, Anyuwaa Zone. In both cases, the fatal attack on inmates was widely reported to have been executed with complicity of the members of the police forces at duty and/or the officials in charge of the administration of these penitentiaries. As one of my informants recalled, “as the government police and security actors become divided along ethnicity and embroiled in the conflict, the ordinary and civilian further delved into the violence from the feeling that the problem permeates even into the security and governance structures, further worsening the dire situations. The violence intensified when those who are meant to enforce law and order, protect people and keep peace, fought divided like what happened in Jor” (KIIG-05). As many informants and participants of group discussions attested, in 2016, it was the actions of the youth that made peacemaking difficult as ‘they’ do not obey to the reconciliations and peace conferences – they do not comply with elder’s decisions and reconciliations made, forming major spoilers by persisting the acts of violence.¹⁵¹

Meanwhile, the institutional and normative frameworks of peacebuilding are weak and poorly functioning. They are found fragmented in various governmental and non-governmental agencies, and without a robust coordination and administrative deals to respond with issues coherently. For example, crisis management works, immediate

¹⁵¹ (FGD-07; FGD-10).

humanitarian aid to victims of manmade or natural disasters (including conflict), executed under the Disaster and Risk Management (DRM) structures, have their process imbued with limitations as the response to victims often comes prolonged, and the process is choked by a complex and dubious bureaucracy.¹⁵² As shown in the preceding section, even if institutional mechanisms for conflict resolution and peacebuilding activities in the region exist, particularly at the various tiers of the security and administrative affairs structure in the GPNRS, they have no more than a nominal role.

The regional Security and Administrative Affairs Bureau with its subsidiary structures at the various tiers of government levels in the region is tasked to primarily to conflict resolution and peacebuilding business in the region. Conflict Management and Resolution Core Process with personnel at its disposal is the main task force that partakes in and leads the peacebuilding work in the region. It has also its administrative set ups at Zonal and District levels. As peacebuilding personnel in this administrative deals at all tiers of government structures testified the unit served no more than nominal role.¹⁵³ As shown before, the peace business is carried out by the political elites. Although the process could be enhanced with a synergetic effort involving and enriching it with inputs from the administrative deals tasked to guide conflict management and peacebuilding works, in strict sense this has not been explored. For instance, a Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding Core Business Process Owner, Regional Security and Administrative Affairs Bureau (KIIG-08) said, “When we identify problems and bring them to the attention of political authorities to help them enrich their understanding as they make decisions, it falls on deaf ears”. Concurring to

¹⁵² See pp. 197-201

¹⁵³ (E.g. KIIG-08; KIIG-13; FDG-2; FDG-4).

this view, an expert at zonal level stated, "...experts, professionals do not participate; it is the administrative council that addresses problems, solely in its own way. They do not involve us; everything in the conferences and other works during violence as part of peacemaking activities are all political and secret (KIIG-13)."

To recap, the forgoing discussion and analysis on peacebuilding process in the GPNRS in terms of the coverage, resource and coherence the following four points that also have a bearing on the outcomes of the efforts could be gleaned. First, the processes are not inclusive in the sense that they are not linked to main beneficiaries (particularly the local populations) as well as all the areas and levels of conflict in need. Second, the nature of communication in the process is not attuned to methods that could produce a win-win and meaningful outcome. Third, processes are not guided by an up-to-date analysis and understanding of the specific realities and unique features exhibited across the various conflict zones and levels of conflicts in the region. Finally, the process is carried out oblivious of the advantage that could be garnered from a synergy between the peacebuilding personnel and the political officials. Often, the peace business remained to be secret and political, a matter that is exclusively left to the apparatus of the government in charge and its governing elites.

8.3.2 Timing, Sustainability and Relevance

In the preceding section, attempt has been made to examine the process of peacebuilding in the GPNRS as regards the coverage, and resources at disposal. An attempt was also made examine the process of with regard to the institutional frameworks and capacity related issues. By taking the analysis further, this section unpacks the process of peacebuilding in the GPNRS over the past a quarter century vis-

à-vis the timing and sustainably as well as the relevance of the efforts and what they have implicated.

Timing and Durability

The path to a constructive peacebuilding process, the difference between successful and unsuccessful efforts, depends on the use of a conflict-sensitive and long-term strategy in tandem with clever early warning systems and the use of time. Reychler (2002) puts it together:

An intelligent early warning system tries not only to anticipate threats and the risk of violent escalation, but also pays attention to the opportunities to intervene proactively; to the costs of different conflict transformation policies and the impact of planned policies, and programs or projects about the dynamics of the conflict. The development and installation of an effective conflict impact assessment system would increase the chances of a conflict prevention system considerably. ...Time is one of the vital and nonrenewable resources that continues to be wasted. Time is money, but it also makes the difference between life and death. Many violent conflicts are examples of missed opportunities. Proactive conflict prevention (that is, efforts made before a conflict has escalated) is more cost-effective than reactive conflict prevention (that is, efforts made after a conflict has become violent to contain and reduce the intensity, duration and the possibility of geographic spill over) (Reychler, 2002, pp. 26-31).

More often than not, the workings of peacebuilding GPNRS have gone in dissonance and unheeded of these determining elements. The interventions are of reactive ones, efforts after violence erupted to stop and/or contain the spread of violence and often transient – devoid of long-term views to deal with the specific challenges underwriting the conflicts. In a strict sense, there is no early warning system and very little attention is paid to the prevention of conflicts in the latent stages. This is a shared view among research participants of this study.¹⁵⁴ For instance, reflecting on the 2016 Anyuwa-Nuer violent conflict, an informant recalled, “the problem is not that Gatluak attacked

¹⁵⁴(E.g. NGI-02; NGI-03; NGI-04; KIIG-02; KIIG-03; KIIG-05; KIIG-08; RCI-05; FGD-07; FGD-10; FGD-11).

Ajale (which is the trigger), it is rather associated with the ignorance to the series of incidents of violence and the mounting tension preceding this moment” (KIIG-05). This is a pattern akin to the circumstances that led to the December 13, 2003 incident in Gambella town, when frequent sporadic incidents such as car ambush and killings and mounting grievance and polarization went disregarded to burst into the killings of Anyuwaa civilians in Gambella town by a frustrated and furious Highlander mob.¹⁵⁵ On his part, reflecting on the 2014 Majang-Highlander violent conflict, one of my key informants invoked with a frustrated sentiment: “initially the problem could have been controlled easily, had the authorities taken note of the emerging apprehensions and increasing reports from the communities about the series incidents of killings and increasing polarization. While the tension was simmering and the situation was getting serious, the response from zonal and regional authorities didn’t go beyond the leap service – “we would see it (NGI-04).” Had the local administration deployed local militias in critical areas or appealed for reinforcement from the regional government, it could make the difference between life and death, and many people could have been rescued. In the vacuum things ultimately went beyond control and the violence had to be brought under control only with the intervention from the federal security apparatus, the ENDF and the Federal Police (RCI-05; NGI-04). An expert at the Regional Security and Administrative Affairs Bureau noted, “our early warning system is weak. Despite visible indications of clear signs, nothing is done to control the crisis before it gets worse. If you take cross-border raid as an instance, response only comes after the damage is done and people are killed despite information alerts from various bodies about the threats looming” (KIIG-08).

¹⁵⁵ (See section 8.2.2 of this Chapter).

In short, the peacebuilding schemes are driven by a disaster-management frame of reference - finding a quick 'political' solution, with little preparation for sustaining the process over the medium and long term, a factor that partly explains the fragility of the peacemaking activities in the GPNRS. One of the informants, a former government official, pointed out, "once overt violence is halted, other issues are left to negligence, then it becomes recurrent. For example, 'rebels' were caught and no meaningful measures or steps followed - a ring leader of 'rebels' caught in ...2016 was released afterwards in some form of nepotism. They should go deep into the solution: What is it that prompts the violence? What do the rebels need? They should have asked these questions and addressed the problem to deal with it sustainably. That is why peace becomes elusive in the GPNRS" (NGI-03). Trainings and conferences are conducted but they do not meaningfully deter conflict as they are short-lived. "Activities come only when violence occurs, and as the violence starts to subside, they shift their attention to other issues," said one of the key informants, a lecturer at Gambella University.

Overall, all the way through the peacebuilding efforts, no concrete changes have been made on the core issues in the conflict, to transform them sustainably. What has been undertaken is attempt to stop overt violence after their occurrence. In other words, the processes of conflict transformation in the GPNRS over the past 28 years have invariably proved short-lived and reactive, only interventions after the eruption of violence in order to put out the burning fire, overlooking the underlying causes of the conflicts. At best, one could say that it is one that resembles conflict management ethos - an emphasis on ending overt violence, largely through the use of carrot and stick, to contain and mitigate the negative and destructive capacity of the conflict. Once the violence is brought under control through whatever means, everything stops, and no

meaningful effort is followed to bring about practical changes to address the root causes of the conflict. It is evident that a meaningful peace that makes sense to the host communities is virtually impossible to attain unless peace is viewed beyond the control or end of overt violence. Emphasis should be given for reconciliation within the communities, for building constituencies and enhancing the peacebuilding capacities within the communities on how to manage conflicts, with orientation that takes a wider view in timing and nature of the intervention.¹⁵⁶

Relevance

The analysis of this study from empirical observations in the region also shows that the efforts were not attentive to the substantive issues in the conflict, to the specific needs in various areas, and to the perceptions and concerns of local communities. This tendency of being removed from the embedded conflict when dealing with them has impinged on the outcome of the efforts as well as the satisfaction with the overall process. In other words, the conflict transformation efforts in the Gambella region are not designed in ways that correspond to the specific realities in different areas and among the various levels of conflict in the region. Nothing exemplifies this better than the feeble support and legitimacy that the initiatives have garnered, particularly from the grassroots. The dissatisfaction with the process and the outcome is interestingly observed among most of the participants of the study and from empirical conditions in the GPNRS.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ (E.g. see Lederach, 1999; Ramsbotham et. al., 2011).

¹⁵⁷ (For example, NGI-03; NGI-04; KIIG-09; RCI-05; FGD-06; FGD-07; FGD-10; FGD-11).

For example, the land tenure saga has been the main issue around which contentious interactions and inter-group animosities revolved, particularly during the 2014 crisis in the Majang Zone. Even if the issue of land ownership, and illegal land sale and occupations appeared as the main sticking points in the peace talks and conferences, no constructive agreement or resolution have been drawn on what should follow and how to deal with the problems in a sustainable manner. As the participants of this study have attested, the process did not create a win-win situation that addressed and reconciled the needs and concerns of both communities (the Majang and the Highlanders). It only helped in maintaining the status quo through a temporary proclamation and instruction for any piece of land under the control of and effective use by any one, acquired in whatever way, under whatever status, de facto or legal to remain under the use of the holder, the bearer. In the words of one of the respondents, a former resident of Meti town: "...the primary cause as well as the main issue in the conflict is land, illegal land sale, which all are a part of, including government authorities and members of the community. The peacemaking activities only stopped violence, but illegal land sell is still ongoing. The action only benefited those that accrued wealth with the illicit-land sale activities, through illegal means. But it comes to the disadvantage of the indigenous Majang and other communities who have lived there for long. The activities were not both satisfactory and instructive. For example, the situation in Yeri is very critical, and it requires a lot of effort. The extant situation is fragile; and I can assure you that it will not take long before the relapse of violence" (NGI-04).

As it could be understood from the above responses of the research participants the conflict intervention schemes in the wake of the 2014 violence fall short in effecting practical changes to tackle the substantive issues and transform in a sustainable way. Overall, the peacebuilding efforts were not constructive in effecting practical changes

that can help to tackle the problems sustainability. They could be typically seen as efforts that kept a lid on the conflict, a temporary intervention to halt the spread and intensity of the violence, as nothing followed afterwards.

Overall, it is to be noted that the situation in the GPNRS exhibits socioeconomic and sociopolitical anomalies between areas and levels of conflict that require peacebuilding activities and strategies based on the distinctiveness within the conflict environment, exploring the differences. Particularly, the distinction reflected among the communities with regard to their experiences of violence, the meaning and impact of the conflicts on various communities need to be explored if a conflict is to be transformed. As already shown, the conflict phenomena in the GPNRS exhibits distinctness as regards narrative of violence, and the perceptions of victimhood groups put up. As such, if an observer has to identify one most conspicuous feature in the conflict environment and inter-group relational patterns of interaction, nothing characterizes it than the claim groups locked into the conflict situation in the region put forward as to what the conflict is about. Particularly in the eyes of the Anyuwaa and the Majang, the conflict is seen as an existential threat to their very survival, their cultural and distinctive ethnic identity. The Anyuwaa and the Majang predominantly frame the conflict and the situation they are in as a threat to their core values. Narratives and discourses of ‘ethnic extinction’ are by participants of interview and group discussions as well as by many people as the researcher was able to observe during the process of data collection in the GPNRS. shared by the elites and majority of the population from both groups.¹⁵⁸ “Their (referring to the Nuer) plan is to evict the Anyuwaa of Openo. This is what they want, control Openo. Akobo, Gillo all were Anyuwaa kebeles. What is being done is genocide

¹⁵⁸ (KIIG-06; KIIG-08; KIIG-09; NGI-04; FGD-07; FGD-11 vehemently share this assertion and are apprehensive about the condition).

- ethnic extinction is in the making and looming against the Anyuwaa” (FGD-07). Concurring to this an informant noted, “the main problem is in the very objective of the Nuer population expansion and movement which is to dislocate Anyuwaa. If for instance, you see the 2016 incident it had to do with site selection for the incoming refugee. The main motive is that by creating space for refugee settlement to use the confusion that may follow as opportunity to dislodge the Anyuwaa. Confusion as a strategy of displacing the Anyuwaa from their area (KIIG-06). To the tune of the Anyuwaa’s perception, fear and characterization is the Majang’s claim and apprehension.¹⁵⁹ The following poignant lamentation is a notable reflection of the depth of Majang feeling of ‘ethnic insecurity’:

Our situation started deteriorating in 1984/85 following the resettlement of Highlanders. Earlier, when we lived alone, things were fine. The discrepancy and chasm between us and the Highlanders very bad and irreconcilable. Since the *Derg* period, there have been tensions between us but it is the Majang that are always killed, blamed and detained. And now comes the worst, the idea that the Majang should be exterminated.¹⁶⁰

It is evident from the above discussions and utterances from members of both groups that there is an entrenched feeling of existential threat permeating the Majang and Anyuwaa communities.

To their dismay, the peacebuilding efforts ‘overlooked’ this aspect of the conflict - ethnic insecurity - how, for groups like the Anyuwaa and Majang, the conflict is essentially perceived as a threat to their ‘survival’. Throughout the efforts, the conflicts have been attributed essentially to material interests, advantage and resource competition, and dismally failed to make sense of it, let alone address the fears and

¹⁵⁹ For extensive description and analysis about the Majang sense of alienation and existential threat see Seyuom, 2015).

¹⁶⁰ (FGD-11).

insecurity of these groups. In short, throughout the peacemaking efforts, intentionally or unintentionally, the understanding about the issues in conflict did not go beyond the surface phenomena. As the assertions from discussions and personal interviews aptly indicated, the effects of the failure to recognize these aspects, concerns and fears of the Anyuwaa and Majang are reflected in their moral agency. Look at this for instance: “We are anxious that we could perish or be displaced - we couldn’t plough, our interest in work has banished; whenever it dusks, we are left apprehensive whether it would dawn in peace or not (FGD-11).”

Overall, it is to be noted that the situation in the GPNRS exhibits socioeconomic and sociopolitical anomalies between areas and levels of conflict that require peacebuilding activities and strategies based on the distinctiveness within the conflict environment, exploring the differences. Particularly, the distinction reflected among the communities with regard to their experiences of violence, the meaning and impact of the conflicts on various communities need to be explored if a conflict is to be transformed. Yet, the peacebuilding efforts in the region have been undertaken, oblivious to these and other factors determining the relapse of violence in the Gambella region. The failure to widen the sphere of activities and endeavors to the specificities of different demographic spaces and social environments in the region has partly determined the efficacy of the peacemaking process and consequently the outcome. The implications are reflected on the realities on the ground and from the assertion of the research participants. For example, in one of the FGDs, a participant had this to say:

The local communities are not happy with the interventions. They are not consulted and their concerns not taken into consideration. The government and its authorities only seek ‘compensation’ then nothing follows. While the local communities are primarily demanding solution on the ‘illegal’ settlement of

large group of people in Ler Kebele which is creating havoc to members of the local community authorities insist on compensation.¹⁶¹

As Lederach (1997) reminds, quick fixes in protracted conflicts rarely lead to sustainable processes or solutions. Peacebuilding process entails a comprehensive approach that encompasses addressing uniquely human dimensions of the types of conflict under consideration (Lederach, 1997). The fear and concern of the communities including the aforementioned could alternatively be dealt with a concerted effort on the relational aspects of the conflict, the sentimental barriers that have created a wall between the communities. Yet this has also come to the neglect of the peacebuilding process, adding to the limitations of the successive conflict intervention activities and strategies in the GPNRS and by extension the poor outcomes. The gap in building relationship and social harmony among various groups in the region - failure to mend strained inter-group relationship - has created a fertile ground for fomenting social-psychological processes like dehumanization and stereotyping, to be further accentuated by the lack of contact between groups. As an informant (ethnic Majang) noted, “our people (the Majang) do not mix, do not make social interaction with the ‘others’ such as the Highlanders. Let alone in Godere (Majang area), even here in Gambella town, they live in isolation in *Baro Mado*.¹⁶² For example, if I marry a Highlander, the Majang community would stigmatize me. Hence, the vicious violence has left a scar, so much so that you could easily observe many Majang with a (blind) stereotype and hatred toward Highlanders and vice versa. Many suspect that I collude with the Highlanders because of my closeness and rapport with the Highlanders” (NGI-04). Needless to say, these circumstances have created a breeding ground for ‘identity’

¹⁶¹ (FDG-2).

¹⁶² A neighborhood in Gambella town located south on the other side of the Baro River which cuts the town into two.

to be instrumentalized for political purposes by regional elites, which becomes particularly acute viewed in the face of the nature of governance that adulates ethnicity, the sole *modus operandi*.

At this juncture, it suffices to say that the peacebuilding process has not created a mutually benefiting sense of interdependence among the communities and groups involved in conflict in the region, and has embedded peacemaking activities into institutions that reinforce and sustain the process, a corollary of which is the recurrence of violence in the Gambella region that have went unabated. What are the challenges militating against the development of a constructive conflict transformation and sustainable peace as well as the prospects and possibilities for sustainable peace is a point we shall turn our attention to in the next chapter.

8.4 Conclusion

The peacemaking efforts made to deal with the various levels of inter-communal violent conflicts that have recurred in the post-1991 Gambella have exhibited a differential form of response, apathy and negligence, the use of compensation as the main conflict settlement procedure, and the entanglement of activities with politics as their marked features. Generally, as the analysis and insight from empirical evidence collected for this research suggest, the process of peacebuilding in the GPNRS over the past 28 years has not been instructive both in the sense of the response to the immediate peacebuilding needs and the broader systemic issues that foster and enhance the containment of violence sustainably. The processes have not created a mutually beneficial sense of interdependence among the communities and groups involved in conflict in the region, and embedded peacemaking activities into institutions that could reinforce and sustain them. As such, no fair, coherent or systematic procedures have

guided the process. Instead, activities were governed by arbitrary rules and decisions are made on the bases of pressures or emotions, rather than on their merit.

CHAPTER NINE

Challenges and Prospects of Peacebuilding in Gambella

9.1 Introduction

In Chapter Seven and Eight, the thesis has attempted to make sense of the practice of conflict transformation in the GPNRS based on the identified themes of analysis; the marked characteristics of conflict settlement schemes exhibited as they deal with the recurrent violent-inter-communal conflict in the region as well as the outcome and process of the peacebuilding. The thorough examination and analysis in these chapters revealed that the process of peacebuilding in the GPNRS have been less successful, if not, a total failure. The purpose of this chapter is to identify and unpack the challenges and presenting the peacebuilding process in the GPNRS. Put another way, this chapter maps out and discusses the challenges and prospects to peacebuilding in post-1991 Gambella; and thereby addresses research question No. 4 of the thesis. Accordingly, excluding the background this chapter is organized into two major sections. When the first section reflects on the challenges the second section embarks on to assess the prospects and opportunities available to harness sustainable peacebuilding in Gambella region in the future.

9.2 Challenges

9.2.1 The Approach of Peacebuilding

The examination of the peacebuilding process in previous chapters have aptly demonstrated the weaknesses embedded in the approach that limited the complex process of building sustainable peace largely with political aspects. This shortsighted approach to peacebuilding has inhibited the development of constructive conflict transformation and sustainable peace in the Gambella region. As such, over the past quarter a century the ethos and mode of interventions in the GPNRS have essentially been militaristic and top-down: one that did not combine bottom-up approach, not guided with an orientation to understand the local setting in order to best adjust actions to bring about a meaningful change; and unsupported with strategies and frameworks of middle-range or long-term transformation especially to address substantive issues (for instance, in order to rebuild strained relations among communities and reconcile the competing needs and settle the dispute between the main contending groups in the region). Rather, focus has been accorded to political negotiations, dialogues at top levels and preparing mere peace conferences emphasizing short-term tasks of consensus and solemn that mimic the ‘disdain’ with the conflict and the ‘commitment’ to eschew violence without any meaningful effect on the ground.

Although the peacebuilding architectures are ought to be designed with a focus to deal with the fundamental causes and conditions of the conflict in the region, with a sight into the security and political realities in Gambella (in the mean time looking at measures that will transform the personal, social, economic and cultural relationships) the efforts have proved myopic. Deflecting substantive issues and factors at the heart of the occurrence of conflict and politicizing things is the norm (see Chapter Seven and

Chapter Eight). In short, the efforts have often been uni-dimensional with one-size-fits all approach, and inordinate reliance on militaristic approach. No practical attempt has been made to connect efforts with specific peculiarities of the various levels of conflict and direct conflict zones. Decisions are made from top-down local communities having merely an audience status implementing. Although they are ought to be one of the main actors in the process the role of local beneficiaries and victims is limited to complying with decisions from mediators or external actors often with pressure. Even worse and to contrary, those representatives and individuals who raise main issues and interests of the local communities are repressed. Overall the process of peacebuilding in GPNRS has been reactive, akin to conflict management approach, often transitory; and viewed from the broader peacebuilding framework, heavy-handed drawn on the minimalist security approach to peacebuilding.

9.2.2 The Mode of 'External' 'Interference': Third Party Intervention

The impact of external actors in the trajectory of conflict is enormous provided that parties in intra-state conflicts often rely on the resource of external actors to sustain their activities. This is particularly paramount in the conflict situations like the GPNRS where the conflict is asymmetric favoring actors and groups that control the state instrumentalities. Vertically speaking and in its greatest degree favoring the central government, the most powerful third party.

More often than not, the intervention from the EPRDF to address the inter-group and political conflicts in GPNRS has negatively affected the situation, acted out as one of the formidable challenges to peacebuilding in the region. This is attributed to factors ranging from the understanding of the 'interveners', the federal authorities about the nature of conflict in the region, their motive of intervention and their credibility to the

timing and methods of interventions. The federal government authorities at task in the region on various occasions lack intimate acquaintance with the local environment. In a stark simplification, EPRDF authorities frame the issues in GPNRS often as noise-making politics, narrow tribalism'. This stereotypical and reductionist depiction has masked the important fact that GPNRS is a diverse and heterogeneous (which is reflected in its various peoples, cultures, ecological settings, historical experiences, and political and socio-economic features) clouding their understanding of the nature, dynamics and complexities of peace and conflict in the region. Articulating the feeling of despair over the intervention from the central government seemingly from successive dismal outcomes, an informant said, the following:

The federal government authorities do not go deep into finding the real cause. Why the federal authorities are not keen about the conflict and its solutions? I think it might be a perception or prevailing assumption from the EPRDF side: if they are stable they would raise and demand their rights but if they are occupied with conflicts, they would lack the poise to raise other issues.¹⁶³

The very purpose of interventions is not directed to seeing and containing the relapse into violence or exploring enduring outcome at local levels. The dictum has been political expediency, maintaining the status quo.¹⁶⁴ Needless to say, the failure in proactive engagement and response has produced a perception that it was a deliberate action, part of a conspiracy or a hidden agenda to stoke violence among ethnic groups in Gambella.

Many informants maintain that resolving conflicts in Gambella has never been the primary aim of the federal government. For example, one of them, a former government official notes, "when they 'intervene' the federal authorities put their interest before the

¹⁶³(NGI-03).

¹⁶⁴ (Also see Dereje, 2006a, 2009; Medhane, 2007; Gizachew, 2011).

interest of the region and its people since they return bribed ‘collecting money. In short, because the federal advisors are bribed by the regional leadership, they misinform the federal government decision-makers (LCI-01). This is a perception that is shared by many local people in Gambella. Arguably it is a view that came from the repeated intervention by EPRDF as a ‘mediator’ that have remained in vain. Strictly speaking, the absence of prudent and sincere intervention from the federal government while mediating the conflict in GPNRS has led to perception from the local people that “*if they are peaceful they will demand their right*”, as one informant invoked.

The EPRDF government and its officials show extreme neglect and lack of interest in resolving conflict when the situation demands on the ground of ‘non-interference’ on the regional matters, or intervene after the damage is already done, and when they did intervene, they pursued unilateralist interventions, driven mainly by parochial party interests, often sidelining the sensitivities and interests of the conflicting parties. As such, EPRDF intervenes when it chooses to do so which escalates the tension. At times, the federal interventions meant to address a conflict in the Gambella region have been sources for another conflict. As Dereje (2006a) pointed out, throughout its actions EPRDF failed to address none of the political demands of various groups in GPNRS. For instance, in early 1990s the Anyuwaa were initially promoted by the EPRDF merely for their alliance with the EPRDF in the struggle against the Derg. Political favoritism has long thwarted the attempt of the Nuer to pursue the politics of inclusion who had to ‘go national’ in order to achieve local aims as it was only after the ‘gallant’ contribution of the Nuer in the 1998-2000 Ethio-Eritrean border conflict and the conflict that broke out between the Anyuwaa and Nuer became politically embarrassing that the EPRDF authorities intervened to ‘mediate’ proportional political representation among the groups in the GPNRS and address the demands of the Nuer (Dereje, 2006a). Sadly, this

late move became the source of another conflict, Anyuwaa- Highlanders conflict. In mediating the deadly violence between the Anyuwaa and Nuer the federal government inclined to blame the Anyuwaa arresting Anyuwaa officials. In the outcome many soldiers from the region's police force (mostly ethnic Anyuwaa) found themselves sacked. The action of the EPRDF government is perceived by the Anyuwaa as interference on the regional matters and usurpation of their right. Reminiscent of the association of Highlanders with the national government, a kind of 'banditry' action believed to perpetrated by Anyuwaa reacted by killing Highlander civilians, the convenient targets especially in a series of passenger car ambush. The spiral killing of Highlander in villages and car ambush continued escalating tensions between the two groups which culminated in the 13, December 2003 massacre of civilian Anyuwaa in Gambella town by a mob of Highlanders (Regassa, 2010). As shown, in the previous chapter the 1998 party merger in the region which presided by the EPRDF has sparked fierce political strife among the elites leaving an indelible mark on sociopolitical developments in Gambella. As Gizachew (2011) observed the 2009 intra-Nuer political conflict and factional struggle which invited the interference of EPRDF brought nothing than a surge of crackdown against the dissident faction by the ruling faction led by the then regional vice president. The conflict intervention activities in response to the 2014 Majang-Highlander conflict was also followed by crackdown against ethnic 'Majang' vocal political elites by the regional leadership. One of the key informants (ethnic Majang) lamented: "At that time intelligence officers magnified the problem and gave it to the federal government. When Majang political elites and authorities like Ashine Astin¹⁶⁵ become stronger, challenged the regional leadership, they (regional president leadership) made things personal and entered into conflict and plotted against them and

¹⁶⁵ Former Speaker of the GPNRS Council.

the Majang by extension labeling us (referring Majang) because we didn't know the rule of the game. What happened on Majang people is political, the Majang have never been reckoned as 'rebels' (NGI-04).

Generally, the different degree of interference and the way EPRDF exercised its influence in settling the inter-group and political conflict in GPNRS have greatly affected the socio-political cohesion in the region and casted doubt about the legitimacy of the outside intervention and the way an outside contributor can promote or support cooperation among the local population. In short, the federal intervention has rubbed off and changed the relational structure, and physical dynamics among parties in conflict and negatively affected the outcomes of conflict in the GPNRS with that inhibiting the process of constructive conflict transformation in the region.

9.2.3 The Political Opportunity Structure: The Main Fault-line

The unrelenting inter-communal violent conflict in post-1991 Gambella indicate the tricky ground on which peacebuilding efforts stand. Integral to this is the nature of the political opportunity structure,¹⁶⁶ the most formidable challenge to process of peacebuilding in the region. The regional government is weak with narrow political space and almost non-functioning institutions, teems with severe absence of rule of law,

¹⁶⁶ By building on the conceptualizations of (Tilly & Tarrow, 2007 and Duffy, 2009), in the context of this research political opportunity structure (POS) is taken to refer to the feature of the regional and the federal government as they contextualize the contentious interaction and conflict in the GPNRS. Broadly the POS entails the capacity and democracy components. 'Capacity' refers to the extent to which governmental actions affect the character and distribution of population, activity and resource within the government's territory - states despotic power and its infrastructural power. The capacity component of POS refers not to the state's capacity to dominate or oppress groups within its jurisdiction, but rather to its capacity to provide the public goods-infrastructure-requisite for orderly and productive economic and social activity (Duffy, 2009, p.112). 'Democracy' (the degree of the use of democratic process) entails "the extent to which people subject to government's authority have broad equal political rights, exert significant direct influence...over government personnel and policy as well as receive protection from arbitrary actions by government agents" (Tilly & Tarrow, 2007, p.55). Essentially democracy refers to the opportunities of groups and individuals in society to express their aspirations freely without fear of reprisals whereas capacity refers to the opportunities of groups and individuals to realize those aspirations, at least occasionally as consequence of state actions (Duffy, 2009, p.113).

maladministration and decline in public services and chronic corruption.¹⁶⁷ Although it is imperative for sustainable peacebuilding to recognize and respond to these challenges, the efforts in GPNRS remain oblivious meaning that the peacemaking activities had to invariably struggle to mend such lines. The manner in which contentious interactions and conflicts in the Gambella region are contextualized and framed by the administrative agencies and surrogates have impacted their understanding derailing strategies of response even further leading to the deterioration of the situations Gambella from time to time.

Since the early 1990s the political landscape in the Gambella region has been dominantly exclusionary and extractive with profound negative effect on societal cohesion in the region (see Chapter Six). As such, the regional government has failed to create strong political leadership and form a workable political community that articulates and accommodate the interests of various groups in the region.¹⁶⁸

The deficiencies in use of democratic practices and process in reconciling the interest of various groups in the GPNRS have created a kind of anarchic situation where ethnic groups in the region must fend for themselves in self-help. In the vent, violent approach and strategy is *rationalized* and become the rule of the game. According to Dereje (2006a) a representative of Komo, one of the five indigenous groups in Gambella had

¹⁶⁷ A particularly memorable instance of the endemic corruption in the region is the analogous remark by a key informant: “as Kenya is reckoned for notorious corruption, in Godere you have to fold it even when you file (present) application. There, everything is processed with bribery to the degree that it is considered norm and normal” (NGI-04).

¹⁶⁸ For example, Medhane (2007) posits, “the regional government has been unstable and inefficient, unable to create popular support and participation. And low political development continues to rock political stability - local actors have proved to be parochial, corrupt and incapable, and are locked in conflicting strategies of entitlement, the net result of which is the escalation of rivalries at various levels as fragments of the regional state are captured by one group or another, causing structural paralysis” (Medhane, 2007, pp. 14-15).

to secure seat only after he fired a pistol in the regional council. And the Majang are reported to have said “*should we have to throw a stone like Nuers*” (Dereje, 2006a). Seyuom (2016) maintains that it is the challenge the Majang faced as they set forth to defend their land rights and their endangering forest in legal redress that dictated the resort to violence (Seyuom, 2016).

The anarchic opportunity structure is further exacerbated by the absence of strong and independent institutions such as independent judiciary. The courts are merely extensions of the administrative organ, to the service and interest of the administrative authorities. The court accomplice through wrong ruling by ‘acquitting’ ‘criminals’, filling falsified and fabricated accusations against dissidents and rival faction groups, and collaborating suspects and defendants escape accountability. To these unjust dispositions of the judiciary is added the glaring involvement of the judges in bribery to distort just adjudications. For instance, as empirical evidences affirm the 2014 Majang-Highlander violence is worsened by the practice of the judges and the members of the local police forces as they stoked the situation particularly interfering lawsuit concerning the issues of land use and management.¹⁶⁹

Overall, it suffices to say that the weak capacity to deliver and appalling gaps in making use of democratic process from the ruling administration in the GPNRS has inhibited the process of peacebuilding in every aspect, permeating and impinging on all activities and actions including short-term conflict management measures and the development of sustainable peace process.

¹⁶⁹ (NGI-04; RCI-05; KIIG-11).

Leadership Problems

The governance crisis is largely the result of the absence of critical leadership in the region that motivates, guides and commits people to harmonious coexistence and peacebuilding. In the contrary, the political elites and the leadership in the GPNRS are of an extractive mindset, embroiled in an extractive view of politics – the instrumental utility of politics. In strict sense, the main inter-communal violent conflicts that have occurred in post-1991 Gambella whether apparently caused by ethnic or other identity divisions have been nothing more than a conflict between competing local elites for the control of power and consequent access to certain material resources. As such, the workings of the politics in the Gambella region are subordinated to the mere use and abuse of the political authorities, the vested interests of the small governing elites, their clan/ethnic fellow or their cronies. The situation is particularly compounded by the nature of governance that adulterates ethnicity, creating a breeding ground for ‘identity’ to be instrumentalized for political consumption. Undergirded naturally by the policy, that is, ethnic federalism, the local elites in GPNRS politicize and manipulate circumstances, creating a huge turf and wall among communities with that making the process of reconciliation and peacebuilding in the region a daunting task.

The absence of peacebuilding leadership as a formidable challenge to successful peacebuilding process in the GPNRS is a common denominator to which virtually all research participants attest regardless of their ethnic or other forms of affiliations. In the eyes of many informants, and group discussion participants’ local elites are considered spoilers of peace through their actions of exploiting situations for their interest.¹⁷⁰ Expert at the UNDP section, RLPP project noted, “political conspiracy is

¹⁷⁰ A glaring example of the degree to which ‘identity’ is instrumentalized in the bid for power by elites, which even defies the embedded culture is the accusation and allegation against a Highlander assimilated

very high. The manner in which they are dealing with the inter-communal violence would even make ultimately harmonious relationship between people impossible. The people are kind and forgiving and they will embrace each other if you say so, the very conundrum is an elite conspiracy (NGI-02). An informant noted, "... the response to the problem is based on ethnicity - when people from their ethnic group or clans are affected they would use and do everything they could to address but when they are 'others' they are negligent" (LCI-05). Concurring to this during a group discussion in Itang special district, Itang Kir Kebele participants maintain that the main problem is attitudinal, exclusionary mindset. Authorities do not see the concerns of all groups in equality, they are partisan, they say this is the problem of Nuer, this the issue of the Anyuwaa by *extension the issue concerns Nuer and Anyuwaa authorities respectively, they don't share the needs and pains of all groups in the Gambella region* (emphasis mine) (FGD-07). To a striking resemblance with these in July 2016 the researcher was in Gambella town attending the discussion of the Gambella University community with the GPNRS administrative council where it is observed the president of the GPNRS (Nuer) saying "... on my part I have settled issues, there is no division among Nuer elite, there are no Nuer politicians making trouble, Senay (referring to the vice president who is Anyuwaa by his name) should do the same."

True to this and its consequence, dismayed by the what appears to be 'unequal' treatment as the president of GPNRS (ethnic Nuer) addressed them communities in Jor District of the Anyuwaa zone said, "You don't represent us. You don't address us when

by the Nuer and representative of his 'clan' in the administrative posts. As one of my informant noted, some say Biel is not Nuer and should not represent 'us'. This politics of identity and the extent to which identity is politicized have shattered and dismayed the culture of the local as the 'Nuers' are essentially assimilations.

we are afflicted, your presence today is not for our help, you come because you are in trouble due to the car ambush in *Nyningnag* for the sake of finding the perpetrators” (KIIG-09). Some are even very harsh that they outspokenly stated their defiance, not to pay tax, from their outrage for the failure of government to protect and respond to their pleas relative to the incidents in other parts of the region particularly the response and attention given to the April 2016 massive onslaught (KIIG-04; FGD-07). Therefore, the idea that politics and public positions are essentially meant to serve the public and being accountable for that matter is bare. A government official appointee at public post regards his position and responsibility ‘exclusively’ to the group he is from rather than to serve everyone.

In general, it suffices to say that the manner of interaction between regional political leaders, factions and dissidents and their actions – the nature of local politics has posed significant challenge to the achievement of meaningful peace and development in post-1991 Gambella.

9.2.4 Subjective/Partial Security System

It would not be an invalid inference to argue that the security system that ought to be otherwise is increasingly posing a challenge to peace and security in current Ethiopia. Especially with the establishment of a new security structure at regional states dubbed as *Speicial Force* (SP) (for example Somali Region Special Force, Oromia Region Special Force, Gambella Region Special Force etc..) in addition to the extant police structures at regional states peace is becoming very elusive in the country. The notoriety of the SP’s is evident that they are complicating peaceful coexistence among various

communities and the very integrity of the country. Nothing is illustrative of this than the border dispute between Oromia and Somali regional State over the past two years.¹⁷¹

One major challenge to peacebuilding in GPNRS is linked to the security system, partial and untrusted - infamous for its positionality. In Gambella it is virtually a norm for a member of police or SP to side with or accomplice the ‘group’ he is from. The situation is worsened in recent year particularly after the institutionalization of the SP structure. The security system is highly subjective and its core members are known for *taking sides* for their ethnic affiliates. In 2016 the regional SP enforcement members in Jor district, Anyuwaa zone fought divided along ethnic lines, Anyuwaa versus Nuer. In the same year members of the police in the regional main administration were reported to have colluded and participated in the killing of Anyuwaa prisoners in what appears to be a retaliation of the murder of Nuer prisoners in Abobo (Anyuwaa district) town prison administration. One of the key my informants recalled, “as the government police and security actors become divided along ethnicity and embroiled in the conflict, the ordinary and civilian further delved into the violence bearing that the problem extends to the government structures. The violence intensified when those who are meant to enforce law and order, protect people and keep peace, fought divided like what happened in Jor” (KIIG-05).

The problem surrounding the SP begins from very process of recruitment to the training. According to one of the informants... “most of the recruits in the SP include people with records of misconduct (as former ENDF members) fired for unethical and unacceptable behaviors, and former member of insurgencies. This is confounded by the

¹⁷¹ See Chapter Five.

limitations surrounding the process of their trainings. The durations are very short and they came as SP members with ill awareness pertinent to human right, civil-military relation, and normative issues as to the constitutional mandate and responsibilities (RCI-01).” To this tune an informant adds... “they are reckless, nothing bothers them” (LCI-10). The situation is confounded the culture of partiality in the region, the nature of the political opportunity structure, and the ethnic composition of members of the SP. In a group discussion at Majang zone, Godere district, Akash Kebele participants (Highlanders) invoked:

The SP’s are all Majang there are no Highlanders. Their way is killing and torture for whatever issue. They torture to a debilitating condition that a person cannot recover. The SP’s are custodians of the Majang politics. We fear that they would decimate us. None of them are held accountable for the crime they commit in the 2014 violence. What is being reported is the so-called rehabilitation that saw no meaningful improvements from previous condition.¹⁷²

Interestingly, therefore, this behavior of the security and police forces did not come in vacuum; it in fact mirrors the administrative and political culture in GPNRS. Whilst repeated rough security sector reforms particularly short-term rehabilitation trainings and inspections, *gimgemas* in local Amharic lexicon, no practical change is observed in the alteration of their behaviors. This is linked to the gross accountability gap as they often ‘escape’ accountability for crimes and misconduct or when it is best served in maintaining justice and accountability they are detained for quiet short time and released afterwards. Thus, adding to the prevalent thinking that “I should not be a spectator of an act against my ethnic or affiliate group is also this dominant perception among the members of the GPNRS core security actors that they would not be accountable or not that much serious consequence would follow, a mentality which is a

¹⁷² (FGD-10).

product of the regional administration that revealed itself unwilling or to give the benefit of the doubt unable to keep law and order and provide security to all groups inhabiting in the region. In short, the regional police and security organization and forces are not drawn into discipline of state and society to the degree that, “members traffic small arms in illicit, wearing their outfit”, ¹⁷³ as one informant notes.

From the stories and discussions presented above one can infer that the practice of the security system and the political institutions in the region at large reflect and are an extension of the regional framework involving the groups in the region. As such, the inter-group animosities and conflicts in the GPNRS are entrenched in the political institutions.

9.2.5 Unfavorable Socioeconomic Conditions

The inalterability of those factors partly responsible for the occurrence of inter-communal violent conflicts in the Gambella region to date *inter alia* economic problems and economic inequality along group lines, resource scarcity and competition, and decline in public service means peacebuilding endeavors had to falter without the existence of relevant infrastructural conditions for their effectiveness. Strictly speaking the peace and development strategies in GPNRS over the last nearly three decades have not responded to essential socioeconomic conditions that are accentuating violence, and where there are they are ill-fated and fractured, lacking vitality to effect meaningful change.

¹⁷³ (KIIG-08).

The political empowerment of the indigenous people has not been accompanied with economic gains. In GPNRS as the political power is dominated by ‘indigenous’ people the economic sphere is dominated by Highlanders.¹⁷⁴ Coming from a relatively better area of entrepreneurial culture the Highlanders have dominated the business sector,¹⁷⁵ a pattern that has induced a sense of *relative deprivation* among the locals. Put it another way, the fact that, on the one hand the political set up designates the indigenous as the ‘owners’ of GPNRS while in reality did not bring about economic improvement have rendered deep contradiction soliciting the sense of alienation as the perception that there are strong unequal economic inequalities have contributed to a sense of grievance. One of my key informants (ethnic Majang) noted, “the situation that economic improvements and gains are not going fairly to benefit all groups is problematic and worrisome as it is the Highlanders who are benefiting now (NGI-04). Land is allocated only to those who have money. If you don’t have money you don’t get land. And *it is the Highlanders who have money therefore who can acquire (posses) land, the indigenous being left as the have nots* (emphasis mine), said, chairman of Chemi kebele, Godere district, Majang zone.¹⁷⁶ As Duffy (2009) reminds democratization in the absence of economic improvement and the capacity of government to deliver socioeconomic service could be dangerous. He writes, “enhancing democracy allows groups to express their aspirations freely and to engage other groups in negotiations for the resources needed to realize those aspirations. But those resources cannot be realized

¹⁷⁴ The experience from the Majang zone is conspicuous in this regard. Despite the lucrative trade in the area, a potential source of wealth, a stark difference in wealth is observed between the indigenous Majang and the Highlanders. While a person hardly finds to see a Majang who owns ‘motorcycle’, let alone a wealthy and a well off business person, it is kind of property considered to be representing average person in economic status among the Highlanders, particularly in Meti town. This is starkly observed by the researcher during the field work in Majang zone areas.

¹⁷⁵ Reflecting on the Majang-Highlander conflict an informant pointed out “the predicaments are primarily economic particularly ‘land’. While the ‘immigrants’ (Highlanders) make the land productive and are economically well off, the indigenous are selling their land and moving deeper” (NGI-04).

¹⁷⁶ LCI-06

if the regime lacks the capacity to deliver them or at least provide the infrastructural conditions necessary to attain them” (Duffy, 2009, p. 118).

As already shown competition over land, particularly the reverine land and its occupation is a major driver of conflict between the Anyuwaa and the Nuer since the 19th century. What is striking and depressing is the extent to which the scarcity of this essential resources is increasing (also confounded by population pressure) meaning that the propensity for this flashpoints to trigger violence between the two groups has to be frequent in unprecedented way. Nothing exemplifies this than the difficulties surrounding the repatriation of the IDPs (ethnic Anyuwaa) from different kebeles in Itang special district where nearby Nuer communities reportedly created havoc to the process and already seized and stepped into the area for their use in cultivation and grazing.

In GPNRS a particularly acute issue in recent years concerns the growing youth unemployment and the socio-economic conditions that the youth are in. Needless to say the alarming youth unemployment, combined with youth ‘violent’ culture is posing a major obstacle to peacemaking activities in the Gambella region. This is a common denominator about which research participants in all areas of the region reverberated. Look at these as example: “the youth are not getting jobs - having graduated with diploma and degree they are living with the farmers. Nothing is being done, and they are in deep frustration state. And added to these difficulties is that they don’t bear patriotism - love their country, they simply go and kill people” (FGD-07). “The youth do conform to the peace agreements and conference and do not comply with elders’ decision and reconciliations made. When the reconciliation is made they act as major spoilers killing people - we have produced a dysfunctional generation” (RCI-02). “One

formidable pitfall here is the culture of the youth; they don't listen to elders. This situation, violent youth culture is very serious" (NGI-03).

As such because other economic sectors are not developed and there is a gross lack of experience to engage in other activities other than civil service (public) particularly from the local people, the only means of employment is in the government public posts. With such realities on the ground failure from the regional government to enlarge the cake and create job opportunities (combined with the other factors) have created scarcity, heightening the already discriminatory system and the propensity in the uneven benefits along group lines, deepening levels of structural violence the communities had to bear. In short, in GPNRS the lack of economic opportunities and the institutional disparities in access to power have deepened the conflict cycle by increasing the militancy on the part of the population thus inhibiting the development of sustainable peacebuilding process.

9.2.6 The Nature of Conflict

The problematic process of peacebuilding in GPNRS is also linked to the nature of conflicts in the region. The main inter-communal conflicts in Gambella are protracted social conflicts intrinsic to identity and sociocultural elements with a long history of violence and animosity. In addition to sharing histories of violence groups locked in conflict in the Gambella region also live in close geographical proximity harboring the trauma and hatred which leaves peacemaking activities fragile and falling short as even a mere dispute between two individuals could degenerate into whole scale inter-group violence. As Dereje (2006a) pointed out, the 2002 Anyuwaa-Nuer conflict is triggered by a petty quarrel over soap at Baro River in Itang to engulf the whole parts of the region where the two communities inhabit (see Dereje, 2006a). So did the 2016 episode

when violence detonated following a dispute over land in Gambella town between two individuals. The movement and protest of the Anyuwaa dominant youth branded *Dhaldim*¹⁷⁷ against the regional leadership demanding for better freedom and socioeconomic conditions degenerated into Anyuwaa-Nuer conflict in astonishing speed. On Sunday, September 23, 2018 the *Dhaldim* staged protest in Gambella town demanding for the release of members of the group arrested by the regional administration to which the administrative officials were forced to concede as they release the detainees. The next day Monday September 24 the whole development was complicated when the federal security forces shot four people to death injuring about a dozen against the youth reportedly on protest, in Gambella town. It was widely circulated that the federal security agents that fired on the protesters were ‘bribed’ or are part of the conspiracy by the regional president (Nuer) who ‘infiltrated’ into the federal security system in the region amidst the victims are all ethnic Anyuwaa thus complicating the whole development. What is striking is the escalation immediately came following the landmark phenomenon in the political history of the region on Sunday September 23, 2018.¹⁷⁸

A culture of distrust and suspicion

The magnitude of violence and the sociopolitical environment in Gambella region has induced deep-seated habit of suspiciousness and distrust in social relations making it hard to generate trust, obsessing people to be always on the lookout for hidden motives and deceptive maneuverings. The pervasiveness of this disposition was thematized by empirical data sources across all groups in the region. Look at this remark from group discussions:

¹⁷⁷ (For discussion about *Dhaldim* see pp. 271-273).

¹⁷⁸ (For details see pp. 271-273).

... It is a right question to ask, and it won't be difficult one to reflect on. We would respond. But what is the risk as we do so?... There is nothing we may set forth or say, we are in despair, left helpless because of the damage the recurrent violence inflicted on us. We have told to different bodies but nothing is delivered hence why we tell?¹⁷⁹

As it can be inferred from the foregoing there is high suspicion and apprehension that they may be harmed for giving information.¹⁸⁰ According to my informant (ethnic Majang) “in the midst of the Majang-Highlander conflict I spent one night at the house of a Highlander friend of mine... Some fellow Majang said how you dare believe them to share sleeping with the Highlanders. That night rumors of were circulated in Meti town that I was murdered” (NGI-04).¹⁸¹

As such, in Gambella gossip and bubbles are pervasive, taken earnestly and passed on so much so that it is difficult to recognize facts from falsified speculations. During the 2016 Anyuwaa-Nuer conflict the Anyuwaa were moving children and women to mainland for fear of the widely circulated information that the Nuer are marching to exterminate them. Reflecting on the 2014 Majang-Highlander conflict and its aftermath one of my key informants, notes, “the people have no trust each other. For instance, if you go to Baro Mado, where the Majang in Gambella town live, there is mistrust and fear among and between them. They live on one side of Gambella town, isolated. Trauma, suspicion and mistrust is rampant. The intensity of the conflict has left indelible scar that people do not trust each other. There is fear and apprehension that it

¹⁷⁹ (FGD-11).

¹⁸⁰ The fact that the researcher is categorized under ‘Highlander’ in the local lexicon and the post-conflict situation in 2014 has left many Majang arrested may have prompted this strong sense of suspicions’ and un-openness from participants.

¹⁸¹ In a glaring illustration of the degree of suspicion and mistrust an informant, inhabitant of Meti town, Godere district, Majang zone states, “say for instance you are drinking beer in a bar.... you have to take the bottle with you to urinate they may poison you (LCI-07).

might happen again. The feeling of apprehension is still there” (KIIG-11). The situation is confounded by the lack of contact between groups as the suspicion and apprehension have increasingly led to isolated settlement or neighborhoods along groups creating a safe ground for identity to be concertized by elites for political motif.

9.2.7 Erosion of Customary Peacebuilding Practices and Values

The societal fragmentation due to the increasing division along group lines, the absence of contact and the local leadership that concertizes these divisions and induces negative stereotypes and mutual suspicion among groups in GPNRS would even be more depressing because of the shattering of the viability and applicability of the TCRMs and social values in the region. The weakening of the viability of local peace potentials largely through the cooption of traditional authorities, elders, and religious leaders, vocal and influential members of the communities for political purpose and control by the government has a devastating effect on peacebuilding efforts and societal cohesion. Many aver that virtually no figures are ‘trusted’ and obey command. “The problem is religious fathers and elders are not respected here”, noted one of my informants.¹⁸²

The situation has created a double-edged problem. On the one hand, the traditional conflict resolution agencies are politicized as the selection of council to mediate like ‘elders’ forum is undertaken by the government, and the duty of the traditional authorities does not often transcend beyond parroting the discourse of the dominant interest or create a kind of consensus that maintains the status quo. Being largely an instrument for elite politics, their actions are devoid of the spirit of conciliation and consensus, without taking heed of the legitimate needs and grievances in communities.

¹⁸² (RCI-02).

This has atrophied the credibility and legitimacy of the customary peacebuilding practices. In one of the group-discussions, the participants asserted that “it would be good had the role and position of elders and religious figure known for real as they partake in the peacemaking processes” (FGD-07). And on another level is the defiance from the government to enrich its outlook and approach when traditional authorities tend to do so. President of Mekaneyesus church, EGBP stated his despair and the situation that left the religious figures and elders’ in pawn in the following manner:

... the other challenge is the understanding, both from the people and the government. On the one hand the people perceive that we are working for the government to serve its interest. On the other hand, as we bring critical matters and issues, what and where the real problem is to the attention of official they consider you in bad faith. For example, once when I urge our people to eschew violence they said you are a government affiliate. Likewise, in another instance the government summoned and commanded us: “you go and do this”. As we insisted on a deliberation, the officials replied, “proceed as we order you, do not put your hands on these matters”. We decline by insisting that we would not collaborate in this way as religious leaders.¹⁸³

In strict sense traditional figures, elders and religious fathers are hardly neutral and trusted and do not obey command from both sides as mediators or mainly considered in this way.

9.2.8 The Situation in Neighboring South Sudan

One enduring challenge to peacebuilding in Gambella region is an external element, the spillover effect from the South Sudan as it nourished into the prevailing conflict in GPNRS consequently encumbering the peacebuilding endeavors. The effect is manifold. First it has induced the influx of refugee into the region with its ensuing aftermath of the politicization of identity and profound encroachment up on inter-group relations and demographic dynamics (especially between the Anyuwaa and Nuer) of

¹⁸³ (RCI-02).

the GPNRS.¹⁸⁴ As Medhane (2007) pointed out, “ the flow of refugees to the Ethiopian side of Gambella region have changed the demography of the region become vital to the issue of power and wealth sharing in Gambella as some of the Nuer refugees were readily integrated into the broader Ethiopian Nuer community, serving to shift the population balance in their favor” (Medhane, 2007, p.10). Yet the impact of the refugee factor on the sociopolitical conditions of the Gambella region had to become particularly both chronic and acute problem since the early 1990s after the introduction of new governance structure in Ethiopia in 1991 and designation of the Gambella region afterwards as one of the regional states forming the FDRE. It became a hot political issue particularly between the Anyuwaa and Nuer as with the new governance structure political power at local level increasingly relied on number. The Anyuwaa strongly question the loyalty and citizenship of the Nuer, since most of them were in refugee camps before they were elected as government officials. This has intensified the animosity between the Anyuwaa and Nuer making the status, integration and citizenship of Nuer refugees as one of the most controversial issues in the Gambella region to date.¹⁸⁵ In what appears to be ‘history repeating itself’, the civil war in the youngest country, South Sudan that erupted in December 2013 has in-fluxed another wave of refugee, adding a fuel to the burning fire.¹⁸⁶ The latest violence in early months of 2016 in GPNRS between the Anyuwaa and the Nuer has connections with the civil war in South Sudan. According to Dereje (2006a) the flow of refugee into Gambella region is one of the sources of the Anyuwaa discourse of ‘ethnic extinction’.

¹⁸⁴ By mid 1980s the refugee population in Gambella reached 300,000 and far outnumbered the local population. All of the refugee camps were established in Anyuwaa areas and the refugee populations were largely Nuer (see Dereje, 2006a; Medhane, 2007; Regassa, 2010).

¹⁸⁵ (see also Dereje, 2006a; Medhane, 2007; Regassa, 2010).

¹⁸⁶ According to DRC (2016) as of April 2016 more than 220, 000 South Sudan refugees (predominantly Ethnic Nuer) have poured into GPNRS (DRC, 2016). ARRA documented the number of refugee in Gambella region as 372, 500 (ARRA, 2018). As per the 2013 projected estimation of CSA the GPNRS population is estimated to be 396,000 (Gambella Regional State Council, 2015).

Second, the civil war in the Sudan in the mid-1980s also brought with it the armed groups (the SPLA/M) who operated in the Gambella region. Many have documented the notoriety of the SPLA/M to the local population in Gambella region, a situation which aggravated the grievance of local people. And the Derg, the military regime, failed to protect the local population from the harsh SPLA/M that used Gambella region of Ethiopia as a launching pad and a base as rebel fighting the Sudan government (particularly to secede the southern part of the Sudan) when it operated without restraint inflicting injustices on the local communities of the Gambella region as well as from other adverse effects of the Sudan civil war on the Gambella region and its people.¹⁸⁷ As Dereje (2006a) contends, by the mid-1980s it was far better to be a refugee than Ethiopian.

Third, the civil war in Sudan has facilitated the small arms trade and militarization of communities in Gambella, a process that has hampered inter-group integration and peacemaking process. As one of the key informants puts forward, “inter-communal violent conflicts are common in the region. Peace conferences and community reconciliation are made but violence recurs. And the role of the proliferation of small arms and illicit arms trade is significant in this regard. For instance, in Matar, Wanthoa¹⁸⁸ even if there was disarmament you can see arms here and there because the border is open¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ The SPLA were known for their brutal tactics towards communities. In one village people told how over 1,000 SPLA troops had regularly set up a camp in the village. They would demand food and money from the villagers and strike them. Twelve people had been shot. Even the clothes they were wearing would be taken. Eventually this treatment had impoverished them to the extent that many of them fled to the bush, where they were mainly living on wild foods. Alex de Waal details how escapees were often caught by the SPLA and taken into slavery, especially women due to the largely male populations of SPLA in Gambella at that time. There was a death rate of approximately 20% of the settler population (Human Rights Watch, 1991, *Evil Days in DRC*, 2016, p. 2). In fact, as outsiders, ethnic rivals and brutal suppressors of dissent, the presence of the SPLA aggravated Anyuwa grievances.

¹⁸⁸ Matar is the seat of Wanthoa District of the Nuer Zone found in the northwest part of the GPNRS bordering the South Sudan.

¹⁸⁹ (KIIG-08).

The large open border that the GPNRS shares with the South Sudan, which is largely left uncontrollable and difficult to monitor has intensified cross-border raid into Gambella, and increased vulnerability of the communities. The situation has worsened after the eruption of civil war in South Sudan in December 2013 which worsened the already difficult condition by debilitating the newly formed country, and leaving most of the parts adjacent to Gambella out of 'effective' control. The civil war in South Sudan since December 2013 has left much of the parts of the country adjacent to Gambella out of effective control, 'stateless' making the already open border uncontrollable, intensifying cross-border raid into Gambella and increasing communities' vulnerability. Equipped with more advanced arms and undeterred by the absence of effective government in Upper Nile state, South Sudan the Murle have carried cattle raid and abducted children in unprecedented way both in frequency of the incursion and the intensity of damage. As seen in the previous chapter the April 15, 2016 appalling Murle raid is a glaring illustration.

The civil war since 2013 has also brought the conflict just close to the border in Gambella region of Ethiopia¹⁹⁰ and imported gruesome norm of violence into the region as many informants claimed especially pointing to the incident at Jawi refugee camp in April 2016.¹⁹¹ In short, the developments in neighboring country have negatively affected and regionalized local inter-group conflict in GPNRS in many ways and posing

¹⁹⁰ Participants of group discussions attested that heavy gun sound are heard as far as Poul Kebele, Itang special district, and people with the SPLM/IO uniform roam carrying heavy rifles like a machine gun (FGD-07).

¹⁹¹ Before the horror and grieving that the Murle raid caused is fading, the GPNRS experienced another atrocity on Thursday May 21, 2016. This time it is the South Sudanese refugee (Nuer) at *Jawi* refugee camp around 20 Kilometers south of the capital Gambella that killed more than 10 Ethiopians. The incident has created tense situation leading to outrage from the Highlander population, prompting Highlander and Nuer into confrontation. What makes the outrage unbearable another bodies were recovered in the forest in April 22 and it is reported that the bodies that were recovered damaged to the degree that one's identity could not be identified.

one of the most difficult challenges to peacebuilding in the region. Overall the spillover effect is enormous on socioeconomic, political and security developments in the Gambella region.

In addition to those elements unpacked above a range of other issues pertaining to the capacity gap from the conflict workers and stakeholders especially about the conflict dynamics in the region and the failure to view (define) peace as a collective good and poor infrastructure like road, and telecommunication have thrown challenge to peacebuilding endeavor in the GPNRS. The fact that some of the areas of violence are remote with dire road and telecommunication services has impinged on conflict intervention activities. Reflecting on conflict management activities as regards the Majang-Highlander conflict in 2014 governor of the Majang zone asserts, “overall the inadequate and poor infrastructure has formed obstacle on the conflict management activities as the erratic telecommunication network hampered the exchange of reliable and adequate information particularly from remote areas. The poor road network also created obstacles for timely access of security forces to reach people in remote areas” (KIIG-11).¹⁹²

¹⁹² To the contrary, in other areas of the region the development of road has enhanced the containment of violence in a short time, for instance in Itang, the asphalted road from Gambella town to Itang has permitted the arrival of security forces to control the Anyuwaa-Nuer violent conflict in 2016 before much damage is done as opposed to the 2002 conflict between the two groups when the dire road leading to Itang hampered the reach of security reinforcement to manage the crisis early, leading to many casualties.

9.3 Prospects

9.3.1 Previous Experiences and Local Peace Potentials

In post-1991, GPNRS there are few experiences to build on to harness constructive peacebuilding process. Of these prospects, include previous experiences of commendable activities and the availability of local peacebuilding capacities that have proved workable in the region in spite of their weakening due to the complexities of modernity and other sociopolitical issues that robbed their strength. As discussed in chapter six the role played by civil societies, and activities that tapped into local peace capacities tuned in *ubuntu* concept of peace in the wake of series inter-group violent conflicts are worth noting that could serve as potential opportunities and prospects for sustainable peacebuilding process in the GPNRS.

As discussed in Chapter Seven, Mekaneyesus church particularly through the EGBP and EGBP in the wake of the 2002 was engaged in sustained activities of mediation and reconciliation between the two communities in the wake of the 2002 Anyuwaa-Nuer inter-ethnic conflict. As the president of EGBP noted, the activities undertaken by the Mekaneyesus between 2002 and 2004 have implicated in the normalization of relationship between the two groups. The EGBP and WGBP have also conducted supportive peacemaking activities in 2016. Save the limitation, under the banner, Gambella Peace and Development Council (GPDC) which brought together civil societies, NGOs and government agencies a series of community cohesion, reconciliation and other restorative and rehabilitative activities were conducted in the region to address the Anyuwaa-Nuer and Anyuwaa-Highlander conflicts especially

between 2002 and 2005.¹⁹³ The peacebuilding support program by the UNDP through the LRPP since 2016 particularly where geared towards bridging the limitations adds to the prospects in fostering and enhancing constructive and sustainable peacebuilding in the region.

In this regard, (i.e. from civil societies and non-government organizations) a particularly instructive peacebuilding support effort came from the Pact Ethiopia, through the Community Stability Restoration and Constructive Dialogue Initiative Projects. For example, between 2006 and 2009 the organization has undertaken peace and governance initiatives programs in all potential conflict prone areas of the GPNRS through which a range of relevant community stability restoration activities were conducted. Furthermore, Pact Ethiopia has conducted extensive research on the nature of conflict and the ways forward for sustainable peacebuilding in the region and published helpful documents on the conflict situation in GPNRS mapping out the major issues in different conflict zones in the region and shedding light on their connection – how decisions at national and regional levels interacted with the local conflicts in the Gambella, and throwing suggestions for their constructive transformation.

Meanwhile as the research for this study explores there is a potential for sustainable peacebuilding in GPNRS rooted in local peace capacity and TCRMs¹⁹⁴, a resource to tap into. Despite the erosion of their vitality due to a range of factors (as seen on the previous section) the traditional conflict resolution mechanisms available in the region still form veritable instruments to utilize. Needless to say, the role of traditional leaders and their influence at the grass root level has been practically demonstrated. One

¹⁹³ (See Dereje, 2005).

¹⁹⁴ For discussions on the TCRMs in the GPNRS see Chapter Seven.

illustration is the 2014 Majang-Highlander conflict. The response to this violence which called for appreciative inquiry to local peace potential has paid. In short, the experience of Majang Zone indicates that local forms of making peace can be effective particularly in situation where the communities are empowered in resolving their disputes. The role of traditional authorities and TCRMs in GPNRS was also discernible in the peace agreement between the Anyuwaa and the Majang in 2003 as the process roughly followed local customary mechanisms of settling dispute. The role played by the Nnyiye, Anyuwaa chief (king) in negotiating the Anyuwaa communities displaced due to the December 13, 2003 incident in Gambella town particularly informs about the legitimacy and viability of customary structures in the region to harness on. Overall, the course to sustainable peace in GPNRS, particularly in the sense of conflict management and inter-communal cohesion could benefit from the locally existing context-rooted peacemaking practices. As discussed, these traditions which merged culture with peacebuilding were relevant in promoting reconciliation and creating foundations for re-establishing social solidarity over the courses of peace activities in the wake of the recurring inter-communal violent conflicts in the post-1991 Gambella.

Other instances that could be indicated as prospects include the security sector reform, rehabilitation and training given to core security actors in the region (inasmuch as they bear fruit), villagization and land tenure schemes, impartial gestures from members of contending groups, and initiatives observed from local population in owning peace, and joint cross-border security ventures between the government of South Sudan and Ethiopia. In 2014 and 2016 rehabilitation training was given to members of the regional security and police forces. Participants of the rehabilitation programs and other informants asserted that the trainings have attempted to shed light on human right and ethnic hatred. As part of the outcome of the security sector reform an overhaul and

revision was made on the allocation procedures of the SP and police force members across the areas in the GPNRS by taking their 'ethnic affiliation into consideration. Corrective measures were also taken on those security members with misconduct. As already illustrated siding to one's ethnic group and the involvement of the security forces is a perennial and acute problem in the region as security forces particularly the so called *Special Forces*, proved to be major actors and spoilers, sidelining the 'group' they 'belong to' to the extent of getting divided and fighting each other along ethnic lines.

Some efforts in tackling critical challenges through villagization and land tenure schemes were also observed. For example, in Majang zone a pilot scheme of granting and legalizing land holding status certificate were carried in some kebeles. One of this emerging tendency is the authorization of land holding status in Chemi kebele, Godere District. According to chairman of Chemi Kebele, "a process of land holding status is underway to address the problem in sustainable manner. A legalization certificate of land holding status is being issued to the farmers and other members of the kebele" (RCI-05). Where similar activities are extended in other parts of the region, especially to Majang Zone areas, where land and its occupation is the nucleus of the conflict formation, both the main source and driver, it may have the potential to reduce the apprehensions of the local communities, the illegal land occupation activities and other related malaises.

Where promoted and animated impartial gestures from members of contending groups in the midst of inter-group violence, and the initiative and commitment revealed by local communities and activities that targeted the youth (as in Gambella town in 2016) could be potentially helpful. For example, in September 2014 residents of Meti town

distanced themselves from the Highlander mob that attacked the Majang in the town. As one of my key informants (ethnic Majang) noted, when a Highlander lynching mob from neighboring areas came into Meti town chanting, habitants of the town recalled refrained from joining the mob. Had the residents of Meti town joined this group of mob it would have been much worse than it was. Especially Highlanders who have lived in the area for very long didn't participate in the lynching and some were even hiding Majangs' (NGI-04). As many informants and research participants shared the local communities took the initiative and were in the frontlines during the conflict management and post-conflict reconstruction activities in response the 2014 deadly violent conflict between the Majang and Highlander. In the words of one of them "here all (both communities) including the local leaders came together to resolve the problems. The victims of the violence as those who had their relatives killed united to bring peace, to end the violence between the two communities" (KIIG-11).

In December 2016 an Anyuwaa regional SP member on board was wounded while fighting attackers (allegedly Anyuwaa) during the ambush on passenger car heading to *Gninygnag* (the capital of Nuer zone) where Nuer passengers were particularly targeted by attackers. This move from soldier surprised many and ignited the idea that there is/are personalities from members of the conflicting group who share the distress of others and stand in integrity whilst the regional core security members are wrought with partisanship dispositions.

The joint border security initiatives and schemes between South Sudan and Ethiopia particularly the commitment the two countries have shown in tackling the cross-border raid and stopping the flow of arms between the two countries after the April, 2016 massive cross-border onslaught indicates that there is a potential possibility in the future

in overcoming the havoc that the cross-border conflict is inflicting on the GPNRS. Successive cross-border cooperation activities were made between the Gambella regional state and the ENDF from the Ethiopian side and the Upper Nile state, South Sudan (the main launching pad of cross-border attack into Ethiopia's Gambella) to tackle critical cross-border challenges between the two countries culminated on August 29, 2018 when the two countries signed a memorandum of understanding in Gambella town.¹⁹⁵ In addition to this, earlier works that aimed at strengthening peace and governance initiatives at the Sudan-Ethiopia border on which future works could build on also exists both by the government and other non-government agencies.¹⁹⁶

9.3.2 Crisis Forced Developments: Anecdotes from Majang Zone and Gambella Town

Studies on conflict de-escalation and empirical scholarships inform that 'hurting stalemate', a situation where no one is able to neutralize or defeat the other and both parties in conflict and a wide range of the communities interlocked into violence suffer the brunt of conflict, would create ripe condition for peace as it compels people to seek for and become direct owners of peace in search of non-violent alternatives. For example, as Andre Bartoli, Aldo Civico & Leon Gianturrco (2009) observed a major driver of peace in Mozambique is a negotiated settlement between primary adversaries after a long stalemate in which neither side was able to overcome the other and the pain has been deeply felt by the people. They wrote: "taken together, an overarching theme

¹⁹⁵ The agreement was signed by Governor of Boma State, Gen David Yau Yau, on behalf of South Sudan, and Gatluak Tut Khot, the President of Gambella region, on behalf of Ethiopia. The two have agreed to form a joint border security force to safeguard peace and stop the flow of arms between the two countries. The agreement further gave Ethiopia the freedom to open a liaison office in Boma State to foster cooperation between the Murle of South Sudan and the Anyuwaa of Ethiopia residing on the common border a deal that would help mitigate the cross-border raids by both sides. (<http://www.nation.co.ke/africa/> :accessed on September 4, 2018).

¹⁹⁶ See the next Chapter

of the Mozambique peace process is the idea of direct ownership of the process by the very people it ought to serve” (Bartoli, et al., 2009, p. 141).

In GPNRS one thing that can be used as opportunity to foster constructive conflict transformation is the mayhem the violence has created and the pain it has inflicted, felt by everyone. Needless to say, the nature and outcome of peace effort to 2014 (Majang-Highlander) and 2016 (Anyuwaa-Nuer) inter-group violence in the region illustrates how the intensity of crisis forced some developments as they raised a consciousness about the damage and influenced people’s disposition in seeking peace. As many informants¹⁹⁷ ascribed, due to the violence Majang communities were forced to flee into the forest, cut off from access to various services. Likewise, many Highlanders had to find themselves displaced, seeking refuge in various areas - thus both groups counting the cost, a condition that made the communities to take the initiative for normalization.¹⁹⁸ The content, process and approach of conferences and public discussions in response to the 2014 Majang-Highlander inter-communal conflict signaled participatory effort. People deeply affected from both groups involved openly to express their needs, interest, fears and hopes, to the degree that it enabled the communities to exploit the interdependence between them through the decision making process. Primary actors participated mutually in delineating the underlying issues in contention which facilitated the preparation to change the manner of interaction as reflected in the outcome of the reconciliation process.¹⁹⁹ An informant adds:

¹⁹⁷ (E.g. NGI-04; RCI-05; LCI-09; KIIG-13)

¹⁹⁸ See also Chapter Seven

¹⁹⁹The process was inclusive (involved various stakeholders), transparent negotiations and dialogues were carried virtually on the ground of equality. Both groups participated in a mutually benefiting sense of interdependence. Opportunities were given for people to look forward and envision their shared future (RCI-05; KIIG-08; KIIG-11; FGD-07).

The conferences were participatory. Both groups raised their issues and concerns. From the Majang side it was posited - because we sold 'land' for mediocre money we are left in a miserable situation thus the land should be restituted. On their part, the Highlanders, set forth - we were threatened, either to comply with decisions from authorities or expelled. In short, both communities expressed their fear and interests. Deliberations were made about sources and factors responsible for the occurrence of the violence. Ideas and opinions were given and then we started eating together on the spot.²⁰⁰

In another level, many respondents²⁰¹ have attested to the feeling of fatigue and fear in Gambella town during the 2016 Anyuwaa-Nuer violent conflict so much so that no one would be immune. A lecturer, Gambella University, described the circumstances in the following way:

...the nature of conflict has changed; this is what surprised many. This has been understood by both parties. You see they wanted to clean each other; there is no person who is safe. Both knew the danger as the nature and dimension of the conflict was shocking. It created a kind of never again consciousness. You can see the blockade of the Nuer in Gambella town, the action at the regional main prison in Gambella town and Abobo. The frequency of the recurrence of appalling violence has worried many about the danger. For example, I was in *Newland* (Nuer Neighborhood in Gambella town) as the town was in chaos due to the news of a passenger bus ambush on December 28, 2016; to your surprise I was picked to safety by a Nuer.²⁰²

Between January and April 2016 more than six peace conferences and community dialogues were held between in Gambella town to look into the sources and drivers of the conflict and how best to manage it. From the nature and process of these sessions it could be inferred that the depth of the crisis permitted positive developments. One of my key informants holds, "the situation has helped people to see the big picture than getting entangled with the violence. The crisis even forced new developments as it allowed reflection and open discussion on issue undisclosed - issues that people have lacked the gut to speak about hitherto. In short, the condition created opportunity for

²⁰⁰ (RCI-05).

²⁰¹ (E.g. RCI-05; KIIG-11).

²⁰² (KIIG-04).

creativity, provided teaching materials for reconciliation and ushered to new ways on how to live with others like never before (RCI-01). The intensity of the 2016 violence implicated thorough and attentive peacemaking activities, which is unprecedented. As discussed in previous chapters, the efforts in addressing active conflict groups like the youth and creating peace constituency was instrumental in abating the violence in Gambella town. And such was a new creative means in the culture of peacemaking strategy in the GPNRS.

Therefore, as the foregoing experiences suggest though limited to some areas there is a prospect for sustainable peacebuilding process in the Gambella region, i.e. the likelihood to forsake violence and embark on shared motive for alternative means rooted in the distress and the danger from the conflict. The conception that no one is exempted may instill a never again consciousness and create the incentive for direct ownership of peace by communities. In 2016 it is widely understood by residents of Gambella town that neither side would overcome each other, that it is mutually destructive. Surprisingly, even the regional leadership and elites to which stoking inter-group animosity is largely the mantra showed commitment to peace because they are also not safe and immune. In short, the lesson may pave the way for a meaningful peacebuilding effort in the region as it prompted a tendency for better management schemes, a condition for broader outlook and actions. In these two cases, the intensity of the violence has prompted the practice in commendable activities relevant to effective mechanisms in handling incompatible interests peacefully and enhancing accountability and the rule of law. As indicated in Chapter Seven, the peacemaking efforts and post-conflict activities for these incidents have seen legal procedures interventions in holding suspects accountable and the injection of new structures to develop and foster substantive and structural justice as for instance in restoring and

strengthening of rule of law, creating temporary and permanent committees like never before yet very far away from what from the realities on the ground the needs in the GPNRS.

9.3.3 The Existence of Institutional Structures and Frameworks for Peacebuilding at National and Regional Levels

The existence of various normative and institutional structures that recognize the framework for peace and security both at the GPNRS and national levels could add to the repertoire of prospects to enhance the conflict prevention, management and transformation practice and improve the likelihood for sustainable peacebuilding process in the Gambella region.

A number of institutional framework to tackle the peace and security predicaments exist at the national level including the newly formed Ministry of Peace, the Border and Identity Commission and the National Reconciliation Commission. The mainstreaming of peace work in the country would allow tackle the limitations in coordination, synergy and capacity and address one of the most formidable challenges to peacebuilding both in the GPNRS and the country at large, the absence of coherent peacebuilding policy on conflict prevention, management and transformation where the implementation of the existing policy pronouncements heavily relied on the formal legal system, and entangled with the politics despite the fact that increasingly, majority of communal conflicts are settled through traditional mechanisms and thereby bridge the loopholes. The establishment of these institutional frameworks particularly the creation of Ministry of Peace on October 16, 2018 by the Abiy administration shows the political will from the Ethiopian government in setting the peacebuilding agenda as top priority. This will, in turn, create the opportunity to rectify one of the painstaking issues and

obstacles to constructive conflict transformation in the Gambella region, the approach and culture of interference from the central government in mediating contentious interactions and conflict in the region as third-party and its conundrums. Furthermore, the fact that there are also institutional arrangements for conflict resolution and peacebuilding activities in the GPNRS at different administrative subsidiaries particularly within the Security and Administrative Affairs Structures with personnel and experts on conflict transformation and peacebuilding that have appeared defunct so far for the reason that peacebuilding works are carried by political authorities and all issues in conflict considered political creates the possibility for effective strategies as the creation of peace ministry at the federal level would catalyze this extant administrative set ups to be functional.

9.3.4 New Political Developments Since April 2018

Although uncertain and far to say that it is promising, since April 2, 2018 Abiy Ahmed's inaugural speech as the fourth prime minister of the EPRDF profound political developments, to be hailed have occurred in Ethiopia (see Chapter Five). The wind of change that started from the center in Addis Ababa has also its trickle-down effect felt in the GPNRS. One of these developments that could be indicated as eye-opening in the political history of GPNRS is the protest of the youth in the region through the Anyuwaa dominant youth movement dubbed as *Dhaldim*.²⁰³ Inspired by the action of their counterpart in other parts of the country (e.g. the *Qerro* in Oromia, *Fano* in Amhara) and getting indignant as to why the wind of change and reforms in other parts of the country lagged in Gambella the *Dhaldim* has protested against the regional

²⁰³ *Dhaldim* is an Anyuwaa word that combined the term *Dhal* - resistance and *Diim* -oppression. Thus, literally denoting - 'resistance to oppression'.

leadership demanding for better political freedom and socioeconomic conditions.²⁰⁴ Between June 2018 and June, 2019 the youth movement has organized a number of peaceful demonstrations in the regional capital, Gambella town increasingly demanding the regional government for measures against the maladministration, corruption, and youth unemployment in the region. For example, in one of the peaceful demonstration on Sunday, September 23, 2018 which culminated in a landmark event in the political history of the GPNRS, the youth has the regional administration concede, forcing it to release five political prisoners including Obang Uguta, the leader of the movement.

Furthermore, over the past year political and civic groups, activists and public figures that have been banned and accused of ‘terrorism’ including the most influential public figure from the Gambella region, a human right and democracy advocate, the founder and leader of Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia (SMNE) Obang Metho²⁰⁵ as well as members of the Gambella People Liberation Movement (GPLM) based in Eritrea returned home.²⁰⁶ On October 2, 2018 the SMNE made a joint press conference together with affiliates sharing concern from the Benishangul Gumuz and Afar regional states to raise awareness on the existing sociopolitical situations in these regions. The conference highlighted and reflected on the pressing issues in today’s Gambella like the issues of human right abuse, gross corruption, maladministration, and the increasing

²⁰⁴ *The Dhaldim youth* movement has mainly demanded for: better economic benefit and improvement for the youth in the region; end of arbitrary detention as well as the release of its members; the protection of freedom of expression; and measures to rectify the reckless investment activities in the GPNRS which isolates the youth; and making accountable government officials who squander public money and resources; and the ‘removal’ of long-serving authorities in various administrative posts of the region for over more than two decades and the process of power transfer and the promotion of the recruitment of capable and competent leadership in the region (A blog post: Amigo Amigo’s timeline <http://www.facebook.com> : accessed on September 28, 2018).

²⁰⁵ Obong Metho has been selected as constituting member of the Ethiopian Diaspora Trust Fund by prime minister Abiy Ahmed.

²⁰⁶ This happened after top officials of the GPNRS and the incumbent governing party in the region GPDM conducted a negotiation in Asmara, Eritrea with the leaders of the GPLM facilitating the fronts eschewal of armed struggle and the official return of its members to Gambella to undertake their struggle as a political party, in peaceful political means.

youth unemployment as well as the indifference of the federal government to address these and other predicaments in the region compared to other parts of the country, calling for attention and appropriate response mechanisms.

Earlier before these events, the new prime minister visited Gambella in June 2018 where he deliberated with representatives from various segments of the region's population and addressed the public at Gambella Stadium, Gambella town. In September 2018 the prime minister also deliberated with the GPDM central committee and regional leadership of the GPNRS for two days in Addis Ababa in an effort to bringing the matters in Gambella region to attention which culminated in major leadership reshuffle within the GPDM including on the two top positions, the chairman and vice-chairman of the party. Overall, the above political developments and the new patterns of committed leadership observed after the April, 2018 leadership transition within the ruling core in the country, the EPRDF, also indicates the potential for sustainable peacebuilding in GPNRS.

CHAPTER TEN

General Conclusion and Recommendations

This is the concluding chapter. It sums up the major debates and findings of the study and attempts to draw some conclusions, provide possible recommendations, and end with by proposing research agenda for further inquiry. It proceeds in three sections. The first section reiterates the research questions that we formulate at the beginning of this study and outlines the major debates and the findings of the research and draws major conclusions. The second section, identifies, proposes and implicates on the ways forward and strategies to foster and enhance constructive conflict transformation and sustainable peacebuilding process in the GPNRS. Then, the chapter ends with recommendation for further research.

10.1 General Conclusion

As it is articulated in the introduction chapter, in its overarching sense this research investigates the nature of conflict transformation and peacebuilding in post-1991 Gambella. In an attempt to answer the research questions posed in chapter one, I have used qualitative methods of inquiry following an interpretivist approach and ‘triangulation’ as the research methodology. The use of different theoretical frameworks – i.e. critical constructivist peace theory, critical theoretical and methodological approach to conflict and peace research has proved essential in capturing different dimensions of peacebuilding that would have not otherwise been captured by one theory. Likewise, the combination of secondary data, interviews and focus group discussions has also generated rich and coherent data that would have not otherwise been generated by a single method. Hence, methodologically, ‘triangulation’ has mitigated the weaknesses and intrinsic biases that come from single-theory or

single-method studies and provided empirically grounded, convergent and comprehensive answers to the research questions.

This research begins its examination of the qualities of the conflict transformation practices, the outcome and process of the peacebuilding efforts as well as the challenges and prospects presenting the peacebuilding landscape of the GPNRS by putting it in the context of post-1991 Ethiopia – by appraising the practice and context of peacebuilding and peace in contemporary Ethiopia, in Chapter Five of this thesis. In this regard, from the review of the works on conflict resolution and peacebuilding as well as the reflections on the state of affairs of conflict and peace in the EPRDF Ethiopia complemented with my own observation in this research I have argued that the conflict transformation efforts in post *Derg* Ethiopia have been limited to short-term measures, activities aimed at ending violence - the restoration of order largely through the use of carrot and stick, and with narrow platform for participation at the grassroots. In other words, the peacemaking activities have been limited to transitory trajectories of compromise devoid of any meaningful strategy for long-term structural and deep-seated changes. The argument of this chapter goes in line with Abbink's assertion "... the EPRDF, the administrative machinery ruling the country has identified 'restoring order' by all means as its main ethos, an overdue emphasis on the containment of conflicts by force and repressive action, establishing only fragile and cosmetic arrangements based on political ideology which are in dissonance with developments on the ground" (Abbink, 2006, p. 407). This has implicated on the outcome of the efforts that have proved to be ineffective, unsatisfactory and fragile. This is reflected on the realities on ground. Today's Ethiopia is a tinderbox, replete with festering wounds, untransformed and uneasy relations among various groups with intermittent eruption into violence, and potentially capable of devouring. I have argued in this thesis that the concept, form

and practice of conflict transformation as well as the overall process of the peacebuilding in post-1991 Ethiopia, indicate that peace is merely conceptualized in its minimal sense, as the removal, management of conflict - one limited to ending overt violence and/or their containment largely oblivious of and leaving intact the social and material conditions that support and feed the violence from beneath. It is a kind of negative peace. My observation and review has associated the main challenges to peacebuilding landscape in contemporary Ethiopia to historical, sociopolitical, socioeconomic as well as normative and institutional factors. Generally, the examination of the peacebuilding architecture in EPRDF in chapter four of this thesis reflects a low profile particularly pertinent to the development of positive peace and promotion of social justice. Amid, the analysis has also indicated prospects in the post-1991 Ethiopia's peacebuilding and potential opportunities for the realization of sustainable peace in the future (see Chapter Five).

A natural requisite for initiating a process of peacebuilding is an insight into the very nature and qualities of the conflict. Put another way, any peacebuilding endeavor or scholarship that seeks to examine the process would fall short without a proper understanding of the characteristics and patterns of the conflict situation of which the peacebuilding efforts the object of enquiry. Accordingly, this research, before it investigates the nuts and bolts of the conflict transformation practice and explored the peacebuilding process in Gambella it had to unpack the conflict phenomenon (in Chapter Six of this thesis) by dwelling on the main inter-group violent conflict in the region. From the analysis of the structure, characteristics and dynamics of the various levels of conflict that have occurred in post-1991 GPNRS in Chapter Six, the study argued that the conflict situation in post-1991 Gambella is a function of many things as it occurs at different (sociopolitical, socioeconomic, sociocultural) domains and

historical experiences. Revolving around ‘identity’ as the center of their contention the main inter-communal violent conflicts in the GPNRS also exhibit national, regional and international dimensions. It is also indicated that inter-group conflicts were common in the Gambella existing long (in the form of resource-based clashes and small-scale skirmishes attributed to values embedded in identity and culture) however they have seen a mounting intensification since the early 1990s. And the main factor determining their transformation has been the institutionalization of a federal mode of governance based on ethnicity in 1991 in the country as the new political development which brought with it new structures and actors altered old competitive pattern of interaction. The multiple layers of positive discrimination and political empowerment, access and opportunities brought about by the post-1991 federal structure have further damaged the process of inter-group reconciliation’ and drastically changed the nature and intensity of conflict among the communities in Gambella region, as the decentralization largely came to pronounce elite political competition at the expense of local forms of integration. Altogether, this chapter has shown that the sources, key determinants, drivers and aspects of the conflict phenomenon in the GPNRS are many and exhibit interface between different factors, levels, actors, issues and domains – they are linked to the broader political, economic, resource, sociocultural, perceptual and security contexts and the history of state formation and state building involving multiple actors, groups and interests.

Proceeding to the main traits of the conflict settlement activities in the GPNRS my analysis of the data collected from different sources in Gambella identified four marked features of the process: (1) differential mode of intervention, (2) apathy and delayed response, (3) the use of compensation as main conflict settlement procedure and (4) the tendency of entangling issues with politics. As this study from the analysis of empirical

evidences indicated what is striking about the varying forms of intervention is they take place sidelining the sensitivities and interests of the groups in conflict, happen along group divisions or between the various levels of conflict in the region. As this thesis has shown such disproportionate attentions and peacemaking activities have become particularly problematic as they are deepening the chasm between groups in the region deteriorating further the already dire relations and heightening the sense of alienation of some groups and making the attainment of successful peacebuilding difficult (see Chapter Eight).

This study observed apathy and delayed action which comes mostly after the damage is done from the part of the regional and national governments to deal with the problems and address the concerns of the local population as enduring hallmark of the processes. For example, one of the glaring indifference is reflected in the cross-border cattle raid and attack, the dismal failure to protect citizens from the raid despite a repeated plea from the local communities and the supply of consistent information and eminent dangers. Moreover, as I have shown in Chapter Eight of this thesis, the delayed and untimely action to address problems have been responsible for considerable human cost and suffering, socioeconomic destructions as well as psychological and spiritual costs in the GPNRS. The December 13, 2003 Anyuwaa massacre in Gambella town and the 2014 Majang-Highlander conflicts are conspicuous in this regard. Participants for this research both during interview and focus group discussions sessions aptly resound how both incidents could have been prevented and the life of many civilians saved had actions and measures were taken to downsize the polarization and address the deep sense of frustrations from sporadic killings and injustice before total eruption of the situations into violence.

In the case of compensation that has identified itself as the main mechanism used in settling conflict even if the practice is a long phenomenon as a traditional means of settling dispute in the region in recent years it has become a procedure of conflict settlement mechanism in a way largely problematic. As this study indicated the emerging patterns of complicating and confounding the traditional compensation modalities (particularly the tendency of blending compensation with statutory system) which have gone increasingly unconsidered have confounded the peacebuilding business in the region in various ways. First it is deepening the culture of impunity jeopardizing the viability of the traditional reconciliation mechanisms. This is because for one thing the compensation is paid by the ‘community, clan’ or residents of a kebele to which the ‘perpetrator’ is assumed to be part of meaning that the direct perpetrator of the crime evades accountability or no attempt is made to identify suspect(s) once the compensation process is settled for that matter. Thus although it is the wrong doer who should be accountable a kind of collective punishment or guilt by association is being enforced. Second is the arbitrary exertion of sanctions as retribution and the ensuing malaise. The amount of sanctions, both in kind and in cash is also inconsistent and incongruent to the realities on the ground. As such there is no uniform and coherent custom to govern the compensation procedure; it depends on the circumstances and interest of the power holders. Even more, what is confounding the problem further this practice of compensation as collective responsibility and punishment is its extension to the government agencies. This is leading to reorientation of state resource to issues other than the purpose it ought to be used and more importantly the extension and conflation of negative attribution to a particular group (see Chapter Eight).

As this study has demonstrated a particularly prominent characteristic of peacebuilding schemes in the GPNRS also concerns the disposition of complicating activities and issues in conflict with politics inasmuch political expediency being the *raison d'être* of intervention. This is a tune to which a host of informants attested. As it is indicated the peace business is carried by political officials and everything is politicized, all issues entangled with politics and the survival of the 'power holders', barely participating professionals.

As the analysis and insight from empirical pieces of evidence collected for this research suggest the process of peacebuilding in GPNRS over the past a quarter century proved ineffective and unsatisfactory be it in their response to the immediate peacebuilding needs of the areas as well as the systemic broader issues that would foster and enhance the containment of violence in sustainable ways in the region. This is reflected in the nature of the outcome and durability of the efforts as well as the satisfaction from the local population with the process. As the study has indicated the inept or less successful peacebuilding architectures in the Gambella region is linked to a host of factors during the process ranging from the coverage, resource and coordination; and timing, sustainability and relevance of the activities to the realities on the ground. The activities are not stretched to all main conflict areas and levels of conflict in the region, and fashioned to deal with the substantive issues. Main beneficiaries and relevant stakeholders whose involvement could impact the outcome of the process both negatively and positively including the concerns of the local communities was for the most part left unheeded. Moreover, the processes largely appeared prescriptive - that they relegated particularly the objects of the efforts, the local communities, which are put at the sideline, with only an audience role and mere recipients and implementers of decision. The finding of this study have also indicated that, less, if not, any dispositions

have been observed to enrich and guide activities with analysis and an insight into the nature of conflict, neither in an apprehension in comprehensive way, to the GPNRS context nor to the specific realities of the various conflict areas and levels of conflict in the region.

Although the process would be enhanced by the use of early warning methods and proactive engagements the evidences from the analysis of this research about the peacebuilding process in the GPNRS suggests otherwise. More often than not, conflict intervention activities in the region proved to be reactive, and one guided by crisis-management framework which are also transient. In strict sense, throughout the process ‘peace’ has been understood in relation to the conflict-management model of maintaining the status quo. This is reflected by the dissatisfaction of the local communities with the process. Many participants of this research argued that responses only come after violence erupted and the peacebuilding efforts discontinued as the violence subsides. Furthermore, as the findings of this research illustrated no coordination is observed across the diverse domains, the different system-levels and layers of the conflict.

As to the suitability and relevance of the activities to the realities and the peacebuilding needs on the ground in different zones and conflict-prone areas of the GPNRS, the findings of the empirical analysis revealed dismaying. Although the situation in the Gambella region exhibits socioeconomic, political and historical anomalies that require a broad-range and context-specific activities and peacebuilding strategies the efforts have failed to explore these differences that exist across areas and levels of conflict in the region. In other ways, the peacebuilding efforts in the Gambella region have been oblivious of the factors (i.e. the distinction reflected among the various communities in

the region as to the experience, meaning and impact of the conflict) and other elements underwriting the relapse of violence. The failure to widen sphere of activities and endeavors to specificities of different demographic spaces and social environments in the region has partly determined the efficacy of the peacebuilding process and consequently the outcome. For instance, the peacebuilding efforts have failed to recognize let alone address the concerns and fears of the Anyuwaa and the Majang for whom the conflicts are seen predominantly as a threat to their core values. The narratives and discourses of ‘ethnic extinction’ is entertained by the elites and majority of the population of both groups, an assertion which has also been shared by many informants and participants of group discussion. In short, the processes have ‘overlooked’ such issues in the conflict, ethnic insecurity – the characterization of the Anyuwaa and Majang as threat to their ‘survival’. Throughout the efforts the conflicts have been characterized inherently to material interests, advantage and resource competition and dismally failed to make sense of it let alone to address the fears and insecurity of these groups. In short, throughout the peacemaking efforts, intentionally or unintentionally the understanding about the issues in conflict did not go beyond the surface phenomena.²⁰⁷

Evidently the construction of effective and sustainable peacebuilding requires the empowerment of communities as its central part. It requires an orientation from ‘simple’ one-dimensional peacebuilding to peacebuilding frameworks that take a longer and broader developmental approach (Ramsbotham et al., 2011). Furthermore, the efforts need to be undertaken with a long-range view of transforming relationships

²⁰⁷ As Lederach (1997) reminds quick fixes in protracted conflict rarely lead to sustainable processes or solutions, in such circumstances the peacebuilding process should entail a comprehensive approach and address the unique human dimensions of the types of conflict under consideration (Lederach, 1997).

within communities and their members, through conflict prevention, vision and transformation (e.g. Lederach, 1997; Karbo, 2008). Conflict intervention and peace building endeavors in GPNRS that have been in action in response to the various levels of inter-communal violence are not suited to specific local contexts, local problems, the kind of development the communities need to build sustainable peace and conflict-sensitive approaches. Furthermore, peacemaking activities are not essentially synchronized down to the earth so that they are integrated to connect peace from the top, middle range leadership to the grassroots levels, a condition that impinged on the acceptability of the interventions - often falling short, without concrete alteration as to impact the movement from violence to non-violent ways.

Based on the explanations given above and others factors (extensively discussed in Chapter Eight and Nine) the study argued that the peacebuilding process over the past quarter a century in the GPNRS have not created mutually benefiting sense of interdependence among the communities and groups involved in conflict in the region and embedded peacemaking activities into institutions that reinforce and sustain the process, a corollary of which is the recurrence of violence in the Gambella region that have went unabated.

Building on the analysis and findings in Chapter Six, Chapter Seven and Chapter Eight in Chapter Nine this research probed the challenges and opportunities presenting the peacebuilding aura of the post-1991 Gambella, it addressed research question No. 4 (What are the challenges and prospects of peacebuilding in the region?)

As shown in Chapter Nine of the thesis the peacebuilding terrain in GPNRS is characterized by a significant number of challenges. First, is the nature of conflict in the region. The main inter-group violent conflicts in the Gambella region are seemingly intractable and protracted social conflicts marked by a history of long cycle repeated violence and animosities where the communities in such condition still share a close geographical proximity while holding the trauma and hatred. These has left the process of peacemaking fragile and short-lived in that even a mere dispute between two individuals degenerates into whole scale inter-group violence. This is compounded by the deep-seated habit of suspiciousness and distrust in social relations and the lack of contact between groups in conflict making the generation of trust very hard. The analysis of this research also shows a connection between the escalation of conflict in post-1991 GPNRS and the weakening of the viability of the local customary institutions and methods of conflict resolution, which have been deprived of their viability due the co-options. The societal fragmentation due to the increasing division along group lines, the absence of contact and the existence of local leadership that concertize these divisions which induced negative stereotypes and mutual suspicion among groups in GPNRS would even be more depressing because of the shattering of the viability and applicability of the TCRMs and social values. This study argued that the weakening of the viability of local peace potentials largely through the cooption of traditional authorities, elders, and religious leaders, vocal and influential members of the communities for political purpose and control by the government has left a devastating effect on peacebuilding efforts and the societal cohesion in the GPNRS. As many aver virtually no figures are 'trusted' and obey command in the region.

The other challenge presenting the process of peacebuilding in Gambella region is the existence of those factors partly responsible for the occurrence of inter-communal violence. According to the finding of this study the unfavorable and problematic socioeconomic conditions in the region also indicate the tricky ground on which the peacebuilding process in post-1991 stands. In the GPNRS economic problems and economic inequality along group lines, resource scarcity and competition, and decline in public service have increasingly made peacemaking activities cumbersome as the peacebuilding efforts had to falter without the existence of relevant infrastructural conditions for their effectiveness.²⁰⁸ Yet, according to the finding of this study a particularly problematic and alarming issues in the region is the growing youth unemployment and the socio-economic conditions that the youth in GPNRS find themselves. Interestingly the issue of the youth has been indicated as cross-cutting variable shared throughout the interview sessions and group discussions conducted for this research (see Chapter Nine).

Effective peacebuilding moves away from ‘simple’ one-dimensional peacebuilding to peacebuilding frameworks that take a longer and broader developmental approach; an approach that Lederach (1997) calls ‘integrated peacebuilding’. In this approach,

²⁰⁸ For instance, one cause of grievance and sense of relative deprivation is reflected in the absence of economic improvement and gain of the ‘indigenous’ despite the political empowerment since the early 1990s. The fact that the political empowerment of the indigenous communities appeared more symbolic as it is not being accompanied by and translated into economic gains, has induced a *sense of relative deprivation* among the locals particularly viewed in the face of the circumstances that the economic sector in the region is dominated by Highlanders. Put it another way, the fact that, on the one hand the political set up designates the indigenous as the ‘owners’ of GPNRS while in reality did not bring about economic improvement have rendered deep contradiction soliciting the sense of alienation by contributing to the perception that there are strong unequal economic inequalities. One of my key informants (ethnic Majang) noted, “the situation that economic improvements and gains are not going fairly to benefit all groups is problematic and worrisome as it is the Highlanders who are benefiting now (NGI-04).

peacebuilding is carried out with a long-range view of transforming relationships within communities and their members, through conflict prevention, vision and transformation (Karbo, 2008, p. 126). As the findings from the study has aptly suggested one enduring and formidable challenge of the peacebuilding process in Gambella region is the short-sighted, usually top-down and militaristic approach. In this thesis I argued that the approach of the peacebuilding in GPNRS has been reactive, akin to conflict management approach, often transitory; and viewed from the broader peacebuilding framework, heavy-handed drawn on the minimalist security approach to peacebuilding.

Amid as the analysis from this research indicates the nature of the political opportunity structure have presented the most formidable challenge to the peacebuilding process in the GPNRS. The nature of governance appeared as the main fault line from which all things have flown as it sets the rule of the game to be anarchic where parties and groups in conflict in the region must fend for themselves in self-help thereby rationalizing violent approach and strategy as the 'only viable mechanism' to put forth one's concern. The weak democratic and political culture and low capacity in the GPNRS have run through every aspect, negatively permeating and impinging on all activities of peacebuilding and actions including short-term conflict management measures and the development of sustainable peace and harmonious and stable sociopolitical condition in the region. This situation is further confounded by the sheer absence of political elites and leadership in the region particularly a political leadership to support, motivate and direct communities to peacebuilding process; and the partial and weak security system that proved subjective, and main spoiler of peace in the region. Seen altogether the impediments to peace and security in the post-1991 GPNRS, as this research indicated, have their circumferences circumnavigated around the nature of governance and political dispensation that adores ethnicity as out and out for its workings.

In addition to the aforementioned variables, my research has identified third party intervention, the manner of ‘interference’ of the EPRDF, the central government as it engages to address and ‘resolve’ the conflict and political strife in the GPNRS as another challenge to the peacebuilding process in Gambella. As such, the practice of the central authorities and its representatives as ‘third-party’ in mediating ‘peace’ in the Gambella region have negatively affected the relational and physical dynamics between the groups, and parties to conflict in the region and with that the credibility and legitimacy of the peacemaking interventions. First, as many informants argue²⁰⁹ the EPRDF is not earnest and keen in addressing the problems in the Gambella region. Second, as external players, both the ruling regime in the country and its representatives in GPNRS often attempt to engage in peacebuilding activities without seeking sustainable solutions at the grassroots level. Moreover, they have very little or no intimate acquaintance with the local environment. The main philosophy behind the intervention from the EPRDF authorities has starkly and constantly proved to be political expediency. This is reflected for instance in the lack of interest and inability to ‘interfere’ when the condition in the region demands with a pretext of justification on the grounds of ‘noninterference on regional matters’, and when they did intervene they do it on partisan ground, often sidelining the sensitivities and interest of conflicting parties. This happened in late 1990s and early 2003 in the events concerning the Anyuwaa-Nuer conflict. In the process leading to the 1998 and 2007 party mergers in the region; and in 2009 during the political tension and conflict among the Nuer elites.²¹⁰ In this research I have argued that the different degree of interference and the way EPRDF exercised its influence in settling the inter-group and political conflict in

²⁰⁹(NGI-03; NGI-04; KIIG-06; KIIG-07; LCI-01).

²¹⁰ (see Chapter Eight and Chapter Nine of this thesis as well as Gizachew, 2011).

GPNRS have greatly affected the socio-political cohesion in the region and casted doubt about the legitimacy of the outside intervention and the way an outside contributor can promote support for the cooperation among the local population. The federal intervention has rubbed off on and changed the relational structure, physical dynamics and negatively affected the outcomes of peacebuilding efforts with that inhibiting the process of constructive conflict transformation in the region.

The hitherto academic debate and prevailing orientations (discussed in Chapter Four) propel that a comprehensive understanding of intra-state and inter-communal conflicts could fall short without consideration of its regional or international connections. This is particularly true to the nature of both intra-state social conflicts as well as inter-state conflicts in the sub-Saharan Africa. This is also true to Ethiopia. As the finding of this research has indicated prominently the spillover factor from the adjacent southern Sudan has demonstrated itself as one major building block of violence in the Gambella region. The study argued that the spillover effect from the southern Sudan has nourished into the prevailing conflict in GPNRS consequently encumbering peacebuilding endeavors as well as sustainable peace in the Gambella region in manifold ways. Besides, the aforementioned ones, as the study has suggested issues pertaining to the capacity gap from the conflict workers and stakeholders especially about the conflict dynamics in the region and the failure to view (define) peace as a collective good and poor infrastructure like road, and telecommunication as variables adding to the repertoire of inhibiting factors in the process of the peacebuilding in the post-1991 Gambella.

From the analysis of the empirical data generated from fieldwork in GPNRS corroborated and substantiated with secondary sources this study has aptly shown that in post-1991 Gambella successful conflict transformation and sustainable peace proved elusive. It is argued that the peacebuilding process demonstrated ineffective and unsatisfactory if not an utter failure, fraught with multiple challenges and setbacks. This does not however mean that there are no worth noting success stories and experiences upon which future works would be built or any prospects of lasting peace exist. In other way, it does not imply that the GPNRS is in miserable state of affairs, devoid of prospects and potential opportunities for sustainable peacebuilding in the future. This thesis (in Chapter Seven and Chapter Nine) has indicated the existence of previous commendable experiences and local peace potentials; the existence of institutional structures and frameworks for peacebuilding both at the regional and national levels as well as the emerging political developments in the country over the past year as prospects for constructive and sustainable peacebuilding process in the region.

10.2 Policy Implications: The Absence of a Conflict-Sensitive Approach and its Outcome

This study has used empirical findings to show that the conflict transformation efforts, as well as the overall process of peacebuilding in post-1991 Gambella, are not successful and effective. The peacebuilding architectures in the GPNRS in response to the recurrent inter-communal violent conflicts and political strife have not formulated a clear and compelling picture of peace attractive to parties and groups and to impact their behavior. Therefore, the arguments for this justification implicate the need for policy review. Four principal policy implications have been identified to be of the essence to be suggested by this study if a better and a more successful conflict transformation effort is to happen - sustainable peacebuilding process, the movement

from violence to peace are to thrive and sustained in the GPNRS. First is the need for policy review with an understanding and orientation towards inclusive and integrated peacebuilding agenda and strategy – an approach that accounts for many variables, transformation across multiple fronts. With this in mind, the study also finds it imperative to suggest for a policy direction and emphasis to address the socioeconomic problem in the region. Thirdly, this study finds it emphatic to suggest for policy direction for political and security enhancing measures and strategies if constructive transformation and meaningful peace is desired in the GPNRS. Finally, the study shows a serious need for a political will both by the regional and federal governments to contrive an attentive policy and strategy (short-term, middle range and long-term) to address the effect of the conditions from the Southern Sudan on the conflict and peace problematic in Gambella region of Ethiopia.

10.2.1 Agenda for Inclusive and Integrated Peacebuilding Approach

As already indicated an enduring challenge of the peacemaking business in the GPNRS is the methods of engagement from the government agencies and other stakeholders as they deal with the conflict phenomenon in the region. The successive conflict transformation efforts have revealed less successful and meaningful peace that makes sense to the communities in the Gambella region appeared elusive due to the very deficiencies and limitation with the approach in building peace. Characteristically the approach has been ‘simple’, one-dimensional and the process reactive. As it is demonstrated the ethos of interventions measures have essentially been militaristic and top-down. In the schemes no tendency is observed as to make effort to genuinely understand the local setting to best tune action so that the outcome and sustainability of the efforts are enhanced. No meaningful change is seen both in the immediate needs and the substantive and broader systemic issues concerning the conflict. Rather the

architectures' can be named as one that unduly limited the complex process of building peace with political aspects. This suggests the need for policy review and a reorientation of the peacebuilding approach in the Gambella region from uni-dimensional to a framework that takes a longer and broader developmental approach, 'integrated peacebuilding', in the lexicon of Lederach - with an understanding towards inclusive and integrated peacebuilding agenda, an approach that accounts for many variables. Accordingly, this study finds to underline and suggest an approach of peacebuilding for the GPNRS that embraces both top-down and bottom-up approaches, a conflict intervention and transformation strategy that takes into consideration the involvement of all groups and the entire society in the region. In particular, the following major actions are suggested for the development and enhancement of constructive transformation and sustainable peacebuilding process in the GPNRS:

- ***Widening efforts and activities to the specific realities and conditions of the different social environments in the Gambella region.*** The finding of this study confirms the remark of Lederach, the assertion: "in reality, the details of and exact procedures for building peace make up a complex, multifaceted endeavor and can vary significantly from setting to setting. Such a perspective suggests the need to situate any given conflict in an expansive rather than a narrow time frame and to look specifically for the elements that make up a sustainable process" (Lederach, 1997). This implies that if a conflict is to be transformed on the ground, distinction be made among civilians and groups based on their experiences and perceptions as pertinent. Even if general patterns of commonalities are discernible across them, the various inter-communal violent conflicts in the GPNRS exhibit unique features distinct to areas, the type of conflict, the concerns groups and parties in conflict put forth, cherish and adhere

to (see Chapter Six). As such, as the findings from this study indicated the empirical realities in the GPNRS reflect a complex and distinct peacebuilding needs meaning that, if efforts and strategies that are likely to bring about successful outcome and enhance the process of sustainable peacebuilding in the Gambella region are required they should be informed by a context-specific and prioritized interventions according to specifics in different areas and the populations. In short, the benefit of my argument in the proposition is those policy makers should drive for a context-specific and conflict sensitive framework in planning and developing a response to the conflict situation in the GPNRS.

- ***Community cohesion and reconciliation schemes:*** address the relational barriers. Reconciliation activities, people to people process will increase the capacity to mitigate conflict, prevent violence in GPNRS. As the findings from the examination of the empirical realities in the region strongly suggest if a veritable and lasting transformation is required in the Gambella region effecting changes in the relational dynamics of the conflict, relationship building actions are central. Amid it should be noted that community cohesion and reconciliation programs will only be effective if they are intertwined with the feelings of safety in the future, the necessary components are addressed - the socioeconomic problems on the ground such as inequality, unemployment and social and economic problems in the region. Therefore, it is imperative that effort that aimed addressing the subjective aspects of the conflict carried in tandem with the consideration into the specific social conditions in the region in order to contain the relapse of violence. As to process that the people to people reconciliation activities in the Gambella region ought to take: it is to be heeded

that the success hinges on the empowerment of communities. Opportunity must be given for people to look forward and envision their shared future because of the fact that future of those communities who are fighting and locked into conflictual interactions in the GPNRS are ultimately linked and interdependent. Cognizant of this, for instance, the methods of reconciliation should entail first identifying and hammering out the underlying issues in the contention through a mutual effort to be followed by a preparation to change the manner of interaction and the basic nature of the relationship that links the local communities inhabiting the Gambella region, those involved in the future. Extending and amplifying the experience of Majang Zone in 2014 and the experience from Gambella town in 2016 (see Chapter Seven and Nine) may be helpful in this regard.

Overall, the study has confirmed the observation and recommendation of scholars and case studies in the situations of protracted social conflict as resembling the conflict situation in GPNRS: that relationship is both the basis of the conflicts and of their long-term solution; thus the deliberate effort should be effected to address the subjective aspects in such conflicts, a response to experiential and subjective realities shaping the needs and perspective of people. As Dayton & Kriesberg (2009) pointed out, “re-humanizing one’s enemy, for instance, by creating super-ordinant identity among conflicting parties, helping people to see their independence²¹¹ would create conditions

²¹¹ Groups involved in GPNRS conflict situation are interdependent one another for their living, for their needs in various aspects of life, recognized and felt by the local community as already pointed out. Therefore, if entertained this *interdependence* can also be viable tool to open channels of communication to allow parties to more openly debate their differences and influence one another.

where peacemaking is possible” (Dayton & Kriesberg, 2009, p. 4). To this end, this study suggests that in order to break the perpetual cycles of violence and resistances people-oriented relational transformation activities among the local population in Gambella region should be undertaken, or public peace process must be enhanced; and the process is apt to highlight the wider social and political sources of a conflict.

- ***Explore the gaps between national, regional and local contexts:*** In this regard the culture of the federal government in dealing with the problems in the GPNRS and the status of Highlanders could be examples. As aptly indicated in this thesis an enduring painstaking issues in conflict and peace work in the GPNRS has been the nature of intervention from the EPRDF authorities which has negatively affected the manner of interaction between groups and parties in conflict in the region in as much as at times conflict settlement measures by the federal government to ‘resolve’ one conflict being the sources of another conflict (see Chapter Eight and Chapter Nine). In a strict sense, it is imperative to increase awareness in the federal government and the agencies and representatives that operate in the Gambella region about the intimate link between national level political events, the mode of intervention from the central government and escalation of political conflicts at the local and regional levels in the GPNRS. Policies and intervention that comes from the federal government should be cognizant of the context under which it is implemented and consider the unintended damages. Particularly representatives from the central government should adhere to such cases and reconsider the ‘one size fits all’ approach while solving disputes in the region. To borrow the words of Dereje:

... representatives from the federal Ministry should take the issues underneath factional politics seriously instead of strategic partnership with a certain faction or vulnerability to local manipulation. This, above all, includes promoting a democratic culture in party politics and internal party politics; facilitating the emergence of competent and representative regional leaders capable of articulating regional interests (Dereje, 2009, p. 32).

The ethnic federal structure and the form of governance that uses ‘ethnicity’ as an out and out means of dispensation and the ensuing working of politics in post-1991 GPNRS has complicated the tasks of peacebuilding in Gambella region in various ways. A reflection of this is prominently observed in the responses to the aftermath of violent conflict incidence and the conflict management works to address them and the response of political elites (see Chapter Seven). Ethnicity is the mirror from which everything is framed, governing all aspects of life. This has created a clash of paradigm between and within the locals and national setting and asymmetry between the means of intervention and the local setting. One main illustration of this is the status of Highlanders in the region, the ‘inconvenient minorities’. For instance, in Majang zone Highlanders were adamantly demanding for federal administration in the midst of the 2014 Majang-Highlander violent conflict – one informant invoked, ‘*Federal yigzan*’ (*let we be governed under the federal administration*). The point is this: the governance structure has complicated the process of peacebuilding in the region and by extension the attainment of workable strategy that accommodates the interest of the various groups in the GPNRS. Therefore, there is a need for making an overhaul to explore the impact of the governance policy for the realization of a workable peacebuilding strategy responsive to all groups and actors in the Gambella region.

10.2.2 Addressing the Socioeconomic Problems in the Region

This research provides solid evidence that peace and development strategies in the GPNRS over the past a quarter century have not solved or addressed the essential socioeconomic needs in the region. The in-alterability of the previously existing socioeconomic problems that support and accentuate the occurrence of violence and additional ones in post-1991 periods have made inter-group harmonious interaction difficult and peace elusive in the Gambella region. What is even depressing is the manner in which the form, scope and magnitude of socioeconomic predicaments in the region are increasing, meaning that the cycles of inter-group conflict and vendetta in the GPNRS are likely to deepen and persist in the future unless necessary measures are taken to address the malaises. Accordingly, this study finds it imperative to suggest for the following major actions both by the federal and the regional government as well as other agencies to address the problems at the policy level:

- *Economic empowerment measures and alternative strategies for tackling natural resources scarcity and competitions.* As Duffy (2009) recounts democratization in the absence of economic improvement and the capacity of government to deliver socioeconomic service could be dangerous. He writes, “enhancing democracy allows groups to express their aspirations freely and to engage other groups in negotiations for the resources needed to realize those aspirations. But those resources cannot be realized if the regime lacks the capacity to deliver them or at least provide the infrastructural conditions necessary to attain them” (Duffy, 2009, p. 118). As this study aptly indicated, the political empowerment of the indigenous groups since 1991 have not been translated in to economic improvement or supported with economic gains alongside. Put it another way, the fact that, on the one hand the political set up

designates the indigenous as the 'owners' of GPNRS while in reality did not bring about economic improvement have rendered deep contradiction soliciting the sense of alienation and grievance contributing to the occurrences of violence in many ways. Therefore, there is a real sense of urgency for measures and strategies that enhance the dire economic opportunities and living conditions in the region. In this regard, widening economic sector and access would be helpful given the fact that in the GPNRS there is a gross lack of experience to engage in other activities other than civil service (public). Particularly from the local people, the only means of employment is in the government public posts which is increasingly becoming narrow and choked due to the gap between the demand and the capacity of the public posts to accommodate. Addressing the increasing unemployment problem in the region, particularly youth unemployment is also very important. The socioeconomic condition under which the youth in the GPNRS are in is alarmingly depressing. They are increasingly disgruntled, and this is leading to increased violence and heightened militancy from the part of the youth in the GPNRS (see Chapter Nine). And this is partly because the youth in the Gambella region have little opportunity for education/employment/livelihoods beyond limited agro-pastoralist and cattle raiding.

Furthermore, alternative strategies of development should be devised in order to mitigate the adverse effects of the socioeconomic engineering projects like large scale land acquisition for massive commercial agriculture, and increasing population pressure which are deepening resource scarcity, and posing threat to the livelihood of the indigenous community. As the study has aptly indicated

competition for and over limited livelihood resources particularly land has been integral and one of the main drivers of inter-communal violent conflicts in the region. This is particularly true to the most protracted conflict in the GPNRS, the Anyuwaa-Nuer inter-ethnic conflict, the Majang-Highlander dispute and conflict and the intra-ethnic clan conflict among the Nuer. What is striking is the manner in which the scarcity of the essential resources are increasing the likelihood of recurrence of violence in the Gambella region. Therefore, there is a need for a harmonious and all-inclusive review of existing investment strategies, development and land laws and lessened livelihood competition and sustainable livelihood support strategies and projects in the Gambella region.

It is worth noting that the strategies such as dealing with the socioeconomic, security and violence dynamic in the GPNRS should be contrived according to the need and priorities of the communities in different areas of the region. Identifying areas with the highest level of violence and socioeconomic deprivations and creating stakeholders there can serve as preventive approach. In order to embed peace and foster continual support from the ground, it is vital to explore local people's expectations.

10.2.3 Political and Security Structures Enhancing Strategies and Measures

This study has indicated the nature of the political opportunity structure which is anarchic as the main fault line, the core factor.²¹² Accordingly, enhancing the political institutions, promoting the use of democratic practice and enhancing the capacity of the regional government to deliver the infrastructural condition that supports the function of democratic political practice are of a paramount policy directions which this study strongly suggests to turn around the tide from vicious cycle of violence and low political development to virtuous cycle of enduring peace and development in the GPNRS. Specifically, the following policy imperatives are suggested to the federal and the regional government as well as other agencies to address the problems at the policy level:

- ***Promote democratic political culture and practice:*** As this study has shown the absence of strong institutions and political environment in the region to serve as a buttress of a condition where the interest of various groups in the region could be articulated and accommodated has militated against the achievement of meaningful peace and development in the Gambella region significantly. As such, in post-1991 Gambella the absence of peaceful platforms to appeal, achieve and cherish one's concern partly explains the resort to violence (see Chapter Nine). It is therefore, imperative to expand other platforms to address grievance and issues. The regional government needs to

²¹² The weak democratic and political culture and low capacity in the GPNRS have run through every aspect, negatively permeating and impinging on all activities of peacebuilding and actions including short-term conflict management measures and the development of sustainable peace and harmonious and stable sociopolitical condition in the region. Seen altogether the impediments to peace and security in the post-1991 GPNRS, as this research indicated, have their circumferences circumnavigated around the nature of governance and political dispensation (see Chapter Nine).

look inward to ensure its policies are inclusive, non-discriminatory and participatory and provide enough political space. In a strict sense, this study suggests for the enhancement of political institutions, the need to build a political opportunity structure which meets the condition where groups in the region enjoy opportunities to express their aspirations in the context of democratic institutions without fear of reprisal in tandem with strategies that enhance the infrastructural capacity of the regional government to deliver to create the conditions under which those aspirations could become attainable. This research posits that the simultaneous promotion of the capacity of regional administration and the democratization process in the GPNRS would enhance the likelihood of long-lasting peace in the Gambella region.

- ***Facilitate and Promote the emergence and recruitment of competent and critical leadership:*** An essential ingredient of sustainable peacebuilding is a critical mass of leadership that can raise hope, generate ways and means to reach the goals, and commit people to the peacebuilding process. It is palpable from the analysis of this study²¹³ that the regional political elites are largely responsible for the predicaments and quagmire the GPNRS and its people are going through. The political elites and the leadership in the GPNRS are embroiled in an extractive view of politics, instrumental utility of politics. This is reflected strikingly throughout the interview and group discussion sessions, in the utterance of the participants (see Chapter Nine). Overall, the absence of prudent, attentive and responsible leadership in the region has posed critical challenge to the peace process in Gambella. For this reason, the study strongly

²¹³ In Chapter Eight and Chapter Nine

suggests for ways and strategies to address the leadership problem so that competent, critical and accountable leaders would come to the fore. And for this to be possible one way would be to promote a democratic culture in party politics and internal party politics; and facilitate the emergence of competent and representative regional leaders capable of articulating regional interests.

10.2.4 Addressing the Spillovers and Issues Connected with South

Sudan

From the analysis of the dynamics of conflict and peace in the GPNRS it is understandable and evident that as part of a necessary condition for enunciating appropriate intervention and transformation strategies for the conflict situation in Gambella it is indispensable that we take into account both the context-specificities to the region (as already shown) and the regional resonance, the connection and the spillover effect from the neighboring state, the southern Sudan. As the argument from this study shows the impacts of the development in southern Sudan on the peace problematic in Gambella region strongly suggests that the normalization of the environment in South Sudan defines the course of conflict transformation and positively impacts the development of sustainable peace in Gambella region of Ethiopia. As such it is imperative to say that a conflict resolution mechanism and endeavor in the GPNRS that does not take this external element into account would hardly be successful and lasting. Towards this point, the study shows a serious need for a political will both by the regional and federal governments to formulate a proactive policy strategy to address such issues:

- *Appropriate Policy and Strategy for the Normalization and Peace in South Sudan:* The study shows a serious need for a political will both by the regional and federal governments to contrive an attentive policy and strategy to address the conditions from the Sudan, if a long-term and sustainable peace that would make sense to the communities in the Gambella region of Ethiopia is desired. In this regard, because the issues at stake are complex and sensitive a huge emphasis should be accorded on getting the right depth of analysis and understanding of social and political dynamics and getting the right level of relationships with the broad range of stakeholders concerned before and in designing appropriate policy and strategy to ameliorate and deal with the complex and intricate relation involving the conflict situation in GPNRS and the southern part of the Sudan. Intervention may include working at regional (the IGAD and the AU) level to the reconciliation and promotion of sustainable peace in South Sudan. The Ethiopian government should place a serious need for this, taking the work of engaging in finding both short-term and long-term solution for the conflict and crisis in the South Sudan with resolute given the fact that the effect is enormous not only in its part of the Gambella region but also the country's at large. It is to be noted that over the past years Gambella has been spotted as the main gateway of the illicit-arms flow to Ethiopia, not to mention the profound impact of the war in the Sudan on the Gambella regional state (as given in chapter five and chapter eight of this thesis). Both the national regional governments should in particularly take the issue of the refugee and its connection and impact on the socioeconomic and sociopolitical condition in the Gambella region seriously, handle it in a very attentive and prudent manner.

▪ ***Promote Peace and Governance Initiatives at Ethio-South Sudan border:***

This study strongly suggests for both the regional administration and the federal government to explore opportunities for peace and governance strengthening initiatives at the ethio-sudan border. It is to be noted that the vast open and uncontrolled border that the Gambella region of Ethiopia shares with the southern Sudan has always remained a problem child for the Gambella region and its communities.

Yet, we have also seen glimpse of light, particularly following the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in Sudan in January, 2005: how the prospect of peace after CPA through the subsequent establishment of governmental institutions in Southern Sudan created a climate of optimism for peace along the border with huge implication for the Gambella region of Ethiopia before the eruption of civil war in the newly created country in December, 2013 upset the whole system and restored the previous dreadful circumstances, even more profoundly. As Dereje (2006) pointed out the signing of the CPA in Sudan in January 2005 has set the stage for a normalization of the environment in Southern Sudan with huge implications for the Gambella region of Ethiopia. This is reflected for instance by the actions from the new administration of southern Sudan and the government of Ethiopia when they recognized importance of disarmament along the border in order to secure peace in the area. The two governments initiated a very relevant and timely initiative of joint disarmament program (Dereje, 2006). The prospects created in Sudan in the mid-2000s have also implicated on peace and governance initiatives schemes along the borders by other stakeholders. The initiative by Pact-Ethiopia

that sought strengthening peace and governance at the Sudan-Ethiopia border is worth noting (see Dereje, 2006).

In recent years, a number of joint peace and disarmament initiatives have been conducted between the government of South Sudan and Ethiopia through a trilateral joint-venture platform that has brought together the Upper Nile state of the South Sudan, the Gambella regional state of Ethiopia and the ENDF (see chapter eight). In strict sense, this is to assert that peace and governance initiatives along the borders of the South Sudan adjacent to GPNRS is integral for the enhancement of peace and security in the Gambella region, and towards this point, these initiatives could be considered sinews especially where they are reinvigorated and executed well and in impartial manner.

10.3 Areas for Further Research

This study examined the practice of conflict transformation as well as the overall process of peacebuilding in post-1991 Gambella. It takes an overarching and holistic engagement within the remits of the whole GPNRS. Hence, it lacks detail investigation of individual cases of conflict intervention efforts undertaken to address the various levels of inter-communal violent conflicts that have occurred in the GPNRS over the past a quarter century. The peacebuilding business is a multifarious task as the details and exact procedures for building peace make up a complex, multifaceted endeavor that can vary significantly from setting to setting. Therefore, to generate a more achievable and practical policy and strategy in order to promote and enhance the process of constructive conflict transformation and sustainable peacebuilding in Gambella region more studies that are attuned to the specificities and unique peacebuilding needs of the various areas of the region and the levels of conflict are required to further the problem.

Exploring the following as potential research can make possible the realization of this purpose:

- No detail study and reflection have been made on the ways to address the Anyuwaa-Nuer inter-ethnic conflict, the most protracted conflict in the region. What has been on the spotlight is the very conflict itself. Although volumes of studies that deal with the Anyuwaa-Nuer inter-ethnic relation and the conflict between these two groups is available no detail examination as to how the conflict could be transformed exist. And the situation has gone alarming and depressing from time to time, continuing to be the most single challenging problem to peace and security in the GPNRS. As such to reconcile the competing needs of the Anyuwaa and the Nuer, long-term intervention and research is needed. What do they want (both Anyuwaa and Nuer)? What are the ways to transform this seemingly ‘intractable’ conflicts? Would be helpful questions to ask and engage;

- The condition and status of the ‘Highlanders’ in the GPNRS have not been considered and treated very well. The ‘Highlanders’ who make up the second largest group in the region have been subjugated to abysmal position in the political dispensation since 1991. Yet they form a sizable number with profound impact on the social and economic aspects of the region. We have seen in this study how the ‘limbo’ position of the Highlanders in the Gambella region complicated peacemaking activities. Therefore, the researcher recommends further research in this area - the political status of Highlanders and its implication on peace and sociopolitical development in the GPNRS;

- The security threat of the Anyuwaa and the Majang has not been treated very well. One striking reality that this research has come up with during the fieldwork in the Gambella region is the way the Anyuwaa and Majang frame the conflict and the overall condition they are in as ‘existential threat’. However, the conflict work and peacebuilding architectures in the region have remained totally ignorant of the *societal security dilemma* of the Majang and the Anyuwaa. This study indicated that the insecurity anxiety of these groups as ‘eminent’. Therefore, the researcher recommends further research in this area.

- Throughout this study as well as earlier works on conflict situation in GPNRS the role of the federal government has been state enormously, particularly in negative manner. Yet, there is very limited study on how to enhance the role of the central government as third party ‘mediator’ in the region in a way that is constructive, attentive to the people of Gambella and the political realities of the region. Given this immense role of the EPRDF and the Ethiopian culture of politics relevant to center-periphery relation, this research recommends for a further and detail study on the nature of relation between the GPNRS and the federal government and how this shapes the dynamics of conflict and peace in the Gambella region.

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²¹⁴ I follow here citing Ethiopian and Eritrean authors with their first name, as it is a custom in the two countries that names are not based on family or surnames, and authors are often cited and referenced by their given name followed by their father's.

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Annex I: List of Informants

For the purpose of confidentiality names of the interviewees are withheld

No.	Code (Key Informant Interview, KII; Informant I)	Affiliation	Date	Remark
GPNRS officials/experts and former officials (G)				
1.	KIIG-01	GPNRS administrative council	February 13, 2017	
2.	KIIG-02	GPNRS Disaster and Risk Management	February 14, 2017	
3.	KIIG-03	GPNRS Disaster and Risk Management	February 16, 2017	
4.	KIIG-04	Gambella University	February 17, 2017	
5.	KIIG-05	GPNRS Education Bureau	March 3, 2017	Former deputy administrator of Lare district
6.	KIIG-06	Gambella University	March 6, 2017	
7.	KIIG-07	GPNRS Administration and Security Affairs Bureau	March 8, 2017	
8.	KIIG-08	GPNRS Administration and Security Affairs Bureau	March 9, 2017	
9.	KIIG-09	Itang administrative council	March 10, 2017	
10.	KIIG-10	Itang administrative council	March 10, 2017	
11.	KIIG-11	Majang zone Administrative Council	March 19, 2017	
12.	KIIG-12	Akash Kebele Administration	March 18, 2017	
13.	KIIG-13	Majang zone Administration and Security Affairs Bureau	March 20, 2017	
14.	KIIG-14	Gambella Teacher's Education & Health Science College	October 19, 2018	
15.	KIIG-15	Gambella University	November 19, 2018	
16.	KII-16	Ethiopian Civil Service University	February 5 & 7, 2017	
17.	KII-17	Gambella Teacher's Education & Health Science College	March 25, 2017	
Members of the Local Community (LC); Local Informant (LCI)				
1.	LCI-01	Nuer, Newland, Gambella	February 19, 2017	
2.	LCI-02	Highlander, Gambella	March 17, 2017	
3.	LCI-03	Anyuwaa, Gambella	February 16, 2017	
4.	LCI-04	Nuer, Itang	March 6, 2017	
5.	LCI-05	Anyuwaa, Itang	March 7, 2017	
6.	LCI-06	Majang, Chemi	March 18, 2017	
7.	LCI-07	Highlander, Akash	March 19, 2017	
8.	LCI-08	Majang, Yeri	March 20, 2017	
9.	LCI-09	Highlander, Yeri	March 21, 2017	

10. LCI-10 Nuer, Gambella July 21, 2018

Religious/community Elders and Figures (RC) Informants (RCI)

- | | | | |
|----|--------|--|--------------------------------|
| 1. | RCI-01 | Mekaneyesus Church,
Western Gambella Bethel
Presbytery | February 25 &
March 1, 2017 |
| 2. | RCI-02 | Mekaneyesus Church, Eastern
Gambella Bethel Presbytery | February 27, 2017 |
| 3. | RCI-03 | Itang, Angota | March 10, 2017 |
| 4. | RCI-04 | Itang, Itang Kiir | March 11, 2017 |
| 5. | RCI-05 | Meti, Akash | March 17, 2017 |
| 6. | RCI-06 | Meti, Chemi | March 18, 2017 |

Personal Communication with the Researcher (PC)

- | | | | |
|----|--------|--|-------------------|
| 1. | PCI-01 | Researcher in field work in
Gambella town | February 25, 2017 |
| 2. | PCI-02 | Researcher in field work in
Nuer areas | March 9, 2017 |
| 3. | PCI-03 | Researcher in field work in
Anyuwa areas | March 11, 2017 |
| 4. | PCI-04 | Researcher in field work in
Majang areas | March 20, 2017 |

NGO Officials/Researchers/ Academics (NGR)

- | | | | | |
|----|--------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. | NGI-01 | Ruhr University, Bochum,
Germany | July 16, 2016 &
February 22, 2018 | |
| 2. | NGI-02 | UNDP | February 16, 2017 | |
| 3. | NGI-03 | WHO | February 19, 2017 | Former
government
official |
| 4. | NGI-04 | UNHCR | March 13 & 15,
2017 | |

Annex II: List of Focus Group Discussions

No.	Code (FGD)	Affiliation	Date	Remark
1.	FGD-01	FGD with the Anyuwaa, Gambella (5 members)	February 12, 2017	
2.	FGD-02	FGD with Highlanders, Gambella (4 members)	February 16, 2017	
3.	FGD-03	FGD with the Nuer, Gambella (7 members)	February 18, 2017	
4.	FGD-04	FGD with the Highlanders and Nuer, Gambella (7 members)	February 20, 2017	
5.	FGD-05	FGD with the Highlanders, Gambella (5 members)	March 7, 2017	
6.	FGD-06	FGD with the Nuer, Agnota, Itang (6 members)	March 9, 2017	
7.	FGD-07	FGD with the Anyuwaa, Itang Kir, Itang (7 members)	March 10, 2017	
8.	FGD-08	FGD with academics from Gambella University and Gambella Teacher Education and Health Science College, Gambella (4 members)	March 11, 2017	
9.	FGD-09	FGD with Majang, Meti (5 members)	March 16, 2017	
10.	FGD-10	FGD with the Highlanders, Akash (6 members)	March 18, 2017	
11.	FGD-11	FGD with the Majang, Chemi (5 members)	March 18, 2017	
12.	FGD-12	FGD with Highlanders, Yeri (6 members)	March 20, 2017	