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INSTITUTE FOR PEACE AND SECURITY STUDIES**

**Resource Related Conflicts in Metekel Zone of Benishangul-Gumuz
Region, Ethiopia**

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my family, Dr Aklilu Amsalu (my supervisor), Engineer Yosef Shiferaw (Director of ICT at AAU), and Dr. Andargachew Tilahun for their continuous support and encouragement during my PhD journey.

Statement of the Author

I, the undersigned, declare that this PhD dissertation entitled “Resource Related Conflicts in Metekel Zone of Benishangul-Gumuz Region, Ethiopia” is my original work and that all the resources and materials used for the dissertation have been duly acknowledged. This dissertation is submitted to Addis Ababa University Institute for Peace and Security Studies presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Peace and Security Studies. I declare that this dissertation is not submitted to this or any other University, Collage or Institute for the award of any diploma or degree. Brief quotations from this dissertation are allowable without special permission if accurate acknowledgment of the source is made

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ACRONYMS

ANDM	Amhara National Democratic movement
ARS	Amhara Regional Sate
AU	African Union
BG	Benshenguli Gumuze
BGRS	Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State
BGPDUF	Benishangul-Gumuzp People Democratic Unity Front
Boro-SPDM	Shinasha People’s Democratic Movement
BPLM	Benshenguli People Liberation Movement
CCRDA	Consortium of Christian Relief and Development Association
CEWARN	ConflictEarlyWarning and Response Mechanism
CSAE	Central Statistics Agency ofEthiopia
CSOs	Civil society organizations
EFP	Ethiopian Federal Police Force
EPDM	TheEthiopian People’sDemocraticMovement
EPRA	Ethiopia People’sRevolutionaryArmy
EPRDF	Ethiopian People’sRevolutionaryDemocraticFront
EMDF	Ethiopian Military Defance force
ENDF	Ethiopian National Defense Force
ENISS	Ethiopian National Inteligency and Security Service
EU	European Union
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
GPDM	Gumuz People’s Democratic Movement
GPLM	Gumuz People LiberationMovement
EPLF	Eriterian Peaople Liberation Front
GDP	Gross DomesticProduct
GERD	Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dame

HOF	House of Federation
HoPR	House of People's Representatives
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority for Development
KPDM	Komo People Democratic Movement
MOP	Ministry of Peace
MPDM	Mao People's Democratic Movement
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NEBE	National Election Board of Ethiopia
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
OPDO	Oromo People's Democratic Organisation
ORS	Oromia Regional State
PP	Prosperity Party
SPLA	Sudan People Liberation Army
SPDM	Shinasha People's Democratic Movement
SNNPRS	Southern Nations Nationalities Peoples Regional State
SNRS	Sidama Nations Regional State
TGE	Transitional Government of Ethiopia
TPLF	Tigray Peoples Liberation Front
UNHRC	UN Human Rights Committee
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UN,	United Nation

GLOSSARY

Derge	Theregimeinpowerfrom1974-1991
Kebele	Thelowest level of administration
Marxist regime	States have been marked by the State and Comunist party
Neftegna	Literally one who owns a gin, associated with solider settlers in southern Ethiopia to whom the government granted rights over land and people in the 19 th Century
Region	The namefor the constituentunits within the Ethiopian Federation
Woreda	District which is an administrative structure betweenKebeleandZone
Zones	Adminsterative Units that are found withein Killililss (regions or States)

ABSTRACT

The nexus of natural resource and conflict has always been at the heart of peace and security studies, which concomitantly the foremost interpretations have relied heavily on the political, socio-economic and cultural contexts. The persistent resource-related conflicts in several developing countries thus rung once again for a renewed understanding of the contexts in which the underlying causes and recurring patterns have all ingrained in for the past few decades. Immersed on the land, water, and forest resource-related discordant between the Gumuz and the non-Gumuz communities (among others these include the Amhara, Oromo and Agew ethnic groups), this study was intended to delve into the contexts, trends and drivers of resource conflicts, particularly in the Metekel Zone of the Benishangul-Gumuz Region. The specific objectives were set to analyse the change and continuities in conflict trends and the key drivers of natural resource disputes and ethnic tensions; examining the socio-psychological positions of parties in conflict; identifying the key actors and relationships that has been shaping conflict dynamics and impacts; and evaluating existing formal and informal institutions involved in the early warning, prevention, and mitigation of such conflicts.

A qualitative research methodology was employed to collect and analyse data. The leading data acquisition instruments include key informant interviews, expert interviews, focus group discussions, archival evidences, reliable documents and other data sources. The findings unveiled that a complex web of tensions have been rumbling the inhabitants of Metekel , and this was essentially driven by stiff competition over scarce natural resources, faulty strategies resorted to address historical grievances and elite-driven conflict-ridden regional politics. The actors involved in these conflicts range from grassroots community members to influential regional entities, each them has motivated by diverse interests such as resource acquisition, excessive lust for power, and shaky inter-ethnic alliance and counter alliance. Mutually opposing claims over land, group insecurity and the politics of difference in tandem with extensive misinformation and hateful rhetorics have all pivoted for the recurring violent interethnic confrontations. The study also uncovers that legal pluralism is in the making. Both the local institutions that customarily used to address the intra-ethnic conflicts and the state-run institutions which typically set to manage inter-ethnic disputes, often resorted to address the intra and inter-ethnic conflicts. Nonetheless, the local institutions of conflict resolution have not yet fully realized their potentials in both transforming the on-going challenges and nurturing durable peace.

Keywords: *resource conflict; conflict actors; ethnic tension and peacebuilding*

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Human beings have always been in a state of conflict, largely due to interactions within human societies and with the physical world. Over the past two millennia, the causes of conflict have evolved alongside socio-economic and political transformations. However, disputes over ownership rights and access to natural resources—such as arable land, timber, water, hydrocarbons, and minerals—have consistently been major drivers of conflict at various levels. As Brown and Keating (2015) note, resources have often been at the heart of many conflicts.

Resource-driven conflicts have had a profound impact on many societal groups, particularly in developing countries, and these challenges have become more pervasive in recent years. A study by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) in 2015 highlighted that natural resource conflicts are among the key peace and security challenges of the 21st century. The study discovered that over 40 percent of internal conflicts in the last six decades have been linked to natural resources, whether high-value resources like timber, diamonds, gold, and oil, or scarce resources like fertile land and water. It also emphasized that the international community, including policymakers, must consider these challenges as direct threats to ongoing peace initiatives. The upsurge of resource-driven conflicts underscores the need for fresh perspectives and new studies of proficient to make sense of the drivers, patterns, and changes in such conflicts, and in doing so, contribute to the efforts to address them through amicable strategies and fostering lasting peace.

The nexus of natural resource-driven conflict has sparked intense debates within peace and security studies. The details of these debates vary significantly and often depend on specific political, socio-economic, and cultural contexts (Bayramov et al., 2017). Conflicts over natural resources have widespread impacts, likely affect millions of local inhabitants, resource users, immediate beneficiaries and other stakeholders (Berry et al., 2018). This has long been a pervasive problem of developing countries, especially many societies in Africa. In 2007 Alao has raised two critical questions of worth making further research: 1) Why is there a prevalence of resource-driven conflicts in Africa compared to other continents? 2) What circumstances or political conditions predispose certain natural resources to be more prone to conflict than others?

Although several studies have attempted to give definite rejoinders for these questions well, the findings of many more studies seemed to have hardly revealed the kernel of such conflicts, or rarely had modest prediction power in tracing beforehand the emerging variants of resource-driven conflicts. These among others highlight that fairly grander need for further research to comprehend the change and continuities in resource-driven conflicts in keeping with evolving cultural, socio-economic, and political landscapes.

Like many African countries, Ethiopia has long been experienced various types of internal conflicts, including resource-driven conflicts over land, water, and forest resources. These conflicts have sometimes turned out to be more violent, and their pervasiveness and impact have been significant over the past few decades. Ethiopia is a home of diverse societies, with a rich tapestry of cultures, languages, and ways of life. Ethiopia is also endowed with vast natural resource base with diverse ecological settings and extensive mineral wealth. However, the livelihoods of the majority of Ethiopians—nearly 85 percent of whom have mainly relied on natural resource-based activities, where agriculture is the mainstay—and significant portion of the society remained contingent to a limited and often degraded natural resource base.

Ethiopia has long been espoused the ethno-linguistic federal system after the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) unseated the Marxist regime in 1991. This new state structure had introduced regional states with new administrative boundaries that essentially based on rigid ethno-linguistic identities rather than geographic proximities, economic ties and sensible administrative considerations. Such kind of political reordering and governance state have made Ethiopia quite distinctive nations state in Africa, wherein the inter-ethnic relations have become the preferred mobilizing façade as well as evocative set of belief of the national body politic (Abbink, 2011). The very assumption behind the ethno-linguistic federal system essentially originated from the claim that the new restructuring would address the underlying causes of the national conflicts, such as the age-old quest for self-rule, the rights to self-determination, using local languages for administrative and other purposes, and the long-stayed demand for proportionate political representation of various ethnic groups at the national level.

However, Ethiopia's history of internal conflicts has persisted, with conflicts becoming more widespread and complex in recent years (Asnake, 2013; Yonas, 2014; Semir, 2019).

Conventional competition over scarce natural resources has often escalated into confrontations, particularly due to demographic pressures, resource depletion, and environmental degradation. Access to and control over agricultural land and water resources have been the primary drivers of resource-driven conflicts (Pankhurst, 2003; Fekadu, 2017). Although Ethiopia has faced both interethnic animosities and resource-driven conflicts for decades, these conflicts seem to have taken on new structural dimensions following the devolution of power from the federal to regional states in the 1990s (Tegegn and Kassahun, 2004; Asnake, 2013; Semir, 2019). As power devolved to regional states, conflicts have also been shifted to grassroots level, for that and other reasons resource-driven conflicts along ethnic lines have become more prevalent nowadays than ever before. In turn, these conflicts rather attract many more actors and stakeholders, including local administrative units, community elites, religious groups, and other interest groups. In essence it becomes extremely difficult to discern such spanking new processes using very orthodox conventional approach; rather it calls for fairly expansive theoretical and very focused and well-ordered manners.

To contribute to the ongoing efforts of addressing national conflicts, and thereby underwrite a bit for the continued knowledge production, this underatkingintended to examine the trends, multiple underlying issues, very compounded value differences and indispensable drivers of often causing and prolonging resource-driven inter-ethnic conflicts in the Benishangul-Gumuz region, one of the most volatile areas in Ethiopia. The study sought to explore the nexus of natural resources and inter-ethnic conflict, pinpoint the structural and proximate causes of these conflicts, and analyze the interplay of numerous issues together with actors involved at various levels. The research also focused on the local intricacies of resource-driven conflicts, including their types, dynamics, and trends, as well as the roles of different actors in both efforts of conflict management and peacebuilding. Additionally, the study investigated local contextual factors influencing inter and intra-ethnic conflicts, local perceptions of conflicts, and how formal and informal institutions of conflict resolution have been act together in recent years.

In conclusion, the study advocates for a comprehensive and holistic approach to addressing the complexities of conflict in Metekel zone. This approach should include recognition of historical contexts, fostering inclusive governance, and promoting equitable resource utilization. Furthermore, the study has well-versed with the need for an integrated approach to conflict

resolution that combines traditional practices with formal strategies to achieve sustainable peace in the area. This includes genuine dialogue and very concerted efforts of peace-building.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Studying the inter-ethnic conflicts which often charged with excessive emotions, infuriated by mutually opposing territorial claims and over-glossed by archival narratives remain to be tough academic venture. Instead of entertaining many more issues that are peripheral to the conflict, it becomes fairly essential to pore over systematically the underlying details as well as motives beneath to resource-driven conflict, and delve into the complexities intermeshed in the web of inter-ethnic conflict, but fundamentally expressed in various forms such as socio-psychological, legal and political realms.

Conflicts related to natural resources have garnered increasing academic and policy attention over the past four decades. Particularly since the 1980s, there has been significant debate within various disciplines about the role of natural resources in conflict situations (Homer-Dixon, 1994; Collier and Hoeffler, 2005). The discussions have been centered on whether resource scarcity or abundance contributes to conflict and, more specifically, to violent conflict. According to a UNDP report in 2009, cited in Gluhbegovic (2016), over the past six decades, natural resources have been linked to at least 40 percent of intra-state conflicts worldwide, of such conflicts many of them likely to replicate and recur twice over five years as compared to those instigated by other factors. Such a statistical data in itself is living proof that underscore many more studies have to be conducted so as to understand the change and continuities of the fundamental nature, scope and uniqueness factors causing resource driven conflict within the rubrics inter-ethnic animosities. And it becomes very scientific to make sense of that what have conventional and unconventional competitions over natural resource to do with in either reinforcing or ameliorating interethnic conflict.

The ongoing debate has led to a new understanding to grasp the full complexity of resource-driven conflicts, it is crucial to consider intervening variables and contextual factors such as social, economic, and political dynamics. Conventional approaches that often emphasize population pressure, scarcity, and environmental degradation have been criticized for both mischaracterizing the context and improperly depicting the deeper causes of resource-driven

conflicts (Barnett, 2000). While competition over resources is often central to these conflicts, a complex interplay of factors can escalate competition into violence.

Academics, practitioners, and policymakers have increasingly recognized natural resources as key drivers of many conflicts, which potentially posing significant implications on the international, regional, and national peace and security (UNEP, 2015). This has spurred renewed interest in understanding the drivers, dynamics, and patterns of such conflicts, either to influence policy or to contribute to efforts to prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts amicably. As Gluhbegovic (2016) argues, understanding conflict often requires a compartmentalized approach that considers state and non-state actors, violent and non-violent conflicts, regional dimensions, and a broad interpretation that includes the interplay of socio-economic, environmental, and intervening factors.

A review of previous studies in Ethiopia (e.g., Gebre, 2004; Boku and Gufu, 2009; Mesfin, 2011; Gebre, 2012; Yonas, 2014; Fekadu, 2017; Dagnachew, 2018; McPeak and Little, 2018) reveals that much research has focused on the roots of conflicts, the actors involved, and prospects for sustainable peace. However, these studies often fail to explore the complex interconnections between resource-driven conflicts and other factors. While they have been effective in identifying the roots of conflicts, the fragmented causal attributions have hindered a holistic understanding of the continuities and changes in the underlying causes of resource-driven conflicts throughout history.

Fairly exhaustive and quite representative review of previous studies in Ethiopia have unveiled that resource-driven conflict together with the multitude ramifications these have on human life are among other topical issues of drawing the attentions of the academia over the past few years. The review uncovered further that many studies (see for instance e.g., Gebre, 2004; Boku and Gufu, 2009; Mesfin, 2011; Gebre, 2012; Yonas, 2014; Fekadu, 2017; Dagnachew, 2018; McPeak and Little, 2018) have rather devoted in pinpointing the roots of conflicts, the actors involved, and prospects for sustainable peace. Even if these studies are good at detecting the roots of the conflict and indeed scientific in their assertion on how peace can be reinstated, many of them hardly discern the prolonging factors (to say the least they tended to conflate the underlying causes and prolonging factors, so that we barely comprehend the reasons behind the protractedness of the conflict. In fact, such misidentifying rather seemed to have originated from

the obvious limitation that many of the studies often failed to explore the complex interconnections as well as the interplay of multilayered cause of resource-driven conflicts and other factors (such like identity, culture, and the role of narrative and trans-boundary entities).

Over the past two decades, state-led changes in Ethiopia have reconfigured borders, administrative units, and ethnic homelands, with significant impacts at the household, kebele, and district levels (McPeak and Little, 2018). Although conflicts are not new to Ethiopia, their intensity, scope, and frequency have increased at an alarming rate. A complex set of factors contributes to these conflicts, with their characteristics and dynamics being locally specific and often changing over time in response to shifts in socio-political and economic orders.

In line with this but in a different dimension, Yonas (2014) notes that past processes leading to conflicts in Gambella were not properly understood, leading to superficial explanations, inappropriate policies, and failed conflict resolution efforts. This underscores the need for a thorough understanding of these peculiarities to develop effective and resilient mitigation and management mechanisms. In Benishangul-Gumuz, interethnic conflicts are deeply rooted in the possession of natural resources, particularly land and forests. The federal state structure has allowed ethno-linguistic elite groups to exploit differences in a bid to control regional and local state powers and resources, contributing to the emergence of ethnic-based violent conflicts, hostile intergovernmental relationships, and lawlessness along regional borders (Mesfin, 2011). Semir (2019) also notes that recent resettlement policies, which have brought Amhara and Oromo peasants into the region, have further complicated relationships, particularly in light of contested borders and tax disputes.

While several studies have attempted to understand the drivers and consequences of resource-driven conflicts in Ethiopia, particularly in Benishangul-Gumuz, a comprehensive analysis that explores the role of political, economic, social, and cultural factors in these conflicts is lacking. Moreover, in spite of the fact that many of these studies have well itemized the various causal attributions that draw communities and ethnic groups into bloodiest conflict, none of them were able to determine the foremost factor that changed itself over time, expressed in different forms and thus far essentially debilitate the conflict. It is hence quite essential discerning such factors so that both policy makers as well as other practitioners could proactively respond in either curbing the conflict from escalation, or get rid of the permissive factors of the conflict.

It is worth stating that this undertaking somehow different from the preceding studies at least from vantage point three scientific reasons. Unlike the other studies, this study was able to distinguish the prolonging factors from the underlying causes beneath to the conflict, which strategically is meant the study has identified the underlying reasons behind the protractedness of the conflict in Metekel area. Second, even if many studies were able to mention that how the influence the external power have been shaping the conflict cause, many of them failed to segregate the political economy of the conflict from any other vested interests of external powers. Third, the target area has never been selected only because many ethnic groups have long been inhabited in Metekel, rather it was due to that not only is resource-driven conflict very prevalent, but also conflicts were purposely created to amass additional wealths. Indeed, this makes Metekel quite unique from other areas, and the one that makes this undertaking so exceptional for the obvious reason that the study was able to discern the political economy of several violent conflicts.

To recap, the study thus was strived to bridge aforementioned academic lacunae, and in doing so, contribute a bit to the ongoing debate as well as knowledge production by thoroughly examining how these factors influence conflict dynamics and management mechanisms in the Metekel area, with a particular focus on the intra- and inter-ethnic violent conflicts arising from incompatible goals, divergent interests, and differing values related to access and control of renewable natural resources.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this research was to examine the prevailing trends, multi-level drivers, and actors and stakeholders involved in resource related inter-ethnic conflicts in the Metekel zone of the Benishangul-Gumuz regional state.

The specific objectives are:

- a) Figure out the longstanding resource related conflicts among the Gumuz and non-Gumuz communities (the Amhara, Oromo, and Agew ethnic groups) over the past three decades;
- b) Identify the key stakeholders along with their underlying motives, interests and values involved in the conflict;

- c) Discern the underlying causes of resource driven interethnic conflict that often exerting sizable influence over the political, socio-economic, and cultural life of the communities inhabiting Metekel area;
- d) Making sense of the implications that the socio-psychological depiction of the resource driven conflict have on the collective existence of the Gumuz and non-Gumuz communities;
- e) Decipher the defining features, the role they played in managing resource-driven conflicts and inherent limitations of the local institutions of conflict resolution in Metekel area.

1.4. Research Questions

This research sought to understand *why conflict in the Metekel Zone of the Benishangul-Gumuz region was so persistent and intensified over the past few decades and what roles natural resources play in such a conflict?* In addition, the research was guided by the following specific research questions.

- a) How did the longstanding resource related conflicts recuperate then again and draw the Gumuz and non-Gumuz communities (the Amhara, Oromo, and Agew ethnic groups) into intense conflict over the past three decades
- b) What were the key stakeholders along with their underlying motives, interests and cherished values involved in the conflict?
- c) What were the underlying causes of resource driven interethnic conflict that often exerted sizable influence over the political, socio-economic, and cultural life of the communities inhabiting Metekel area?
- d) How did the socio-psychological depiction of resource driven conflict implicate the collective existence of the Gumuz and non-Gumuz communities?
- e) What were the essential markers such as the role they played in managing resource-driven conflicts and inherent limitations of the local institutions of conflict resolution in Metekel area?

1.5 Significance of the Study

Studying the underlying causes of resource-driven conflicts is quite relevant and immensely significant in Ethiopia for several reasons. First, as widely known Ethiopia relies heavily on resources like land, water, and youth-abundant labor for its economy and the well-being of its people. Ethiopia could not be able to benefit from these resources which otherwise, properly guided, channeled, and operated in fairly workable peace and order. The prime prerequisite for strategically exploiting these resources for shared benefit is, therefore, peace and stability. What has research and documentation to do with this? Well, the delving into the nature and dynamics of these conflicts can avail incisive insights to policymakers and other stockholders about the underlying factors and potential solutions. In turn, these are meant contributing modestly to address such conflicts as amicably as possible.

Secondly the Benishangul Gumuz Regional State has been beleaguered by the intra and interethnic conflict and political violence for several years back. These conflicts often revolved around issues of identity, access and control of resources. There were grim periods when violence has been escalated, and resulted in enormous casualties and displacements. Essentially any study that focuses on deciphering the underlying causes of resource-driven conflicts in this area could potentially contribute a lot. Yet, specifically this research undertaking can be taken as making readily available the most updated data utilizable for preventing, managing effectively conflicts and fostering peaceful coexistence among different groups. This would mean that the study can have practical implications for policymakers and practitioners working in the field of conflict resolution and peace building. By understanding the root causes of resource-driven conflicts in the Metekel Zone, policymakers can design targeted interventions that address the specific challenges faced by communities in the region. Furthermore, the study can provide a basis for developing long-term strategies for promoting sustainable development and peace in the region.

The abovementioned contributions can be construed as the empirical relevance of the study. Nonetheless, the significance of this research undertaking is not confined in the empirical realm. Numerous intellectuals, practitioners, experts and decision makers have emphasized the importance of tackling resource distribution and management problems to prevent conflicts and foster sustainable development by applying different theoretical perspectives. With its own

philosophical foundation and perspectives of studying resource-driven conflicts in the Metekel Zone is third significance of the study, but can be primed in line with its add-on in both expanding the frontiers of exiting knowledge production, supplementing the literature and refining theoretical perspectives of peace and security.

1.6. Scope of the Study

The study concentrated on the analysis of resource-based conflicts within the Metekel zone of the Benishangul-Gumuz region, an area marked by complex ethnic interactions and a diverse range of natural resources. The primary focus of the research was on understanding the dynamics of intra- and inter-ethnic conflicts, specifically highlighting the tensions between the Gumuz and non-Gumuz communities, which include the Amhara, Oromo, and Agew-speaking groups. These conflicts have been shaped by various factors, including competition for critical natural resources such as land, water, and forests.

Land, both agricultural and grazing, has been a particularly contentious resource, with disputes often arising from issues related to land ownership, usage rights, and access. Water resources, essential for both agriculture and daily life, have also been a significant source of conflict, particularly in a region where water scarcity can exacerbate existing tensions. Forest resources, which are vital for the livelihoods of many communities, have further added on to the complexity of these conflicts, with competition over forest access and usage rights leading to clashes among different ethnic groups.

The research was conducted with a historical perspective, covering a period of the past three decades, starting from 1991. This period is significant as it coincides with a time of dramatic change on both global and national levels. Globally, the post-Cold War era brought shifts in security dynamics and economic policies, influencing political and economic landscapes worldwide. In Ethiopia, these global changes were mirrored by a significant transition in the country's political economy and governance system. The adoption of an ethno-linguistic federalism in 1991, which redefined administrative boundaries and governance structures based on ethnic lines, played a critical role in shaping the conflict dynamics within the Metekel zone.

This period saw the emergence of new political and social tensions, as ethnic groups began to assert their rights and identities within the new federal structure. The competition for natural resources became more pronounced, as different communities sought to secure their livelihoods in an environment of changing political power and economic opportunities. The study aimed to understand how these historical and contemporary factors have influenced the nature of resource-based conflicts in the Metekel zone, exploring the interplay between ethnicity, resource competition, and governance.

By focusing on this specific region and time frame, the research provides a detailed examination of how resource-based conflicts have evolved in response to broader socio-political and economic changes. It also sheds light on the complex relationships between different ethnic groups in the Metekel zone and the ways in which these relationships have been shaped by both historical grievances and contemporary challenges. This study contributes to the broader understanding of conflict dynamics in Ethiopia, offering insights that may be applicable to other regions experiencing similar tensions over natural resources.

1.7 Limitation of the Study

Indeed, several challenges and cataracts have been encountered. Of these, the foremost was time constraint in collecting, organizing, and analyzing primary data sources. This includes also the consultation of the secondary data along with massive literature on peace and conflict studies. The snowballing system was applied to get as swiftly as possible the key informants together with the influential leaders of both governments at different levels. Very adaptive strategies have been applied further to curtail bureaucratic rigidities in Metekel. As far as the consultation of the secondary data sources and literature are concerned, reasonable and methodical consultations have been carried out with these strategic documents. If not representative, an exhaustive review of literature conducted with the most authoritative and authentic studies conducted over the past few years. It would mean that selectivity, prudence and resilient supports from my colleagues were among other strategies applied to offset the time constraints.

In fact, insufficient funding for data collection was another, but exceptionally upsetting constraint. The study has required much extended data collection methods and instruments. It was extremely difficult to manage such a project of demanding fund-intensive approaches with

very limited budget. Several people were assisted me to pursue cost-efficient approaches to penetrate the rigid bureaucracy and communicate the key informants with modest budget.

Personal security was perhaps the foremost challenge I have never faced before. Not only was searching for the key informants riskiest business, but also somehow the data collected became so sensitive in nature. Also, the interpersonal communications with officials has not been less political, roaming for further data collection was less likely assumed genuine. In order to ameliorate the adverse effects, several techniques have been resorted, which among others, the one was just making firm prior contacts with the local people and officials.

1.8 Organization of the Study

The study is structured into eight chapters, each addressing a distinct aspect of the research. Chapter One serves as the introduction, providing the background of the study and establishing the context for understanding the nexus between conflict and natural resources. This chapter sets the stage for the entire research by outlining the key issues and the relevance of the study.

Chapter Two focuses on conceptual clarification and the theoretical framework of the research. It delves into the theories that underpin the study and provides an empirical review of resource-driven conflicts. This chapter lays the theoretical groundwork that informs the subsequent analysis.

Chapter Three addresses the methodological aspects of the research. It discusses the research design, the scientific rationale for selecting the research approach, and the tools and techniques used for data collection. Additionally, it covers sampling methods, the determination of sample size, and ethical considerations, ensuring that the research is conducted with rigor and integrity.

Chapter Four is dedicated to analyzing the core issues related to resource-driven conflicts in the Metekel area. It explores the underlying causes of these conflicts, the actors involved, and the interplay between internal vulnerabilities and external interferences in the intra- and interethnic conflicts among the Gumuz and non-Gumuz communities.

Chapter Five provides an in-depth examination of how the Gumuz and non-Gumuz communities perceive resource-driven conflicts. This chapter offers insights into the local perspectives and

experiences of these communities, highlighting the impact of resource competition on their lives and relationships.

Chapter Six assesses the strengths and weaknesses of local conflict resolution institutions. It examines how these informal mechanisms interact with formal state-run dispute settlement processes, shedding light on their effectiveness and mutual influence in managing resource-driven conflicts.

Chapter Seven synthesizes the discussions and findings from the previous chapters. It presents concise and representative conclusions, drawing on the research's key insights. The chapter also offers practical recommendations aimed at policymakers and advisors, providing actionable suggestions for addressing resource-driven conflicts in the Metekel area.

Overall, the study provides a comprehensive analysis of resource-based conflicts in the Metekel zone, exploring their causes, dynamics, and potential solutions through a multi-faceted approach that integrates theoretical, empirical, and practical perspectives.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

Conflict is an inherent aspect of human existence rather than a mere possibility, making it an inevitable part of human interactions. Whether conflict proves destructive or constructive, avoiding it entirely is nearly impossible. Today, humanity faces a critical choice: engage with conflict constructively to maximize benefits or intensify its destructive impacts. This chapter aims to explore various concepts, prevailing themes, and current issues in the field of peace and conflict studies.

To complement relevant theories, conceptualizations, and scholarly debates, this chapter also integrates findings from empirical studies. It covers key types of conflict, including ethnic-based conflicts, identity-based social conflicts, resource-driven conflicts, and the intersection of resource and interethnic conflicts. The chapter examines how these conflicts are managed and mitigated, particularly in the context of post-conflict reconstruction.

The chapter is organized into five distinct sections, each with specific sub-sections. The Introduction addresses conceptual and terminological debates surrounding conflict. The Ontology of Conflict sub-section explores the need for new conceptualizations of conflict. Typologies and Trends discuss various types and trends of conflict in the contemporary world. Theoretical Perspectives covers different theories, their core principles, and their insights into the sources of conflict. Finally, Empirical Research highlights the scope, coverage, and impact of scientific studies on policy implications related to conflict management, resolution, and prevention. The chapter concludes with a comprehensive discussion of the conceptual framework and its connection to the study's objectives.

2.2 Conflict: On the Conceptualization and Debates

As stated above, conflict is a natural aspect of human interactions. That is why it has drawn attention from practitioners, policy makers as well as scholars from a number of disciplines, including the political science, sociology, anthropology, psychology, history and literature. Differences in values, views, goals, or interests can lead to conflict. Nonetheless, sometimes conflict may take more than a couple of forms including the interpersonal, organizational, or

intergroup disputes. The way these conflicts could be handled also seems to be associated the typologies. Conflict can be flared up from blatant incongruities which might arise between or among individuals, groups or parties over something that each of them reckoned it useful. Prevalence of incompatibilities in behaviours, moral values, cultures, economic backgrounds and world views were among other scientific details that seemed to have convinced scholars to grip almost similar views as regards to inevitability conflict. It becomes a dry fact that in the contemporary world a wide-ranging consensus is in the making by scholars as regards to the inexorableness of conflict within human societies. Divergences over interests, values, views and thoughts among human beings to remain exist. Conceiving a society with no conflict is technically meant the absence of meaningful interaction. This among others highlights that conflict does not essentially seem a problem in itself. Without a doubt, conflict is a reality of life. More than a few rewarding changes have technically been regarded as the end result of conflicts.

The historical records attested that the study of war has long been carried out and well documented over the past millennia. In his account of the Peloponnesian war, Thucydides (circa 460-c 400 BC) has chronicled the war between Athenian and Spartans. He himself had taken part in the war, so that his accounts found to be regarded by many as pretty objective and reliable, which in effect, it has been thought that he earned reputation from early chronicling of human conflict. Yet, apart from such fragmented records, study of conflict has rather been a recent exercise. In fact, the idea of conflict has been explored in literature across a range of genres, including theatre, fiction, and poetry. Conflict is an essential component of storytelling, partly because it has long been part and parcel of the human life. It has also been demonstrated through drama and other forms of stage shows. Literary conflicts can be internal or external, and they can involve a variety of characters, including people, groups, or societies.

For the past few decades, scores of attempts have been made to make sense of the very essence of conflict. Accompanied by their theories and fragmented underpinnings, more than a few disciplines have been tried to develop a workable ascription for conflict. For instance, relying on the game-theory and theories of decision-making, economists were able to analyse market failure, conflict of interests at the household level and among the business firms. On the other hand, sociologists were able to understand the various social discords by focusing on the positions, status and hierarches within a society. Using the various theories of the international

relations, political science was also among other disciplines that attempted to analyse conflict at both interstate and global levels. In line with these but in a different dimension, anthropologists have long been interested to comprehend conflict from the vantage point of identity, group formation and local level socio-cultural processes. These among others entail that no discipline so far exercises special dominance over the definition and conceptualization of conflict. It can be argued that laying a claim to a well-articulated definition of a conflict seems to have been very tough academic exercise. Applying scores of theories in either defining or articulating a conflict therefor often appears to impose exceptional burdens for study of peace and conflict studies.

Generally speaking conflict has been a recurring threat to the wellbeing of the international community. Unless human being deals with the recurring conflicts as constructively as possible, smaller disagreements in a particular area would grow easily to threaten the international peace and security. Many of them would potentially generate terrible repercussions for people, communities, and societies all across the world. Although conflict is frequently viewed as a bad thing, if it is handled and resolved well, it may also act as a catalyst for social transformation. As a result, the study of conflict from a peace and security viewpoint has gained importance as policymakers and practitioners try to comprehend the underlying factors that lead to conflict and create plans for preventing and resolving it. Conflict can be seen as a complex phenomenon that encompasses different forms of violence, such as armed warfare, organized crime, and interpersonal violence in the framework of peace and security studies. Political, economic, social, and cultural differences are only a few of the many causes of conflict that can erupt and quickly escalate into widespread destruction and human casualties.

The goal of studying conflict from a peace and security viewpoint is to determine its root causes and devise prevention and resolution plans. A variety of strategies, including mediation, negotiation, and peace building, may be used for this. Such strategies necessitate a thorough comprehension of conflict dynamics, including the numerous parties engaged, the power dynamics at play, and the underlying causes of conflict. Recent years have seen a rise in the recognition of literature's importance in the study of conflict from a peace and security viewpoint. In addition to offering insights into the human experience of war and its effects on both individuals and communities, literature can give a special prism through which to analyse

the intricacies of conflict. The difficulties of conflict resolution and the functions of many actors in advancing peace and security can also be discussed in literature.

With an emphasis on how conflict is portrayed in literature, the current literature study seeks to offer an overview of the idea of conflict from a peace and security perspective. The review will examine the numerous facets of conflict and its effects on people and communities by drawing on a variety of literary works, such as novels, memoirs, and poetry. The evaluation will also look at how literature may aid in conflict resolution and play a role in promoting peace and security. To this regard this literature review is intended to provide a brief discussion the concept of conflict by focusing on the dominant conflict narratives from the perspective of peace and security.

In both journalistic reports and the vast literatures, we may find that conflict and dispute are often applied interchangeably. Nonetheless, on how should the two terminologies have applied to expound a certain episode rather appeared to be subjected to scholarly debate. The debate over the use of these the lexicons of dispute and conflict has been survived within both community of practice and the academia. As can be observed from the vast literatures, the feeling of the disputants, the length of time that incongruities take to be resolved, the issues in contention, and whether the issue in conflict is negotiable or not are among other concrete criteria that scholars often applied to delineate between the conflict and dispute.

Keep in mind these benchmarks, therefore the term dispute become identified to figure out a competition between or among contenders over a specific set of material and intellectual resource as well as realities. In that regard, contenders may not necessarily embrace a negative feeling. On the other hand, conflict is a situation that arises from intense emotional as well as perceived incongruities. The notable scholar John Burton has been articulated these two lexicons, he distinguished “dispute” from “conflict” based on the length of time it takes and the issues in contention. Nonetheless, the long stayed and deep-rooted incompatibilities such for instance those engage in the non-negotiable concerns (like moral or value differences) are often resistant to amicable way out. Such kinds of disagreements can be registered as conflict. Other scholars like Yarn, however, take to mean conflict as state of affairs, and dispute is just a process. The authors went further to articulate that conflict could exist as independently from dispute, but dispute does not exist without some kind of incompatibility, which is meant conflict (Douglas

Yarn et.al, 1999:115). In fact, disputes may arise without the larger frame work of conflict. Disputes are generally considered to be disagreements that involve negotiable interest. Disagreement over a specific set of facts and short term in their times lapse are subsumed in the classification of a dispute.

2.3 Conflict: Ontology and Conceptualization

2.3.1 Conflict: On Defining Characteristics and Core Essences

Conflict is an important subject with many definitions in the context of peace and security studies. The word conflict often conceived as crisis is Latin and French word “conflictus” or “confligere”. It denotes act of ‘striking together,’ which appears to be compatible with the usual Anglo-American behavioural interpretation as parties ‘shocking together’, in violence (Galtung, 2007:22). Yet, what is ‘shocking together’? These are goals held by the parties, when the realization of one excludes the realization of other(s) (Ibid, p.22).

The Oxford Learners Dictionary has defined conflict as “a serious disagreement, an argument, to be very different to be in opposition. The definition by the Cambridge Learners Dictionary, on the other hand, takes to mean conflict as “an active disagreement between people with opposite opinions or principles”. The new vocabulary of Webster’s dictionary of the English also distinguish the term conflict as “a struggle between opposing principles or aims; a clash of feelings or interests.” A glossary of terms and concepts in peace and conflict studies came up with concise definition of conflict in 2005. It expounds:

Conflict is derived from the Latin term for ‘to clash or engage in a fight’, a confrontation between one, or more parties aspiring towards incompatible or competitive means or ends. Conflict may be either manifest, recognizable through actions or behaviours, or latent, in which case it remains dormant for some time. For either the incompatibilities are unarticulated or built into systems such institutional arrangements as governments, corporations, or even civil society (2005: 22).

For many scholars, conflict is a clash of interests, values, actions, views or directions. People disagree because they see things differently, want different things, have thinking styles which encourage them to disagree, or are predisposed to disagree. Bercovitch and Jackson (2009: 2), for instance, have taken conflict to mean as “a process that comprises a disagreement or conflict between actors over values, resources, or power, and which may involve the use of violence or

the threat of violence.” In the same logic but in a different parameter, Fisher (1990) argued, conflict is “an incompatibility of goals or values between two or more parties in a relationship, combined with attempts to control each other & antagonistic feelings toward each other”. Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, and Miall (2016:16), define conflict as "a social process in which people are involved in a relationship of actual or perceived antagonism or incompatibility that produces conflicting interests, goals, values, or wants". This definition emphasizes how conflict is relational in nature, involving players who may have varying wants and objectives that result in varying interests and values.

In his famous articulation of conflict in late 1960s, Johan Galtung (1969:68) rather deciphered conflict in a simple but logical provenance, he highlights conflict is a kind of fervent contest at least two more interdependent parties. He resound that they contested because they perceive incompatible aims, goals and material interests. Galtung was perhaps the pioneer in pinpointing those parties in conflict could be involved as additional actors to get realized their goals. This approach places a strong emphasis on how perception shapes conflict, where various actors' perceptions of the same event might result in opposing objectives and results.

Last but not least, conflict is described by Lederach (1997) as "a web of relationships, which encompasses the actors, the issues, and the context within which the conflict occurs" (p. 4). The complexity and contextual character of conflict, which involves a number of individuals and problems that are linked and influenced by the larger social, cultural, and political context, are highlighted by this definition.

As a result, conflict in the framework of peace and security studies is a dynamic and contentious process that involves people that may have conflicting perspectives on the current situation as well as competing interests and aims. The definitions offered by Bercovitch and Jackson, Ramsbotham et al., Galtung, and Lederach highlight many conflict-related issues and offer a framework for comprehending conflict's character in this situation. Researchers and practitioners in peace and security studies who wish to comprehend and control conflict in various contexts may find these concepts helpful.

2.3.2 Conflict: On Ontology about Nature and Function

Conflict is part of human life process. It should be accepted as both the process and end result of human interaction. Seen in this vantage point, therefore neither is conflict a destructive nor entirely constructive. What determines is the way we treat conflict, or the fundamental approaches that human being resort to handle conflicts. In terms of its potential, surely conflict holds a double fold aspect. Thus, it becomes up to the human being creativity and assertiveness to treat conflict, the more human kind invest resources, time and emotions to deal with everyday disagreements, certainly conflicts would be so constructive and transformative. If human being appears to be less concerned with everyday disagreements, the likelihood of destructive conflict becomes so higher. Therefore, what is in our disposal in the contemporary world, human being should deal with conflicts as constructively as possible to generate the best outcomes out of conflict, since we know that conflict is a fact of life—so inevitable so long as there is human interaction.

With conviction, destruction often resulted from violence and inarticulation of the incompatibilities. The end result of violent conflicts is destruction. Violence often breeds more violence, which is why no one would likely predicts where the destructive conflicts ends up, what is known so far violent conflicts are of devastating and escalatory. Sometimes Conflict could be expounded from the vantage point of negatively charged words. These may include like dispute, disagreement, misunderstanding, controversy, fighting, disharmony...etc. Although we know still conflicts do exist, we may pin our ears back the positive attributes of conflict such as: unity, peace, interchange, improvement, forgiveness, change, progress, reconciliation etc.

These among other suggest that the way people understand and interpret conflict may not always reflect similar bearings. How are people comprehending and interpreting conflict? Is conflict seen as inherent and inevitable? Is conflict seen as a pre-determinant of social change? Many scholars argue that individuals' values and beliefs about conflict often have an effect on their behaviour. And this is essentially entrenched in the cultural and social values. The discussion made above essentially boiled up to rests on to the belief whether a conflict is inherently destructive or constructive engagement. Nonthless, we know that a wide range of potential differences among people do exist. If that is the case regardless of that whether a conflict brings about desirable outcomes or not, the absence of conflict would by no meandesignate lack of

intercation. It would mean that whenever we think that there is no conflict, practically it sounds there is no meaningful intercation. Thus, whether we liked or not, conflict does exist, it remains to be unavoidable, it is part and parcel of our process of life. Conflict occurs between people in all kinds of human relationships and in all social settings.

2.3.3 The Need for a New Conceptualization

As stated above, we hardly find objective criteria that determine whether conflict is entirely destructive. It should be noted that conflict is neither good (constructive) nor bad (destructive) by itself. Only conflicts appear destructive whenever ill-treated, and permitted to be drawn into the use of unnecessary power. Whether conflict remains to be contributed as positively as possible for social transformation has become now core agenda in the scholarly debate in peace and conflict studies. As relying to his study on the *functions of social Conflict* (1957), for instance, Lewis Coser has been argued that conflict among others is responsible for the role that gearing up society towards betterment, assist to build new institutions, better technology and well-functioning economic systems. If that is the case, conflict would likely be playing constructive role. Scholarly debates of such kind rather hinted that the ontological studies on the sources of conflict seemed to have originated from two philosophical standpoints vis-à-vis conflict. These are the subjectivist & the objectivist viewpoints.

In late 1960s Schmid (1968) has articulated that the objectivist perspective rather consider for the origin of conflict from the vantage point of social and political make-up of a society. Thus, for him, the source of the conflict essentially from incompatibility over goals, interests and other stakes. It would mean that conflict could exist albeit parties are not aware of it. So long as the objective states of affairs like structural conditions (such as income inequality, poverty, systematic exploitation, etc.) do exist, conflict will prevail.

Contrary to the objectivist position, the subjectivist bearings rather tended to focus primarily on the perceived incompatibility of goals and differences. It is to mean that conflict can be defined as a phenomenon that occurs when one or more parties perceive incompatible goals. Nonetheless, parties in conflict may or may not respond to their desire just to realize their goal. Morton Deutsch (1991: 30) articulated that conflict can never be tightly determined by the single state of affairs. He underscores that essentially conflict "...is incompatible differences which

give rise to conflict...It is not the objective incompatibility that is crucial, but rather-the perceived incompatibility.”

It should be noted that the perceived incompatibility often dominate the mental state, which is why conflict becomes so inherent to human society. The perceived incompatibility also designates that divergence in opinions often prevalent in human creature, yet what is still worth mentioning the way these differences are communicated and articulated within the minds of parties in conflict often determine both the concept and management of conflict. Human kind at different level (be it in group, state or any other form) have long been developed norms, principles and set of laws to regulate conflict. These among others attest that at the onset conflicts had not been so violent. Thus, in order to deal with conflicts in constructive manner, we need to consider the dual aspects such as the objective state of affairs as well as the subjective enterprise of conflicts, which essentially originate from the perceived incompatibilities. The new conceptualization of conflict is meant that unless we dually consider the various perspectives and notions of conflict, we are not able to chart feasible strategies of peace.

2.4 Conflict: On Typologies and Trends

2.4.1 Resource Based Conflict

Needless to say, the access to and ownership rights over a certain material and intellectual resource have long been at the heart of human conflict. Perhaps such conflicts seemed to have been the oldest of all forms of conflict in human history. What makes the case very perplexing is that irrespective of significant advancement in technology and modernized productive capacities, resource driven conflicts have been intensified in contemporary world. And this was pervasive in many underdeveloped nations. In fact, the underlying causes behind the resource-driven conflicts have been integral to modern life system. The late integration of Africa with the global political economy appeared to have precipitated the resource-driven conflict. The speedy changes in life style together with rampant population growth were also additional factors that intensified the resource-driven conflict. Essentially, we find three major spots in which resource driven conflict often reared and boiled into very bloodiest ventures. These are of the tangible resources including minerals, arable lands and water bodies; the ecological zones where resources mainly integral to the weather, water abundance, grazing fields and animal sanctuaries; the availability of strategic minerals such as petroleum, uranium, lead, tantalum.

As indicated in the introductory chapter, as historically seen, the foremost cause that led communities in Benishangul Gumuz, specifically in Metekel was the divergence likelihood pattern, where the non-Gumuz communities often preferred to establish permanent agricultural land, whereas the Gumuz tended to apply a kind of shifting cultivation. The conflicts of such kind have been started along ago, but replicated in many forms over the past few decades. Both oral and written local sources also testified that the more Gumuz communities has been started to settle to commence agricultural activities, the competition over natural resources became intensified. The recent chronicling of the conflict has proved that the conflict became more variegated, but essentially it was transformed from the access to the claims of ownership right. Conflicts that develop over natural resources including water, land, oil, minerals, and forest resource are referred to as resource-based conflicts. These conflicts are common around the world and have a significant impact on both national and international security as well as the impacted people. This study of the literature looks at the numerous solutions that have been put out to lessen resource-based conflicts, as well as their causes, effects, and causes.

The unequal distribution of natural resources is one of the key factors contributing to disputes involving resources. Factors like corruption, poor government, and differences in ethnicity and religion can make this worse. For instance, corruption and the government's disregard for the local community have fanned the conflict between the government and the local communities in Nigeria's Niger Delta region for control of the country's oil resources (Omeje, 2010). Yet as Basedau argued (2005:2), the impact of natural-resource driven conflict often does not seem solitary determined by its own. He suggests that a number of contextual variables should be considered. As he outlined, in order to make sense of the impact of the resource-course, both country-specific conditions as well as resource-specific conditions (such as the type of resource, degree of availability, a revenue obtained from resource, the management and business firms involved in the extraction of the resource etc.) have to be considered.

Environmental deterioration is another issue that fuels disputes with resources. Natural resource scarcity or depletion raises competition for them, which fuels conflict. Conflicts over grazing and water supplies have been experienced in many areas of Africa as a result of land deterioration and desertification (Berman & Matanock, 2017). Historical records have been evidenced that individuals, communities and groups of individuals and societies were competing for resources

which essentially limited and scarce in their availability (such as water, land, and minerals etc.) Studies also show even if these resources often led communities to intense competition, hardly draw societies unless accompanied with other factors such as natural catastrophes. For instance, the notable social anthropologist, Frederic Barth (1969:29), wrote that ethnic groups (both intra and interethnic) often drawn to violent conflict as once environmental changes took place. On the other hand, the prominent scholar in the Horn of Africa, Markakis (1987: 20) also highlighted that water scarcity and soil erosion have posed gravest threat on the environmental security in the Horn states. This would mean that the frustration that essentially emanate from the changes in the environment could induce groups to compete heavily on some scarce resources, which as a result, the change in ecology likely causes tension and perceived fear over the access to scarce resources. Nonetheless, as he noted, for Markakis, the underlying cause behind the interethnic conflict in the Horn of Africa remains associated with the craving to secure access to scarce resources (Ibid, p.20).

Conflicts over resources can have negative, protracted effects. Communities may be uprooted, lives may be lost, and there may be economic hardship. These conflicts can also erode social trust and cohesion by causing tensions between various ethnic and religious groups. As demonstrated in the instance of disputes over oil resources, which can have significant impacts on the world economy and security, resource-based conflicts could have also regional and international ramifications.

Many measures, including governance changes, resource management plans, and conflict resolution techniques, have been put forth to lessen resource-based conflicts. Natural resource management may be made more transparent and egalitarian through governance changes including enhancing the rule of law and fighting corruption. Reduced competition for resources and the protection of the environment can be achieved with the aid of resource management tactics like sustainable land use and water management techniques. Conflict resolution techniques like mediation and discourse can aid in amicably resolving disputes and preventing them from escalating (Berman & Matanock, 2017).

Yet, putting these techniques into practice can be difficult, especially in nations with poor administration and significant levels of corruption. However, some tactics could be better suited for a particular kind of conflict than others. For instance, while negotiation and mediation may

be successful in settling disputes over land and water resources, they may not be appropriate for disputes over oil or mineral resources, which frequently involve strong governments and international corporations (Ross, 2015).

2.4.2 Social Identity and Ethnic Based Conflict

More than a few studies on the dynamics as well as the sources of identity-based conflicts have been tried to examine the casual link between interest and identity. As Karina (2009) argued, the interrelationship between these factors often leads to examine the dilemma whether the ethnic and national identities causes political conflict, or do the national identities arise out of political conflict. In an attempt to give definitive answers to such a dilemma, Scholars come up with two divergent postulations. And these are the primordial and instrumental approach. Karina underscores the primordial approach focuses on the role of the salient form of social identity in “provoking intractable, irrational, and affective conflicts and violence.” The cultural difference and the unique aspect of the cultural group constitute the distinct as well as defining feature of an ethnic group. For this approach, other than cultural facets including language and other markers, the political, economic aspects and other arenas such as the manipulation of public opinion by the political elite, the perceived threats of group narratives often do not have effects.

On the other hand, the instrumentalist approach give much give much emphasis to the economic, political and social aspects often paly significant role in drawing groups to bloodiest conflict. Specifically, the economic inequalities, the issue of proportionate political representation and territorial claims were among other often led groups in to conflict. Citing notable scholars of the discipline (such as William Zartman 1995; Muhammad Ayoob 1997; and Jackson 2004a), Karina wrote that the underlying factors that draw groups into violent conflict often associates with “weak state”—weak institutional make up, state making may sometimes lead to territorial consolidation of power holders etc.(Ibid, 2009:100).

Celia (2009) wrote about how ethnic groups are mobilized for conflict. As the author mentioned explicitly, the social, political and economic uncertainty may cause groups to challenge the system. Specifically, in such a situation ethnic groups may put into question the legitimacy of the existing government and its institution. Citing Frank (1967), the author argued that lack of legitimacy over the existing institution may draw groups to maintain their own security. The author went to argue that the scarcity resources accompanied by relative deprivation may cause

collective, groups may take action against the governing body. These underlying causes behind such a conflict remain associated with the perceived fear of groups. As Celia (2009) identifies, groups with solid foundation in their identity, shared language, memory, history and common ancestry are stronger in mobilizing capacity. Citing additional authors (Gurr 1996; Byrne 2001), the author has underscored that whenever the group members deem that the other groups would likely threaten their collective identity, this might cause violent conflict (Ibid, p.19-23). As can be understood from the discussion, the source of ethnic conflict remains associated with several contextual as well as identity based issues.

The world has long been plagued by ethnic wars. Social, economic, and political divisions among distinct ethnic groups are the root cause of ethnic disputes, which frequently lead to violent clashes. These conflicts frequently have their roots in historical, cultural, and political disputes that have been made worse by contemporary events like globalization, resource competitiveness, and power struggles. The purpose of this literature review is to examine the factors that lead to ethnic-based conflicts, their effects, and the function of interventions and peace building measures.

The battle for dominance and control is one of the main factors contributing to ethnic-based violence. One ethnic group frequently tries to dominate and control political power and resources in the form of political disputes. For instance, during the Rwandan conflict, the Hutu majority attempted to maintain political dominance over the Tutsi minority, which led to the 1994 Genocide (Gourevitch, 1998). Similar to Sudan, the quest for control of resources and political power drove the war between the Arab Muslim government and the non-Arab Christian and animist tribes in the south (Natsios, 2002).

Economic inequality and rivalry for resources are further causes of ethnic strife. Ethnic groups are frequently split along economic lines, with one group possessing the majority of the resources and the rest being sidelined and denied access to economic possibilities. As a result, there may be hostility and tensions between various groups as well as violent confrontation. For instance, competition over oil resources was a major factor in the war between the government and ethnic groups in Nigeria's Niger Delta region (Adejumobi, 2007).

Ethnic conflicts can also be significantly influenced by the historical and cultural distinctions between ethnic groups. In certain instances, these disparities can be linked to long-standing conflicts involving land, religion, or cultural norms. For instance, persistent territorial and religious issues and the country's 1947 division are to blame for the violence between the Hindu and Muslim communities in India (Ganguly, 2013). Conflict based on ethnicity can have disastrous effects on both the parties involved and larger society. Loss of life and community dislocation is two of the most important effects. Large-scale acts of violence, such as massacres, forcible evictions, and other violations of human rights, frequently occur from ethnic conflicts. Ethnic conflicts can also seriously harm the economy by stifling trade and permanently harming infrastructure and growth.

Social cohesiveness and community ties are also negatively impacted by ethnic conflicts in the long run. When ethnic groups are pushed against one another, trust, communication, and collaboration can suffer, making it challenging for communities to recover after a conflict. As a result, there may continue to be tensions and disputes, feeding the cycle of violence and unrest. Effective interventions and peacebuilding techniques are urgently needed given the destructive effects of ethnic-based violence. Dealing with the political, economic, and cultural core causes of conflict is one strategy. This can include initiatives to foster economic growth and lessen economic inequalities, as well as initiatives to foster communication and racial harmony amongst various ethnic groups. For instance, the 1998 Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland sought to overcome the fundamental political and cultural divide between the Protestant and Catholic communities by encouraging power-sharing and inclusive governance (Bloomfield, Barnes, & Huyse, 2003). Focusing on conflict prevention and early warning systems is another strategy that can be used to find and resolve possible sources of conflict before they turn violent.

2.4.3 The Nexus of Resource and Ethnic-Based Conflict

Natural resources including land, water, minerals, and oil are often at the center of conflicts between people, groups, or nations. These conflicts are referred to as resource-based conflicts. Ethnic groups frequently engage in conflict over resources in these conflicts, which frequently have an ethnic component. The connection between resource depletion and ethnic-based conflict has been a recurrent issue around the world, causing bloodshed, evictions, and social discontent.

The purpose of this literature review is to examine the connection between ethnic-based conflict and resource availability, its origins and effects, and potential resolution methods.

Resource availability and ethnic-based conflict have a complicated and multifaceted relationship. Land, water, and mineral resources are frequently linked to ethnicity and culture. For instance, in Nigeria, the Ijaw, Itsekiri, and Urhobo ethnic groups battle for access to the oil resources in the Niger Delta region, where oil is a substantial resource (Ibeanu, 2008). The fight for land and water resources also has ethnic overtones in Darfur, Sudan, as Arab and non-Arab communities in the area compete for access to resources (de Waal, 2007).

Conflicts over resources may potentially heighten existing ethnic tensions and turn violent. For instance, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the struggle over mineral resource ownership has affected several ethnic groups, with each competing for control of the mines and the corresponding financial benefits (Hagmann & Péclard, 2010). Moreover, the lack of resources brought on by environmental deterioration or climate change may result in competition among ethnic groups for scarce resources, leading in tensions and wars.

The unequal distribution of resources, frequently along ethnic lines, is one of the main factors contributing to conflict based on resources and ethnicity. When one ethnic group has a disproportionate amount of resources, other communities may feel excluded and marginalized, which can cause resentment and friction. Conflict may result from this, particularly if there are few chances for an amicable resolution. For instance, in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, competition over oil resources, which the government and foreign corporations controlled with little benefit to the local communities, was the main cause of violence between the government and ethnic groups in the region (Adejumobi, 2007).

Conflict over resources and based on ethnicity has serious effects on both individuals and communities. While ethnic disputes can result in human rights violations such as massacres, forced displacement, and other forms of violence, resource conflicts can cause displacement, loss of livelihood, and environmental destruction. Moreover, these confrontations may have a lasting negative effect on community ties and social cohesion, making it challenging to foster cooperation and trust again once they have stopped.

A comprehensive strategy that addresses the root causes of these conflicts is necessary for resource- and ethnic-based conflict management. Promoting inclusive governance and equitable resource allocation is one strategy. This can include initiatives to foster economic growth and lessen economic inequalities, as well as initiatives to foster communication and racial harmony amongst various ethnic groups. For instance, the Niger Delta Development Commission was established by the government of Nigeria in order to address the underlying economic and social problems that were causing unrest in the region (Adejumobi, 2007).

Focusing on early warning systems and conflict prevention is another strategy that can help find and resolve possible sources of conflict before they turn violent. To settle conflicts and foster trust between various ethnic groups, this may entail the use of mediation, discourse, and reconciliation. Peacebuilding and conflict resolution activities have been actively promoted by international organizations like the United Nations.

2.5 Some Selected Theories of Conflict

As many scholars have articulated (see for instance, Schellenberg, 1996:12), there are many versions of conflict theories and many variants of theories about conflict. This among other suggests that quite divergent theories do exist within the field of peace and security studies. Chronicling the conflict cause remains to be debatable. The initial task of any exhaustive review is therefore probing: why do we deal with theories? The extant knowledge unveils that theories are useful to have concrete record about the legacies of past; theories also avail unique explanatory models for unpacking the root causes, prolonging factors and the foremost actors of a conflict; and theoretical underpinnings available perfect clues of applicable to intervention.

Conflict naturally occurs throughout human interactions and can be caused by a variety of things, such as disparities in needs, wants, values, and views. Human need theory, relational theory, relative deprivation theory, frustration and aggressiveness theory, and greed and grievance theory are just a few of the ideas that scholars have created to explain the reasons of conflict. Each of these theories will be thoroughly discussed along with citations to back up our arguments in this reply.

In the contemporary conflict studies, the major underpinnings can be categorized under two headings. These are the behaviourist (which is nowadays renamed as the socio-psychological)

and the classical theoretical perspectives (which are currently identified by the name of socio-structural theories). The former focuses on the individual level, where the unit of analysis is individual rather than the group. The latter are primarily concerned with the analysis of group interactions. Unlike the former, the classical theorists often seek to analyse conflict situations. They consider conflict situation as a conscious interactions of human creature. Unlike the behaviourist, the units of analysis of classical theories are too many, because they seek to analyze conflict from holistic social perspective. This part devotes to review the major premises, underlying arguments that each theory seeks to highlight and the core underpinnings that each theory takes as essential marker to differentiate itself from others. As stated above, the study is all about the resource driven conflict, so it cannot be bounded within a single theoretical perspective. In effect, theories are clustered under two core headings such as the individual and socio-structural, but presented in six headings—just to maintain clarity within logical sophistications.

2.5.1 Basic Human Need Theory

The human need theory posits that conflicts arise from the failure to satisfy the basic human needs, such as safety, security, and respect. According to this theory, people engage in conflict whenever their needs are not met, and they feel that they are being denied their basic human rights (Burton, 1990). For instance, if a group of people feel that their safety is being threatened, they may engage in conflict to protect themselves and their loved ones. The theory appears fascinating for at least the following reasons. It offers a conceptual tool capable to connect and addresses human need at all levels. Moreover, the theory offers official recognitions for the existence of the non-negotiable issues such as identity, human security, etc. Such distinctive qualities rather make the basic human need theory to serves as the philosophical foundation for human concerns often deemed as non-negotiable. As the theory underscores human need are neither liable to any form of deprivation, nor be negotiated.

As a matter fact, the material needs of human kind have along been subjected to very powerful debates among scholars. Since the demands for basic needs have always been surpassing its supply, conflicts can be justified for being a personal failure of either to share or to obtain a certain need. Consistent to this, the mediaeval thinker and scholar, Thomas Hobbes argues, selfishness of man is the cause of many conflicts. He went to postulate further that, since human being is inherently incapable to satisfy all his needs by himself (the *Leviathan* (1651, the

excessive for basic needs would ultimately lead to conflict. Nonetheless, John Lock responded to this logic by criticizing the very premises of Hobbs. As Lock maintains, it is of the niggardliness of nature (i.e. scarcity) that often leads human to conflict (1801:39). For Lock, since nature does not offer enough resources to satisfy human needs, scarcity becomes the source conflict (Ibid, p.43). The early scholarly debate that sought to associate conflict with only the material aspect of basic needs remained partial, which failed to consider the entirety of human needs.

John Burton (1990:334) was the early scholar who coined the basic human needs theory during the late 1970s. He argues individuals cannot be socialized into the behaviors that destroy their identity and other need goals, and therefore they often appear to react against such challenges. As articulated by different scholars who advocate to the basic human need theory, the roots of the conflict does not emanate from the behaviour of the individual, rather from the social environment. It is of the social environment that tended to deny individuals from attaining their basic needs. In related story, but in a different arena, in the late 1960s, Koestler has identified that the need for belongingness such as the excessive desire and urges of human being to become identified with a group, a nation, church etc. are among other innate qualities that often make humankind offer reason to live in this planet. Surely, it was the denials of such basic needs often draw humankind to violent conflict. Burton and other early thinkers such as Koestler (1967) highlight that human needs are both ontological (theory of existence) as well as essential elements for the continued existence of humankind. Certainly, human needs are ontological, which in effect, the firm drive to fulfil individual and group needs has become essential explanatories human behaviour and social interactions (Jeong 2007).

However, unless such needs are stated clearly and delineated with the plausible theoretical fence, it might create more confusion than bring clarity. In the effort to create the causal link between basic needs and conflict, Galtung (1990) remarks that essential needs for survival entail security and safety (from fear and anxiety), belongingness and love, recognition and acceptance by others, dignity and feelings of personal fulfilment (Galtung, 1990 cited in Jeong 2007). The notable psychologist Abraham Maslow (1971) has also constructed illustrious hierarchies of needs. He argues that different needs can be attained independently from others as stated in his pyramid of needs. He stated that the basic items related to safety and security (such like food, water, and shelter) has to be met first, and followed eventually by other need i.e. self-esteem. In

fact, basic human needs are physical, psychological, social and spiritual needs without the attainment of these needs essentially human existence to remain partial. In related position, but in a different logic Jeong (2007) argues, even though as articulated in that way (i.e. material needs must be met first), most intractable sources of conflict are ascribed in perceived threats to identity and security.

In 1970s John Burton was able to articulate a theory of intractable conflict (protracted social conflict). He analyzed the causal link among the complex, deep-rooted nature of protracted social conflict with individual and group needs (Burton, 1998; Sandole 2001). As articulated in basic human needs theory, the denial of human needs often expose to violent conflict for the simplest reason that human needs are universal and non-negotiable in their attribute. Burton went further to postulates human needs are meant just to be learned as part of the specific culture or simply instructed by the local institutions, but these basic human needs are of universal and innate to humankind. Burton had identified four types of needs as basic human needs. These are personal development, security, recognition, and identity. Personal development (fulfilment): it denotes the need to reach one's potential in all areas of life; Security (cultural): connotes the need for recognition of one's language, traditions, religion, cultural values, ideas and concepts; Recognition is indicate the right to be recognized as person or group; and identity implies a sense of self in relation to the outside world.

Rubenstein (2001) articulates that as the state system fails to fulfil identity needs, over time the ethno-national struggles would likely emerge. To understand the conflict, thus identity needs has become a central theorizing point. In fact, history suggest in most cases regimes have been ousted from power simply because they could not repress such needs.

For identity needs are thought to be non-negotiable, they cannot be put on the table to be divided or bargained. It can lead to increased polarization as identity needs become further entangled in the conflict process. For the basic human needs often perceived to be incontrovertible and non-negotiable, parties in conflict become ready to keep on the conflict. They may even ready to wield fire power to meet their needs (Burton 1990). The basic human need theory postulates the denial of such needs including unmet physical need often come out to be regarded as suppression of human fulfilment. Thus, any restraint-including the political or physical barriers should not be imposed, for such restraints often undermine human capacity to make choice and use these

capacities to the fullest in the course of life (Bay, 1990 in Jeong 2007). Thus, in order to guarantee choices and access to social and economic opportunities, fair allocation of resources among all members of a community has to be maintained. Burton and other theorists went on further to make hierarchies on the foremost needs stated above. Prime attention has been paid to identity, which thought to have represented as a sense of self in relation to the outside world, together with the need for recognition of each group's language, traditions, and religion (Ibid).

When the state fails to respond to the inherent needs of its constituents, the legitimacy of the state would likely be contested from within. The looming danger is that when the basic human needs cannot be attained within the boundaries of existing social relations and institutions, individuals and identity groups seek alternatives far beyond to the conventional realms (Burton, 2001). Lack of institutional responses to vital needs, or even systematic denial of development opportunities would likely breed a conflict. Therefore, as Jeong argued, in view of these, the basic human needs theory has been shifted its unit of analysis from states to identity groups. This is indeed the major breakthrough in the history of the field of study of peace and security. As behavioural concerns in the postulation of inherent human needs theory stress, law and order cannot be sustained through the use of fear and threats. Law and order only be sustained all through by satisfying essential human ontological conditions (Ibid).

2.5.2 Relative Deprivation Theory

Generally, the relative deprivation theory postulates that conflicts arise whenever people perceive that they are being treated unfairly, people feel that they receive far less than the reasonable share of resources and opportunities (Gurr, 1970). This would mean that the actual inadequacies that political system become constantly unable to fulfil the needs and aspirations of the broad mass could bring about grievances and a negative frame of mind, which these sometimes may grow to political violence. For instance, as the better life condition get deteriorated due to falling in income, economic recession and unreasonable tax burdens, these might lead to mass dissatisfaction (see Jeong, 2007). As theorized in the relative deprivation, people engage in conflict when they feel that their relative position becomes lower than it should be. For example, if a group of people feel that they are being discriminated against or excluded from certain opportunities, they may engage in conflict to demand their fair share.

Yet, expectations on wants and aspirations may not get dropped as easily as in the decline of material life. Since expectations by the general public cannot be suppressed, nor are suited to be controlled for long by the governing unit, it comes out to breed frustration as independently from others concerns. As a result, a shift from social and economic progress to a brief period of slump, the condition easily bumped into a high level of insecurity and apprehension. As well articulated in the theory of relative deprivation, sense of *relative deprivation* arises from the gap between on what people expect to get and they acquired in actual terms (Ibid, 2007). Therefore *relative deprivation* is deemed to result from the combined effect of the rising expectations and lack of proportional response to the demands for a better life.

It is defined as “actors’ perception of discrepancy between their value expectations and value capabilities.” Value expectations lead people to believe that they are rightfully entitled to certain goods and conditions of life. Value capabilities are the goods and conditions that they think are capable of getting and keeping (Gurr, 1970). Greater instability is produced by the simultaneous occurrence of a substantial increase in expectations and quick regression in actual fulfilment. It is of a condition as the rising value expectation is tracked by a downward spiral of the value capabilities.

To say these in other words, sometimes progressive improvements in life could bring necessary conditions for the rise of expectation. Mostly this happens when a continued progress often comes out to exceed inert capabilities. If that is the case, pervasive mass discontent emanates from a sharp setback of sensible satisfaction as accompanied by an extended period of rising on mass expectations. As scholars argued, most significantly, structural inflexibility is accountable for the reluctance of institutions to accommodate new demands (see Jeong, 2007). In other words, an intolerable gap between the anticipated and the manifest reality of life conditions serves as a precondition for widespread unrest. The rise of popular protest is likely to result from combination of unfulfilled expectations and perceived unfair treatments (Ibid, 2007). So, subjective factors are important in making sense of the perceptions of relative deprivation.

It is of “[the] dissatisfied state of the mind” rather than the tangible supply of goods or social conditions that produce political stability and violence. Rising expectations and unmet social conditions increase the intensity of sense of deprivation. Disproportionate allocation of resources generates further anger and emotional frustration. A reference to what other groups have brings

about more intense levels of dissatisfaction. Rapid social change, coupled with uneven distribution of wealth and power, tends to generate feelings of a growing gap between unmaterialized expectations and perceptions about existing economic, social and political conditions. Violent uprisings are likely to take place when people's wants and desires grow further away from what they can obtain.

2.5.3 Aggression Theory

Perhaps the theory of aggression is the oldest among other underpinnings of the micro theories (i.e. individual level) of conflict. These are more concerned with instinctive conducts of the individual. Basic premises of various theories have already identified that root causes of war lie in human nature and human behaviour. The pedigree of such theories rather appears to have been traced from the 'original sin', with which humankind being regarded as inherently imperfect as specified in code of belief of various religious books, such as the Judo-Christianity, Islam and others. Yet, it seems also to have associated with theory of political realism. As postulated in realism. Human nature is inherently egoistic and self-interested, each of these behaviors would likely upsurge the propensities to conflict (See Elias, 2007: 48). According to realism, fights and belligerence are all derivatives of flawed nature humanity, for the simplest reason that humankind is born evil (Amstutz, 1995).

Imperfection and wickedness have permeated inherently into humanity, therefore the prime behaviors such as selfishness, egoistic drives and moral-imperfections are all continued to exist with no change. The basic premises of this theoretical perspective underscore that there is a direct correlation between the intra-personal and conflict that permeates in the external social order. Even though immense progress have been made to enhance the quality of human life over the past millennia, many of the civilizations and cultures had rarely dissociated from rebellions, uprisings, upheavals, extremism, and revolt. Even as scientific knowledge has increased to make life easier than ever before, the extent of human collective violence has grown malevolent today than in the antiquities. While concurring the realist thoughts and observing the propensities of humankind to violence, the early philosophical and religious traditions have conceived that instinctive impulse of humankind is a source of destructive behavior.

As Jeong (2007) argued, for the early thinkers, the instinctive impulses do exist as independently from human experience. In actual operation, this would mean that the aggression theory rather

seeks to establish the causal link between human biological (psychological) nature and violent conflict. Thus, aggressive behavioural characteristics of human species are explained by the primeval urges to fight and dominate each other. The aggressive behaviour is not necessarily a counter-reaction to some external events. Instead, it is embedded in the human nature, which is why many scholars tended to associate conflict with inborn violent behaviour of mankind.

In this regard, the notable figures have been Sigmund Freud (196) and L. Nader (1968), they both argued at different times that human tendency to act aggressively is quite inborn. As Jeong (2007) unveiled, in response to Albert Einstein questions as regards to the reasons for an easy arousal of hatred, Freud (1933a) has drawn the roots of violence to the *death instinct* in operation for the destruction. For Freud the destructive behaviour of human creature is inborn and likely drawn from the *death instincts*. These among others hinted that the intellectual roots of the aggression theory traced back to the late 1930s. The German biologist and ethnologist, Konrad Lorenz (1966) was one more scholar from early thinkers of human behaviour. In fact, he was the pioneering scholar in theorizing aggression behaviour. His findings unveiled that both the organic mechanism of survival and adaptation to changes has all been inferred from the evolution. He has drawn a historical analogy of these essential behaviours (survival instinct and adaptation humankind) with animal behaviours in natural surroundings. By way of extrapolation of the survival instinct and adaptations by humankind from the animal behaviour in natural world, he postulates that aggressive human behaviour is rather a reflection of survival-enhancing instinct. It would mean that for intent of self-preservation, the drive for self-annihilation (death-indistinct) is deflected outward, and impel the destruction of external targets.

By extrapolating instincts what he observed in a wide variety of animals, Lorenz postulates that like all other animals, humankind are endowed with fixed patterns of behaviour oriented towards self-preservation. He argues that for survival reasons humans are aggressive by instinct. If aggression is considered to be a reaction to an external stimulus, the activation of an internal physiological mechanism can be, in part, attributed to the social environment (Ibid). Thus, in motivational theories, aggression stems from a blocked energy of frustration produced in a diverse social, psychological environment (Jeong, 2007). Nonetheless, until this date, we find no scientific basis to conclude that human beings are innately aggressive animals. Nor we get a hold of scientific explanations that demonstrate human being is inescapably committed to war as

cajoled by his biological nature. So, it will be endless debate whether aggression is innately based on a human instinct, or is related to a physiological predisposition for species survival, or is nurtured in a social context.

This suggests, even if human species have been in fighting each other for the past millennia, for mainly due to rivalry for power and scarce resources, so far no solid evidence does exist that prove human are patently evil, nor biologically aggressive. Specially, yet, human aggression theory has been discredited by those writers who conducted exhaustive ethnographic works particularly in a-cephalous societies. As part of the on-going debates, but in a different logic, Jeong comes up with two points help to discern whether aggression is intentional or not.

If psychological and physical destruction are motivated by external rewards or specific gains, as opposed to a strong emotional arousal to injure others, according to Jeong, this is instrumental aggression, instigated by political or economic benefits, it's learned as independently from frustration. In contrast to this, endogenously motivated aggression is spontaneously generated and is not subject to removal by social reforms (Berkowitz, 1990 in Jeong 2007). These among others hint that theories on biological and instinctive origins of violence often disregard problems rooted in the organization and development of society. Indeed, human behaviour has profound social roots. Political, economic and ideological structures have always had an impact on human interaction. Therefore, destructive impulses need to be restrained and diverted away from expression in war. The biological origins of aggression are certainly contrasted with social & educational learning contexts (Ibid, 2007). He went on to argue further that imperialist policies on war and conquests have been intellectually rationalized by 'stages of evolution', presented in the form of 'social Darwinism'. Hereditary or genetic determinism has been promoted to justify ethnic, racial, religious, cultural superiority, for example, in India's caste system (Ibid).

2.5.4 Frustration-Aggression Theory

As stated above, the aggression theory has been subjected to substantial critics from different field studies; the theory becomes bogged down, failed to renovate itself. Later to the heavy critics, the behaviourist school of thought (such by Sigmund Freud and Lorenz) has been outsmarted by other theories. Among others, the frustration-aggression theory took primacy over the aggression theory in the analysis conflict at the individual level. In this regard, the contribution of John Dollard (1930s) and his colleagues (1939) has been immense. They were

able to create a causal link between aggression and frustration, which in effect, they heralded that aggression does not necessarily relate to the human instinct or nature. The frustration – aggression theory postulates that that an excessive level of frustration comes to build up when an organism/animal is blocked in pursuit of its goal. Correspondingly, human beings, as goal oriented animal, are innately becoming prompted to violence as they felt that they are being foiled from achieving what they want.

Since there is natural build-up of blocked energy that seeks to be getting out, aggressive action is therefore emanated from frustration, not from the innate desire human being that intends to hurt others. In fact, Jeong (2007) comes up with fairly persuasive argument, he underscores that the failure to obtain vested interests as well as needs such as food, territory, or even economic shocking would likely lead to the predisposition to and readiness for the violent behaviour. As a result, the nature of frustration seems to be associated with the type of goals in mind, and on whether alternative means are available to achieve these goals. In a nutshell, the more improbable to realize these goals, the deeper will be the frustration one might feel (Ibid). The absence or fewer alternatives to attain goals would likely tempt a stronger to act swiftly. As Jeong articulated, the level of intensity and frequency of blocking is therefore positively correlated to the depth of frustration (Ibid). It is hence postulated that external stimuli induces frustration, this, in turn, precipitates the aggressive behaviour.

Frustration aggression theory also assumes that whether achieving a goal or not is at the core of conflict across all levels. This suggests frustration is at the heart of every conflict. It can be surmised that frustration is both the necessary and sufficient condition for any aggressive behaviour. Scholastic assessments uncovered that aggression is the direct consequence of frustration. When certain innate needs or demands are deeply frustrated i.e. frustration of the substantive physical, socio-affectional, self-esteem, and self-actualization, or implemental needs such as security, knowledge & power, it could easily be turned conflicts to violence (C. Davies, 1973:251). Yet, sometimes aggression may be directed on inappropriate targets in a response to the fruitless efforts to eliminate the sources of frustration, and often carried out by power holders (Dollard et al., 1939). In this case, aggression is aimed at self-enhancement by scapegoating members of the social out-groups regarded as demeaned/disgraced. Mass pathology or a collective madness, accompanied by wider social, economic, and political ‘frustrations’, has

drawn intense concerns about a prejudice against minority groups, blamed as scapegoats for societal ills (Jeong, 2007). If aggression cannot be expressed against the real source of the frustration, displaced hostilities can be targeted to substitutive objects. Widespread aggression among a population can be manipulated by political leaders in directing hostilities towards the minority groups within the society.

Yet, the extent to which frustration causes aggression is not certain (Glossop, 1993). Societal stress and violence can be generated by frustrated expectations related to urbanization or economic despair. In some cases, antagonistic behaviour may be reduced by finding alternative means of releasing the frustration e.g. through humour, drama etc. (Jeong, 2007). Human behaviour is affected by social environment, and frustrated feelings can be controlled through various adaptive mechanisms. People can be educated to behave differently under conditions of frustration e.g. training on conflict transformation, anger management and others. Cultural settings also influence patterns of behaviour as demonstrated by experiences of non-aggressive societies. In short, the frustration aggression theory posits that conflicts arise when people experience frustration and are unable to achieve their goals (Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, & Sears, 1939). As the theory postulates, people tend to engage in conflict when they are unable to achieve their goals, and they feel that their efforts are being thwarted. For example, if a student is repeatedly failing an exam despite their best efforts, they may engage in conflict with their teacher to demand better support or resources.

2.5.5 Greed and Grievance Theory

Apart from the theories discussed above the contemporary theorization that seeks to create causal link between the civil war (including state failure) and grievance is known by the name greed and grievance theory. As postulated in this theory, conflict often arises from both material and non-material factors, including economic interests, power, and identity (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler's theory of greed and grievance sought to associate the civil war with the low per capita or gross domestic product (GDP). In their article published in 2000, they argued that it is not grievance that determines whether a civil war flared up or not, rather the possibility of organizing armed groups. In this regard, the lack of job and economic opportunities together with the inadequate schooling for the youth might avail exceptional opportunity for the rebel groups to join them novice fighters.

By taking the statistical data from 1960 to 1999 (nearly three decades) the authors have investigated about the possibility of civil war. They tested the greed theory in relation to grievance theory, the essential premises that they took in each theory include the propensity and capacity to finance the ethnic rebellion as to greed theory and the religious, ethnic, income inequality and the issue of political representation as indicative variables of greed theory. Their findings show that greed significantly outpaces grievance. The likely sources of rebel earnings include the external funding often obtained from the diaspora community, ransom and exclusive control of extractive minerals. In view these findings, the authors argue that in keeping with greed theory heavy dependence on primary commodity and the enormous money gripped from the diaspora community therefore poses high risk of civil war. In contrast to the grievance theory, ethnic and religious diversity unlikely pose high risks of civil war.

The authors also predict the possibility of civil war in relation to the export commodities. They predicted that those states that their primary export commodities comprises 30 percent of their GDP, such states are more prone to civil war as compared to these primary commodity composed only 10 percent of their GDP. The primary commodities here are mainly associated with strategic and extractive minerals. The findings of the authors also show that the role of grievance rather appeared to be less significant. For example the income inequalities, lack of political rights and ethnic polarization as well as religious factionalism are not potent enough to instigate violent conflict. Instead, as the authors asserted the ethnic dominance that is to mean one ethnic group being dominant such a context might lead to conflict. The authors also highlighted that ethnic diversity in itself makes rebellion very unbreakable; this is partly because it makes harder and more costly rebels solidarity.

2.6. Empirical Research

2.6.1. The Global Trend of Resource Related Conflict

Resource-based disputes are a common occurrence that can have serious negative effects on the economy, society, and the environment. These disputes arise when many parties have conflicting claims to natural resources such land, water, minerals, and forests. Many variables, including resource depletion, unfair resource distribution, climate change, and political unrest, can lead to these conflicts. By examining the existing literature on the subject, we will explore the global trend of resource-based conflicts in this literature study.

Many emerging nations, especially those with lax governance frameworks, continue to struggle with resource-based conflicts. In the last 60 years, 40% of all internal military conflicts have been resource-based, according to a report by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (UNDP, 2017). The analysis identified land, water, minerals, and forests as the four primary categories of natural resources that are most vulnerable to conflict.

One of the most hotly contested commodities on the planet is land, and disputes over it have been a major source of unrest in many nations. Land conflicts, for instance, have increased in Africa as a result of urbanization, commercial agriculture, and population growth (Nabudere, 2019). According to a Global Witness research, disputes over land and natural resources in Honduras resulted in at least 200 fatalities between 2011 and 2016 (Global Witness, 2017). Similar protests and fights with the police over land acquisition for industrial developments in India have resulted in a number of fatalities (Singh & Pandey, 2017).

Another important resource that is increasingly turning into a source of conflict is water. By 2050, the World Bank predicts that 40% of people worldwide would reside in water-scarce places (World Bank, 2016). Water disputes have long been a problem in the Middle East, and tensions between Israel, Jordan, and Palestine frequently arise in the Jordan River basin (Abu-Taleb & Hasan, 2021). Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia have been at odds over the Nile River in Africa due to Ethiopia's construction of a project that Egypt alleges will harm its water supply (Osman, 2021).

Minerals and metals have also been a significant source of conflict globally, particularly in countries with large reserves of these resources. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), for example, the conflict minerals trade has fuelled armed groups, leading to widespread violence and human rights abuses (Global Witness, 2020). Similarly, in Colombia, illegal gold mining has led to conflicts between armed groups and indigenous communities, resulting in forced displacement and environmental degradation (González, 2020).

Forests are also a vital resource that is increasingly under threat due to deforestation, land-use changes, and illegal logging. Forests provide essential ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration, watershed protection, and biodiversity conservation. However, conflicts over forests often arise due to competing interests between conservation, commercial logging, and

local communities. In Indonesia, for instance, conflicts over forest land have led to violent clashes between indigenous communities and plantation companies (Tacconi, 2021).

In conclusion, resource-based conflicts are now a widespread issue with negative effects on the economy, society, and the environment. Disputes over resources including land, water, minerals, and forests are particularly common in developing nations and are frequently aggravated by elements like resource depletion, unequal resource distribution, climate change, and political unrest. The core causes of these conflicts must be addressed in order to find creative solutions that will support sustainable growth.

2.6.2. Resource Related Conflict in Africa

Conflicts over resources have been a significant issue in many regions of Africa, with substantial economic, social, and political repercussions. With a focus on natural resources like oil, diamonds, and land, this essay will examine the causes, repercussions, and potential solutions to resource-based conflicts in Africa.

The unequal distribution of resources is one of the key factors contributing to conflict involving resources in Africa. Small elite in many African nations controls the majority of the nation's resources, leaving the rest of the populace in squalor. People strive for a fair share of the resources, which breeds anger and can result in conflict. For instance, in Angola where the government controls the oil business, a few numbers of people have amassed great riches, while the majority of the population continue to live in poverty and denied from the national fortune (Stewart, 2015).

The absence of efficient governance and regulation of resource extraction in Africa is another factor contributing to resource-based violence. Due to corruption and poor institutions in many African nations, multinational firms can exploit natural resources without paying fair wages or taking into account the needs of the local population. For instance, the diamond trade in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been associated with armed conflict, with rebel groups using the earnings to finance their operations (Autesserre, 2014).

Conflicts over resources in Africa have enormous social and economic ramifications. These conflicts may result in population displacement, fatalities, and infrastructure devastation. For instance, oil spills and pollution in the Nigerian region of the Niger Delta have severely harmed

the environment and people's health, sparking protests and violent battles between communities and oil firms (Humphreys, 2005).

Conflicts over resources may potentially have wider regional and global ramifications. Resource exploitation can cause rebel groups to form and violent warfare, which can destabilize entire regions. Moreover, the need for resources from industrialized nations may result in backing for oppressive regimes in Africa, escalating already existing conflicts (Le Billon, 2001).

There are numerous actions that can be made to address conflicts in Africa that are resource-based. One is to encourage accountability and transparency in the extractive sectors. This can be accomplished by mandating that multinational firms reveal the sums they give to governments and that these funds to be used for the local population's benefit. To guarantee that resources are managed responsibly and for the benefit of all citizens, efforts should also be made to strengthen governance and regulatory structures.

Promoting sustainable development and alternative livelihoods in resource-rich places is a crucial next step. This may entail funding for education and skill development as well as assistance for agriculture and microbusinesses. Communities will be less reliant on resource exploitation and less likely to get into conflict over resources if there are alternate forms of income available.

2.6.3. Resource Related Conflict in the Horn of Africa

Conflicts have occurred frequently in the Horn of Africa, which is made up of Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia over the years. Resource scarcity, which has been made worse by climate change, population increase, and unsustainable resource management methods, is one of the main causes of these disputes. With a focus on land, water, and food, we will examine the resource-based wars in the Horn of Africa and their causes in this essay.

In the Horn of Africa, land is one of the most valuable resources, and rivalry over it has resulted in countless conflicts. For instance, the government of Ethiopia has been charged with forcibly displacing indigenous people from their lands to make room for significant agricultural projects. This is particularly evident in the Gambella region in southwest Ethiopia, where thousands of residents have been uprooted to make way for enormous industrial farms. Due to the fact that indigenous people perceive that their land and means of subsistence are being taken away from

them, such incongruities have led to violent disputes between the government and local populace (Lavers, 2016).

Water is another valuable resource in the Horn of Africa, and its scarcity has led to numerous conflicts. The Nile River, for example, is a source of water for Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia. The construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) by Ethiopia has led to tensions between the three countries, with Egypt and Sudan claiming that the dam will reduce their share of the water (BBC News, 2021). This has led to diplomatic tensions and threats of military action, highlighting the importance of water in the region and the need for sustainable water management practices.

In the Horn of Africa, where millions of people face malnutrition owing to drought, famine, and violence, food insecurity is another cause of conflict. For instance, repeated droughts in Somalia have resulted in the loss of livestock and crops, depriving a large population of food and water. Armed groups and militias are now vying for control of resources, which has resulted in widespread warfare for access to food and water (ReliefWeb, 2021). Moreover, war has hampered the delivery of food supplies, making it challenging for humanitarian agencies to distribute urgently required help.

Although complicated and numerous, the underlying causes of resource-based conflicts in the Horn of Africa can be linked to a few major variables. First, the strain that population growth has imposed on finite resources has intensified competition for food, water, and land. In addition, droughts and other extreme weather events brought on by climate change have made it harder for individuals to make a living. Finally, resource depletion and environmental damage have been exacerbated by unsustainable resource management methods like overfishing, overgrazing, and deforestation. Finally, it has become challenging to manage resources in a sustainable and fair manner due to political instability, corruption, and poor governance.

2.6.4. Resource Related Conflict in Ethiopia

Several studies have documented the trends and drivers of resource conflicts in Ethiopia from the perspectives of different disciplines (political science, anthropology, geography, and conflict studies) across different socio-political, economic and geographical contexts. This section attempts to review previous empirical research carried out in Ethiopia and elsewhere related to

the complex linkages of conflict and resources. The review provides a cursory overview of the findings of relevant research to this study and never claims for being complete and exhaustive.

Previous studies carried out in Ethiopia noted that the link between natural resources and conflict is strong (see Fekadu, 2017; Gebre, 2012; Wood, 1993). Gebre (2012), in his study on pastoral conflicts in Dassanech area, found out that conflicts are complex and strongly challenge the idea of a direct causal link between concrete environmental factors and specific conflict incidents. According to this study, socio-cultural and economic factors cause or trigger conflicts independently or in conjunction with ecological processes. Using theories of property rights, environmental security and political ecology, Fekadu (2017) examined resource-related conflict among pastoralists in southern Ethiopia, specifically the Somali and Oromo ethnic groups. The study found out that the governance system, including the setting up of regions along ethnic lines and the associated competition for land and control of water-points, has contributed to violent conflicts between the Somali and Oromo ethnic groups. In addition, changes in land use, prompted by insecure property rights to communal land, rather than expected increase in economic benefits has caused conflicts among the clans of the Oromo.

In a study on inter-ethnic conflicts in southern Ethiopia over grazing resources, Boku and Gufu (2009) found out that inter-ethnic conflicts have interfered with customary resource allocations by undermining customary institutions for resource sharing. The study identified the importance of dialogue between the government and different pastoral communities for negotiating access to key resources supported by conflict resolution in the southern rangelands of the country. In Borena and Guji zones of Ethiopia, McPeak and Little (2018) found out that the main role of government in resolving conflict revolves around border conflicts, while for issues related to water, forest, privatize enclosure of communal resources, and cropping, the most common resolution institution is elders. They also found that recent administrative redefinitions of boundaries in the study area are associated with increased contestation over territory among ethnic groups.

Based on evidence from south-west Ethiopia, Wood (1993) argues that a major stage in resolving natural resource conflicts has to be the identification and analysis of the root causes of the conflicts, which will require considering the total circumstances which impinge upon the various users of natural resources. He also identified different types of resource conflicts in terms of the

actors involved, which include: inter-group conflicts between different peoples or ethnic groups; intra-group conflicts between different socio-economic groups within an ethnic group; conflicts between the state and people; intra-government conflicts between different groups and organizations within government; and inter-regional and international conflicts.

By taking Benishangul-Gumuz regional state as a case, Mesfin (2011) examines whether the federal arrangement has created an enabling environment in managing conflicts in Ethiopia. Among others, he found out that the federal process the country adopted encourages ethnic-based elite groups to compete in controlling regional and local state powers and resources. This has greatly contributed, according to him, “to the emergence of ethnic-based violent conflicts and undermines the capacity of regional states making the federal structure vulnerable to the dynamics of political change”. He further argues that the conflicts in Benishangul-Gumuz emanate from these causes, but lack of territorial land use rights of the indigenous people and lack of proportional political representation of the non-indigenous people are the principal manifestations. According to Cohen (1995), the regionalization carried out in the country resulted in the decentralization of administrative and fiscal authority to regions and lower level administrative hierarchies with the conviction that this was essential to: (1) reducing the inter-ethnic conflict that has divided Ethiopian society for centuries; (2) promoting equitable material conditions in all areas of the country; and (3) improving the efficiency and effectiveness of public sector performance at the field level. The devolution of power and decision-making to the ethno-regions includes budget, revenue collection, self-administration, the judiciary, and local development planning (Abbink, 2011). However, many authors (e.g. Abbink, 2011; Asnake, 2013; Berhane and Tefera, 2018) argue that ethnic federalism as practiced in Ethiopia has not simply contributed to conflict reduction, but rather has transformed and even generated new forms of conflict, often ‘decentralizing’ conflicts from the national level to the regional and local levels. According to Keller (2002) minorities in a federal system might tend to feel threatened by ethnic or regional majorities, by external actors or by the state itself. The author further noted that they need assurances that their human and political rights will be protected and that they will be able to function as equal citizens within the context of a multi-ethnic federal state. The challenges in translating the principles of ethnic federalism into practice in Ethiopia do not only come from inter-ethnic politics, but also from geographic and demographic factors preventing the full-scale realization of the principles enshrined in the 1995 constitution (Erk, 2016).

Gebre (2004) studied the impacts of previous resettlement program in Metekel area of Ethiopia on the settlers and their host communities and analyzed how resettlement-induced conflicts lead to bloodshed, increased displacement, reformulation of inter-ethnic alliance, and administrative complications. He found out that resettlement has the potential to affect both the settlers and host people in multiple ways that are comparable, and suggested avoiding involuntary resettlement programs and recognizing the alienable rights of local communities to their natural resources.

In Gambella, southwestern Ethiopia, Yonas (2014) studied using a qualitative methodology the causes of violent conflicts and found out that the causes are complex and beyond ethnic conflict. He identified more than single factor which have framed the analysis of conflict complexity in Gambella and concluded that internal conflicts are complex, and their constituent elements are conceived of, and explained, differently by the local peoples and different levels of government. Pankhurst (2003) also noted the relevance of looking at conflicts from a historical perspective which reveals changes and continuities in dispute settlement processes, and changes in relations between informal and formal institutions. According to this author, institutions created by the state and accountable to it have become increasingly intrusive in local affairs over successive regimes and have tended to marginalize or co-opt local informal institutions such as groups of elders, religious leaders and burial associations.

Using a relational ethnography research approach, Dagnachew (2018) studied ethnic conflict in Metekel zone since 1991, particularly between the Agew and Gumuz. He found out that relative political deprivation with ethnic lines created favourable conditions for violent conflicts, implying that elimination of the underlying conditions of deprivation would minimize the motive to use violence as a political instrument. The study also highlights that though the Gumuz are politically empowered, the socio-economic status of the people is hardly comparable with the Agew and other non-indigenous ethnic groups.

2.6.5. Conceptual Framework

The exhaustive review of theoretical perspectives have underscored that many more theories do exist. Experiences from various countries of contemporarily world unveiled that a growing complexity in conflicts due to divergent interests among groups and the increasing number of conflict actors involved. Traditional approaches to conflict have often sought to establish deterministic cause-and-effect relationships between resources and conflict. However, recent

scientific investigations have moved far beyond this linear approach, restored to more composite perspectives in the interest that making much deeper analysis as regards to the role of underlying and intervening variables that influence conflict dynamics (Schilling et al., 2018). This among other underscores that blends of many more perspectives have been applied for a broader understanding of conflicts. In fact, the new approach seemed to have influenced by a range of factors that interact in multifaceted ways, rather than by singular or direct causes.

Ethiopia serves as a notable example of this trend, where conflicts have evolved into more intricate and dynamic phenomena. The country's diverse ethnic groups, varying resource distributions, and complex socio-political landscape contribute to the complexity of its conflicts. In such contexts, unless scores of theories get applied, essentially it becomes growingly difficult to capture how the interplay of multi-layered causes influences the conflict dynamics. Moreover, without the application of a range of perspectives often hardly examines how the interconnected vexed issues, vested interests and incompatible goals mutually influencing each other and eventually grow to violent conflict in a spiral model.

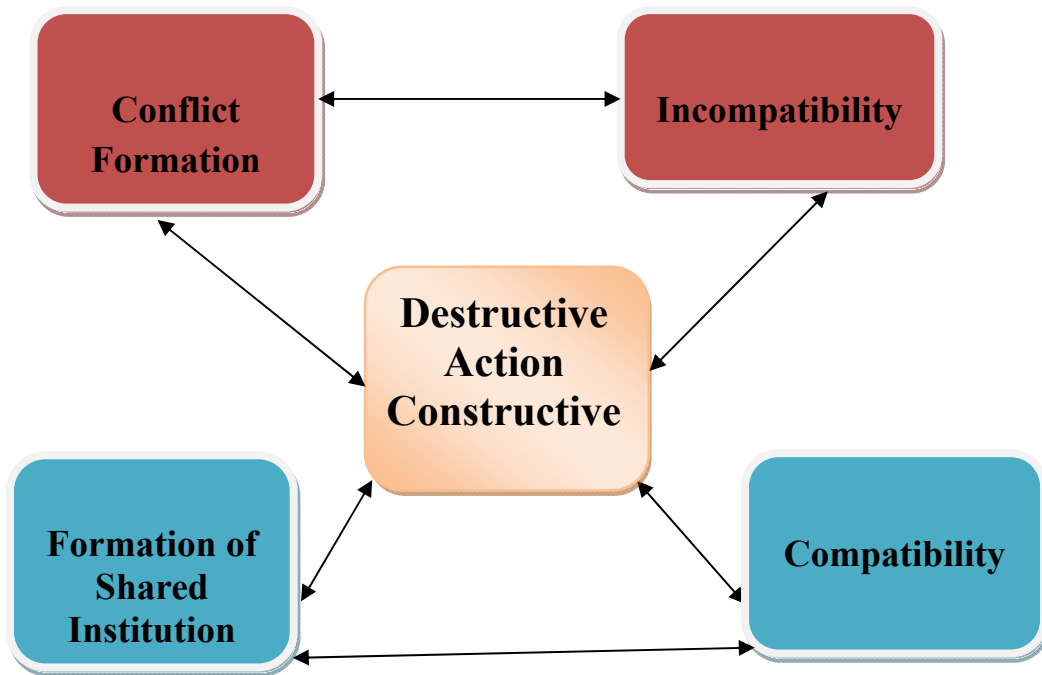
It should be noted that without making much deeper analysis of conflict myriad causes using quite numerous perspective, logically one could not able to chart feasible way out from that conflict. This would entail that using a variety of theories often avails exceptional opportunity to have fairly deeper understanding on how conflicts develop and change over time, considering the multiple variables and actors involved. The application of multiplex theory in conflict studies avails quite prudent prisms of capable to decipher how complex systems are functioning and respond to pressures, and how unintended consequences arise from such processes. Surly, insights obtained from using many more theories are of crucial for those engaged in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, for the strangest reason that they offer strategies for managing and mitigating complex conflict scenarios (de Coning, 2020).

In line with the multiplex approach, the study was set to utilize three different yet complimentary models of analysis, comprehensive model of conflict mapping and Herbert Kelman's "A social-psychological approach to conflict analysis and resolution," which the later in turn, congregates many more theories such as need-based, relative deprivation and socio-psychological theories. These two models of analysis are neither to be considered as logical sets of theories in themselves, nor deemed appropriate absolutely for analyzing other cases; rather

these analytical models are adapted based on the utility that they bring out more clarity and greater manageability of the entire thesis. Kelman (2009: 171-175) defines conflict from four vantage points. First, Kelman take to mean conflict as a process driven by collective needs and fears. He meant by that conflict is "a process driven by collective needs and fears rather than entirely a product of rational calculation of objective national interests on the part of political decision makers (Ibid, p.171)." This suggests that human need is always expressed in terms of personal needs; it can be also articulated in terms of collective needs such like ethnic group, ideological group or national group including the state. Second, for Kelman, conflict is essentially an inter-societal, thus as he postulates conflict analysis is not just give due attention to "strategic, military, and diplomatic dimensions," but also to "economic, psychological, cultural, and social-structural dimensions (Ibid, p.172)." Third, conflict as a multifaceted process of mutual influence, as Kelman (2009:173) articulates conflict is "a multifaceted process of mutual influence," in which each party often come out to influence the other in the intent that promote or defend each other's interest. The fourth perspective of Kelman rather conceive conflict as an interactive process with an escalator, self-perpetuating dynamic. This position views conflict as an interactive process, rather than sequential action-and-reactions of "stable actors". Yet, such an interaction is often directed by certain norms and dictated by a set of enemy images, and that is why undergoes escalatory self-perpetuating dynamics.

As stated above, the multiplex approach has been applied to delve into various attributes—political, socio-economic, and cultural—that influence conflict prevalence and dynamics. It also assisted a lot in assessing the strategies for conflict prevention, management, and transformation. It should be noted that the multiplex approach is not just aimed to encompass every individual party or stakeholder in conflict, but also capable to carry out a thorough examination various contexts within the whole span of trajectories in the complex systems. It helps to identify the processes and interactions that shape conflict outcomes and provides a more nuanced understanding of how to address and resolve conflicts effectively (Hendrick, 2009).

Synthesizing Concepts of Conflict Analysis



(Adapted from Peter Wallensteen, 2007:55)

Figure 1: Synthesizing Concepts of Conflict Analysis

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Brief Introduction

The methodology of a research set to determine the philosophical, scientific, empirical and other whys and wherefores of prompted a study to apply specific procedures. The methodology also offers brief recap about the overall setting and other contextual backdrop in which a research undertaking has been conducted. In a related but different aspect, research design can be regarded as the roadmap of the study, often geared up to depict as clearly as possible the overall course of research undertaking. It illustrates the basic strides that should be executed as per timespan of the research undertaking.

This research was qualitative in its design, fairly constructivist in its philosophical foundation, well-equipped with multiple data sources of that got amassed through different conduits, organized thematically, primed to corroborate (triangulated) different data sets, and analysed methodically to provide definitive rejoinders for the research questions. In line with this, this chapter offers detailed portrayals about the description of the study area; the philosophical foundation; the research design and approaches; the data source and instruments of data acquisition; sampling procedure and sample size determination; methods of data analysis; and ethical considerations.

Description of the Study Area

The research was carried out in Metekel zone of the Benishangul-Gumuz regional state. The area has undergone a long history of recurrent conflicts, and still violent conflicts seem to be the foremost challenge impeding the local development and posing clear and imminent peril for social, human, regional and national security. Unlike the other areas in federative Ethiopia, conflicts in Benishangul-Gumuz region rather seemed to have intricate by multilayered issues, extremely divergent goals and markedly incompatible value systems, and agonizing interests. Nonetheless, the intricate processes of such kind often manifested in the form of resource-driven the interethnic and intra-ethnic conflicts. Surprisingly enough, most of these conflicts have been turned easily into violent form, resulted in despicable material destruction, claimed the life of several innocent inhabitants, and apparently posed credible threats on the national security.

3.2.1 Topography and Natural Resources

Benishangul-Gumuz region is one of the twelve regional states of federative Ethiopia, which was established in 1992, but legitimized only later to the official endorsement of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) Constitution in 1995. The region is located in the western flank of the country, shares borders in the north and northeast with the Amhara regional state, in the south and southeast with the Oromia regional state, and deep to the west with the Republic of the Sudan (see Figure 2). Administratively, the Benishangul-Gumuz region is organized into three zones: Assosa, Kamashi and Metekel zone.

The study area, Metekel zone, shares border in the north with West Gondar Zone of the regional state of Amhara, in the South and South west with Khamashi Zone of Oromia regional state, in the east with Awi zone of the regional state of Amhara, in the deep west with the Republic of Sudan. This suggests among others that Metekel zone shares boundaries with diverse ethnic groups inhabited in two regional states, the Amhara and Oromia.



Figure 2: Location of Metekel zone in Benishangul-Gumuz regional state

The total population of Metekel zone is estimated at 276, 367, of which females constitute nearly about 49.7% (CSA, 2007). The region is endowed with extensive potential arable land, enormous vegetation cover with impressively large biodiversity and water resources including big river

basins of awash with rainwaters throughout the year. In addition, the zone is known for diverse mineral resources reserve, mainly gold and marble. In terms of agro-ecology, a great proportion (75%) of the zone's area falls in the lowlands (Afework and Adam, 2018).

3.2.2 Socio-economic Context

As stated above, the Benishangul-Gumuz region was formed as a self-governing regional state in 1994. The organizing principle has been relied fundamentally on the ethno-linguistic, shared memories and other cultural façades. The five ethnic groups such as the Berta, Gumuz, Shinasha, Mao and Komo which formerly were under different provinces (mainly the ethnic homelands of the Amhara and Oromo) become the proprietors of the national regional state of Benishangul-Gumuz. In effect, the significant others such as the Amhara and Oromo, comprising nearly 40% of the total population, became politically disenfranchised (Semir, 2019). These political trajectories were boiled into a new context, significant others (the Amhara and Oromo) seemed to have felt being marginalized from politics. The relationship among the regional states of Benishangul-Gumuz, Amhara and Oromia started to take new paths (Asnake, 2013). It can be argued the interethnic conflict in Metekel was essentially originated from their asymmetric relationship.

Metekel zone was bounded and became one of the administrative zones of the Benishangul-Gumuz regional state. The Benishangul-Gumuz regional state constitution was endorsed in 2002, by which the inhabitants of the regional state made segregated and recognized as indigenous and non-indigenous peoples (Mesfin, 2011). Even though attempts were made to stick territory with ethnic identity, which thereby forge ethnically homogenous states. The outcome was far less nearer to the expected (Beza, 2013). Apart from these, over the remaining years the Benishangul-Gumuz region has been politically flimsy for one or both reasons of that either for fierce rivalry among the major constituent ethno-linguistic groups, or capricious, less-prudent and poor inter-government relations with the neighboring regions such as the Amhara and Oromia regional states. In this respect, the northern part of the region (the Metekel zone) has stronger economic ties with the Amhara regional state than the southern part—the home-region (Asnake, 2013).

3.2.3 Demography, Societal Composition

The regional state of Benishangul-Gumuz is ethnically diverse, consisted five constitutionally authorized possessor-ethnic groups (Berta, Gumuz, Shinasha, Mao and Komo) together with

several the ethnic groups, the Amhara, Agew and Oromo of having no such exclusive rights. As part of this regional state, Metekel zone is the home of several ethno-linguistic groups, but predominantly inhabited by the Gumuz and Shinasha, the Amhara, Agew and Oromo ethnic groups. Metekel zone is also inhabited by inhabitants from diverse ethnic backgrounds, who moved into the area starting from 1950s, because of 'distress push' migration mainly from drought-affected areas of the northern part of the country, and later through state-sponsored forced resettlement schemes by the Marxist regime (Tsegaye, 2015).

As can be inferred from the demographic, ethno-linguistic composition, and other political orientations, the Metekel zone is the classic show case of diversified society. Diversity is the reality, not the perceived political landscape for Metekel zone. For the past three or more decades the Metekel zone seemed to have had lonely chance, either it has entertained its diversity so that benefited much the opportunity, or mismanaged to pay for the cost of vulnerability. The balance sheet of the political trajectories over the past three decades rather attested that Metekel zone did not benefit from its diversity. The ethno-linguistic diversity seemed to have been its liability than asset for the Metekel zone.

Empirical studies that have been carried out in the area over the past few years underscore that the kernel of political conflicts in Metekel partly emanated from the cumulative effect of the political misrepresentation or underrepresentation (Semir, 2019), ethnic profiling (Mesfin, 2011), the ill-advised policies and crisis of expectation ((Beza, 2013), and inadequacies of the inter-governmental relations among the regional states (Asnake, 2013). It was in such a political landscape that the study has been conducted, as the findings uncovered the internal vulnerability of Metekel zone essentially originated from internal fissures, which in turn, derived from misgovernance but often strategically exploited by external entities.

3.3. Philosophical Orientation of the Study

Ontologically the research undertaking was relayed fairly on the constructivist philosophical foundations and orientations, and in its epistemological scope and validation, interpretive. The governing premise of this ontology underscores that social reality is created through social interaction as well as interpretations. Thus, social reality has no permanence, nor does preexist, and far from objective thing. In consistent with these underlying underpinnings, the research undertaking thus presumed at the onset that people create their own realities based on their

experiences, interactions, and interpretations of actions and counter-actions and their immediate surroundings. Thus, essentially the research sought to comprehend how did different societal groups work together to define their own social reality, how were different stakeholders conceived and perceived their own reality within the wider ambit of resource-driven conflicts, and how were they able to resolve conflicts.

The selection of this philosophical foundation and theoretical perspectives was basically originated from their inherent strength, sophistications and unique methodological prudence of fairly useable to generate definite answers to the research questions. Indeed, the constructivist ontology is suitable for this qualitative study, since realistically conceives that how people's experiences, values, and beliefs influenced by on how they see the social reality. By researching the varying experiences and viewpoints of those involved in resource-based disputes in the Metekel Zone of the Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State, the researcher was able to understand the complex and dynamic nature of social reality. With the aid of the constructivist ontology, the researcher was also able to grasp how people shape their perceptions of reality from unique interactions, and decipher how interpretation a certain action and reaction influence the overall social reality as regard to resource-driven conflict.

What's more the very exceptional utility that this research undertaking acquired from applying the constructivist perspective was the one that related to the use and abuse of narratives. As shall be discussed well over the next chapters, apart from the physical realities that the target population often exposed to in every-day life activities, narratives are powerful means to shape, influence and able to construct additional realities on the minds of people. As the core findings showed, narratives have been in use to create new realities, to offer historical legitimacy for underlying claims and mobilize supporters for political violence.

3.4 The Research Design and Approach

3.4.1 The Research Design

As stated in the introduction, the research design is the overall plan, key arrangements and fundamental strategy of conceived ahead to bring about definite answers to the research question. It is of detailed plan helping to pursue the study as appositely, strategically and in organized manner. The research design is the critical steps of synchronizing the core research objectives, realistic capacity of a researcher and available funds, so that it determines which data to be

acquired, organized, analyzed and reported (see Kumar 2011). In line with this, the study was designed to be carried a qualitative design of having used multiple data sources. If not all, this research undertaking has been orientated by, and indeed, applied more than a few intrinsic worth of the research design stated above. Specifically, however, the research design has been operational in both to select the philosophical foundation and theoretical perspective of the study. Moreover, the design was also effectively utilized to ensure quality through the application of different mechanisms.

3.4.2 The Research Approach

The study was conducted all through the use of a descriptive qualitative research approach. Methodologically, the study was of qualitative, scores of data sets geared up to answer the research questions. The scientific rationales for applying a qualitative approach as the principal methodology were copious, but essentially originated from quite unique methodical prudence and inherent competence that can be exploitable from pursuing this approach. Among others, these include it allows to amassing colossal data within the shortest possible time, permits for an in-depth understanding of conflict trends, capable to discern the drivers of conflicts and the complexity thereof, and the role of actors and institutions in conflict prevention and management. Qualitative methodologies have also endowed with exceptional merits exploitable to examine very similar claims, value differences and high-stake issues in conflict studies and they are considered as the best available approaches.

In his study, Yonas (2014) was able to capture the basic attributes of the qualitative methodologies with respect to peace and conflict studies. And he comes up with very plausible justifications why a qualitative approach is fitting model in studying conflicts at different levels. He noted that it is appropriate to employ qualitative methods to collect data in an under-researched and little known context with a view to exploring, understanding and explaining complexity of violent conflicts.

Further, it uses a case study methodology. This methodology is suitable because it enables a thorough investigation of a particular occurrence in its actual setting. In-depth interviews, focus groups, and document analysis are just a few of the tools the researcher uses to gather information in order to better understand the subjective viewpoints and experiences of those involved in the dispute. Using the case study approach, the researcher was able to examine the

subtleties and complexities of the co-government officials and representatives of civil society organizations, who were directly or indirectly involved in the resource-based conflict, as well as other stakeholders and their varied perspectives and experiences.

3.5.Data Source and Acquisition

3.5.1 Data Sources

Data sources for the study were comprised a variety of primary and secondary sources. These include:

- I. Official reports from governmental and non-governmental and civil society organizations (CSOs), which were working in the region over the past few decades such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and other organs of the United Nation (UN), the intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD), the Continental Human Rights Commission of Africa and African Union (AU), the Ethiopian Ministry of Peace, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, the United Kingdom (UK) international aid such as the Oxfam, and the Consortium of Christian Relief and Development Association (CCRDA) and the Regional State of Benishangul-Gumuz. Indeed, official statements by these entities on conflict dynamics, resource management policies, and social and economic conditions in the region were considered as dependable data sources.
- II. The other data sources were related to archival sources (about historical and cultural background, including customary methods of conflict resolution and land use patterns) and scripts obtained from scientific empirical studies published in the form of journal articles, books and other accounts, including land administration policies, environmental policy and region-specific decrees.
- III. Opinions and experiences of various participants of the research undertaking were additional data source; these include the local stakeholders, community members, government employees, traditional leaders, and representatives from civil society organizations.
- IV. Real-time updates on the conflict as well as viewpoints from different sources channeled in the mainstream media outlets, social media platforms, and occasional reports by national and international media outlets were utilized as complementary data sources, but carefully used with cautious scrutiny and corroboration of other data sources.

3.5.2 Instruments of Data Acquisition

The research was applied different instruments of data acquisition. The diversification of instruments rather availed exceptional advantage for the obvious reason that the inherent limitation of a given instrument has been equipoised by the utilization of the other. Technically, the research was utilized the following instruments to gather data.

I. Desktop Research

As stated above, the research has been undertaken an extensive review of previous empirical works on conflict issues in Ethiopia in general; and the study area, in particular. In addition to these, available documents including official statistical data, policies and proclamations, local police reports and documentation, and relevant government documents in relevant zonal offices were made to be carefully analyzed and corroborated. The review of these essential documents has been utilized to map out the interstate conflict in Metekel zone.

II. In-depth Interviews (Key Informant Interviews)

In-depth interviews were conducted with key informants selected from among the local community representing major ethnic groups. The colossal data has been acquired from the Key Informants (KI), which otherwise could have not been grasped by other tools. As mentioned earlier, the key informant interview was made to explore complex issues with individuals by discussing very personal, fairly unknown and sensitive topics. The key informants have been selected purposefully, considering their knowledge about the issues while keeping on reasonable representation from among major ethnic groups (the Gumuz communities, the Amhara, the Oromo and Agew), and various social groups, just to grip a range of experiences and perspectives on resource-driven conflicts. It should be noted that despite the fact the Shinasha assumed to be part of the legal proprietors of the region, often times they were subjected to mechanical segregation due to their skin color. Cognizant of this, the researcher was able to gather dependable data only from proportionate and yet carefully chosen individuals from the Shinasha ethnic group.

The selection of the informants was essentially carried out based on consultation of the local elders, community leaders, and local authorities to verify and ensure whether informants had sufficient knowledge and information about resource-driven conflicts in the area. It would mean

that snowballing was applied to trace additional well-informed informants. Moreover, experts were selected from relevant government and non-governmental institutions, who are directly or indirectly involved in the conflict prevention, resolution and management. The purpose of extended interviews with experts was to explore the trends and drivers of conflict situations in the area, and institutional responses to conflicts.

III. *Observation*

Even if the study has not been ethnographic in its entirety, the researcher was immersed in all through extended field works. The intent of the observation was to understand the topography, physical setting, and the political contexts in which different stakeholders of the conflict were influenced each other. It was also utilized to make sense of the socio-cultural logic by which perceive and interpret the resource-driven conflict among the different ethno-linguistic groups in Metekel. The closer observation of target population was indeed allowed the researcher to procure remarkable datasets about the meanings, symbolic expressions, locally-specific communication styles and wisdoms. In short, through keen observation on what looks like human life in the study area has been grasped, and in doing so, fairly deeper and pretty accurate data was amassed in keeping with impartiality and objectivity.

IV. *Focus Group Discussions*

A series of focus group discussions (FGD) with eight discussants were selected from among various groups, which had been identified during the preliminary field work. In fact, the compelling reason behind the application of the focus group discussion was so evident; the study is all about the underlying causes of resource-driven. The use of this data gathering tool seemed to be inherent to the discipline of peace and conflict studies. The incompatible goals, divergent interests, agonizing issues and value systems have often been expressed through well-articulated narratives and perspectives. It appeared extremely difficult to understand on how these categorically functional in both levels of the political discourses and actual engagements, which otherwise, applied the focus group discussions. The purpose of the focus group discussion was therefore to obtain a group perspective of the issues, goals and interests, as well as triangulate the data obtained from other methods of data collection.

Selection of participants of the focus group discussion was fairly reasonable and powerful enough in maintaining balanced representation of different social and ethnic groups. Individuals included in the discussion were selected based on their knowledge and experiences of conflicts and conflict situations in the area. The Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) was guided by a checklist of questions and also flexibly carried out through probing as new issues of discussion emerge. The application focus group discussion had several advantages, which among others, the instrument allowed to grasp the genuine concerns and innate behaviours of individuals rather than artificial or experimental ascription often see in a quantitative survey. As participants expressed firmly that they found every sessions of focus group discussions more comfortable and enjoyable. Indeed, valuable evidences, sophisticated positions and others were gathered through the focus group discussions. If that was the case, the prime lesson that can be learned from this study is that the setting, procedures and management the of the focus group discussion have to do with contribution of discussant. In fact, many sessions were relatively structured and much focused to generate colossal data from diverse different groups.

3.6. Sampling Procedure and Sample Size Determination

As per sampling design, the sampling frame of the research consisted people and groups who have gone through resource-based conflicts in the Metekel Zone of Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State. To choose individuals with certain qualities or experiences pertinent to the study, the researcher have been applied a purposive sampling strategy. Hence, key informants were chosen by the researcher using a snowball sampling method after being recommended by a Metekel Zone administration office.

Moreover, the researcher uses judgment sampling to select respondents to conduct focused group discussion based on their knowledge or expertise related to the study. The study was conducted four focused group discussion in each of the three ethnic groups, with a total of twelve focused group discussions. The four groups include: only elders; a mixed group containing adults, women, and the youth; a gender separate group involving only women; and only youth group. A total number of participants in each focused group discussion were eight (8) participants to make the discussion and communication manageable. As a final point, the study employed both a combination of judgment and snow ball sampling to conduct in-depth interview with the

community members. Accordingly, a total of 24 key informant interviews was conducted, 8 interviews in each of the three ethnic groups.

3.7. Methods of Data Analysis

3.7.1. Method of Qualitative Data Analysis

The methods of data collection and analysis used are the key components of this research. As explained well above, apart from secondary sources, the chief primary data acquisition instruments were in-depth interviews (including key informant interview), observation, and the focus group discussions. The different datasets obtained from different sources were organized and analyzed using thematic analytical method. This has involved coding the data into categories or themes and then further breaking down the themes into more specific subthemes. This method was meant locating themes and patterns of datasets, interpret them in in line with philosophical foundation and theoretical perspective selected to apprehend the research objectives. With this method, colossal datasets acquired through the application of various instruments were made to be analyzed from multiple perspectives, and thereby geared up to give definitive answers for the research questions.

3.7.2. Quality Enhancement Strategies (Reliability and Validity)

The validity of a study has always been subjected to the diversification of data collecting instruments. To ensure the validity of datasets, the study was applied multiple data collection methods such as in-depth interviews, observation, focus group discussions, key informant interview and document reviews. These were all applied just to offset limitation each other instrument inherently entitled with. It is therefore self-evident that reliability of the datasets got assured at the onset by diversifying data sources. Furthermore, the collected data from different data sources were made to be triangulated to reduce the risk of bias or inconsistency.

As discussed here under the research was guided by well-defined protocol which essentially aimed at ensuring reliability of the study. Apart from this, the study was synergized by a theoretical framework that provides a clear understanding of the research problem and the concepts being studied. Moreover, the data collection procedures, analytical methods and other critical steps in data acquisitions were clearly outlined and consistently applied throughout the study. A purposive and representative sampling strategy was utilized to select participants, which helps ensure that the sample is representative of the population being studied. Furthermore, the

researcher was shared the initial findings published in journal articles to the research participants themselves and thereby ensures the reliability of the data. It was also made to collect additional data to solidify the findings of the thesis.

3.8. Ethical Considerations

This research was guided by a credo of respecting for all, refrain from causing no harm to the culture, values, and customary practices of the community residing in the study area. The researcher appropriately informed the study participants about the purpose of the research and fully considered their consent to participate in the research. It was done with a voluntarily participation of the participants. The confidentiality of sensitive data also handled with utmost care. In so doing, the identity of informants remained anonymous; and maximum care has taken to manage secure the identity of the participants. What is importantly to be disseminated was only their view towards the research issues.

In addition, all the information collected for the purpose of this research is not permitted to be disseminated and used for any other purpose. Furthermore, the output of the research was by no means permitted to be used for a purpose that harms the local community of the people who were participated in the research; and/or any other human creature. The research output had also been communicated to all the stakes/ community leaders, governmental hierarchies from kebele to regional level and beyond, research participants and other stakeholders. In general, as per research ethics, all the data collected for this research will not be castoff for an intentional and/or unintentional manipulation.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE HISTORY AND SHIFTING TRAJECTORIES OF RESOURCE-DRIVEN INTERETHNIC CONFLICT IN METEKL

4.1 Introduction

Resource has always been at the heart of many interethnic conflicts. The economic cause of interethnic conflicts is among the most widely acknowledged cause in the literatures of peace and conflict studies. Nevertheless, resource competition alone might not be a sufficient condition that draws ethnic groups into intense violence. The value difference, incompatibility of interests, change in livelihood strategies, and the flow boundaries of ethnic homelands with the changing socio political reordering could also precipitate pre-existing interethnic animosities. These highlights the contiguous issues, divergent interests, value incompatibilities, and cultural differences are among other proximate factors that propel resource competition, often used and abused to mobilize supporters for violent interethnic conflicts. In actual fact, resource driven conflicts do not exist as independently from broader societal riven, historical legacies, and geopolitical dynamics. In this regard any analysis that attempts to make senses of resource driven conflict has to be substantiated by additional functional analysis.

Relying on fairly broader inspection of incipient as well as genesis of the conflict, this chapter seeks to provide comprehensive etiological analysis of the inter-ethnic conflict in Metekel. The analysis in chapter four is set to provide the holistic depiction about the conflict. The original templates of conflict mapping by Weher (1979) and Wallenstein (2007: 50-57) have remodelled to analyse the intricate conflict in Metekel. It is of pretty much comprehensive chronicling of the resource-driven conflict in Metekel. Therefore, the analysis presented in chapter four went far beyond to ordinary conflict mapping, for the superb reason that it offers broader rendering of the conflict while focusing on the analysis of the context and historicizing the conflict by tracing back to the early years of interaction of the Gumuz and non-Gumuz communities.

By delineating the two critical phases, the opining subtopic offers in-depth account of the genealogies of the conflict. The second subtopic is all about modelling the inter-conflict in Metekel. The wide-ranging circumstances, prevailing contexts, core actors as well as stockholders involved in the conflict together with their underlying motives have all set to be

analyzed in diachronic and synchronic manners. The third sub-topic devotes to show the change and continuous of the inter-ethnic conflict over the past two decades. Indeed, this sub topic of provides holistic portrayal on how the change in political landscape eventually led to significant change in goal, values, and interests among parties in conflict. The regionalization of the local conflict is the concern of sub-section four, where the lingering effect of the local conflict together with the geo-strategic concerns of states in the Horn of Africa set to be analyzed. The final sub-section of this chapter presents a brief analysis of the consequences and examines to what extent attempts made to address the conflict were successful. The remaining subtopics have destined to identify the foremost underlying cause of the interethnic conflict within the wider ambit of incompatibilities in the Metekel area.

4.2 History of Inter-ethnic Conflicts in Metekel

4.2.1 Context of the Interethnic Conflict (Pre-1991)

The genesis of the interethnic conflict is rather dating back to the early years of the modern Ethiopian state system. Nonetheless, for the interest of time, manageability and in the intent to emphasize the merit for political transitions; this subsection is rather classified into three fundamental mileposts. These are before 1991, from 1991 to 2017 from 2018 to present. The underlying motive of this periodization is just to show the change and continuity of the resource driven conflict through the prism of defining timelines. Regardless of disagreements among oral sources on whether the Gumuz and non-Gumuz communities have drawn to organic links, it can be argued the that the on-going relations of the two communities must have been the outcome of their early contacts as well as processes of heavy interaction.

As the oral sources have unveiled, the interaction of the Gumuz and non-Gumuz communities in Metekel had never been all-peaceful. There were intense conflicts, which many of them claimed the life of several inhabitants. In fact, often it appears difficult pinpoint precisely and discusses exhaustively the sources of conflict in the historical past. Surely, the interchange of various actors rather had made the conflict causes so variegated. Nonetheless, an exhaustive review of the genesis, the course and patterns of the conflict in historical past would require an in-depth examination many more factors and side issues. The principal objective of this sub-section is therefore a careful analysis of the genesis of the inter-ethnic conflict. It focuses only on some historically relevant events and then move onto the analysis of underlying causes together with the dynamics of the inter-ethnic conflict in post-1990s.

As several informants (senior citizens, local elders) have informed, Metekel area was just no-man's land. People from different parts of the country had been gone there to put on show their adventure, hunting scary animals such as lion, African tigers and elephants etc. Nevertheless, this has never been peaceful at all. A number of adventurers (hunters) have been coming from different parts Ethiopia to the purpose of hunting wild animals, which such engagements regarded widely then as crucial ventures often executed to boost social capital and to achieve a certain but outstanding status within the society. As oral sources have unveiled further,¹ the Metekel area has long been served as hunting ground as well as among the preferred cites often individuals might have marched there just to grip substantial respects from their respective societies. Local informants have recounted that many more individuals who sought to have such a venture were in conflict with the people inhabited in the suburbs of the present day Metekel.

During then, the predominant inhabitants these areas were the Gumuz and other Nilotic speaking people such as the Berta and Shinasha. Gradually but surly, as individuals who sought to strengthen their business venture (like hunting wild animals for quiet a variety of economic motives such as ivory, skins and the civet) and other people went much deeper to the area, the conflict between the Gumuz and the non-Gumuz communities have turned to the use of excessive force, organized violence and then full-fledged battles. The local sources unveiled further that in 1952 inhabitants of *Dech Lombardia* vicinity led by Gumuz warrior named Lemmocha had launched heavy attack against the non-Gumuz communities. Of course, this might have not been a full-fledged battle; it must have been a surprise attack along the main way to Metekel area. It should be noted that, if not the beginning of the end, this could be considered as the beginning of the interethnic conflict in the most logical sense.

As local sources claimed, the second and the bloodiest war had been carried out between the Gumuz and non-Gumuz communities over the years later to 1950s. The underlying reasons behind these successive waves of conflict were due to that Gumuz communities refused to pay taxes to the local governors at provincial or district levels. Although hardly trace the exact time period the Gumuz communities were started sedentary life, they might have been asked to pay

¹ The recounting is mainly relied on the oral data has been collected throughout the research period, which roughly fall from the beginning 2022 to early years of 2023.

tribute for the reason that the live in the fiefdom of governors to whom was appointed by the Royal Monarch—the emperor. Extant local data confirm that the successive battle have been s devastating. The successive wars have claimed the life of several inhabitants, destructed immense wealth, and introduced for the first time that violence was the early form mutual influence in the area.

Attacks and counter attacks were so pervasive along the Metekel area in which most non-Gumuz communities have been travelled for economic purposes, but the Gumuz communities have long been tried to maintain their interest by all means. Before *Gungua* made to be administered by the Amhara regional state, Metekel was a full-fledged district (*Awuarja in Amharic*), comprising the present day *Wordas (local administration below district)* such as *Guba, Dibatie, and Mendura*. This area was mainly inhabited by the Gumuz, Shinasha and the non-Gumuz communities such as peoples who speak Oromifa and Agew and Amharic. Even if statistical data remains scant, the local sources claim that the Gumuz and Shinasha were outnumbering the other communities.

As can be understand from the discussions above, Metekel was conflict ridden corridor. Nevertheless, the underlying causes for many of the conflicts have not been recounted and documented well. Many informants have tried to associate the cause of the conflict with the resistance—noncompliance to the tribute imposed by the local governors. Nonetheless, the data remained insufficient to claim that there was organized resistance in the Metekel area that essentially posed stern threat to the local governors. Fragmented resistances and counter resistances might have been conducted, the direct victim of such skirmishes were inhabitants. This among others highlights that the interethnic conflict between the Gumuz and non-Gumuz communities have had early traces, which was mainly demonstrated in terms of resource use and ownership right. As informants confirmed further the fragmented resistances had been rather declined or turned face away for some time, largely for one or both reason of that either the local governors of the Imperial regime were able to appease the influential leaders of different banditry groups. Or the local official were able to create mass awareness by introducing basic education to the local inhabitants, which among others it capitalizes any assassination of individuals or groups would have legal consequences, or it was due to that the government was started to provide essential services to the inhabitants.

The underlying causes of conflict can be analyzed in terms of value incompatibilities regarding the use and distribution of resources. The Gumuz communities were not ready to pay tribute for one or both reasons of that they did not have such experiences before, or they might have believed that the area belonged to them for the simplest logic that no one appeared there before them. Nonetheless, the value clash could have been the key additional incompatibility that we might discern from the early acquaintance of the Gumuz and the non-Gumuz communities. To narrow down the actual and perceived value incompatibilities, the imperial government has been opened primary school in a small village known as *Gidem Daful*. The local sources indicated that the primary school was aimed at transforming the Gumuz communities. Progressive native Gumuzs were made to attend schooling just to encourage the fellow Gumuz community to draw to the education system. Ato Messeret Tsiwa, Ato Metemtiha, Ato Jegnefia Metmkia were among the pioneering, especially Ato Messeret Tsiwa has been played exceptional roles in this endeavour.

Many students from the Gumuz communities were graduated from this school; some of them were assigned later as local governors. Ato Messeret Tsiwa was the one who enjoyed such a position for long during the imperial era. Following the Ethio-Somali war in 1975, Ato Jegnefia had published a song that served as war chant. Local source evidenced that the song had played significant role in mobilizing the local people to defend their sovereignty from external infringements. He himself was marched to the war front called *Kraramara* along with other patriots he fought fiercely against the Somalia invaders. Indeed, left his fabulous legacy in plethora of anti-irredentist and resilient against the external domination by Ethiopian patriots in the history post independent Africa. In addition to Ato Messeret Tsiwa, Ato Metemtiha was also appointed as governor of *Gungua, Dungur Woreda and Dibatie* in late 1960s. He was known locally by his governing style, which mainly demonstrates his fairness, extraordinary sense of balance and objectivity. He advocated and often advised the Gumuz communities to live cooperatively with non-Gumuz communities. He preached that the Gumuz would benefit from the peaceful coexistence with other communities than using violence, banditry and other forms of resistance. These among other suggest that the late integration of the Gumuz communities with the Ethiopian state system was the one that could have been demonstrated in terms of both admittance and resistance.

The Gumuz and non-Gumuz communities had enjoyed fairly peaceful relations at the mid of 1950s. People were coming from the former provinces of Amhara regional state such as Gojjam, Gondar and Wollo have all been led peaceful life as they engaged in agricultural and other primary activities. They were adopting the traditional friendship ties with Gumuz communities, locally identified as *Hayii*. Nevertheless, over the succeeding years, as more people were migrated into the area, the relations of two communities has been started to deteriorate. The demand for new agricultural lands and the consummation of forest resources have all been increased at increasing rate. The search for new agricultural lands has never been without consequence. Several hectare of forest was burned, which in effect, it had posed existential threat for Gumuz communities. This was perhaps the turning point in the history of the inter-communal relations of the Gumuz and non-Gumuz communities. Not only were the Gumuz communities unsympathetically request for the withdrawal of the non-Gumuz communities from Metekel areas, but also harbingered that the two communities have begun tracking to intrinsic incomparability—some of come out in terms of variegated interests towards the use and possession rights of natural resources. Indeed, this entails that the natural resources have always been at the heart of interethnic conflict in Metekel.

From then onwards, the inter-communal relations of the Gumuz and non-Gumuz communities rather had become more conflict ridden than amicable. In the history of the inter-communal relations, the devastating war was recorded in 1966. The battle was started around the hamlet called *Gungua*, and waged for nearly nine months. This war is locally identified as the *Gasasi War*. The combatants were the Gumuz and non-Gumuz communities. Surprisingly, the Shinasha had fought alongside with non Gumuz community for the reason that they were identified as non-Gumuz community due to their brown skin colour. The local sources confirmed that in its magnitude, scope and coverage the war was quite unparalleled with the other inter-communal conflict. In effect, the Gumuz and non-Gumuz communities come out perceive each other as threat, and each of them expect the right time for vendetta. Over the succeeding years later, the conflict boiled into a new framing of the interethnic conflict. Slowly but surely, the relation had been degenerated into diametrical perception, the members of the two groups have been destined to kill each other until recently. Thus, the use and abuse of the natural resources, the perceived fears and historical legacies all seemed to have tangled, and turned over time to complicate the interethnic conflict in Metekel.

4.2.2 The Inter-ethnic Conflict Dynamics (Post-1991)

The post 1990s was the period in which the residuals of the past and the efforts for political and institutional changes appeared to have colluded. Those economic and political forces of tended to resist the change, and those which wanted to expedient the new wave of change came out to influence each other in many ways. The core interest of this subsection is thus to show how these mutual influences implicate the inter-ethnic conflict in Metekel. As informants recalled, the foremost drives of the inter-ethnic conflict in post-1990s was largely associated with the issue that whether the Gumuz communities of living in other regions to be reintegrated and become part of the new regional state of Benishangul Gumuz or not. As informants have attested, with the exception of the neighbouring *Woreda* in Wolkitie (which formerly was under the Southern Ethiopian Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State), the other regions were not ready to entertain this quest. As witnessed later, the Gumuz communities together with the territories they inhabited have been made to remain under the regional states of the Amhara, Oromia and Tigray. And this has created discordance and the feeling of gross incompetence among the Gumuz elite. Many believe that since their kinship were made to be marginalized (or considered as permanent minorities) in the other regional states, the Gumuz has never bothered about the non-Gumuz communities who currently residing in the Benishangul and Gumuz region. If that was the case, the trend seems to be a kind of tit-for-tat. Such interactions have been expressed in many ways. Thus, it should be noted that essentially the kernel of the conflict seemed to have laid on the continual tensions of over minority rights, language and ethnic identity in many regional states.

The other cardinal point that brought different ethnic groups into conflict was the different land use and divergent livelihood strategies. Most Gumuz community tended to live in a scattered area, used to produce crops with short gestation periods and within exceptionally smaller plot of land. They immediately leave the area until the summer (winter in Ethiopia) season passes. In contrast to this, the non-Gumuz communities often wanted to have bigger plots to saw crops with fairly higher yields, with the long gestation period (nearly three months long) and tended to occupy the land for long. The underlying philosophy of these two livelihood strategies are found to be mutually opposing, for the Gumuz communities often sought to use the land after a brief period of summer, but often they fund it occupied by others. This was awfully unacceptably by the Gumuz communities; they often applied violence to dislodge their land.

On the other hand, the non Gumuz communities believe that they became forced to defend themselves and their interest by all means. Since Metekel zone is so remote to the central and federal government, most conflicts was rather made to be settled in their own way. Overtime they have been shaped and influenced by the nature political system; the state was able to manage many of them by resorting to political solutions, where other alternatives were either unentertained or intentionally side-lined to serve the short term goals of politics. The inter-ethnic conflict in Metekel rather seemed to have drawn from very organic divergence of the livelihood strategies of inhabitants, nonetheless the short term solution resorted to overcome the problem became the long term problem.

The other structural factor that draws the community into conflict seemed to have linked with the widening of the economic gaps or income disparities. This has to do with the quest to benefit from the local investments, equity and job opportunities. Apart from these, the gap as well as the local complaints rather associated with investment, several, informants expressed their concerns on how could the interest of the regional state be entertained as regards to the issuance of investments in the region. According to informants, since the federal government often authorized to decide on what, who, and how an investment to be executed in the region, the local inhabitants would have no leverage to what level they benefit from any venture.

Since 1991 the area has been plagued by numerous causes of conflict involving myriad participants. One of the primary drivers of these conflicts has been the contentious issue of resource utilization. Land, particularly agricultural land, and various minerals have been at the heart of these conflicts. Especially between the years from 1992 and 2018, hundreds of hectares of forests, notably in *Dangur, Mandura, Gubo, Pawi Dibate, and Bullen woredas*, were logged in the name under of investment and exported to the other neighboring state such as Sudan as well as to regions of Ethiopia. As the *Gumuz* communities and other inhabitants such as the *Shinasha* have notified, they didn't obtain any direct or indirect benefit from such investment. They remarked further that even they were not allowed to the logging sites, which eventually the situation has become the source of tension in the area. A community leader described the situation as follows:

Numerous individuals from the Tigrai region, including former military, law enforcement, and political leaders, have been engaged in land expropriation under

the guise of investment. Individuals from other regions were also involved in similar activities. This was flagrant violation of the region's fundamental rights to self-rule. It has been executed forcefully without consent of the region. It is worth noting, however, that there were supporters of this malicious act among members of our community (meant the Gumuz community) (KII 7, 2022).

The assertion of the community leader rather seems to have concurred by several other members of the community including the local politicians, activists and other ordinary citizens. An officer from the Zonal Investment Office wants on to substantiated this claim, indicating that the primary investors in the area and the region of the came from the Tigrai Region. This underscores the widespread concern regarding the influence and impact of these investments on the socio-economic and political landscape of the area.

To recapitulate, as it can be inferred from the early history of the relation the Gumuz and the non-Gumuz communities, they were able to establish fairly organic links. They co-existed for long with the interplay of peace and conflict. Their organic link was started to deteriorate due to the influx of additional inhabitants to the area, which in turn, this has mounted the competition over shared resources. Even if resource scarcity remain visible and at the heart of the inter-ethnic conflict, the socio-political and differential livelihood patterns between the two communities seemed to have fed the longstanding conflict. The late integration of the Gumuz communities with the Ethiopian polity was additional factor that draw the two communities, for the Gumuz were identified the non-Gumuz communities as staunch supporters of the imperial regime. Since the two communities had never been crafted shared institutions to manage their conflict, the only entity invited to play such a role was the state. The state intervention seemed to have added new factors to the conflict, which as a result, contributed less to the long-terms peace. Many of conflicts that were unresolved over the preceding years became accumulate and turned out to be the long term challenges of Metekel. It can be argued that the conflict in Metekel has been derived from complex inter-play of intercommunity interaction; progressively more competitive over the access and ownership rights over the natural resources, value difference, failed attempts by the state and legacies of the past.

4.2.3 Metekel in Post 1991

Unlike the intra-ethnic conflict within the Gumuz, the intra-regional conflict was pervasive in Metekel since 1991. Following the change in the Ethiopia state structure in 1991, the Benishangul Gumuz region became one of the regional states constituting the Federal Democratic Republic Ethiopia. Originally the seat of the regional state was set to be Pawi town, within Metekel zone. Probably the selection seemed to have been considering several aspects such as this town was equipped with better infrastructure, adequate housing for official, and both the service sector and other facilities were at good condition as compared to other places in the region. As far as the inhabitants was concerned, many of them was non-Gumuz communities who served in the Salini project, which then undertook different development activities on a contract basis outsourced by the Marxist regime. With comparable number, the Shinasha ethnic group has effect presence in both Pawi and its suburbs. Within the new regional state, which then was composed of five ethnic groups, there were some elites who sought to expand their leverage by claiming ownership rights of specific territories. In fact, as it can be inferred further from the claims and counter claims of specific territories, the issues of power, resource use and political representation were potent enough—but essentially many of them pose the existential threat to the regional state. Since the regional state had no effective leverage, simple disagreements were easily spiralled to violent conflict.

Following the political reform in 2018 in the country, the socio-political landscape of both at the national and the regional administration has been undergone numerous significant changes. This transformation has precipitated a series of inquiries about the governance structure of the Metekel zone. Notably, specific administrative districts within the Zone, such as *Mandura, Pawi, Debate, Dungur Chasir Guba, and Bullen* have emerged as focal points of conflicts, marked by mounting the inter-ethnic tensions. These conflicts have local rather been in this materialized between the indigenous Gumuz community and the non-indigenous population, which mainly comprise the Tigrai, Amhara, Agew, and Oromo ethnic groups. Adugna and Debela (2023) wrote that the politically dominant Gumuz in Metekel displaced the ‘non-indigenous’ ethnic groups with whom they had competed for resources, which thousands of the Amhara and Agew fled to Amhara Regional State as the conflict started.

The new wave of political change at the federal level rather implicated the region negatively. The “native” and “settler” political tagging has once again showed a brief resurgence. With the support of undisclosed forces, the Gumuz communities have been inflected massive attacks against the non-Gumuz communities. This, in turn, has displaced several civilians from their resident. Informants from the Amhara ethnic group have indicated that they are the primary victims of the recurrent conflict in the Metekel zone. They have also highlighted the inadequacy of government efforts to ensure their safety and security. Conversely, the Amhara elites and activists advocate for the “return” of the Metekel zone, asserting its rightful place within the Amhara region. Such a political bearing has intensified the existing tensions between the Gumuz and the Amhara ethnic groups in the area. An informant explained this situation as follows:

The conflict has been relapsed and continued to cause damage in the region because of the claims by the Amhara elite that they vowed to incorporate Metekel into their administration. The Amhara elites believe that Metekel is their ancestral territory which was deliberately given to Benishangul Gumuz Regional State (BGRS) by the Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF) to weaken the Amhara. The Gumuz were wrongly sensitized by the Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF) to defend the Metekel zone from the Amhara (KII 5, 2022).

It could be inferred from the excerpts of the informant, essentially the claims of the Amara elite has never been originated out of the blue. It was partly the end result of the narrative of “native” and “settlers” and the direct consequence of internal displacements, where the ethnic Amhara seemed to have resented by the political violence that the Gumuz perpetrated to disown properties and other assets of the non-Gumuz communities. This underscores internal conflict, displacement and inter-communal feuds have always been at the heart of changes in Ethiopian body politic.

Informants also claimed that the conflict in Metekel seemed to have been less distinct. This was for one or both reason that many more actors with varied interested have been involved, or due to the fact that the power seeking elites from the different ethnic groups constituting the regional state have been trying to seize regional power in the name of territorial claims and counter claims. Viewed in this sense, additional dimension of the conflict was the one that the elites from the Gumuz community have identified the non-Gumuz as the perceived threat for their collective

existence. Surprisingly enough, this labelling also included the Shinasha whom their skin colour so identical with the highlands (the Agew, Amhara and Oromo). They accused these groups being working clandestinely to hand back the Metekel zone to the non-Gumuz communities. With the same posture, but in a different castigation, the Shinasha were identified as enemy for either they wanted to exercise outright right over the Metekel area, or for being found allied with the non-Gumuz communities. The wave of alliance and counter alliance with amities and enmities of seeking to attain a certain political goal was among other underlying causes that drowned the Metekel to the abyss of conflict in post-1990s.

Another significant cause of conflict in Metekel zone pertains to border disputes which have been intensified since 1991. It is stated throughout the thesis that the federal state structure has been resorted to overcome injustice of the past. Nonetheless, this move does not seem potent enough to address the competing narratives over the national history of which roughly fall under three mutually opposing theses. To use the words of Donald Levine (1976), the political process of state making has been gripped on a continuum of two divergent underpinnings—an “Amhara thesis” and an “Oromo anti-thesis”. For Levine, Ethiopia is yet conceived as a ‘synthesis’ of the two. Merera (1994) discerns three nationalist perspectives under which Ethiopian history could be interpreted—and these are the “nation building perspective,” the “national oppression perspective” and the “colonization perspective” (Ibid, p. 120).

The clue is in their name, they demonstrated marked difference in the interpretation of historical trajectories that had brought out the Ethiopian state. Since these perspectives are markedly differing in their distinctive characterization of the phenomenon and interpretation with which the Ethiopian state has been evolved, they could by no means propose similar prescription for the national problems. In 1991, proponents of the “national oppression perspective” came to power; they prescribed the ethno-linguistic federal state structure just to overcome the pre-existing problems. After three or more decades of experimentations, this intervention has been proved that it becomes part of the problem than transforming the national conflict. It should be noted although the intervention executed in 1997 essentially helped to overcome many more problems of the country, still many more vexed issues (that might arise from misapplication or misgovernance) originating from the system. At this point of time, the resurgence of competing narratives often comes out debilitate the resource-driven conflict. Metekel area is the classic

case, the issue of political representation of minorities, economic, identity and territorial issues remain potent. The revival of the conflict issues with quite identical manner could be symptom that calls for additional re-examining efficacy of the federal system.

For instance recently after many years later the conflict was survived to implicate the inhabitants of the Metekel area. The revival stemmed from local political figures those advocating for the expansion of their administrative territories, both at the *Woreda* and zonal levels, leading to competing claims over specific territories. Consequently, a cycle of avowals and rebuttals regarding territorial claims and ownership were ensued. Border disputes have posed gravest challenges in delineating administrative boundaries and allocating resources, exacerbating tensions and contributing to the on-going conflict dynamics in the area. In this connection, an informant witnessed his experience as follows:

In a tragic event, a prominent individual from the Gumuz community was accidentally shot and killed. In retaliation, the Gumuz gunmen unleashed their fury, resulting in the death of 53 individuals and numerous injured in a Salam Kebele. The violence spread to several other areas including Deq villages 134, 131, 49, 127, 46, and 5. Another distressing incident occurred in village 49 where regional officials returning from fieldwork were brutally killed with machetes and gunshots. This had led to the eruption of widespread clashes involving 40 members of government security forces and civilians from Pawi Woreda, Alum town and other neighboring kebeles, of Amhara regional State (KII 13, 2022).

After imposed the state of emergency, the regional state of Benishangul Gumuz was deeded to shift its capital from Pawi to Assosa. To address the internal friction with in the various ethnic group of constituting the regional state of Benishangul-Gumuz, they were able to establish a united regional organization called Benishangul-Gumuz Democratic Party (BGDP).

As widely known Metekel has once been the hub of multi-purpose and integrated water resource development projects. The Marxist regime was out sourced the construction and project management to the Italian firm, known as Salini. The project had many components; the government had deployed huge resource. Later to effective execution of the project, but following the regime change in Ethiopia it was rather aborted in 1991. The Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) was not able to finalize the project, this was mainly associated

with financial capacities, complex regional pressures such as Egypt and intense conflicts within and around the project cite.

As stated above, the Marxist regime had deployed huge resource. The project contractor was not able to execute its tasks. Attempts were made to restart the project, but failed to do so far due to a variety of reasons. The very point that this part seeks to underscore is that the project was subjected to strategic looting. Informants have disclosed that both the financial and other assets of the project have been looted by individuals who had firm contact with officials at both the federal and the region levels. Thus, the political economic interest of such individuals was the one that involved in the conflict in Metekel. They were formatting hate and discord for the society which was then composed of different ethnic groups, trivial disagreements were easily turned in to intense violence. The basic reason behind the escalation and prolonging of the conflict in Metekel was partly associated with the conflict entrepreneurs, who exploited the local conflict for advancing their interest i.e. looting the project to the very core.

And this party was made to subordinate with the Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), which then was the ruling front at the federal government. However, strategies resorted to address the conflict from above had been failed to be translated to local contexts. As a result, the conflict continued unabated in Metekel over the succeeding years. Neither was the inter-party coordination, nor the intra-party forums within the Benishangul Gumuz democratic party were powerful enough to end (overcome) the quandary in Metekel. Indeed, the dilemma that Metekel has been facing in the post-1990s was incompatibility of the political willingness and visions of the governing party at the federal and regional levels. The dilemma in Metekel seemed to have lodged in that whether ethnicity is causing resource driven conflict, or the availability of resource causes ethnic conflict? And, why was this occurred in Metekel? Both credible local sources and the hindsight of the key informants have attested, Metekel was rather the victim of its blessings. The conflict was partly the result of the confluence of two mutually reinforcing incompatibilities; between the different ethnic groups inhabiting Metekel and the intra-regional feud among the competing ethnic groups constituting the Benishangul Gumuz regional state and identified by the revised constitution of 2002 as legitimate possessors of the region. The one seems to have fed the other in an unnoticeable way. Over the years in the post

1990s, Metekel had become the bone of contention at least among the three discernable conflict actors.

Both local sources and informants have confirmed that the several individuals were participated in this tragedy, but they shifted their blames to the Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front or Tigray people Liberation Front (EPRDF/TPLF) leadership for they didn't show any empathy for such a blundering and for they failed to perform their duty. Whatever the case was, the grim reality that Metekel faced rather seemed to have original from its political economy, and the state-driven projects became its curse than blessing. This highlights that not only was Metekel the exceptional site for resource driven conflict, but also its blessing that could have served to address the inherent conflicts, where the failure to do so often turned out conflicts to be protracted. The conflict often labelled as inter-ethnic, but essentially it appeared to have been derived from resource of having different dimensions and involving several actors at different levels.

As the key informant attested that, the conflict in the Benishangul Gumuz regional state, particularly in the Metekel zone was so devastating, causing significant displacement and disruption in the livelihood. The transportation and public services have been halted for over four years due to the state of emergency was imposed just to contain the conflict and curb additional bloodshed. Conflicts were prevalent in districts like *Mandura, Dwab, Bullen, Dangur, Wonbera, Pawi, and Guba*, where forceful displacement political vendetta and property distraction were so prevalent. The conflicts remained associated with the status of surrounding territories, on whether the administration of Metekel should remain with Benishangul Gumuz or not, the issue of political representation of the local populace in the local administration, and addressing the border disagreements with the other regions. The conflicts have been escalated due to the claims and counterclaims by various political elites, the process boiled up to intensify tensions and leading to further violence and displacement in the region.

Another local expert recounts the pivotal moment that has been goaded the conflict. He attested that the conflict has been swiftly disseminated throughout the Metekel within a short period time. This was partly because the misinformation and disinformation campaigns spearheaded by the local political elites have mobilized different groups to fight each other. As he retreated further,

the propaganda campaigns rather appeared to hold a mix of well-articulated agendas as well as premeditated deceptions. He gave an account of the propaganda campaign as:

The local elite attempt to set agenda that roughly heralding the federal state structure would no longer working. Prosperity Party is not federalist but unitary force; the self-rule would no longer applicable, governors at district, zone, and regional levels will be appointed directly by the central government. The new government in power is enthusiast to single language, faith and nostalgic to imperial Ethiopia. The name of the region would be changed from Benishangul Gumuz to West Ethiopia, and the Metekel zone will be renamed as Metekel Awraja of the West Ethiopia region. They further advocate that Gumuz has lost its identity, existence, and history, and the land is completely given to the Amhara region. The local elite seemed to have allied with their former ruling elite of the Tigray peoples Liberation Front (TPLF). The leadership is so compassionate with Tigrigna speaking elite. The Gumuz elite often come out to agitate their community that everyone is their enemy, except the people of Tigray who helped them as early on 1990s. Accordingly the Gumuz elite were ordered their supporters with the exception Tigrigna speaking residents, they should forcefully derive out the remaining ethnic groups their land, and no one must show mercy in any way. They avowed to reclaim their land; if necessary they asserted that to sacrifice their life for this cause. They told to their community that that any “red skin” people shall not be allowed to live in Metekel, but to leave out. They avowed that the non-Gumuz community should be removed from their ancestral land (KII 9, 2022).

Three different but mutually reinforcing developments can be forced from the observation and closer inspection by the informant. The first one heralds the shift of ethnic alliance, the Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF) and its supporters who were identified earlier as oppressors and promoting their hegemony by disregarding the local demands, are now being revered federalists and closer ally of the Gumuz community. It can be summarized further from the informants view that ethnic balancing that mainly relies on confrontation style become the *mode of operandi*, the ethno-nationalist political agenda has often been manipulating collective fear just to attain certain political goal. It was therefore the economic insecurity that dictated the resource driven conflict in Metekel.

Conflict in Metekel it would mean that the inter-ethnic conflict remains potent so long as economic insecurity or survival dilemma gets manipulate by the powers seeking elite. Thus, manipulation of fear and survival dilemma is at the heart of resource driven conflict in Metekel. Third, the valid lesson that can be drawn from the informant's assessment is that the power seeking elite often formants conflict at grass roots level. The stated agenda as the informant disclosed is the classic case that proves development, poverty reduction, intercultural dialogue and cooperation have not been as such attractive agendas exploitable to mobilize supporters. Surprisingly enough, the ethnic groups constitute the Benishangul Gumuz region were governing themselves with little interference from the federal government. It should be noted that setting agenda of quite contradictory to the reality. This might appear unsound for the ordinary citizens, but very strategic for the power seeking elite. These among others suggest that the other dimension of the resource driven conflict in Metekel has to do with power.

As local sources have testified, the agenda of defending the interest of Gumuz community should not be understated. All members of the Gumuz ethnic group who then were serving at the federal level such as natural defense force, federal police and regional special force have been called as to join the clandestine force that determined to defend the collective existence of the Gumuz community. This was not mere coincidence with the one we witnessed in Tigrai before the all-out of November 2020. The Tigrai Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) has been called upon its members who serving at different levels in the federal government shortly before the war. It can be argued that the power seeking elite of the Gumuz communities has been attempts to exploit the inter-ethnic conflict for its own political goal aspired to grab at both federal and regional levels by forging form alliance with other ethnic groups. This in turn, underscores power is core issue within inter-ethnic conflict. The power seeking elites often wanted to have this component, only because they are cognized of that power is value means to extract wealth from the coffers of states. This does not mere allegation, let us see what an elderly non-Gumuz informant has reflected. The ethnic Gumuz who were serving in national defense, the federal police, other security institutions, the special force of the region, the zone, and district police have been called up to defend their community. Elderly non-Gumuz informant witnessed the situation as follows:

The local elites were able to convince their community (the Gumuz) by inciting grievances of the past, which mainly related to ownership rights of local resource

and other assets of the region. They make provocative statements often essentializing a single narrative of the Gumuz, who has been side-lined from creating wealth and usable assets. They told them that all these hotels, farms, and shops are belonged to the non Gumuz comment. They complained that no one was allowed them to create wealth, to invest and enjoy economic benefits. They criticized the status quo for being it allowed a few economic elite from other regions extracting their wealth and for being the forest and mineral resources have been taken away from the region. They decried that they have been robbed. They also vilified the non-Gumuz communities for they were slandered them as beasts, and snake eaters, and they indirectly looted their wealth and property; they said openly that they kick out them out of their ancestral land (KII 10, 2022).

The call by the local elite crippled and dissolved the local government administration in most areas since most law enforcement agents and politicians joined the call. As the informant stated well, the extremist and ultranationalist Gumuz ethics and supporters have long been used the internal cleavage to mobilize their supporters against others, especially the non-Gumuz commutes. They often sensationalize the existing economic disparities, local political provinces and farfetched ascriptions originate from cultural differences, still the perceived tear seemed to have manipulated to realize political goals. Following such massive agitations and ethno-naturalist rhetoric, nature Gumuz who was serving in the law enforcement bodies at both regional and federal level joined the extremist paramilitary groups. In addition to these, extensive preparations have been made in public without fear or legal restrictions, especially in the villages where the conflict has been widely noticed, namely Degugur, Ben, Pawi, Guba, and in many kebeles and districts from the Madu zone. As a direct response to the ethno nationalist war drams of the Gumuz, the non-Gumuz community also informally organized themselves, they went as far that organizing their own Para-military forces in defence of themselves and their property.

As can be traced from the process, not only was the state capacity of maintain peace and order significantly dwindled, but also the inter-ethnic conflict rip to violence. Shortly after the state of emergency has been issued, periodic election made to be postponed only recently (2014) the Benishangul Gumuz region has executed election to legitimize seats at both federal and regional level. These processes also highlight that Metekel became in a state of managing the effects or direct consequences of the conflict, which essentially originate from resource having multitude

dimensions. Fighting through ethnicity and fighting for ethnic equality is seemed to have been blurred, the power seeking elites often made their groups to fight their thought, and they amassed substantial wealth all through this process.

4.3 Conflict Actors and their Interests

4.3.1 Prime Actors and Other Stakeholders of the Conflict

Often a conflict involves several actors in its initial phase, only those actors having vested interest with a conflict will remain integral to the end with varying degree of involvements—and any engagement and disengagement in a conflict has to do with the goals, values and interests that an actor places in a conflict. For the involvement many actors begins at the formative age of a conflict, a comprehensive analysis of actors thought to generate enormous data regarding scope, the intensity, depth of the conflict and prospects for peace. Like any other area, actors were involved in the interethnic conflict in Metekel. Apart from the prime actors, the interethnic conflict in Metekel has involved additional conflict stakeholders with a varying degree support, pedigree and regional and global alignments.

For further clarity and prudence, those actors involved in the conflict are congregated under three headings: primary, secondary, and tertiary parties in the conflict. Locally, the conflict involves armed rebel groups (including paramilitary groups), clan leaders, and local political and administrative figures. However, the primary drivers of the on-going conflicts are the ethno-elite representatives of various ethnic groups in the area. The Gumuz Liberation Front (GLF) stands out as a primary actor in the conflict, purporting to represent the interests of the Gumuz people. Another key actor in the conflict is the Gumuz People's Democratic Movement (GPDM), which is heavily involved in attacks against other ethnic groups in the area. The movement promotes the idea that young people of fighting age should join its armed faction. Those within the Gumuz ethnic groups who refuse to join are subjected to attacks or pressured to leave the area.

The primary actors in this conflict are the Gumuz Liberation Front (GLF) and the regional government. They mobilize local populations and instigate conflict. Coordinate attacks and protect the Gumuz community. They frequently collaborate with the regional Special Forces, local law enforcement, and militias as well as with local political parties and politicians.

Secondary actors encompass a range of armed groups, including the Amhara Regional State special forces (Liyu Hayel), Benishangul Gumuz region special forces, and rebel forces in the

Amhara and Oromia regions all representing their respective ethnic constituents. Within this category, businessmen and investors are also implicated due to their interest in the region. Informants have reported that armed groups, mainly rebel factions, from the Amhara, Oromia, and Tigray communities were participated in the conflict. As they of claimed, their primary aim was to protect their ethnic communities from the threats posed by the Gumuz armed groups. These groups had the feeling that the Benishangul Gumuz Regional State (BGR) government had failed to maintain peace and order in the region. This would mean that apart from the regional state of Benishangul Gumuz, the paramilitary groups were also the major secondary actors in the conflict Metekel area. Some of these armed groups originated from the neighbouring regions, crossing regional boundaries and they received financial and logistical support from businessmen and investors of their respective ethnic groups. This among other attested that lack objective criteria as well as thus among ethnic groups as regards to the administrative boundaries and lack of strong cooperation among regional states were the foremost structure factors as well as enable of militarism in the Metekel. Party it can be argued that enables of the conflict are the foremost beneficiaries from the conflict.

External forces, mainly Sudan and Egypt, play role tertiary actors in the conflict. These countries were being accused by the local government for supplying weapons and logistical support to the rebels and exacerbating the inter-ethnic conflict in the area. According to local informants, Sudan has long been engaged in the local conflict by providing support, including weapons, training, and sanctuaries to rebel groups fighting in the Benishangul Gumuz Region (BGR). Apart from the vested interests in the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam GERD, Sudan seemed to have been leveraging Ethiopia to get fulfilled its longstanding territorial claims. For the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) is situated in the Benishangul Gumuz Region, Egypt's involvement in this conflict rather seemed less surprising for it anticipates that the impacts of the inter-ethnic tensions and conflicts would derail Ethiopia from its transformative projects. A local conflict expert explained the situation as follows:

Both Egypt and Sudan possess strategic interests in the conflicts within the Benishangul Gumuz Region, aiming to destabilize the region to impede the construction of the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) foreign agents as well as necessary very affiliated agents with these two governments had been collaborated with the Gumuz rebel groups, actively engaging in disinformation

campaigns to fuel ethnic tensions in the area. They have also reportedly influenced regional politicians and local elites through bribes and other form of monetary rewards over the past ten years. The situation in the region has incredibly intricate, now it becomes the one that easy to observe but difficult to explain (KII 3, 2022).

The perspective provided by the aforementioned informant highlights the intricate nature of the conflict in the Metekel zone, revealing to relay optional that both regional and international actors. This underscores the difficulties to rely on optimal conflict resolution and transformation, for the reason that external actors further complicate the situation by influencing local actors have to advance their strategic interests. As stated above, the strategic interests of Sudan and Egypt often have to do with the mix of territorial and historical claim over the use of the Nile water. They both have been sought to leverage Ethiopia by supporting local insurgencies, sponsoring local anti-government riots and provide strong backing to secessionist insurgencies. Through different media outlet they propagated anti-Ethiopia sentiments, their activists often vowed to dismember Ethiopia by supporting those fighting for the independent state of Benishangul Gumuz. Although it may sound petty, the psychological warfare and the propaganda platforms have often been emboldening the prime actors of the conflict. The direct result of these process were just the prolonging the conflict. The more Ethiopia bogged down in such a conflict with in the strategic region like Benishangul Gumuz, the less would be the possibility to furnish the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) and other projects. This was the very mother behind the involvement of Egypt and Sudan in the interethnic conflict in Metekel.

4.3.2 Underlying Motives and Vested Interests of Actors in Conflict

The interests of the various actors involved in the inter-ethnic conflicts in Benishangul Gumuz regional state, particularly in the Metekel zone, include a spectrum of motivations ranging from resource acquisition to the assertion of power and strategic positioning. A nuanced understanding of these interests at play is crucial for devising effective strategies of conflict mitigation, facilitating resolutions, and fostering sustainable peace-building efforts within the area.

Interests over the resource acquisition represent a significant face of the conflicts which among others in tense, competition over land, water, forests, and economic opportunities are the topmost drivers of the conflict. In the study area where fertile land and natural resources are quit abundant, tensions often arise from competing claims over these valuable resources. As noted by Abbink (2005), the struggle for control over land and other natural resources has historically

fuelled inter-ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia, with groups vying for access to arable land and grazing lands. A local leader explains the diverging interests behind the conflict in Metekel as follows:

Given its proximity to the Sudan and the construction site of the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), the Metekel holds significant prospects for development. This attracts attention from various actors in the area in terms of tapping these potentials and benefiting from the available economic opportunities. The competing interests among ethnic groups reflect a deeper tension and conflict over control and utilization of resources (KII 15, 2022).

As highlighted by the local leader, the competition for resource and access to the region's resource potential remains high stake issue, involving a diverse array of actors and interests. Not only these include investors of seeking economic opportunities, but also senior citizens who sought for better position; government employees who sought advancement; the former army officers who wanted to have extensive leveraging their experience, security forces who sought to accumulate bigger assets, and members of political parties who wanted to wield their influence. In the efforts that extract wealth this diverse mix of stakeholders reflects the complex dynamics at play in the region's development landscape. However, this multiplicity of actors underscores the need for effective governance structures and mechanisms to manage conflicts of interest, ensure transparency, and promote sustainable peace and development.

Value-based interest has also played a crucial role, these among others encompassing cultural, religious, and ideological in congresses. Ethnic groups sought to keep on their distinct values and traditions. And they essentialize distinctiveness to differentiate themselves from others. Deep-seated ethnic identities and historical grievances often contributed for the perpetuation of conflicts, for the political elite frequently utilized these facets as essential markers to delineate group boundaries. Cultural and value differences have often been instrumentalized to justify the inter-ethnic conflict. The possibility of manipulating minor differences in either to mobilize the supporting base or to legitimize the conflict cause remained higher Metekel. It can be argued that modernity with its various forms have become the source of tension in Metekel. If that was the case, noble initiatives such as poverty reduction and gradual transformation of the local populace do not seem warmly accepted, but resisted. Thus, resistance to change become interpreted as the threat of collective existence surprisingly enough, the absence of

infrastructures, high rate of unemployment and widespread poverty of the picked by the ethno-naturalists to justify their objection to the regional and federal government. On the other hand, they cry against the gradual economic and social transformation. It should be noted that the foremost driver of inter-ethnic conflict in Metekel remain in fact with resource acquisition. The solution for the underlying causes (such for instance, flow of investment) can be decoded as the source of threat for collective existence of a certain group. The pronged nature of cause and effect in resource driven conflict is quite observable in Metekel. Further empirical studies remain essential to discern how value difference implicates the resource-driven conflict.

In fact, Mamdani (2001) raises interesting points, he argued that ethnic identity often plays significant role in ethnic politics differences can be politicized and draw on community to violence in several multi-ethnic society like Ethiopia .This does not endorse that diversity is inherently prone to be political violence, rather ponders that multi-ethnic society are susceptible /vulnerable to misapplication of collector right. As stated above the Gumuz community elites are deeply concerned with the perceived threats to their culture and values they claimed that some ethnic groups, mainly the Amhara, Agew, and Oromo ethnic groups remain posing essential threat for the collect existence. They believe that their identity and rights to self-administration started to be obliterated by expansionist rhetoric. They openly discuss the dangers of cultural fusion and acculturation due to the presence of these ethnic groups such as the Amhara, Agew and the Oromo. The local informant has more to say on this area:

The rapid expansion of cities and the influx of people from various regions seeking opportunities have led to numerous challenges in our communities. The entrants of new investments rapid urbanization often made at the displacement of residents from their ancestral lands. This exposes Gumuz community to unfamiliar lifestyles and new norms, where become in some of them become in conflict with our cherished values and unique traditions. Although urbanization and swift economic growth have all been new developments as well as quite useful for the gradual transformation of the Gumuz community, these should not be executed as its expense or detriment the well-being and rights of local populations (KII 11, 2022).

Both the claims of the informant and objective political processes at the surface have demonstrated that the perceived fears for being dominated by each other cultural group is the

underling factor dictating the conflict in Metekel particularly the expansionist rhetorics the absence of inter-cultural forums seemed to have been interacting the resource driven conflict in Metekel.

Regional power dynamics became additional facets that often appeared to complicate the landscape of inter-ethnic conflicts in Metekel. This is largely for the reason that various actors perceive each other as if working to dominate one another. Several actors involved in the conflict seemed to have preoccupied with the excessive fear of being dominated by the other. It would mean that the fight begins at the mind, where cognitive bias plays greater role in the conflict, which as a result, different ethnic groups often shunning cooperation with the other. Instead, they compete and contradict each other for greater share of the available resource; partly because no one would feel certainty about what will cooperation bring about. This is quite discernable in the power politics in Metekel and the regional state at large.

The political elites, armed groups, and government officials often tended to leverage others to advance their agenda, which in effect, such a tendency exacerbate tension and hinder peaceful coexistence of varies cultural groups. As Lyons (2019) argues that the struggle for political power and fair representation lays at the heart of many conflicts in Ethiopia, including these we had witnessed in Metekel for the past three decades. For instance, the Amhara and Oromo ethnic groups often express their dissatisfaction, arguing that they have not yet granted fair political representation in the region, despite they are numerically superior to others. Their assertion underscore that the Gumuz community is overrepresented, in spite of the fact that they are numerically small as compared to others. Conversely, the Gumuz contend that political authority should exclusively be given to them for the obvious reason that the revised constitution of the region (2002) has granted them as legitimate possessors as well as indigenou inhabitants of the region.

As can be observed easily from the claims and counter claims, the demand for fair political representation and the interest of keeping on legally constituted rights of procession of a given area are the two high stake issues. The revised constitution of the regional state (which was endorsed in 2002) has been served as a legal barrier that excludes other groups from taking part in the regional politics. Thus, the politics of inclusion and exclusion have long been operated in Metekel. Political power as a resource is only allowed to be exercise by a certain group would

mean that the inter-ethnic conflict in Metekel essentially originate from their asymmetric relationship, cooperation among different ethnic groups remain to be side-lined for political gains. Power as essential currency of the regional politics became the foremost driver of resource-driven conflict in Metekel. Conflict becomes the necessary evil; cultural differences are being exploited for political end. Such a conflict often appear resistant to amicable resolution for the simplest reason that structural causes remain potent for one or both reasons of that either the power holder were numb to its far reaching consequence or, the political elite has been left the conflict to settle itself through time.

4.4 The Change and Continuity of the Interethnic Conflict in Metekel

4.4.1 Competition over Resource and Ecology

The stiff competition on natural resources such as over the access to land, water, minerals, and grazing fields have long been pervasive in Metekel area. This has involved several actors, but the prime actors in the violent conflict are so distinct, roughly the conflict was between those who claim the original inhabitants of the area and others to whom regarded by the “natives” as new comers. The Gumuz communities often claimed as natives of the area, and labelled the non-Gumuz communities as new occupants of their ancestral land. The conflict was typically a resource driven conflict, each contending group wants to legitimize its claim by retracing past engagements. As some writers unveiled (see for example Fana, 2020; Lemessa, 2021), the appropriation of vast areas for state-run farms during the Imperial era and the resettlement program during the Marxist regime were topmost trajectories behind the inter-communal discord. According to the Gumuz communities, these all have not been made with the consent of the natives, nor was provided adequate compensations for systemic dislocation of the original inhabitants. They reiterated that both the resettlement program that has been carried out during 1970s and massive dispossession of their land for commercial farms and non-natives encroachments (Fana, 2020) were at the heart of the on-going resource driven conflict in Metekel. For the Gumuz communities there for the conflict was thus all about defending further encroachments of their ancestral land and its resource

On the other hand, the non-Gumuz communities believe that they are entitled as historically and legitimate people to use the resource there for the obvious reason that they are just inhabitants of the area. For the non-Gumuz communities (the Amhara, Oromo and Agew communities, who

inhabited Metekel area few centuries ago, their defensive mobilization is rather framed around defending their ancestral lands whom had cultivated and invested both economically, emotionally and successfully defend from both internal rebels and external encroachments for centuries (Human Rights Watch, 2021). Hardliners of the non-Gumuz communities have portrayed the Gumuz communities as extremists having genocidal intent and often targeted civilians groups, for that reason such groups must be eliminated from the area.

As it can be inferred from the claims and counterclaims; the incompatibility does not seem arise from accessing a resource in the area, but on whether to exercise exclusive possession right. The Gumuz communities sought to exercise exclusive possession right by instrumentalizing their nativity, as well as legal rights as legitimized by the revised constitution of the regional state in 2002. On the other hand, the non Gumuz communities were often manoeuvring both cards of historical claims and their permanent residence in the region, and yet they tended to accentuate more their rights to access resources. An objective assessment of the interplay of these narratives of dictating the resource driven conflict rather offers some distinct portraits. These are to do with the perceived threat or insecurity seemed to have dominated the mind-set of prime actors of the conflict. The Gumuz communities are engrossed by perceived threat for not being dominated by non-Gumuz communities and the later also seemed enthralled for not being dispossessed from their position / possession/. Defending the on-going status quo would have less relevance for both groups for the simplest reason that future is so uncertain. Gross frustrations by the prime actors seemed to be the key factors that induce groups to violence. Despite profounder desires for peace among many war weary residents, the new politics dynamic such as the resurgence of the sense injustices, fear of demography change, horizontal inequality, the inter-communal political polarization and youth radicalizations were among others, keep alive frustrations and incentivize the local peoples for communal violence.

Although the underlying cause of the inter-ethnic conflict has been emended from accessing the natural resource including land, water and mineral over the past three or more decades it was transformed into new conflict landscape in which the possession rights and search for new administrative structures are heavily intermeshed with the pre-existing discords. In effect, the original cause that drew ethnic groups into intense fighting now seems to be glossed over by spanking new agendum. During late 2010s the youth militias have already begun to organize

themselves just to reclaim contested resources all through the use of political violence. It is widely believed that the local militia secured substantial support among Gumuz communities who felt aggrieved over the political and economic inequalities in Metekel (Yihun, 2019). Elders lament losing control over the radicalized youth who are driven by the local primer assumption called generational grievances. In parallel to this, the non-Gumuz communities who believed that they sacrificed a lot for the remaking and development of the area (not less cultural assimilation), avowed via different media outlets that they are ready to defend their acquired treasures (assets). To realize such intents, initially they organized a local militia in defence of their interest, but later the self-defence militias have rather spiralled into retributive atrocities against civilians, further polarizing inter-communal relations.

Even if the armed groups often came out to justify their intent is just to defend their vested interest, in actual operation each of these groups along with their staunch backers have been remained in offensive posture. It could be argued that the pivotal driver of the local participation in political violence was rather the political elite efficiency in mobilizing disenfranchised Gumuz, Oromo and Amhara youth by ethno-nationalist groups who provide good-sized incentives in monetary forms and in kind like better local reputation and eminence (Lemessa, 2021). Nonetheless, it should be noted that youth joblessness of the youth and income disparity and sense of economic marginalization and political disfranchise are among other structural factors seemed to have debilitated pre-existing resource driven conflicts, fuelling the local resentments and intensifying youth radicalization. With moderate elders, religious figures and customary authorities have large been weakened, restless youth are more easily inflamed by extremist rhetoric and recruited into militias along the ethno-regional lines by local power brokers and external actors (International Crisis Group, 2021).

Closer inspections of the conflict dynamics in Metekel is still highlighting that the residuals of pre-existing conflicts come out to embolden new conflict types. Policies and strategies that have been coined to address conflicts at grassroots level found less effective, which as a result, accumulated graveness, discords and horizontal disparities become recuperated with new frame, and thus appear to be far beyond the existing capacity of the regional state and local institutions of conflict resolution. These among others underscore that the caused analysis of conflict in Metekel has to be broader than ever before, so that the various interlinks can be easily identified,

and concerted actions by different stakeholders including the federal and regional state have to be enforced first to overcome structural causes. Over the execution such tasks, the proximate and lingering factors would likely be ceased easily later.

4.4.2 Conflict Dynamics: On Changing Circumstances, Actors Behavior

It often appears difficult to analyse the causes of resource driven conflict in unidimensional attribute; this is for the obvious reason that any conflict involves scores of incompatibilities, value differences and divergent world views. Conflict dynamics in Metekel area exhibit a complex interplay of various factors that have all compounded contributed for its inelasticity and obduracy for amicable strategies of conflict resolution. The inter-ethnic conflict in Metekel rather seemed to have enmeshed within their asymmetric relationships they had in the past, few countries thus any analysis that tended to disregard such a reality might overlook the kernel of the inter-ethnic conflict. Furthermore, understanding these dynamics requires a nuanced analysis of the patterns, processes, and underlying factors influencing the development of tensions and conflicts. This subsection shows how the transformation of issues and vested interests in conflict have manifested to new conflict typology, far complexion and resistant to address. In this regard, the foremost factors that precipitate the pre-existing conflict were rampant population growth change in demography, climate change and the change in local coping mechanisms to new realities.

The trend analysis of the conflict has offered two different but mutually reinforcing patterns. First, the conflict pattern in Metekel is characterized by its dynamically recurring feuds, which often stemmed from local triggers but escalating swiftly later to all-out violence. Since 2010, there has been a discernable increase in the frequency and intensity of conflict incidents, including a broad spectrum of issues and involving an increasing number of actors. According to local informants, there has been a marked escalation in the conflict situation starting from 2018, reaching a peak in political violence during the years 2020 and 2021.

Second, the conflict in Metekel has often turned to violence for external actors and other cohorts were able to exploit effectively the internal fissures of the region, which in effect, the Benishangul Gumuz region is prone to unremitting security concerns. The proliferation of rebel and paramilitary groups and the formation of armed blocs along the ethnic lines is the gravest threat often comes out to undermine peace and order in the region. These groups tended to

pursue divergent agendas, exacerbating tensions that lead to violent confrontations. Furthermore, the influx of firearms from neighbouring countries, particularly Sudan, has intensified the conflict, enabling armed factions to engage in deadly skirmishes with devastating consequences. Between 2018 and 2020, deadly clashes have ravaged the region, inflicting devastating loss of lives on communities. According to local leaders, over one thousand casualties have been reported while approximately 300,000 individuals have been forcibly displaced from their homes. The pervasive impact of violence underscores the urgent need for effective conflict mitigation and management mechanisms.

Historical evidences testify that the population growth is often compelled human groups to come up with new coping mechanisms. Unfortunately in the Metekel area the coping mechanisms that the local people have resorted to overcome such a problem were simply involve that expanding the arable land. Surprisingly, the short term measures that each group has taken to tackle the demographic pressures seemed to have been degenerated to be the underlying problem of the locality. Given the scarcity mind-set and longstanding political and economic quest on land, the new search for farmland rather made the interethnic conflict more violent than ever. The one saw the other as the perceived threat for its continued existence (the case of Gumuz communities), which conversely the later perceives the former as the foremost threat for its vested interest (the case of non-Gumuz communities). Thus, any move to acquire new farmland would not be conceived as mere economic agenda, but too political. It would mean that the change in circumstances such as the rising population have brought new demands for land, which in turn, makes stiff the resource competition along ethnic lines. As groups vie for control over declining natural assets, tensions continue to flare up. An expert from the Metekel agriculture bureau has spelled out that:

The Metekel Zone's rapid population growth has led to a rise in the need for residential areas, pasture fields, and farms. Consequently, there is now significantly less arable land available per household. The local communities that depend on agriculture for their livelihoods, as well as initiatives to address food security and land tenure issues in the area, may face difficulties as a result of this loss in available land. In order to support the expanding population in the Metekel Zone, it emphasizes the urgent need for equitable resource allocation and sustainable land management techniques (Interview, 2022).

In fact, as the expert opined not scarcity alone less likely lead different groups to fight for getting greater share of the resource, but the rising demand for land due to high population growth rate together with poor resource management system. This assessment is also concurred by studies that have been conducted over the past few decades (see for instance, Kumsa et al, 2014). The findings of studies uncovered that the arable land per household went down from 1.93 hectares to approximately 1.67 within Benishangul-Gumuz region. Metekel however is faced with a shortage of such cultivable limits being heavily constituted by forested uplands and wetlands. Climate variations like erratic rainfall, flash floods and droughts are disrupting customary seasonal resource sharing arrangements between groups (Bekele, 2022). For instance, during droughts Oromo pastoralists have deviated from traditional transhumance routes into wetlands and forests used by Gumuz communities, sparking conflict over scarce water and pasture access.

The outcome exerted additional pressures on Gumuz locals who mostly relied on inherited very traditional farming systems. On top of that large portion of these communally owned ancestral domains the Gumuz communities have been handed over to private and state owned firms without being transformed the livelihood strategies (Fana,2020).. Such historical incidences rather seems now offering Gumuz communities functional reasons to challenge the status quo. Nonetheless, this seems so different from the dynamics of resource–driven conflict and impacts of population growth at national level. An example: Nearly one-fourth area in Ethiopia loaded with larger-scale plot investments that rounds up about 363hectares rests inside Metekel and marking it as maximum utilized place (Lemessa, 2022).This loss additionally pushed most natives onto fringe margins which impacts their normal crop rotation practices causing displacement eventually driving them into more treacherous hilly forests prone leading conflicts involving wildlife (Tesema, 2022).

The influx new entrants from neighbouring conflict-plagued regions suffering from land shortages like the Oromo and the Amhara are exacerbating ethnic tension due to limited availability of resources. Taking advantage technical infrastructures and better equipped than the Gumuz communities, the Oromo and the Amhara inhabitants were rather able to manage the scarce resource spectrum largely by engaging in commerce, agribusiness and service delivery (Tadesse and Bahru, 2022). This was not totally immune from tension and rivalry, the Gumuz

communities used to shift their blame on the non-Gumuz communities for they systematically alienate them from the labour market and denying them from accessory such opportunities.

In relation to this but in a different context, increasing local productivity through the use of irrigation in dry season also subjected to contest. Yet this does not seem to be related to land use, rather water resource. Intense competition among different groups especially battling for water supply has been intensified due to recurring drought (Melese et al, 2016). Very sued competition over scarce resource come out to escalates are existing interethnic animosity. In spite of the occupies vast territorial over the lower occupy watershed belt, the Gumuz communities may get access of irrigation infrastructures that perhaps include pumps, reservoirs and other schemes installed thought-out the entire zone (Lemessa, 2021). The non-Gumuz communities often accused the upstream Gumuz communities for consuming more water than fair or their legitimate share, but the Gumuz communities often came out to defend their stance by recounting the historical claim of being rightful users and exercised privileged rights to use their ancestral water bodies.

4.4.3 New Found Resources Breed New Conflict Type

In the broader context of resource-related conflicts, mineral resources have recently exacerbated tensions in the Metekel area, highlighting a critical dimension of resource-driven discord. The region has become a hotspot for gold prospectors, attracting individuals from across the country. This influx has not only intensified existing rivalries among local ethnic groups but has also introduced new sources of conflict. The gold rush, driven by personal ambition and, in some cases, recruitment and financing from undisclosed firms, has led to severe environmental degradation. The unregulated and unchecked nature of these mining activities has resulted in significant land degradation, extensive deforestation, and severe water pollution. These environmental impacts present major security challenges, affecting both the local communities and national stability (Gebrehiwot et al., 2020).

The security threats are particularly acute because the damage has already been done, and the negative effects are becoming increasingly apparent. The local population, especially villagers who have long depended on the land and its resources, has voiced strong opposition to the mining activities. They attribute their grievances to the mismanagement and exploitation of natural resources, which has led to ecological and social harm. The uncontrolled mining has not

only disrupted local ecosystems but has also undermined traditional livelihoods, intensifying the sense of injustice and disenfranchisement among the local communities.

Violent confrontations have erupted between the Gumuz youth and other gold prospectors over access to resources and the distribution of profits. These clashes reflect deeper issues of inequality and exploitation, as local youth and community members struggle to assert their rights and gain a fair share of the benefits derived from the mineral wealth of their region. Interviews with local youth reveal their frustrations and concerns about the on-going exploitation and its detrimental effects on their communities. They express a sense of betrayal, as their ancestral lands are ravaged for the benefit of outsiders and undisclosed firms, often with little regard for the long-term consequences on their environment and way of life. This growing unrest underscores the need for more effective management and regulation of resource extraction to address both environmental and social impacts. During interviews, local youth conveyed their frustrations and concerns about the on-going exploitation and its impact on their communities as follows.

We are really concerned about the growth of gold-digging operations in Metekel. Our farmland is being taken from us by force so that more and more gold mining holes can be dug. Even though there are many gold resources in the area, we are not allowed to take advantage of them. It was not our privilege to use the resources on our property. We are no longer in possession of our land or our riches since others have taken over the management of the gold mining industry. Tensions and complaints within the Gumuz community have increased as a result of this circumstance. The Gumuz people feel economically disadvantaged and disenfranchised due to the advent of gold mining activities in Metekel (Interview, 2022).

The youth's concerns about gold mining in the Metekel Zone highlight important issues regarding the effects of mining on the Gumuz community and the wider implications for land rights and resource distribution in the area. The Gumuz community believes they are being forced to leave their agricultural land in order to accommodate growing gold mining operations, which emphasizes the intricate relationship between land tenure and economic development and the difficulties marginalized communities face in defending their rights to land and resources against industrial encroachment. Even if Metekel Zone is abundant in natural resources like

gold, timber, and farmland, local indigenous communities do not proportionally benefit from commercial investments in these resources (Fana, 2020). Huge profits from state-allocated agribusiness and gold mining concessions fail to reach local populations. This entrenches resentment and perceptions of exploitation.

The belief that the Gumuz community is not reaping the benefits of the gold resources, even though they are close to mining sites, highlights more general problems with resource governance and equity. It calls into question how the money created by mining is distributed and how much local communities are involved in the decision-making process about the extraction of resources. Moreover, the story of gold mining in Metekel is paradoxical, representing both danger and hope. On the one hand, it provides local communities with jobs, development possibilities, and economic prospects. Conversely, it worsens already-existing tensions, degrades the environment, and causes social unrest, especially when it comes to resource rivalry and ethnic divide. The claim that the Gumuz community is being deprived of its gold riches at the behest of others is indicative of larger trends of social and economic marginalization. It draws attention to the necessity of increased accountability and openness in the management of natural resources in order to guarantee that local populations profit fairly from resource extraction operations. The scenario as it is presented also highlights the possibility of social discontent and conflict brought on by unequal access to and management of resources. Conflicts over the rights to land and resources have the potential to worsen already-existing tensions within communities and erode social cohesiveness, which makes sustainable development and peace-building initiatives in the area more difficult.

A multifaceted strategy that takes into account the social, economic, and environmental aspects of mining operations is needed to address the issues brought up by the Gumez community. To guarantee that mining activities follow environmental regulations and respect the rights of nearby populations, regulatory frameworks may need to be strengthened. Additionally, in order for marginalized groups to take part in and profit from resource governance projects, efforts must be made to support inclusive decision-making processes.

4.5 Consequences and Responses

4.5.1 The direction taken to resolve the conflict and what the result was

It is known that the conflict in the planting zone has lasted for many years. It is remembered that the causes of the conflict and the main actors of the conflict are described in different ways in different contents. Therefore, this sub-topic tries to explore and explain the measures, recommendations and efforts taken by the government, the local community and various bodies to resolve the conflict in the planting zone and the surrounding area.

The Core Measures by the Regional government since 1991

Benishangul Gumuz National Regional Government has its regional headquarters in the Plantation Zone of Pawi District. Especially after 1991, the administrative structure in the area changed and the Benishangul Gumuz region was one of the regions that formed a new federal government, so it has been doing government work as the headquarters of the region. However, the conflict escalated over time. As the people took action against the regional leaders and other security agencies in Planting Zone, Pawi District, the efforts made by various government bodies to resolve the conflict through the National Defense Force, Federal democratic republic of Ethiopia Transitional Government and traditional conflict resolution methods were beyond capacity, so the regional government moved the regional headquarters and various regional offices from Metekel Zone to Assosa. Not only this, but he tried to prosecute the participants in the conflict and those who are said to be the main instigators of the conflict. In this regard, efforts have been made to enforce the law to some extent. However, the problem could not be completely or partially solved. At different times and seasons, the conflict has been increasing in both type and size. As a result, many human lives and property were destroyed and burned.

After 1991, the conflict in the planting zone has shifted to the districts, kebeles and zones of the bordering Amhara region. As a result, the conflict spread to *Gwangwa* district, *Jawi* district, *Awi* zone, up to Metmma. Gradually, the conflict increased in type and size and reached the nation, tribe, and even family level. Thus, mainly Amhara from Gumuz, Gumuz from Agew, Gumuz from other sections of the society, are the observed types of conflict. The government of Benishangul Gumuz region which has noticed that these conflicts increasing from time to time, has talked with the federal government and the bordering governments of Amhara, and Oromia regions, and the efforts and attempts to resolve the local conflict once and for all have failed. As

a result, the Federal Police and National Defense Forces have been assigned the responsibility to maintain law and order in the area, as it is beyond the capacity of the Benishangul Regional Government and security agencies.

From 1995-1997 was the period when the civil conflict in the area was at an all-time high. When I conducted this interview, the local residents who gave me information for the interview, the officials of the local government office, the elders who are known for avoiding conflict and reconciliation in the area, gave me enough information about the issue. However, they could not come to a lasting solution to the conflict. In fact, the conflict has spread beyond the planting zone to the neighboring districts and zones of Amhara and Oromia regions. An example of this is the period from 1995 to 1997 in *Mandura District, Gelgel Beles City, Edida Dechlubya, Atiss, Agenta in Dbati District, Dbati City including Berber Gelesa in Blen District, Dangur District in all kebeles, Guba District in all kebeles in Pawi District, Almu City, Village 27, Villages 28 and 29. Village 49 Village 46 Village 3 Village 2 Village 1* It was learned that the conflict between the *kebeles* of *Abate Beles, Mekena SelemandPhoto Menjer* was beyond the control of the area and the Benishangul Regional Government.

Evidence suggests that the main source of the conflict in the area from 1998 to 2002 was who was in charge of managing the natural resources in the area, especially agricultural land, forests, and minerals, and who would benefit from their control. Among these, it is known that mainly agricultural land is known to exist in *Mandur, Guba, Dabt, Dungur and Pawi* districts in the planting zone. These vast agricultural lands are considered to be dominated by the natives of Amhara, Tigray or Oromia region who entered the planting zone without any name of investment. Whether this type of management of agriculture or other natural resources is considered by the Gumuz community, they are worried about what the members of the society who are currently in charge of the natural resources may do to us in the future. In particular, the members of the society who are active in the political side, you have been gossiped about, you have been surrounded, your property has been taken by someone else, and they incited the members of the community who are native to *Gumuz and Shinasha* to conflict. I was able to understand during this interview that these liberation fronts have made it an unavoidable issue to weaken the local government structure after meeting with other units working against the federal

government or the Benishangul Gumuz regional government structure. All the efforts made could not bring lasting peace to the area.

After the constitution of Benishangul Gumuz region came into force, the conflict between Gumuz, Berta, Shinasha, Mao and Komo and the residents of Benishangul region, Amhara, Agew, Oromo and other sections of the society, the grievances and the mutual suspicion, hatred and racism from time to time. It has been increasing over time. Because the constitution of Benishangul Gumuz states in its introduction, "The owners of this region are Gumuz, Berta, Shinasha, Mao and Komo." It does not give recognition to the other part of the society whether it is political, economic or social security. This kind of action was from the region. He found the agile outside of society.

As a result, the Amhara, Agew, Oromo and other sections of society were viewed with two eyes on the sections of society recognized by the constitution. One of them is that if we live in the Benishangul region after a period of time, even if we produce any amount of property, our property will be taken from us by these parties. There has been a tendency to say that if a conflict breaks out, we will be the victim of the attack or that they will deliberately start a conflict and attack us. And the second is that we were born and raised in this region, some of our fathers, mothers and grandparents were also born in this region. It is a law that the Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) has deliberately prepared to attack us, especially the Amhara, Agew and Oromo to make it a refugee. He is going to make us the victim of his attack. Therefore, we have a duty to protect ourselves and their property as much as possible. Therefore, whether it is Gumuz or any other part of the society, we are all equal for the region. In fact, planting is an early inheritance of the Amhara people, and they deliberately gave the Amhara land to Gumuz. Therefore, Gumuz must leave the area or else we should live together as equals.

Following this, from 2000 to 2002, the government of Benishangul region implemented a new five-year process of evicting members of society from other regions through planting zones in *Dangur, Mendura, Guba, Dabti, Belen and Pawi districts*. Following this, especially in *Mendura, Guba and Dangur* districts, many members of society from other areas were forcibly evicted from their homes and forcibly transported to Amhara region. As a result, the administration of the Benishangul Gumuz region and the planting zone abused us, and many sections of our

society, especially the Amhara and indigenous people, were victims of the attack, they told me in an interview.

4.5.2 The Statuesque After 2018

It is safe to say that the efforts made to establish lasting peace after 2018 in the planting zone and its surroundings are mostly successful because it is known that there have been conflict trends in the area for a long time between one nation and another nation, one tribe and another tribe, one opponent and another opponent. Since most of the society has been victimized by the conflict, more than ever after 2018, the conflict of planting has been changing its shape in terms of type and size.

The conflict is not only local, but also national and regional. It holds Actors in the conflict were local, liberation organization's operating in the region, armed groups and even the governments of Egypt and Sudan, directly or indirectly. From the Benishangul Gumuz regional government and the armed nations operating in the Benishangul Gumuz region, the Amhara region and the Amhara national regional government, which claims to be representative of the Amhara and Agwi communities, the Oromo Liberation Front, which is directly fighting with the federal government based in the Oromia regional government, and from the federal government.

Forces having political differences with the government including their supporters such as the *Fano* and some combatants defected from the *Amhara Special Forces 'Liyi Hayl'* have been waging war over the past few years. All the armed groups who were waging war against the government have been backed by the foreign countries such as Egypt and Sudan. They have provided money, materials and training to the armed gangs operating in the area, by arming and training them, so that the area will never have lasting peace, and it has been turned into a long conflict zone. As a result, the planting zone in *Mandur district, Gube district, Dabti district, Belen district, Wonbera district, Pawi district, Dungur district and the bordering kebeles of Amhara and Oromia regions* in the area became victims of the conflict. Some of them were completely destroyed in the war, government institutions, schools, health centers, hospitals, training institutions for farmers, cattle ranches were destroyed in the conflict; they were burned, looted, or partially rendered unserviceable.

In other words, these zone governmental institutions or non-governmental institutions have been out of service during the period of 2018-2022. Normal government structures from Keble to

Zone have stopped working or their structures are crumbling. The government of Benishangul region is beyond its capacity and is unable to carry out its duties while making governmental decisions to manage the area. All the law enforcement agencies of the federal government, including national defense, have been deployed in the area to achieve lasting peace with the help of a continuous government structure, led by the emergency declaration command post, but they have not been effective. Although the ninth national election held in Ethiopia in 2022 was planned to be held in all regions, including Benishangul Gumuz region, the election of the federal government (for the House of People's Representatives) was not held in all the districts of Benishangul Gumuz region. In 2024, the Benishangul Gumuz region has been carried out general election to nominate peoples representatives at both the federal and regional level.

The Ninth National Election was held after two years in Benishangul Gumuz Region and Metekel Zone, and the election was the one that could have not been easily conducted in the midst of many security problems. A few days before the election, in *Dibati, Dangur, Mandur and Pawi districts* and bordering districts of Amhara and Oromia regions, there were fierce battles with various armed groups with national defense, strike dispersal members of Benshangul Gumuz region and the federal police. As a result, the number of people who should vote in the national elections in *Dangur, Guba and Pawi districts* did not participate in the election because there was a serious security problem until two or three days before the election, especially armed groups based in the Amara region, some of the kebeles of Pawi district village 126, village 124, village 28/29, village 14, village 21, village 22 and village 11 kebeles. By controlling the so-called kebeles in *Mendura district, Photomenjuri, Dudumai, Dangur district, Menbuk* and the surrounding areas of *Belaya Mountain and Jawi* bordering areas, the local community moved to their heart's content and had difficulty in voting. It was understood in a press release issued by the National Election Board of Ethiopia after the election.

In this sub-heading, it should be concluded that the conflict that has been raging in the area since 1991 has not been able to be brought to the area once and for all. In this regard, as we expect from the federal government, the Benishangul Gumuz regional state, the neighboring Amhara, Oromia and many other regions of Ethiopia, this part points out that only because the area has a lot of natural resources, different ethnic groups should work together. The local community has two views on the lack of peace that has been planted in the area for once and for all. Gumuz

regional government or the federal government does not want peace to prevail in the area. From time to time, the government stops and watches as the types of conflicts that the government has to control or can control spread, but the contribution is very limited. Whether it is the national defense or the federal police who are sent, they leave the criminal or the suspected criminal and abuse the innocent. They imprison, kill, evict the local community from their homes, and the local community is armed. They have attacked us or they have hidden weapons. And other sections of the society harass us. Instead of protecting our peace and security, the government bodies that are part of the problem, whether it is the Benishangul Gumuz regional government or the federal government; have been playing their role to keep the area in conflict for a long time.

4.6 Concluding Remarks

The conflict in the Metekel zone serves as a stark illustration of the persistent ethnic tensions and intricate socio-political challenges that plague the region. This on-going strife is deeply rooted in historical grievances that have been exacerbated by contemporary political issues, leading to frequent cycles of violence and displacement among the diverse ethnic groups inhabiting the area.

The conflict encompasses a broad spectrum of actors, ranging from local to regional and even global levels, each contributing to the multifaceted nature of the violence. Key players in this complex scenario include various paramilitary groups, notably the different factions of the Gumuz rebel group. These groups are heavily involved in the conflict, driven by long-standing historical animosities and fierce competition for resources. Their activities have entrenched the violence, making it a persistent and escalating issue.

In contrast, paramilitary forces representing non-Gumuz communities, such as the Amhara and Oromo, also play a crucial role. These groups, often backed by their respective supporters, contribute to the conflict by supplying resources, moral support, and financial backing. This support is frequently channelled through covert operations and within bureaucratic frameworks, further complicating the conflict dynamics.

Secondary actors also play a significant role in the conflict. These include individuals and entities that exploit the turmoil for economic or political gains. Their involvement often exacerbates existing tensions and prolongs the violence, making conflict resolution more

challenging. These secondary actors may include local elites, opportunistic businesses, and political figures to whom benefited from the continued instability.

Moreover, the involvement of external actors such as Egypt and Sudan adds another layer of complexity to the conflict. Both countries have vested interests in the Metekel region, and their actions seem to align with broader strategic and foreign policy objectives. Egypt and Sudan have been implicated in instigating and supporting internal conflicts as part of their regional strategies. Their backing of various factions and influence in the inter-ethnic conflicts contribute to the escalation of violence and the entrenchment of power struggles. This external interference complicates efforts toward conflict resolution, as it intertwines local grievances with regional power plays.

Overall, the Metekel conflict reflects a confluence of historical, socio-political, and external factors that create a highly complex and volatile environment. The interplay of these elements not only sustains the violence but also makes finding viable solutions more challenging, underscoring the need for a nuanced understanding of the conflict's many dimensions.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE AND INTERETHNIC TENSIONS

5.1 Introduction

Since the underlying causes rarely manifest independently from proximate details, historical legacies, the geo-strategic arrays and the socio-economic pitfalls, this chapter also set to unpack the key drivers of resource-driven conflict by delving into the dynamic processes and historical trajectories that influence and shape the interethnic conflict over the past few decades. In that intent, the essential determinants such as inadequacies of governance, chronic poverty, environmental degradation and the inside-out (and outside-in) influencers of interethnic conflict are all set to be considered and synchronized. In its intents and purposes, this chapter is meant all about depicting how resource competition, incompatible interests and other intervening factors such as the pitfalls in governance, deep-seated poverty and environmental degradation are all conjoined sets in making sense of the change and continuities of interethnic conflict in Metekel area. In turn, this could be regarded as part of the intellectual exercise of contributing a bit by tracing plausible causative terrains so that policy makers, practitioners and other stakeholder may use it for different purposes such as policy interventions and concerted socio-political reordering.

5.2. The Political Economy of Resource Conflict

In order to depict properly and intelligibly the resource driven conflict in Metekel, it becomes essential first to comprehend the context, the underlying socio-political and legal trajectories by which the conflict has been shaped and reshaped to hold the extant form and essence. This part is therefore devoted to show the overarching dynamics in which the conflict was incepted, fermented and later burst out to be more violent than ever before.

5.2.1. Backdrop on Ethiopian Federal System

Both written and oral source have attested, Ethiopia had long tradition of early state system. The Ethiopian polity had constituted various ethno-linguistic groups, with their own district culture, language and way of life. Evenly Ethiopia has long been identified as ancient state of

constituting different groups; significant sources claim that Ethiopia has never had such a position. Its state system was backward, failed to resemble most requirements of modern state.

Be that as it may, the underlying fact about Ethiopia's past was that the Ethiopian state did not have drawing complete legitimacy over its constitutions. This would mean that the tension between center and periphery was so prevalent; the friction of centripetal and centrifugal forces had always been at the heart of Ethiopian state system. As many writers believe the modern state system has only been introduced during the Imperial Regime Emperor Haile Selassie was able to forge strong central state system. However, fascist Italia had invaded Ethiopia for the second time in 1935. Italia was able to establish effective occupation from 1935 to 1941. But Italia had lost its war against the allied groups in the Second World War, which as a result, Ethiopia with the support of allied powers regained its sovereign power. Emperor Haile Selassie returned from exile and reconstituted to his throne. However, this was not wormy accepted by many groups. The central government had introduced different tax systems, imposed it over the wide mass with little or no consultation.

Resistances have been mushroomed throughout the country, (notable examples were in *Gojjam, Bale and Tigrai*) none of them were effective enough to bring significant policy change by the imperial government. The most organized resistance that the imperial regime had faced in its tenure was the Ethiopia student movement, as many writers believe; several ethno-naturalist movements and liberation fronts (including the Eritrean People Liberation Front (EPLF), Tigrai People Liberation Front (TPLF), and Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) seemed to have drowned. The 1974 revolution was the one that Onsted the imperial regime from power. The military junta, which locally known as the *Derg* was the one that usurped power form the revolutionaries. The Marxist regime has stayed for nearly two decades on power.

The Marxist regime ruled Ethiopia while fighting with different insurgencies. The declaration of land to the tiller was its notable achievement, which many scholars equated it as progressive and essentially addresses the structural cause of national conflict. Although many more causes have been identified as of the national conflict by scholars and practitioners, the "national operation" perspective was the one that widely accepted by the ethno-naturalist insurgencies. The Marxist regime was being identified by the others (such as the ethno nationalist insurgencies and the

secessionist groups like the EPLF) as “unionist, “dominated by the Amhara elite” and no more serving purpose nationally (see Merara, 1994).

In the midst of 1991, the combined forces of the Eritrean People Liberation Front (EPLF), Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF) and Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) were able to unseat the Marxist regime. The Transitional Government (hereafter TG) has been organized; different ethnic groups were able to secure seats as per their population size. The transition charter had announced Ethiopia becomes federal state of constituting different ethno-linguistic groups; fourteen ethnic homelands have been identified as regional states of constituting the federation. The Benishangul, Gumuz region was one of the member states.

Essentially, federalism has been resorted to overcome the natural conflict, which according to Ethio-naturalist the forms cause of natural conflict was national operation. Various ethnic groups had declared that they start to administer themselves; therefore, self-determination is in exercise. As power was made to be devolved to the regions, conflicts also set to be pushed to the grassroots level. It is from this vantage point that the conflict in Metekel has to be analysed. The logical probe that can be raise here is that why was the presentation effected in 1991 still unable to address national conflicts? Metekel is the perfect case show that depicts resource-driven conflicts has always been instrumental in both intra-and inter-ethnic conflict.

The backdrop of national conflict also attests that perceived fear economic insecurity and power were all intermeshed in the political economy of resource-driven conflict. Metekel has no exception; those groups who claimed that they were marginalized from power are now excluding others from political participation. The change and continuity of national conflicts have yet proved that the center periphery discords started to subside, but the intra-regional conflict is on the rise. It is from such a backdrop that this part tries to analyse the resource driven conflict in Metekel.

5.2.2. Federal System and the Political Economy of Resource-driven Conflict

As stated well in the preceding sections, following the decentralization of governance system to the grassroots level with fairly workable regional autonomy, conflicts have also been devolved to the bottom. This would mean that the new governance system has been shaping the resource-

driven conflict. Given the long-standing structural impediments, varying levels of economy development and new political power arrangement, how was the new federal system implicated the recourse-driven conflict in Metekel? This is among other useful questions that this part sought to offer plausible explanations, and thereby demonstrate the influence of federal state structure on the dynamics of resource induced conflict in Metekel.

The dynamics of resource-induced conflict in Metekel rather seemed to have drawn from four different but mutually reinforcing developments. The historical memory of past injustice has brought to change in the state structure; federalism was resorted to overcome these imbalances. It granted constitutional rights to ethnic groups, accumulate diversities in terms of language, ethnic identity, culture etc., and developed significant powers to the regional states. As many writers and practitioners asserted, these were all aimed at vindicating historical grievances, avail political opportunities to ethnic groups to exercise self-rule and shared responsibilities and promote as well as ensure equitable political representation. In effect, the ultimate development of these new structural adjustments was made to attach new land entitlements.

Ethnic identity was made to be attached with land and territorial boundary. Land as the foremost resource in Metekel had become subject to new styles of competition. Since the new arrangements had brought new institutions mechanisms of managing such conflicts at the grassroots level, the solution become turned out to be the new challenge to the regional states. Metekel has no exceptions; different groups were fighting each other for a greater share of resource. The non-Gumuz communities were subjected to dispassion, targeted by the Gumuz communities. Political violence has been prevalent shortly after 1991. Partly the misapplication of the new governance system seemed to have debilitated the pre-existing resource induce conflicts.

The second most important development that impacted the resource-driven conflict in Metekel was the rise of new political actors. These political actors have not been the problem in their own terms, but they were closely working with political entrepreneurs. The inter-ethnic conflict was made to be exploited to advance political goals at different levels. As analyzed exhaustively over the preceding chapter, the political entrepreneurs were able to exploit ethnic identities to mobilize one over the other; often they instrumentalize the pre-existing economic disparities and inequalities for either settling scores or disfranchising the targeted group.

The vengeance seeking elite also seemed to have exploited such cavities to advance very specific group interest. In all these developments, land and other resource-driven conflicts were the typical spots that ethnic and conflict entrepreneurs were exploiting it to far one or both motives of that either to assume in to power, or to protect the acquired values (power) from perceived threats. Therefore, it can be argued that Metekel was the place where different ethnic groups fought each other for supremacy. As informants disclosed, the access and possession right to resource made to be instrumentalized to advance political goals. This, in turn, has precluded the problem from attaining appropriate recognition from the concerned bodies.

As the time went on unresolved conflicts became brand new challenges to the regional and local governance system. One more impediment observed in this regard was lack of institutional capacity. The federal state arrangement was so describable and progressive to Ethiopian polity, equally it has never been coupled with strong institutional backing, weak institutional making seemed to have complicated pre-existing inter communities relation including the local systems of resource management. Since the federal system has been introduced with adequate institutional backup and efficient conflict management systems, even the regional state was not able to sustain with its prime preference of regional city, but compelled to shift it to less contested area. This by itself proves that the federal arrangement has brought no solution for pre-existing resource-induced conflicts, in Metekel, but it seems to have complicated for the simplest reason that it failed to be accompanied by strong institutions of conflict management and prevention, which as a result, the political and ethnic entrepreneurs have exploited such cavities to advance sectarian interest.

5.3 From Distribution to Redistribution

5.3.1. Land as the Source of Inter-Ethnic Conflict

It is argued in the preceding section that federalism has been resorted as a response to centres of authentic rule and monopolization of power at the center. Federalism was not just resorted to overcome the impediments of past, but also to craft the shared future of ethnic groups constituting Ethiopian polity. Under the new federal system Ethiopia was made to be divided among the nine regional and two city administrations. This was the direct shift from 14 provincial administrations to 9 ethno-linguistically based regional states and two multi-ethnic based city administration. Within the new administration Metekel had become part of the

Benishangul Gumuz regional state. As indicated in the preceding chapter Metekel was among other territories that people in other regional states such as the Amhara often claimed that this territory being ‘snatched’ from Gojjam province and wrongly merged with the Benishangul regional state.

In the absence of strong inter-governmental relation, the conflict in Metekel also involved strong claim of re-appropriation of this zone, at least at the rhetoric level. Apart from the internal feuds of ethnic groups in habiting Metekel, the claim and counter claim of interest groups outside the region has impacted the zone in many ways. The adversarial relationships of ethnic communities have been turned in to a new political landscape.

The Gumuz-communities have started to label the non-Gumuz communities as enablers of those groups who wanted to incorporate Metekel with their regional state. The object of contention is still revolving around the access and ownership right of land. The absence of strong regional cooperation rather precludes the opportunities to manage the internal funds. Lack of strong inter-governmental relations also seemed to have brought additional competition on the political arena. Metekel had once again the bone of contention from within and from outside. Therefore, it can be argued that the resource driven conflict was partly the result of the transition from territorial distribution to redistribution. This was among other challenges that faced the inhabitants of Metekel in both to understand and address the conflict.

5.3.2. High-Stake Distributional Issue

Metekel is both the home of diverse ethnic groups and the contested territory by different groups from within and the outside. As internally seen, the Metekel area has been subjected to intense resource-driven conflict and meaningful rivalries among different ethnic groups. Although resource remains to be the foremost driver of the conflict, the issue of political representation, perceived fear of domination and value differences have all been involved. The availability of vast arable land, water, valuable minerals and compressive projects like the former Pawi-integrated national project and the recent the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) were all pooling different actors to exploit the resource in different ways. The competition over these resources would have never been peaceful, what makes the case of Metekel unique is that the use of particular resource often causing conflict, because it has to do with identity, geopolitical or strategic issues, political economy conflict and power politics.

Take for instance the case of the integrated project in Pawi; the conflict entrepreneurs were inciting conflict purposefully among ethnic groups, just to undertake looting. On the other hand, take also the case of the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), Egypt and Sudan have long been supporting the local insurgencies just to divert the attention of the federal government from this project and to deter Ethiopia from completing the national project. The gold mining sites together with other small scale projects were all attracting various actors having divergent goals. These all designate Metekel in itself was the high stake distributional issue both in its physical as well as perceived resource base by scores of entities. Therefore, such a confluence of various interests by different actors seemed to have complicated the inter-ethnic conflict in Metekel. The inter-ethnic conflict in Metekel was so protracted for the past few decades partly due to the reason that Metekel in itself was a high stake distributional issue for various actors.

5.3.3. The Issue of Justice, Identity and Protractedness

Throughout the courses of inter-ethnic conflict in Metekel the underlying cause has been revolved around the use and possession right of resource. However, the resource driven has also been demonstrated in many ways such as the access to resource, power, economic insecurity, perceived fear and the change and continuities of resource management and governance systems. Since the capacity of the regional government and the local institutions of conflict resolution were not efficient enough to in addressing the pre-existing conflicts, justice and fairness have not been maintained. As a result, sense of injustice as coupled with the politics of identify has been debilitated the inter-ethnic conflict. The sense of injustice over the access and ownership rights of resource in Metekel has become the key driver of the conflict. The sense of injustice has eroded the mutual trust among different groups. Lack of this basic component is additional dimension of the resource-driven conflict, where minor disagreements have easily been grown to intense violence.

As Celia (2009) highlights, identity has always been at the heart of social conflict. This is for one both reasons of that either as Kevin Avruch (2002) articulates culture often avails frame to the conflict, or identifies in themselves could bring about and transform social processes into a landscape, which as a result, social groups enter into intense tussle (Celia,2009). As recounted in the chronicle of interethnic conflict in Metekel, identity has played incredible roles in both escalating and protracting the resource-driven conflict. Following the change in the state

structure in 1990s and subsequent to the formation of ethno-linguistic based regional states including the Benishangul Gumuz regional state (specifically the revised regional constitution in 2002), identity seemed to have deepened the intractability of the resource-driven conflict in Metekel. Indeed, as stated in its preamble of the revised regional constitution of 2002 the Benishangul Gumuz regional state, the underlying motive behind the revision was to redress the past injustice, which in effect, it is meant to maintain justice. Surprisingly the significant others (the non-Gumuz communities) considered as the gadget of injustice. It can be therefore safe to argue that even if the sense of justice and injustice often construed according to the beholder, the pivotal role that identity has played over the making and unmaking of justice remained significant, and which was why the conflict in Metekel appeared to have protracted over the past few decades.

As highlighted in the second chapter of the thesis, scholars and practitioners of conflict have been attempted make firmer our knowledge about the role of identity in conflict, they (scholars and practitioners have analyzed how groups able to create, define, articulate the identity needs and aspiration in their fight against others (see for instance, Kriesberg 1998 and Byrne 2001 in Celia, 2009). As community of practitioners and the academia highlighted further, bigoted perception (see the details in the next chapter), hate mongering narratives, and prejudiced attributions often applied by contending groups in either to mobilize their supporting base or to reinforce ethnic and religious polarization. In fact as well discussed in the preceding sections, the resurgence of resource-driven conflict in Metekel was partly associated with gradual morbidity of the local institutions resource management. Even if gradual morbidity of the local institutions seemed to have associated with sores of reasons, the underlying cause essentially related to the basic human need aspect. The local institutions of resource management have long been applied as bargaining forum to allocate resource with greater sense of distributive justice. Nonetheless, as the competition became passionate as well as stiff, over time it has drawn each other group in to survival dilemma. As a result, the resource-driven conflict started to have linked with the basic human need aspect. The local institutions of resource management appeared to be less potent to address such conflicts. What is more, since the resource-driven interethnic conflict in Metekel has histrionically been implanted within their asymmetric relationship, the new state structure (the ethno-linguistic based federal system) become part of the preexisting problem than bring

about sustainable resolves for the overarching demands of the groups identity (often these associate with basic collective needs, aspirations, interests and values .

In view of these essential attributes discussed above and the preceding chapter, it can be surmised that the conflict the resource-driven conflict in Metekel resembles many of the attributes of the well-attuned theory of protracted conflict. As theorized by Edward Azar (1990), the protracted conflict often is attributable to four interior variables, which each of them seemed to have observed also in Metekel over the past three decades. First, as mentioned above, the new state structure, the ethno-linguistic based federal system, which once has been envisaged to redress the past injustice later become found to be insensitive to the new collative demands. The contention between the Gumuz and the non-Gumuz communities in Metekel over the past few decades was revolved around the attainment the collective identity needs (be it access to resource or ownership rights), for the new ethno-linguistic based federal system has been less competent enough in relation to availing fairly agreeable resolve, the resource-driven conflict become turned to hold additional arena of the conflict. Many of them have been demonstrated in collective grievance and mutually destructive efforts of delegitimize the regional and the federal government. Second, the resource-driven conflict in Metekel has been turned into easily to bloodiest violent conflict. In turn, this has resulted violation of basic human rights, horrifying internal displacement and material destruction. As sensibly seen these aspects, each of them has to do with the fulfillment basic human need, none of them are negotiable. Therefore, it can be argued that the resource-driven conflict in Metekel was so protracted over the past few years because, the conflict had to do with the fulfillment basic collective identity needs.

Third, let alone to that capable to maintain peace and order, and proactively respond to the societal demands in the region, the Benishangul Gumuz regional state was failed to defend itself. It was forced to shift its regional seat from Pawi to Assosa. Metekel and its surroundings have been under strict rule of military command post. This was made two times, in 1990s and in 2019. These two trajectories have suggested that both the federal and the regional states were unable to fulfill the vested interests, basic needs (both collective and individual) and aspirations of the inhabitants. As well discussed in the political economy of conflict in Pawi, the conflict entrepreneurs including the local political elites have been exploited such cavities to advance their political and material gain. Moreover, they mobilized their supporting base to exacerbate

the situation, both exclusionary politics and hate mongering group narratives were instrumentalized to make worse the conflict. These, in turn, seemed to have eroded significantly the legitimacy of the state.

Fourth, these trajectories have not been without external enablers. As shall be discussed in the last section of this chapter, due to its location as the site of the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), Metekel was among other areas that anti-Ethiopian forces often preferred to leverage Ethiopia. It should be noted that both the federal and the regional state of Benishangul Gumuz have been devoted to maintain the national interests of Ethiopia. Nevertheless, Ethiopia has also been challenged by the external forces including the pressures from the international financial institutions. In an attempt to offset external pressures, it seemed to have significant attention as well as resources diverted to the outside. The direct ramifications such a shift in focus by the federal government becomes visible in Metekel. It is to mean that the protractedness of the conflict in Metekel is partly associated with this shift of focus. In conclusion, the resource-driven conflict in Metekel has been so protracted, the direct outcome of this trajectory become extreme polarization, youth radicalization, militarism and the difficulty to decouple the vested interests of parties in conflict and their cohorts with the narratives of ethnic identities.

5.4 Pitfalls of Resource Management and Local Governance

5.4.1 Morbidity of Preceding Resource Management Systems and Inter-ethnic Unrests

Essentially the stiff resource competition and infrequent interethnic violence seemed to have been the derivatives of gradual decaying of preceding resource management systems made functional for centuries in Metekel. This opines that either the preceding resource management systems appeared to be impervious to new types of resource induced conflicts, or the local systems of resource management failed to cope with the new realities. This assertion also concurred by other scholars who conducted fairly extensive studies on the area. Many argued that inadequate systems of resources management would significantly increases the likelihood of resources based conflicts (see Rustad et. al, 2008; Østby et. al, 2011; and Basedau and Pierskalla, 2014). This would mean that the inter-ethnic polarization partly originates from the incapacity of the local institutions of resource management and conflict prevention.

The implication of such voids rather seemed to be pervasive in Metekel area. One of the direct outcomes of the failure to manage natural resources driven conflict based on fairness and the long-term peaceful coexistence of various groups who just making the competition for land and other resources very stiff. This, in turn, draws significant population from engaging in productive activities, but to involve in destructive intents. As more people are disengaging from productive activities, extremists of either group would get additional men fighting for their cause. Not only is such a dynamical process posing danger for each other group, but also appears to be the foremost concern for national security. The underlying reason behind many resource-driven conflicts in Metekel does not necessarily related to scarcity, but the dearth of effective local resource management system. In addition to these, lack of comprehensive community engagement and detailed strategies of resource management and early warning systems for environmental shocks seemed to have contributed immensely for the on-going interethnic tension in Metekel.

Since the local people did not get the opportunity of consultations on how to manage the local resources, many residents become are exposed to condemning propagandas by extremist groups and shortly after they turned to be conformist to destructive rhetoric. The direct result of such giant mistakes was just be entrapped the local people, specifically the Gumuz communities, with sense of relative deprivation and remained to live in a crisis of expectation. For instance, Melak (2021) notes that the regional statesmen has been outsourced the extraction of gold and digging wells for ground water for the Amhara regional bureaus. Since many of these companies together with their employees were regarded by the Gumuz communities as outsiders, the local people rather appear less receptive and cooperative for these projects. Local grievances aired to denigrate these projects. Not only are these problems emanated from dearth or deficiency of local participation in resource management including project designed to help local populace , but also originated from inter-ethnic animosity for the obvious reason that the extremist Gumuz community activists wanted to do that but unfortunately unable to do that—is that not crisis of expectation?

Additional manifestation of the deficiency of local resource management and lack of participation to the local people is shifting blames and the tendency of guided through ‘one fits tall size’ parlance. Melak (2021) disclosed that lack of awareness on what is really done and the

absence local participation on the resource management often reinforce the pre-existing too nationalist rhetoric. He opined that the Gumuz community often equated some locally driven economic developments as if intentional and systemic dislodge of the authentic entitlements the Gumuz comments by other groups.

Even if the manifestation remained exist in rhetoric level, its repercussions would be so horrible. As a writer perfectly put it, the one can be that as sense of convergence exclusive control of the resource by the one and rhetoric of the privileged group takes all would be an excellent setting for political schemers to escalate resource-related conflicts into volatile ethnic confrontations (Østby et.al, 2011). In a related but different logic, the traditional Gumuz leaders openly depicted Metekel land controversies as manipulated stratagems designed to systematically seize ancestral Gumuz territories through government-endorsed settlement ventures and agrarian investments (Aalen and Tronvoll 2020). This kind of narrative stokes an essential struggle over habitation along racial boundaries which fuels animosity amongst the Gumuz community toward the governing entity or contending Amhara or Agew folks.

Self-justified by alleged national oppression rhetoric that underpinned the state disfranchisement, systemic exclusion from power and labelling others as ‘intrusive foreigners’, the armed factions from within the Gumuz communities have perpetrated mass killings over the non-Gumuz communities (Aalen and Tronvoll 2020). This was additional repercussions of failed resource management systems and lack of adequate consultation and participation at the grassroots level. Obviously, the local government and the regional law enforcement bodies were not unable to respond as swiftly as needed. Distance, timing and poor early warning systems are among other factors seemed to have precluded the regional law enforcement bodies from responding proactively to such local atrocities. The Cumulative gaps of such kind though heavily related with state inadequacies, nationalists rather interpreted it differentially. Delegitimizing the local governing body being siding to this or that group the, rhetoric was devised to mobilize vengeance seeking groups (Rustad et. al, 2008). This would mean that the repercussions of failed resource management mechanism has manifested once again in the form of political vendetta. This was among other reasons that can be recounted as the one behind the multi-layered resource driven conflict but recurrently marring the Metekel area.

5.4.2. Gross Inadequacy of Local Governance and Misgovernance

As discussed well above, the nationalist rhetoric's were not just aired to grab additional power, but also to rationalize the gross governance inadequacy and skill gaps as part of rulemaking instrument or simply manoeuvred to remain on power. In Metekel area another resource component that draws groups to conflict was the last for political power. This is for the obvious reason that in many parts of Africa including Ethiopia, political power is a means to extract enormous of wealth from state coffer. Look at hereunder the one that has been commented by Gumuz community member regarding the issue:

There are numerous elites in the regional politics. Elites from the non –Gumuz community hold the majority of government positions. Throughout the hiring process, they deliberately make it difficult for the local Gumuz community to find a professional career because they have already held the majority of position in several professions. A deliberate effort is made to prevent knowledgeable and capable Gumuz residents from holding positions of authority. For example, most of the registrars, lecturers, and administrators at the Metekel College are from the non-Gumuz community. They purposefully dislodge the Gumuz community from in important government position. All of this has caused the local community to get frustrated, which finally led to inter-ethnic conflict (Interview, 2022).

The interviewee underscores the Gumuz communities believed that they are being stigmatized and marginalized from state bureaucracy including the decision making and other key government position. And he (she) opined such a discrepancy would likely turn the Gumuz communities frustrate, and simple discords becomes easily politicized. One can easily discern from the remarks by the interviewee the allegations and control alights, seem more emotional than critical. The non- Gumuz communities were accused for being denied the Gumuz from getting knowledge and being occupied disproportionately the professional carriers. Imagine this was commented in the midst of that ample opportunities were given the Gumuz communities to join higher institutions all through affirmative actions have been implemented long ago, and in the midst of that the Gumuz politicians have controlled the political landscape in the area since 1995. In view of that for the claim appears diametrically opposite to what is going at the surface, it raises further concerns than seems to help addressing the underlying problem.

What can be said at this point of time is just conducting further study remains essential to understand the kernel behind the interethnic conflict. Nonetheless, behind these controversial claims and counter claims, still the critical pitfalls of governance and misgovernance (such as nepotism, chronic corruption and formal dishonesty for national norms and principles) are the foremost drivers of inter-ethnic conflict. Surprisingly enough, such drivers are deeply embedded in the intra-ethnic conflict, but often communicated as glossed over often cited rhetoric—past injustice, discrimination and marginalization. Most conflicts in Metekel arise due to issues of nepotism and cronyism within the government. As indicated above, the Gumuz communities often expressed concerns about their representation in political and administrative positions that oversee the management of land and mining resources in the area. A Gumuz political party member has more to say above the exclusion

Our system exclusion of the Gumuz communities from important decision-making processes and political engagement is a pervasive problem and embedded in the social inequality and historical marginalization. The Gumuz communities frequently find ourselves marginalized in the larger political environment such obstacles that make it difficult for us to participate actively in government and have an impact on the policies that affect our daily lives. The non-Gumuz community enforced the execution Highlanders in a variety of in within various institutions (Interview, 2023).

Yet, another interviewee, a public figure rather elucidates the deep rooted problem the wider ambit of local and regional; governance in the region as follows:

The Gumuz ethnic group who make up the majority of the ruling elites are over whelmed by widespread corruption and gross in capacity. They maintain a cycle of nepotism and self-enrichment by abusing resources for their own benefit and taking side toward their kinship networks. Because there are no essentially ensures systems in place in the area, the elites are free to act as they choose and systematically evidence avoid accountable. There are no discernible attempts taken to maintain transparency in governance systems, making it a venture t ideal. The region's persistent conflicts are mostly caused by the widespread absence of effective governance. In the absence of strong governance system frameworks, complaints go unresolved and resource distribution becomes a lofty ideal (Interview, 2022).

The closer inspection of these two comments rather suggests that none of them held exclusive control over truth. The rhetoric of marginalization is made to serve politics in other way, but

debilitating the inter-ethnic animosity. The reflection of that public figure indisputably puts where the kernel of the conflict hinges on. His comment provides a clear picture of the region's governance issues, especially with regard to the actions of the ruling elites, who are mainly members of the Gumuz ethnic group.

One could easily imagine how poor governance, corruption, and a lack of accountability would negatively implicate the stability and overall prospects of development in the region over the years to come. First of all, chain the notion that the governing class is incapable and corrupt rather highlights where the basic problem with governance lays. Leaders who lack these qualities were notable unable to manage resources and carry out policies in a way that benefits inhabitants of the region. Furthermore, widespread corruption exacerbates socioeconomic inequality in the area by undermining public trust in institutions and taking funds away from vital social services and infrastructure projects. This would mean that additional grievances and resentments will likely be arisen essential for not due to that Gumuz communities are marginalized, but it has made systematically disfranchised by their political elite.

Existing disparities are made worse by the ruling elite by international mismanaging and abusing abuse of resources for private have benefit and favouring of their family. This practice exacerbates discontent among underprivileged communities that feel disenfranchised and excluded from the benefits of development, in addition to perpetuating nepotism and cronyism. These problems are made worse by the lack of transparency and accountability, which provide the ruling class the freedom to act without consequence and avoid being held accountable. There is no motivation for leaders to govern in the public interest or attend to the complaints of oppressed people if there are no systems in place to hold them responsible for their actions.

Of course, this does not mean that resentments are lacking legitimacy. For example, genuine resentments often arise due to lack of understanding and inadequate compensation given to displaced Gumuz communities as their community lands sold for large scale farming and others purposes. But as Dereje (2022) recount, the resentment often arises out of inadequate consultation and fair bargaining with the local people. In the absence of such schemes, the Gumuz communities often come out to oppose quinces initiatives as they felt imposed upon by local authorities without their consent. But later on rumours get circulating; automatically the initiative (in whatever form) came to interpret as of a scheme strategized by the 'mountain-

dwelling' elites in an influential position, undermining traditional Gumuz territory rights (Ibid, 2022). The political elite again come out to rally around ethnic lines against each other. It is quite understood that the failure to make accountable the corrupted officials and the absence transparency on key decisions of strategic issues were the underlying reasons behind inter-ethnic violence.

Moreover, the absence of local influence (in whatever from) in issuing mining licenses has given Gumuz leaders an opportunity to rally their communities against supposed 'outsider' or the non-Gumuz gold miners, extracting resources in Metekel. Melak (2021) argues that the political elite often manipulate historical discords to instigate conflicts over crucial assets within a volatile society devoid of stable governance. In discharge of its responsibility of maintaining peace and order, the regional and federal the law enforcing bodies have intervened for not to address the conflict but to stop from escalating further the conflict escalate further. The possibility of using excessive power by law enforcing bodies often determined by the immediate core commanding personnel, Thus the governments at both levels were also accused for being committed extrajudicial and sweeping military assaults on the regional and federal entire Gumuz community (Human Rights Watch 2021). This, in turn, avail functional reasons for the political theGumuz community activists and other actors to mobilize group members for violence.

Another widely circulating grievance by local Gumuz community is the one that preaches the Gumuz are victim of the justice system. The informant from the local community has noted that the situation is very disgusting. He suggests me to 'go and visit all prison. I asked why they get arrested. He replied that simply they are of ethnically Gumuz. After getting this information from the local informants, I personally went to the city of *Geligal Beles* Prison and able to observe what the local informants has noted. The fundamental problems of Metekel have to do with human rights protection and law enforcement. The prison speaks a lot about the status of human rights protection, especially with regards to human security. There are significant worries about the arbitrary use of state power and egregious violation of human rights. Individual liberties often get compromised excessive use of force by low enforcing bodies. The disproportionate number of Gumuz convicts posed additional worries, many of them seemed to have imprisoned without chasing the due process of law.

The inherent inability of the legal system to maintain the concepts of fairness, impartiality, and due process of law is at the root of this problem. In addition to violating individual right to liberty and personal security, detaining somebody without a warrant or court order also threatens the fundamental tenets of a democratic society based on the rule of law. In addition, the lack of legal counsel makes inmates even more vulnerable by rendering them helpless to stop possible abuses of authority. The public's confidence in the fairness and integrity of the legal system seemed to have weakened by the conflicts of interest that are clearly present in the court and prosecution systems. The legitimacy of the law enforcing bodies put into question for many of them accused for being involved in conflicts of interest. This often appears to have undermined trust in the rule of law and feeds the culture of impunity.

Moreover, the disproportionate number of Gumuz prisoners in the jail points to a kind of marginalization and prejudice within the criminal justice system. It raises serious issues about the prevalence of systemic biases and prejudices that support injustice and inequality as well as concerning questions about the targeting of particular ethnic groups for arbitrary incarceration. It will take coordinated efforts to improve and reform the institutions in charge of managing the rule of law and protecting human rights in order to address the structural issues. This involves making certain that everyone has access to their rights under the due process of law, which includes the rights to counsel and an impartial trial. In addition, systematic interventions have to be executed to resolve conflicts of interest in the legal and prosecution departments, such as putting in place safeguards against bias and undue influence.

5.5 Lingering Poverty, Energy Insecurity and Interethnic Rivalry

5.5.1 Chronic Poverty and Interethnic Animosity

As analyzed in the preceding subsections, Metekel is among the most poverty ridden zone within the Benishangul-Gumuz regional state of the federal democratic republic of Ethiopia. It has long been plagued by escalating ethnic violence over the past few decades, wherein most conflicts have involved and emanated from minor disputes over the access and control of vital resources like land, water, and mining sites. Nonetheless, lingering poverty seemed to have been at the heart of several resource-induced conflicts. Unlike the other economic factors, poverty is both the source and effect of conflict. It would mean that poverty breeds conflict, which otherwise, constructively manage such a conflict; the direct consequence becomes additional poverty live in

the cycle of poverty. This part seeks to demonstrate how poverty has been pivotal within the resource-driven conflicts in Metekel area.

In fact, several studies conducted in the study area over the past few years have already expounded that competition over access to scarce natural resources, sense of marginalization, and demographic pressures were the key drivers of the inter-communal tensions in Metekel (see Yihun, 2019; Lemessa, 2021). As the authors highlighted these might have been led different groups to mutual distrust and extended tensions. But many more studies have also uncovered that population growth coupled with unsustainable land use practices has dramatically increased pressure on the finite land resources in Metekel. Between the years from 1994 and 2007, cropland has been decreased from 1.93 to 1.67 hectares per capita in Benishangul-Gumuz region, thus land scarcity has become most acute in Metekel (Kumsa et al., 2014).

From these studies one could infer that population growth rather have compelled the local people to expand farm lands for one or both reasons of that either new entrants to the economy has necessitated for expansion of farmlands. Or, as the findings showed the decrease in cropland rather posed new challenges for the households for the land productivity has been dwindled significantly, which in turn, these have informed households that they could not realize food security which unless expand their farmland. This was the underlying trajectory that induced different ethnic groups to fight over the land to secure food at family level. The grim episode is that it was the deep-rooted poverty as well as underdevelopment that draw communities to unnecessary resource competition. Diminishing the productivity of cropland is often associated with the use of other factors than the size of cropland. This would mean that the political and institutional approaches resorted to alleviate poverty at the grassroots level were either proved fatly failed or exacerbate that have been conflict and thereby generate additional poverty.

Combating poverty is not as simple task as many conceived; it demands on the political of the determination and the application of policies well tested by and proved with success stories throughout the planet. In this regard, poverty has long been prevalent in the region partly because the institutional interventions, policies and strategies resorted to reduce poverty and transform the livelihood strategies of vulnerable groups such as the Gumuz communities were proved less effective. Although the federal state has declared so long that the foremost national security threat is poverty, and identified its economic policies has oriented as pro-poor and development

list, we do find little or no evidences whether these policies are translated into effect at grassroots level. After effective implementation of organizing principles such as shared rule and self-rule over the past three or more decades, the region seemed to be unable to reduce the vulnerability level of its key constituent groups such as the Gumuz communities. An expert of agriculture and livelihood in the study area has more to say on this:

Because of their semi-nomadic way of life, the Gumuz people are among the most susceptible to poverty. Due to their traditional reliance on pastoralism and subsistence farming, they are especially vulnerable to the effects of climatic change. The reduced size of their land holdings, which is frequently ascribed to elements like deforestation, land encroachment and infrastructure development, seemed to have seriously jeopardized the livelihood of the households of the Gumuz community. Gumuz families find it difficult to support themselves through farming due to limited access to fertile land, which these in turn increases their susceptibility to poverty. Moreover, the households in the Gumuz community have endured additional difficulties due to repeated crop failures that are made worse by erratic weather patterns and insufficient rainfall (Interview, 2022).

The interviewee highlights the Gumuz community's significant struggles, especially their susceptibility to poverty as a result of their semi-nomadic lifestyle and external circumstances.

Among others, the semi-nomadic lifestyle was the one that identified by the expert as the one that exacerbate poverty among the Gumuz communities however. He failed to mention the various policy packages that have been executed to lessen vulnerability. Rather he highlights that decreasing amount of land they own as a result of different circumstances, along with the frequent crop failures have all brought on including irregular rainfall patterns where among others, seriously lamped their capacity to support themselves.

Nevertheless, studies show that lack of alternative livelihoods has long made the Gumuz communities entirely dependent on farming, fishing, and foraging on increasingly precarious land and water resources. In contrast the, non-Gumuz communities such as the Oromo and Amhara are more commercially oriented farmers, merchants and civil servants (Tesema, 2021). Such economic imbalances often breed tension between the two communities. It can be argued that other poverty alleviating policy packages such as credit facilities to change the livelihood

strategy and voluntary settlements to acquire sustainable state provision of state by the Gumuz communities were either untried or implemented poorly in the region. If we consider seriously the highest population growth in the region, the failed strategies of such kind would rather produce many unemployed youth—essentially prone to poverty and then to conflict.

As stated in the preceding sections, after several years of self-rule the dominant narrative circulating in the study area still obsessed the rhetoric that depicts : ‘the Gumuz have faced systemic socioeconomic and political marginalization since the late 19th century’. It went to say further that they remain largely semi-nomadic subsistence farmers and rank lowest on literacy, school enrolment, health outcomes and other development indicators (Yihun, 2019). Who held accountable for these failures? It seems to be policy making. But, such rhetorics remain alive and often appropriated by the political elite to mobilize groups to fight for greater share of a resource. As competition over these declining resources base intensifies, existing ethnic divisions are increasingly manipulated and exploited by local power brokers and national elites either to assume to power or to consolidate power (Ibid, 2019). One could intellectually guess to what extent becomes easy for political elites to mobilize the unemployed youth for violence in Metekel. As the ICG (International Crisis Group, 2021) has reported, armed Gumuz militias attack the Amhara and Oromo civilians to displace them from contested lands, prompting retaliatory violence. In factthe, political violence could bring out a few rich people, but end up by multiplying the poor. This was a grim reality of the poverty nexus conflict trajectory in Metekel area.

To transform such a conflict, inclusive and participatory natural resource management, more packages of poverty reduction, and speedy economic recovery programs have to be effected (Lemessa, 2021). Equitable benefit sharing, sensitive conflict mediation, and integrating marginalized groups into the political processes can also help defuse resource tensions (Fana, 2020). Additionally, enfranchising the Gumuz community all through the application of diversified livelihood strategies could avail additional sources of income, get better-paying employment, and enhance their general well-being through interventions that centered on education, skill development, and healthcare. Policymakers may assist in ending the Gumuz community's cycle of poverty and paving the road for a more affluent future by making investments in social safety programs and human development programs. The voices of both the

Gumuz and non-Gumuz community must be heard, and their needs must be taken into consideration, in order for attempts to combat poverty among them to be based on the ideals of inclusivity and participation. Policymakers can create more practical and long-lasting solutions that tackle the underlying causes of poverty and foster significant change in the Gumuz community and beyond by collaborating with neighbourhood associations, civil society organizations, and community leaders.

5.5.2 Environmental Degradation, Energy Insecurity and Interethnic Rivalry

The preceding section highlights that rapid population growth is the underlying challenge in Metekel. This has forced inhabitants to search additional cropland for either to maximize productivity or allow new entrants to acquire land for that purpose. These are all made at the expense of forest lands. Surprisingly enough, the new entrants to crop cultivation including the Gumuz communities for they often seasonally change their crop or grazing lands (i.e. transhumance) are fighting over the access to and control of the remaining forestland. As a result, rapid deforestation, soil erosion, and overall environmental degradation have assailed Metekel zone for the past several decades. Vital resources like fertile farmland, forests, grazing lands and water sources have seen a significant decline because of such conditions leading to increased poverty among local communities while also fanning regional ethnic disputes.

Poor land regulating system and less visionary land use pattern are mainly responsible for substantial deforestation as well as soil erosion in Metekel area. Between the years from 1973-2010 the forest coverage of Benishangul-Gumuz region was rather dwindled from 61% to 51%, and this was so alarming degradation rate (Beweket, 2013). Particularly the ‘Gumuz communities have felt decidedly deprived and succumbed in fast pace declining grasslands combined severe resource scarcity especially those linked cattle breeding routines triggering odd problems designing transhumant direction (Bekele, 2022). All these findings result in an unfortunate disruption of the erstwhile harmonious resource sharing systems sparking new tension between ethnic groups. The agricultural and natural resource expert whom I interviewed explains the impact of environmental degradation in Metekel as:

Deforestation, land grabbing, and the growth of mining operations are only a few of the many reasons contributing to the urgent problem of environmental degradation in Metekel. The natural resources and ecosystems of the area have suffered greatly as a

result of these damaging activities, which pose serious risks to local communities' general well-being, biodiversity, and water quality. Deforestation has led to the loss of important forest habitats and has exacerbated soil erosion, habitat fragmentation, and climate change. It is mostly caused by logging, infrastructural construction, and agricultural expansion. The removal of trees threatens the livelihoods of indigenous groups that rely on the forests for food, fuel, and medicinal supplies. It also reduces the region's ability to control water cycles and lessen the effects of climate change (Interview, 2022).

The aforementioned claim draws attention to the serious problem of environmental degradation in Metekel, which is a result of growing mining activities, deforestation, and land grabbing. The repercussions of these harmful actions will be covered in detail, and possible remedies to the region's environmental degradation will be looked at in this debate. In addition to reducing biodiversity, a reduction in forest and upsetting ecosystems cover raises the risk of flooding, exacerbates soil erosion, and accelerates climate change.

Yet, deforestation with which is a prominent factor contributing to environmental degradation seemed to originate from the convergence of the livelihood strategies of inhabitants both the Gumuz and the non-Gumuz communities were able to expand their land use, for each of them believe that the existing cropland would enable them to realize food security at family level. Moreover, the household in each group still consume further the remaining forest for fuel only because none of them achieve energy security at family level. They fight to have the greater share of cropland and forest resources, for the local communities are so poor and too prone to conflict. Overconsumption of the natural resource (as a result of deforestation) have eventually exposed the local communities to lose out on crucial ecosystem services that are necessary for their livelihoods and general well-being, like clean water, fertile soil, and climate regulation,

The indigenous Gumuz community traditionally practiced shifting cultivation, but is now restricted to fixed plots due to land enclosure by non-Gumuz communities (Fana, 2020). These trends severely restrict Gumuz livelihoods and access to fertile land, creating resentment against other groups. Deforestation, recurrent droughts, and highly uneven rainfall distribution have reduced the availability and reliability of water resources across Metekel (Melese et al., 2022). Rivers are the primary source of irrigation and household water. But frequent droughts have led

to growing competition between ethnic groups over access to scarce river water (Tadesse&Bahru, 2020). The Gumuz have historically depended on wetlands and rivers traversing their ancestral territories, and are thus impacted most by water scarcity (Lemessa, 2021). The Oromo and Amhara migrant communities possess more advanced irrigation infrastructure giving them advantage in water access, causing tensions with the Gumuz.

Those activities which initially intended on commercial agriculture have pivoted towards timber pulling out along fuel wood gathering ended up clearing entire forest spaces, rather reciprocated through incremented runoff mellowing just alongside nutrient depletion contributing substantially complete hindrance over resulting into dwindling productivity. For land is often degraded without necessarily making any sense diminishing more pathetic river flows whilst pretty much tampering quite annoyingly groundwater recharge cycles around our totally hence not letting aquifers absorb rainfall properly. Nonetheless activities of such kind often appear to be detrimental for local farming practices, which eventually also appear degrading economic sustainability by assaulting further the herbal medicine production bases.

A significant consequence of this vulnerability is that Gumuz households continue to live in a state of abject poverty. Families are compelled to live in a state of chronic deprivation when they are unable to meet their fundamental needs for food, shelter, and healthcare due to their inability to grow enough food or earn enough money from agriculture. In addition to keeping people and families mired in a never-ending battle for survival, this cycle of poverty makes it difficult for them to make investments in education, skill development, and other means of escaping poverty. A comprehensive strategy that tackles the Gumuz community's immediate problems as well as the underlying structural issues that prolong their vulnerability is needed to address the core causes of poverty among them.

Significant environmental dangers are also posed by the expansion of mining techniques in Metekel. The use of hazardous chemicals and methods in mining operations frequently contaminates ecosystems, degrades soil quality, and contaminates water supplies. Furthermore, mining activities have the potential to worsen land degradation, upend delicate ecosystems, and wipe out biodiversity. These actions can have a negative long-term influence on the environment and public health. Apart from these, in spite of the fact that Metekel is so rich in gold, natural gas, timber and fertile land, local communities do not proportionally benefit from resource

commercialization and investments in the zone (Lemessa, 2021). Large gold mining concessions provide minimal jobs and royalties to local people while degrading the environment (Gebrehiwot et al., 2020). Huge state and private farms displace Gumuz from ancestral lands without compensation or alternative livelihood support (Fana, 2020). These are among other grievances often exposed the local communities to animosity. The prevalence of widespread poverty in the midst of abundance is the sign of abnormality. Although difficult to pin down the underlying factors behind the alleged mismanagement of natural resources, one could understand that the inter-ethnic tension might be found the lesser evil for the political elite often use as an excuse for failed policies. This underscores that the foremost reason behind the inter-ethnic tension and animosity seemed to have related with chronic poverty and energy insecurity for the public resources are not yet riveted to address each of them.

By upending customary land management methods and uprooting indigenous communities, land grabbing exacerbates the environmental degradation in Metekel. In addition to destroying ecosystems and splintering habitats, large-scale land acquisitions for infrastructure development and commercial agriculture also intensify land-use disputes and conflict over natural resources. This reinforces cycles of poverty and marginalization and threatens the rights and means of subsistence of the local communities.

The interrelated consequences of mining, land grabbing, and deforestation highlight the critical need for coordinated action to stop environmental degradation in Metekel. Strong laws and rules are needed to do this in order to safeguard forests, stop land grabs, and control mining operations in a way that respects local communities' rights and puts the environment's sustainability first. Additionally, programs to support community-based natural resource management and advance sustainable land management techniques must go hand in hand with measures to stop environmental deterioration. This entails enabling local communities to engage in decision-making, promoting sustainable means of subsistence, and cultivating inclusive governance frameworks that guarantee fair distribution of opportunities and resources.

The ecological integrity of Metekel can be protected, as well as the welfare of current and future generations, by addressing the underlying causes of environmental deterioration and encouraging sustainable development practices. In order to accomplish this and promote a more resilient and

sustainable future for the area, cooperation between governments, civil society organizations, local communities, and other stakeholders is crucial.

5.6 Implication on Governance Policy and External Actors

5.6.1. Revisiting Public Policy: Is the Cause or an Arbiter of Resource Driven Conflict?

As widely known governance often appear to have implicated conflict in many ways the nexus of governance and conflict remain debatable in peace and security studies. Now the debate seems to settle on consensus/ the underlying point in consensus is that the way the governance system gets fair, prudent and accountable to would likely contribute by regulating, transforming and addressing conflict. The case in Metekel has to do with the governance system. Although the Benishangul Gumuz region has developed regional land proclamation, and resource management legislations at different times, many of these were rather failed to bring the desired outcome. This was basically originated from gross incapacity of enforcing the proclamation. The local data show that the region in general and Metekel in particular, were the victims of lack of locally driven resource management policy.

The reliable field data in Metekel indicates further that the problem in this area essentially originates from three pitfalls. These are gross incapacity in managing the natural resource, which basically spring from lack of locally tailored public policy together with its vastness and complicated frontier with the neighbouring states. The second one has to do with elite policy making, where the Benishangul Gumuz region seem to have little or no representation within the governing party-the EPRDF. The third one is about the mutual influence of politics and policy.

From the field data collected in Metekel, the basic problem that the local governors facing now days and some years back rather seemed to have related with the gross incapacity of enforcing policies crafted at the federal level. The Benishangul Gumuz land proclamation that has been endorsed in 2000 and later were all good in themselves, but nothing brought to manage the inter-ethnic conflict which basically originate from the access and ownership rights of resource. The revised constitution of the Benishangul Gumuz region in 2002 had also impacted little in either transforming or settling the inter-ethnic conflict. The revised constitution has sown discords simply by dichotomize the native and non-native inhabitants of the region. Governing the local populace through this constitution seemed to have served no purpose.

The inter-ethnic conflict has been flared up once again in 2019; it claimed the lives of several people. The region was unable to conduct even the periodic election. The Metekel area including the other parts of the region has been managed via a state of emergency. Only recently the local inhabitants start to be governed by the legitimate governors. The outcome of the inter-ethnic conflicts over the past few years has suggested that the absence of legitimate leadership together with lack of clearer public policy were the fundamental reasons behind the intense inter-ethnic conflict in Metekel. In the absence of leadership that should be held accountable, public policy has brought nothing. Both Metekel and the region were in a state of emergency in the past few years would mean that the leadership was in a state of crisis management.

In this regard public policy together with the local governance system was all contributed minimally in addressing the resource driven conflict. Apart from these, the execution capacity of the leadership has been constrained by the conflict itself and other political engagements. The data obtained from informants have demonstrated that the leadership has neither the capacity nor qualified with appropriate skill to manage divergent interests over the access and ownership right of resources, which in effect, the public policy including the governance system were part of the problems, rather than generate sustainable solution for the inter-ethnic conflict.

As widely known the EPRDF leadership, which was the governing party of Ethiopia was the responsible body in developing national policies. After the governing party discussed and endorsed the public policies the executive body was allowed to give formality and send to the house of people's representative to endorse it. It was witnessed further from the trends of policy making over the past few decades that the EPRDF leadership was the one that had exclusive right over the formulation of public policies. This suggests that although the Ethiopian polity have enjoyed the legal rights to make decision on policies, in practice, it has been endorsed what was recommended by the executive body. The process has entailed the policy making in Ethiopia was so elitist in its approach, alternative policy suggestion were rarely considered. The political elite of the Benishangul Gumuz have not been part the Politburo of the EPRDF, thus they were destined to execute what was decided by the EPRDF leadership.

It would mean that they were not able to translate policies to the realities facing at the grassroots level. The inter-ethnic conflict that basically emanated from the use and ownership right of the resource often side-lined, because the leadership has been found challenging to familiarize the

national policies with the local realities. In this respect, public policies were hardly usable to manage the resource-driven conflict.

The other aspect that precludes policy from playing its role in both managing and transforming the resource driven inter-ethnic conflict seemed to have linked with politics. As stated above, the political elite of the Benishangul Gumuz region has never been part of the policy making, but to EPRDF leadership was expecting the leadership to execute the policy. It would mean that even if the region has exclusive rights to formulate policies, the party arrangement did not allow it. Thus, policy seemed to have dominated by politics. The end result of such a trajectory was quite understandable. The public policy which was expected to address resource-driven conflicts rather set to be part of the problem than the solution. To wind up, the inter-ethnic conflict in metal was partly resulted from lack of fairly plausible public policy, and essentially the rules and regulations set to address incompatible interests at the grassroots level have also been dominated by politics.

Another factor that determines the contribution of public policy for managing resource-driven conflict is changes in population or demographic change, climate change and change in the livelihood strategy of the local populace. In this regard, both the federal and regional governments did not seem competent enough in coping with new developments. As stated above, the local governing body was not able to craft strategies that help to mitigate the smaller community conflicts. The morbidity of local institutions of conflict resolution that the local people have long been utilized to manage resource-driven conflict become additional reason that impede policies to contribute for conflict management and transformation in Metekel. The policy makers at the regional and federal level often were not in a position to understand such challenges, partly because resource-driven conflict remained high stake issue in local politics. As the local informants have disclosed, they have never been consulted in the planning and execution of resource management. They commented further even the local governing body did not take part in both determining and allocating the investments flowing to the region. Thus, the absence of strong coordination between the local, regional and federal government in the planning and execution of resource management at the grassroots level seemed to have contributed immensely for the escalation of inter-ethnic conflict.

As stated in the preceding section, even if the federal state structure has been introduced to mitigate or redress the discords and graveness in the past, it precipitated resource driven conflict in Metekel. This was not due to the policy in itself was so bad and incompatible, rather even if the intension was genuine, it end up with multiplying resource-induced conflicts. The public policies and other resource planning schemes that have been executed over the past three decades rather appeared so counterproductive. The existing situation in Metekel is the living proof for this assertion. It can be argued that the resource driven inter-ethnic conflict in Metekel appeared to have originated from either failed policies of resource management, or poor implementation of public policies due to the influence of self-serving elite at the grassroots level.

5.6.2. Multi-level Governance System: Implications for Resource Driven Conflict

Governance has always been influencing conflict. As indicated in the preceding chapter, federalism was resorted to address the historical imbalances over the access to resource including political representation. Power has been devolved to the grassroots level. Different ethnic groups that constitute the federal Ethiopia were allowed to govern themselves. Both the shared and self-rule were maintained just to alleviate the preceding national discords. As Tsegaye (2022,1) argued the underlying cause of conflict in the Benishangul Gumuz region was the perceived fear of the Gumuz communities for being dominated by the non-Gumuz communities such as Amhara and Oromo inhabitants, specifically as regards to their political rights or the issue of political representation with the new governance system called-ethno-linguistic based federalism. He went to state further the worst political violence has been recorded in the past few years, Metekel Zone remained the epicentre-for many believe that Metekel was misadministered by the Benishangul Gumuz region, since 1990's (Ibid, 2022:2).

It is stated above that the Metekel zone is currently under state of emergency (in a military command post). Federalism as a governance system was resorted to address national discords, yet it is now becoming the source of tension for either it was misapplied or in capable to mitigate conflicts at the grass roots level. As discussed well in the preceding sections, the Benishangul Gumuz regional state was formed by incorporating some territories from the former provinces of Gojjam and Wollega after 1997. The region has been facing challenges from both regional states of Oromia and Amhara. The conflict was essentially originated from territorial claim; Metekel was claimed by the Amhara elite.

Fekadu and Ketema rather traced the territorial contest between the Amhara regional state and the Beneshangul Gumuz regional state had begun as early on 1991. They went further to state that initially in 1991 it was proposed that the Benishangul Gumuz region has been made to share boundary with Tigray. Accordingly, Metema, Quara and other areas in West Gondar were assumed as part of the Gumuz's territory with in the Benishangul Gumuz regional state (Fekadu and Ketema, 2023:12). As the authors stated this proposal was rather dropped. However, the tension has been continued over the remaining years. Recently in 2020 a kind of map that connects the Tigray and Benishangul Gumuz regional state has been circulated in social media. According to this political map that made the two regional states (Tigray and Benishangul Gumuz) to share boundaries had to speak a lot. Not only evaded the legal territorial boundaries of the Amhara regional state, but also instigated unnecessary frictions between the inhabitants of the regional state. Such media campaigns seemed to have inflamed the resource-driven conflict in Metekel.

Surly this has to do with governance, the continual reshuffling and wild claims over certain territories with in the regional states had become the biggest influence of resource induced conflict at the grassroots level. In this regard Metekel zone has been the hottest spot, the zone was the bone of contention of different ethnic groups. According to the 2007 census, the Gumuz and Shinasha to which identified as the possessors of the Benishangul Gumuz region by the revised regional constitution of 2002, were constituting 38 per cent and 22 percent respectively, and the remaining ethnic groups such as the Amhara and the Oromo constitute 40%. The contention here was to have proportional political representation in the zonal and regional administration. The governance system seemed to have less participatory, disregarding the aspirations, interests and fundamental rights of the minority. The political tension among different ethnic groups as regard to proportioned political representation appeared to have implicated the resource-driven conflict in Metekel.

This underscores the multiple governance systems which have rarely been synchronized to mitigate the local conflicts become the additional factor that complicate resource-driven conflict in Metekel. Not only were such factors intricate the conflict, but also interlace of these factors with the other issues come out to prolong the conflict. The absence of coordinated governance system from the regional to the zone and local decision making units has never been intentional,

but the end result of gross incapability of managing resource-induced conflicts. As stated in the preceding chapter, lack of accountability and transparency together with chronic corruption seemed to have crippled the leadership from synchronizing efforts to address local conflicts. The pitfalls of governance at different levels have exposed the local people for protracted conflict. Now, it can be argued that the resource driven conflict in Metekel is basically originate from the absence of good governance, lack of accountability and extended period of disfranchisement of minorities in the regional politics.

5.6.3 The Inside-out and the Outside-in Factor

Although many conflicts have drawn universal attributes, some conflicts seem very unique in their core essence and typology, and essentially manifest in specific localities. The conflict in Metekel area seemed to have drawn closer resemblance to such a conflict type. In fact, characteristically the conflict in Metekel area can be patented as resource-driven conflict, yet in both its structural milieus, and the issues and actors involved in the conflict over the past few years—the rather conflict seems pretty different. Certainly the internal factors played significant roles in instigating conflict in Metekel zone; concomitantly, the external factors were also exacerbating the conflict. This subsection examines the interethnic conflict in Metekel area in the intent to show how confluence the internal vulnerability and external influence was debilitating the interethnic conflict, and in doing so, pinpoints the prolonging factors of the conflict.

Studies conducted the over past few decades have already verified that the ethno-linguistic based federal governance system executed since 1991 has inadvertently solidified a sense of distinct ethnicity, which in effect, turned Metekel to the bone of contention of the rival ethnic groups (see Vaughan, 2003; Abbink, 2011). The 1995 FDRE constitution has granted exclusive rights to ethno-linguistic groups to exercise notable command over their respective territory (ethnic homeland). The federal state structure and the new regional arrangements have transformed the issues, interests and underlying intents of the national conflict. Specifically, however the new reordering of the socio-linguistic groups have also shifted to new political entities, and transformed the preexisting or traditional boundaries into brand new political barriers. These trajectories seemed to have been less affable, reasonably deepens pre-existing the territorial battles amongst different ethnic groups in Metekel (Yihun, 2019).

It has to be noted that the ethno-linguistic based federal governance system cannot be the source of inter-ethnic conflict in itself, nor equated as solely responsible for internal vulnerability. As analyzed properly in the preceding sections, the underlying reasons behind the inter-ethnic conflict in Metekel were the prevalence of deep-seated poverty, underdevelopment, chronic corruption, misgovernance and environmental degradation. If that was the case, what has federalism to do with these determinants? Both the solid evidences acquired all through closer observation of the area, from the formal and informal statements that statesmen at both levels often communicate to the public, and the analysis made over the preceding sections, the federal state system is not yet fully executed in Ethiopia. It would mean that the different ethno-linguistic groups have entitled with constitutional rights to rule themselves, many of them seemed to have drawn insignificant legitimacy from their constituents. Deceleration of democratization and the absence of transparency might have been the foremost reasons for the deficiency of legitimacy. However, legitimacy deficient regional states would indirectly signalize the existence of intense intra-ethnic competition in each regional state, which some of them were waging armed struggle since 1994. The demand for the new ethno-linguistic administration at different levels (*Woreda*, Zone and Region) have been rambling over the past few decades. Even if these all demands are deemed desirable, legitimate and genuine at first glance, the decision on such a quest has never been less political. The political elite in each group mobilizes supports to realize any of these goals. The difference in cultural facets, language, religion and historical grievances were among others often the political elite instrumentalized for that purpose.

The Metekel has no exception, different groups competing each other to control it, many of them wanted to have exclusive right (special zone administration with in the regional state of Beneshangul Gumuz), whereas the others sought to disassociate Metekel from the existing regional state of Benishangul Gumuz—and thereby wanted either to merge with their ethnic homeland or rule themselves as independently in whatever level (the Amhara, Oromo and Tigrrians are among others suspect groups for such intents). Warnings exist about syndicates and politically motivated individuals from adjacent areas funding arms provision hence feeding communal insurgents exist in Metekel by granting additional capabilities needed further to morph territorially ambitious plans (International Crisis Group, 2021). These indicate that the current resource driven conflict in Metekel area rather involves goal incomparability among different ethno-linguistic groups as politically interpreted. In this regard, unlike as many writers

have underscored above, it can be argued that the ethno-linguistic based federal governance system became the permissive factor for the interethnic and interethnic conflicts in Ethiopia since 1991. The goal incomparability of different groups would mean that the realization one's goal depends on the loss of the other, thus it is a zero sum game. Albeit the protractedness of the conflict in Metekel seemed largely to have associated with scores of factors, the incomparability of goals by prime actors is the foremost prolonging factor.

Within the wider ambit of resource-driven conflict in Metekel, gold mining sites have been also the bone of contention among the indigenous people of the Gumuz communities, the non-Gumuz communities and the seasonal labourers commissioned by wealthy individuals. The misapplication of the land policies, gross incompetency to execute the strategic documents authorized to manage mineral wealth, and lack of coordination between the federal and regional states over the management of mineral wealth in Metekel area were among other reasons that embolden different groups to make use of violence. The absence meaningful compensation for the households forced to leave their homeland for the purpose of mechanized agriculture or gold mining site have also been the source of agnostic, hatred and abhorrence—such agnostic perception especially profound and prevalent among the Gumuz communities.

The new economic opportunities such like the gold mine dealings have rather exacerbated preexisting interethnic conflict (Gebrehiwot et.al, 2020). Thus, one could easily guess political economy of the resource driven conflict in Metekel. The new found item the gold mine seemed to have transformed the preceding resource-driven conflict into a new landscape; different armed groups were reportedly trying to control the gold mine sites at different times. Certainly, the direct victims of the short and brief military engagements by these paramilitary groups were the Gumuz communities. Although evidences remain scant to claim that whether every armed group wants to control the gold mine sites or not, the physical presence of the paramilitary groups in Metekel area has posed additional tensions—where the Gumuz communities often uttered their anguish to the non-Gumuz communities. In effect, the new found resource has brought about additional pressure on already scarce regional assets (Mulualem&Abay2020). The internal tension would likely seem exacerbate the inner vulnerability of the Ethiopian state, and it could be interpreted by external actors as inherent fissure. The confluence of the internal weaknesses such kind seemed to have prolonged the interethnic conflict in Metekel, but now it becomes

degenerate to other typology—the external actors tried to leverage Ethiopia all through backing extremist armed groups to knock off balance the peace and stability of the region.

As stated above, the internal vulnerability that has been mounted over the past few years rather invited many more spoilers and crisis exploiters from outside. As the senior officer from Ethiopian National Defence has disclosed, the two states have been involved in efforts of destabilizing Ethiopia via the south western corridor. He articulates the case aptly as:

The involvement of external powers in Metekel has become apparent as a crucial element influencing the dynamics of the area and intensifying pre-existing problems. Numerous external parties, such as nearby countries and governments in the region, are involved in the efforts of destabilizing of the area to varying degrees. The involvement has taken several forms, such as political manipulation and military support. Concerning the Ethiopian Grand Renaissance Dam, lower stream states aimed to use the Metekel area to leverage Ethiopia and advance their own geostrategic interests. Pre-existing interethnic conflicts and tensions in Metekel were convoluted by the outside interference. External involvements intensify ethnic tensions, local rivalries, and impede efforts to create peace and security through military and other forms of support (Interview, 2022).

The interviewee unearthed that outside interference was the one that longwinded the pre-existing conflict. Undoubtedly, this was a remark from the military man, no could question for the obvious reason that it did not come from diplomatic community and the political elite. As the interviewee has confirmed the leverage of the downstream states such as Sudan and Egypt was rather emanated from the inner vulnerability Ethiopia. The interviewee stated further that the underlying motives of Sudan and Egypt were destabilizing Ethiopia, and thereby show the world that Ethiopia is not capable to construct the GERD by its own capacity. Let alone to accomplish huge projects of such kind, Ethiopia is unable to manage its internal affairs all through civilized manners. The concrete message that they wanted to enlighten the international community is that Ethiopia bogged down in civil war, where different groups wage armed struggle for equality, freedom and self-rule. To their surprise, the Ethiopian government has been worked hard for the past few years; the GERD is at the verge of completion. Indeed, the Ethiopian government has successfully curbed the propaganda, psychological warfare and other forms of leverages coming

from the downstream states with maximum dedication and political determination, albeit it has been challenged internally by foreign backed armed groups.

The history of the interstate interaction in the Horn of Africa has been informed us that not only states in this region were so weak in their internal makeup, but also the foreign policy establishments of several states were bent on efforts of mutual destabilization. Among others, Ethiopia's intervention in Somalia to dismantle the terrorist groups, the Ethio-Eritrean interstate war (1998-2002), the Ethio-Eritrean standoff that remained for nearly a decade and half, and the support of anti-Marxist regime of Ethiopia by Sudanese government were among other classic cases that can be cited to justify the above-mentioned assertion. The recent intervention of Sudan and Egypt with Ethiopia's internal affairs is not newfound exercise—rather an extension of the preceding leverages in the other form. Yet, because of their strategic interests in the GERD, downstream states and their allied have been tangled in the conflict in Metekel. This highlights the interconnection of internal political dynamics, specifically vulnerability and the potential for external actors to intensify the domestic body politic. It should be noted that the confluence of the internal vulnerability and underlying interests from outside was the foremost factor that makes the conflict in Metekel protracted, if not created. Further exploration of the complex effects of outside interference on regional dynamics is possible, especially with regard to how it exacerbates rivalries, stokes ethnic tensions, and adds to the militarization of the area. External actors exacerbate violence and insecurity in Metekel and thwart efforts to establish peace and stability by arming local armed groups with military hardware or support.

All things considered, the aforementioned case offers a strong foundation for talking about the difficulties of outside power involvement in Metekel and its effects on efforts to promote security, stability, and peace in the area. In order to bring workable peace and order in the region, it is important to address the confluence of geopolitical interests and the escalation of current tensions, particularly with regard to the Ethiopian Grand Renaissance Dam (GERD).

4.7 Concluding Remarks

Characteristically the conflict in Metekel area can be titled as the resource-driven conflict. In its structural scenes, however the stiff competition over resource in tandem with environmental degradation seemed to have turned the conflict into new landscape. Every group perceives the situation as of its survival dilemma. Thus, not only was the interethnic conflict so violent, but

also appeared resistant to amicable way out. The new found resources were something a blessing in disguise for Metekel. The new found gold sites became additional spots for inter-ethnic conflict. Morbidity of the preceding resource management system was additional reason the pose tension within the different ethnic groups. Many of them were capable to handle the new conflict types. On top of these, gross inadequacy of the local governance and misgovernance rather became part of the problem than the solution, which in effect, the inter-ethnic rivalry turned to new political, economic and legal complexity.

Additional structural issues that debilitated the interethnic conflict in Metekel were the lingering poverty and environmental degradation. These are not mutually exclusive, underdevelopment such as heavy dependence on forest resource for energy have tended pose survival dilemma on different ethnic groups inhabiting Metekel. The successive droughts occurred in the region, which in in turn, was caused by the ecological imbalance have resulted in enormous environmental degradation. The cycle continued, but it can be argued that chronic poverty and environmental degradation remain to be the leading predicament of Metekel. Nonetheless, it should be noted that energy insecurity is at the heart of the interethnic conflict in Metekel. Undoubtedly, the internal factors have played significant roles in instigating interethnic conflict in Metekel zone. Equally, the external factors found to be precipitating interethnic conflict. It would mean that the interethnic conflict in Metekel area rather seemed to be resulted from the confluence of the internal vulnerability and external influence.

CHAPTER SIX

THE SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF RESOURCE-DRIVEN INTERETHNIC CONFLICT IN METEKEL ZONE

6.1 Introduction

As indicated in the preceding chapters, the economic interpretation of conflict is rather encompassing both the underlying reasons and resonating effects of the inter-communal conflict. An exhaustive exploration of the local perceptions and firsthand accounts on various actors involved in the complex web of conflict in the study area unveiled that the underlying cause of the conflict seemed to have embedded in the inter-communal relations. Not only were the inter-communal relations at the heart of the local conflict, but also set to define, redefine and shape the conflict landscape over the past few decades. Thus, it appears essential to delve into the crux of the resource driven conflict, which systematically meant, unveiling how governing communal attitudes, fundamental attributions and perception of different groups such like political parties, government officials, law enforcement bodies and significant others has been implicating the local conflict. The mutual influence of the inter-communal relations and resource-driven has been demonstrated in many ways, but often finds apparent expressions in divergent interests, lingering legacies of the past and socio-economic aspects. The difficulty to find bargaining forums and deficiency of amicable alternative way out seemed to have associated with divergent goals, spanking new perceptions towards resource, and ever changing inter group value systems. It would mean that the local perceptions often come out to harm the long enduring social ties, and thereby precipitate hostilities, perpetuate political violence and overhauling uncertainty.

This chapter is thus dedicated to show how the inter-communal relations has been eroded as a result of stiff competition for resource, which eventually degenerate to contaminate the socio-political life of people in the study area. And the aggregate effect of all these processes ultimately came out militate groups and create conditions for further communal violence. By chronicling such a conflict trend, this chapter bids to fairly broader understanding of resource-driven inter-communal conflict, which in turn, contemplates to chart amicable alternatives of working peace and contribute a bit the ongoing knowledge production.

6.2 Culture, Conflict and Perception

6.2.1 Culture and Perception

As discussed well in the preceding chapters, conflict is all about the competition, incompatibilities and divergences in goals, underlying interests and values. We observed that conflicts occur at all levels of human socialization and institutions. The perceived incompatibilities often designate the perception aspect of a conflict. In the effort to assess scientifically the conflict nature, Johan Galtung (1969) has devised a composite analytical model. This is commonly referred as conflict triangle, where the three angles represent respectively as conflict attitude, behavior and contradiction or (conflict situation). The conflict attitude generally designates the positive or negative feeling that a person or a group has on the other. These are psychological states that often manifest in three forms of having their own intrinsic elements. These are of the cognitive (belief), emotion (feeling), and the conative (will i.e. expectations) elements. Conflict attitude also include mental states by which often expressed through the emotional orientations and emotive laden reactions such as feeling of anger, fear, sadness, bitterness, hopelessness, distrust, resentment, envy etc. towards somebody.

As Kevin Avruch (2001) underscores, the foremost determining factor of perception is of culture. He defines culture as “the socially inherited, shared and learned ways of living possessed by individuals in virtue of their membership in social groups.” No conflict does exist without boundary, as Avruch explains it further both the cognitive and perpetual boundaries are of cultural boundaries. Essentially these boundaries are prone to intercultural miscommunication, which in turn, these are the major escalator of conflict. As stated well in Chapter two (theoretical perspective), it is of the perceived incomparability often potent enough in drawing groups or individuals to conflict. Likewise, in Metekel area even if the objective incompatibilities have been observed in both resource use and the claim over the ownership rights including other material interests, the study found that perception including the difference in culture has been precipitated the inter-ethnic conflict.

Obviously it can be difficult to claim that the cultural difference among different ethnic groups in Metekel was the underlying source of the conflict. However, the way groups perceive particular resource, political power including the perception towards seemed to have played significant roles in drawing ethnic groups in to conflict. As informed by history and the group narratives

disseminated over the past few decades, the Gumuz communities often perceive the non Gumuz communities as natural enemies, this appears to have emanated from the scarcity mind-set—they perceived that natural resources being dwindled for the non-Gumuz communities shared it progressively. Another cultural facet that draws groups into conflict seemed to have associated with the divergent goals; the one perceives the other as existential threat for its collective existence. The strong aspiration to build a homogenous political entity becomes among other perception that essentially originate from the difference from culture and found to be the major driver of interethnic conflict in Metekel.

Indeed, culture gives frame to conflicts, which is why perception often dictates conflict. If that is the case, since culture is not static, any change in culture would likely lead groups in to conflict. Avruch underscores that sometimes rapid cultural transformation might lead to social instability, and this may in turn lead to conflict. In this respect, as stated in the preceding chapters, the conflict in Metekel has been transformed into a new socio-political landscape over the past few decades. The resistance to the socio-economic changes has been additional factor that led the various groups into conflict. For instance, following the new state structure that has been introduced in Ethiopia in 1991, a few ethnic groups have considered the change as a threat to their collective existence. They perceived the socio-political and cultural change in a new prism; they identified the supporters of this change as their perceived threat—they destined to fight with the other just to maintain their interest. The crux of the conflict rather demonstrated that the change in political and other aspects of change have brought about the change in perception. The change in perception was the one that draw ethnic groups in to conflict.

6.2.2 The Layers of Perception

As explicated in chapter two, divergence in perception is the foremost factor often debilitates conflict dynamics, intensifying tensions and muddling alternatives for peace. Thus, it became worth essential to explore how the underlying perspectives of principal actors and other cohorts influence the storyline, shared memories and narratives on the genesis and course of the conflict in Metekel. Extant evidences testify that the inter-communal perception is the driver of the conflict, which embeds in the legacies of past such as excessive marginalization and systemic dispossession. This was specifically comprehended as the prevailing narrative among the Gumuz community, and often applied to decode perspective or contextualize the inter-communal

conflict. This perspective also seeks to associate the ongoing armed struggle by Gumuz Liberation Army with past injustice, and tended to rationalize that the sense of marginalization and historic disfranchisement were among others at the heart of the resistance. Opposing to this, the core standpoint by the non-Gumuz community (ethnic groups such as the Amhara, Agew, Shinasha, Oromo, Kenbata, and Hadya) highlights that they are in defense of their constitutionally bequeathed interest, and such groups the inter-community conflict originates from clash of value systems such as ethno-linguistic differences involving several issues, but often came out to be expressed all through the sense of territoriality and valid historical claims for territory.

In the midst of these mutually exclusive claims, the government officials (including Prosperity Party officials) at different levels take to mean the inter-community conflict as part of longstanding national problems such as poverty, lack of development and local inadequacy. This is of the perspective from above, which tended to prescribe that economic development and equity in wealth distribution will ultimately bring to an end the local conflict and ensure stability. Although such prescriptions from above are so progressive and useful in their own terms, often seem to be easier said than done. In effect, the proposed solutions to the conflict by the state officials rather appear to be far fetching for the principal actors in conflict.

6.2.3. The Social-Psychology of Gumuz Community

It should be noted that the Gumez communities often consider themselves as native inhabitants Metekel region. Nativity in this sense has to do with the territorial entitlements, ownership rights over the administration of the constituency and the right to acquire constitutional prerogative being as distinct identity with defined territory. As per these essential markers, the Gumuz communities argue and claim that they are historical heirs of their ancestral land overhanded by several generations. In fact, such a claim seeks to affix the ethnic identity or primordial ties with a given territory— ethnic homeland being conceived to reflect a distinct sense of belongingness.

Apart from the legal and political claims, yet the perception of being indigent people within a certain locality often draws far deeper implications to the remaining inhabitants. In that regard, Gumuz communities were able to produce their own narrative. The narrative seemed to have created own distinct reality on the minds of community members, many of them underscore that the Gumuz were the original occupants of the region, which in turn, such a narrative essentialize the ownership right of the area together with other privileged entitlements including the right to

self-determination. The underlying argument in this narrative dates back to the antiquities, the Gumuz believed that other ethnic groups were arrived only recently. As the Gumuz claimed, significant others were only coming in to their area during 1950s and 1960s, which for them it was this historical juncture that redefined the social relations and brought about significant demographic change in Metekel. They went further to claim that significant changes in economic life and demographic shift have all been implicating the land use and resource distribution in Metekel. In fact, the bone of contention seemed to have been integral to the past, but apparently come out to be corollary of the inter-community relation at present. It should be underscored that the potency of historical narrative so noticeable. Not only are these narratives shaping and reshaping local perceptions, but also serving as the foremost haulers of the inter-communal conflict either by sanitizing positions or socializing the chosen traumas of the group members.

This entail that the alternative narrative often originate from established national history by other inhabitants would unlikely serve the sense of communality in the study area, rather it offers additional functional reasons for distinctiveness of the Gumuz in many ways. It can be argued that in its intents and purposes, the instrumentality of distinctiveness by any group seemed to have enthused either with ownership right or access to a certain resource (including power), but it essentially originates from and a reflection of the national conflict. What makes the case in Metekel area peculiar in this regard is that it runs deep in the ethnic animosity and firmly held in the societal categorization of “we” and “others”. To unravel the depth and degree of divergence in the local perception as regards to nativity one of my informants from the Gumuz community in Metekel region has noted that: *‘We are indigenous people of Metkel and an original inhabitant of the area. We do not come from anywhere we do not belong to any area. We are here and our decedents were here. We are requesting our natural rights as an indigenous people of the area. Others are new comers to our land and live with us (Interview, 2022).*

As can be inferred from the claim quoted above, the Gumuz boldly assert that they are the original occupants of the territory, and defined others as new comers. According to this claim the non-Gumuz ethnics whom currently inhabited Metekel are of new comers, they were only coming recently into Metekel just to acquire additional resource. The Gumuz went further to claim that subsequent to their overwhelming control of the labor market everyday labor, agriculture, and farming, the Amhara communities from Wolo, Central Gojam, and Gondar were

progressively brought back their friends and families to the area. This was executed aggressively over the past few decades, which eventually, the indigenous Gumuz made to have outwitted in own ethnic homeland. This historical trajectory has never been gone without historical narratives. As the Gumuz asserted further, the *non-Gumuz community* were also able to craft their own narrative, which claims that Metekel is their ancestral homeland. Recently they formed the Metekel returnee committee, as the name suggests its purpose is to bring back Metekel to the ethnic homeland of the *non-Gumuz community*. An elder from Gumuz community has spelled it out as:

I wonder why the Amhara and Agew claim Metekel as their native area and assert that they have a natural right to control it. They publicly declare their willingness to make any sacrifices to regain Metekel. Their move and propaganda awaken our sons and daughters and they have been scarfing their life for their people. We were hospitable to both Amhara and Agew when they arrived to our area. We lived together and coexisted in this land; we provided them our land; we showed respect for one another via marriage, culture, and even language. However, our favor to them returned with conspiracy to overtake our land. They slaughter and expel our people from their homeland. They don't treat us with respect, and even verbally insult us. They demonized our dignity and even designated as with nick names such as: "Shenkla" and other derogatory words (Interview, 2022).

The excerpt above succinctly illustrates what is really going on in the study area. The informant expresses his enigma why the non-Gumuz societies claimed the Metekel as their own ancestral land and vowed their readiness to death for that sake. What led the informant to profound anguish rather seem to have associated with the formal disloyalty that the non-Gumuz communities demonstrated against the very people (the Gumuz community) who allowed them to live peace, shared everything they had, and forged strong ties with marriage. Sense of betrayal also seems to be coupled with verbal abuses that the Gumuz community claimed being the non-Gumuz communities used to call them long ago in historical past. The kernel of the conflict appears to be integral to the sense of territoriality, where the Gumuz community became infuriated by the wild assertion of non-Gumuz communities that aimed at disinheriting their ancestral land, and in doing so tantalizing their youth for valance. Apart from polemical arguments, one can easily infer from the claims and counter-claims is that the driver of the local

conflict and tension have all to do with the underlying socio-psychological positions, where the territorial claims are being instrumentalized to legitimize the confrontation and protractedness of existing conflict.

In line with the local perceptions but in a different logic, the Gumuz community also raised concerns over the political representation in Metekel. They claimed that currently Gumuz community is underrepresented in the politico-legal affairs and bureaucratic apparatus of the Metekel area. An informant illuminates the case as:

There aren't many elites in politics today. Elites from the non-Gumuz community hold the majority of government positions. Throughout the hiring process, they deliberately make it difficult for the local Gumuz to find a professional career because they hold the majority of professional roles. A deliberate effort is made to prevent knowledgeable and capable Gumuz residents from holding positions of authority. For example, most of the registrars, lecturers, and administrators at the Metekel College are from the non-Gumuz community. They purposefully denigrate Gumez from the area in important government roles. All of this has caused the local community to get frustrated, which finally led to conflict (Interview, 2022).

The underlying claim of the Gumuz community as reflected by the informant rather seemed to have associated with lack of transparency over the criteria for recruiting professionals and other supportive staff in the administrative system. They strongly objected the ongoing disparity between the non-Gumuz and Gumuz professionals. Even if they failed to avail solid evidence, the Gumuz community believed that they were systematically suspended from key academic and other professional posts by non-Gumuz community. As the informant insisted, the ongoing exclusion of Gumuz community from the labor market (for the government is the biggest employer in Ethiopia) would have long-term economic and political ramifications among the Gumuz community. As many of them believe, this would bring the Metekel area into the abyss of conflict than generate sustained peace. Still these ascriptions by the Gumuz community underscore that the local perception which has inherently relied on the politics of inclusion and exclusion became the underlying factor in the inter-communal conflict in Metekel area.

6.2.4. The Social-Psychology of the Non-Gumuz Community

The underlying perception by the non-Gumuz community to whom locally identified as non-Gumuz community, but essentially constitute both the Amhara and Agew ethno-linguistic groups have rather been orientated by their alternative narratives to the Gumuz community. As stated above, these two groups had strong territorial claim over the Metekel area, which in effect, appeared to be flatly contradicted with the narrative by the Gumuz community. Not only were the non-Gumuz community and other entitled with competing narratives over the ownership right of this specific territory, but also such narratives have long been served as essential devises of shaping perception and marshaling group members for confrontation.

As the Agew and Amhara communities claimed, the narrative of Gumuz community which regarded the non-Gumuz community as aliens to the area is rather unfounded and baseless. They went further to recount that not only were these communities existed for centuries together having in use the same market, rural farms and roads, but also made their shared past as they fought and won the anti-colonial war in Adowa. However, during the Italian occupation, the colonial masters were applied the divide and rule policy, which in effect, ethno-linguistic boundaries have been highlighted as rulemaking instrument. It was at this historical juncture that the ethnic homelands redefined, redevise, used and abused. Although one could argue that the inter-ethnic animosity has been changed dynamically over the subsequent years, the bold claims and counter claims towards a certain territory as ethnic homeland must have begun during Italian occupation. What historical narratives have to do with the inter-ethnic animosity? Well, narratives are power themes; they have installed additional imaginations to the minds of the group members and thereby tagging others being an alien to that specific area. The divergence in narratives came to demonstrate in perception, thus the inter-community conflict in Metekel area rather seemed to have complicated by the inter-community relations in historical past.

In addition to the conventional claims that non-Gumuz communities often raise over the proprietorship right of the Metekel area, they also picked up the previous provincial administrative system that Emperor Haile Selassie installed immediately after he returned from exile since 1940s. The Amhara and Agew mobilized this historical decision as valid evidence to substantiate their claim. They went further to propel that no territory was identified by this name before the institutionalization of the provincial system; Metekel has always been part of the

proper Gojjam, as they often asserted. Thus, it appears worth examining further the case in point, for the simplest reason that selective memory often debilitate the genuine claims and influence perception in many ways. One of the informants from the Agew community noted

It is not today that the Agaw and the Amhara arrived in this region. We coexisted with the Gumuzs in places like Chagni, Ganetamariam, Belayterara, Debatie, Workmeda, and Mandura for a longer period of time. We even got along well in the Adwa War. The local Agew and Amhara well-to-do families used to control the area and collect taxes. The patriots from Debre Markos, Wolga, Gondar, and Begemdir arrived and sheltered here during Italy's brief occupation. The emperor arrived in Ethiopia through Sudan after his return from the United Kingdom and spent a short time in Menkush Al-Mehal. Agew was the region's rulers at the time. We were here a long time ago. We are neither strangers nor intruders. We are the local indigenous people (Interview, 2022).

The excerpt from the Agew informant clearly shows how the territorial claims has been appropriated all through historical narratives. The Agew and Amhara communities have been trying to challenge historical narratives of the Gumuz community. Fighting through narratives became the rule of the day in the study area, where the inter-communal perception seemed to have discolored due to the politics of difference and zero sum games. Although it becomes extremely important to consider the varied experiences and viewpoints of major constituents and minorities in the study area for the interest of knowledge production and documentation, equally it appears worth considering the unheard voices by the concerned bodies just to redress injustices that might have been committed in the past.

In relation to early demography, out migration and human relations with the environmental and livelihood patterns, the local communities are also reflecting somehow divergent views. As the non-Gumuz communities claimed specific localities such as Danguri, Manbuk, and most part of Mandura worada were rather dense forests and abundant in wildlife until the late 1970s. Only a few communities have been used to live there, which only later the area became inhabited by several ethno linguistic groups coming from different parts of Ethiopia. In retrospection an informant from the Agew local community member recounted as:

There was a forest between Dangur and Mandura, also known as Almehal, and Gwangwa, also known as what is now Chagni city. The region was home to both settlers from other regions of the nation and wild animals and extensive natural bamboo forests until 1976 and 1977. On the other hand, Agew communities from Gwangwa used to visit the region throughout the summer to gather herbs for medicinal purposes. At that time, they gradually built communities and began to settle in this area; the Agew group made up the majority of the village's people. This region was not home to the Gumez people (Interview, 2022).

At a glance the interviewee has been tried to recount the objective realities in the past, which vividly depicts the region's ecological past and the possible causes of changes in the ecosystem across time. Furthermore, the interviewee underscores that the economic and socio-political and livelihood patterns of the local people have all been transformed as a result of human interaction with the environment, but deforestation, urbanization, and agricultural development the direct outcome of this historical processes. What is more, the interviewee confirms that the population inhabiting Metekel area was rather the outcome of interaction of various groups. The story takes on a new dimension for mentions that people from other parts of the nation are moving into the area. It implies patterns of human movement and settlement that have influenced the region's demographic makeup over many years. Exploring the causes for these moves, whether driven by economic possibilities, social issues, or environmental conditions, can provide useful insights into the interconnectivity of human societies and the landscapes they inhabit.

Additionally, the reference to the seasonal movement of Agew ethnic group to the Mandura in pursuit of therapeutic herbs rather proves there was the strong interaction between human societies and their environment. The harvesting of herbal medicine and other traditional ecological knowledge and practices are examples of how culture, environment, and livelihood strategies are deeply intertwined. Both the preservation of cultural heritage and the conservation of biodiversity depend on the documentation and preservation of such activities.

It's crucial to recognize the effects of political and socioeconomic shifts on regional communities and ecosystems, though, in addition to these stories of environmental richness and cultural customs. As the interviewee claims the Agew communities have taken the status of majority over several years later. This would mean that they are claiming to be the indigenous people of the

area, which flatly contradict with the narratives by the Gumuz community. Whatever the claim was the underling point that does ring here is that the ecosystem services, indigenous populations' well-being, and biodiversity conservation may all be impacted by the shift from forested to agricultural or urban settings. And these socio environmental transformations might be inferred to justify historically the claim for a territory as homeland of a certain ethnic group.

Furthermore, in order to advance environmental justice and fair decision-making procedures, it is essential to acknowledge the viewpoints and experiences of marginalized populations, especially indigenous people, in conversations around land use, resource management, and conservation initiatives. Another narrative is portrayal of the Gumuz community as historically subjugated by the non-Gumuz community. This narrative has been utilized by the non-Gumuz community to assert their perceived superiority and claim a natural right over the Metekel region. However, a closer examination reveals layers of historical context and socio-political dynamics that challenge the simplistic portrayal of the Gumuz as mere subjects of the non-Gumuz community. An 89-year-old elder from Mandura district illustrate:

This is where our forefathers came from, and we also lived here. The Mandura district was home to our fathers and grandfathers. This is where we were born. Our forefathers settled here 300 years ago, when they constructed a church, and we continued to reside here while paying our taxes. Is Addis Ababa somewhere? We're not sure. I have raised my children and grandchildren in the Genthemariam Church here all my life (Interview, 2022).

The statement emphasizes the close relationship the speaker's community had with the land they live on, highlighting their longstanding existence in the Mandura district and their ties with the customs and history of the area. This sentiment brings up a number of crucial discussion points. The speaker emphasizes the rich historical legacy of their village by mentioning their ancestors' 300-year settlement and church construction. This begs the concerns of how important it is to have ancestors who are connected to the land and how historical narratives shape a sense of group identity and belonging. The interviewee emphasizes the strong sense of local identity and devotion to the area by claiming that they and their relatives have resided in the Mandura district for generations. The mention of paying taxes to ancestors who lived in the highlands suggests a historical system of land tenure and governance within the community.

Examining the relationships between land ownership, care, and customary political institutions can provide insight into the community's socioeconomic and political structure. The importance of intergenerational relationships and maintaining cultural continuity within the community is highlighted by the speaker's remark of raising children and grandkids in the Genthemariam Church. This demonstrates how important cultural practices and organizations are for maintaining cultural legacy and promoting intergenerational social cohesiveness.

Another widely circulating allegation is the non-Gumuz community has been subjugated the Gumuz community. The non-Gumuz community members never admitted this allegation. One of the elder from the non-Gumuz community describes the allegation as baseless as noted below.

We've heard that the non-Gumuz community has been charged with using methods against the Gumuz people that are similar to mere servants. On the other hand, we disagree that our dealings with the Gumuz that equates them with such a status. Rather, we see it as a customary arrangement in which we employed Gumuz people as servants and herders to help us with farming and livestock. We saw this as a win-win situation where our community's labor needs were met and the Gumuz were given a means of support and employment. Understanding the historical and cultural background of these relationships is crucial, as is taking into account the subtleties of our traditions and conventions before categorizing them as such forms of designation (Interview, 2022).

The elder's statement above reflects the idea that the non-Gumuz community has been spreading broadly. It is crucial to examine the historical background of slavery in the area in order to comprehend the forces at work. Slavery has a long history in Ethiopia, where many ethnic groups have been involved in the slave trade for many years. A number of people from the Gumuz community believed to have been treated in such a way, yet the Agew and Amhara communities often appeared to complicit in this as well. The places Gwangwa Dengele area, Dek, Jewi, Work Meda, and Enjbara were mentioned as well-known hubs for such a trade where people coming from different areas were bought and sold.

The historical account reveals that, in contrast to popular belief, individuals started intermittently entering from Wollo and Gondar in 1983 and 1984 as a result of the drought. Several villages have been constructed which as a result several hectares of forest made to be cleared. Large

market areas, hospitals, schools, and retail malls were the results of the growth of cities and commercial activity in these places. The principal beneficiaries of this urbanization are the people residing in Gumuz. There was only a small school and a few churches in Mendura Wereda, but later on, large-scale schools, hospitals, banks, and other social service facilities were built, as one local elder attested to.

The new trend after 2018 political transitions unveils new pattern of intra-ethnic and inter-communal relations between the non-Gumuz community and the Gumuz. One of the elder witnessed the post-2018 new trends in Metekel as follows:

Since 2018, in particular, our community has experienced unprecedented levels of loss and violence. We have never witnessed such horrible circumstances before. Claimant to be the only owners of the land, the Gumuz group started to forcibly remove us from our homes in the Ganthemariam or Mandura district, calling us outsiders. They resorted to violence that spared no one, even religious leaders who usually avoid politics, women, children, and the elderly. They also set fire to our homes and destroyed our belongings. The colors red and black, which denoted affiliation with a specific ethnic group, were sufficient to provoke needless devastation and bloodshed. Many people in our neighborhood were consequently compelled to escape to improvised shelter stations in Gelgel Beles, Gentemaryam, and Chagni District. The abuses and violations of our fundamental human rights that we experienced throughout this period are incomprehensible and difficult to put into words (Interview, 2022).

The elder's testimony sheds light on important dynamics and developments that occurred in Metekel after 2018, especially in the interactions between the non-Gumuz and Gumuz communities. According to the elder, the state of ties between these groups has deteriorated which has increased rivalry and resentment and created a combustible atmosphere that can lead to conflict escalation.

6.2.5 The Social-Psychology of Political Parties in the Region (Prosperity Party, Gumuz People Democratic Movement (GPDM) and Rebel Groups)

Political parties' perceptions of the conflict in Metekel, Ethiopia, are indicative of the political landscape's complexity and diversity of viewpoints. Various perspectives on the underlying

causes and reasons for the violence are at the core of this problem. The Prosperity Party (the ruling party), often shifted its blames to others, labeled them as radical and expansionist organizations for the Amhara, Agew and Gumuz ethnic mobilizers for each of them enticing their supports for political violence and challenging the constitutional order in Metekel. A senior political figure of Prosperity Party member has more to recount on both his party's political stand and other issues in contention as follows:

We sincerely believe that elements associated with some ethnic groupings, especially the Amhara and Gumuz communities, are the main drivers of the strife in Metekel. These communities' desire to dominate the region's significant resources drives their territorial expansion and eviction attempts against other ethnic groups. In order to combat these challenges to stability and security, it is imperative that we move decisively against these extremist groups and make sure that every community in the area is protected (Interview, 2022).

The interviewee highlights that how certain groups in the name of their ethnic groups—specifically, the Amhara and Gumuz—have long been instilling expansionist outlooks on the minds of their supporters, and thereby mobilize them for fight. The prosperity party accuses these groups for being fighting each other for either annexation of the neighboring ethnic groups, or the expansion of their territory, These goals cannot be realized unless one of them seize control of the region's important resources, thus according to prosperity party, this was the topmost functional reason behind the fight.

However, other political groups purportedly claim their struggle is for the Gumuz community rather forward quite opposite viewpoint. An official from Gumuz People's Democratic Movement / GPDM / has come up with this assertion:

The ruling party's plan to destroy the federal structure and reestablish a unitary government is the fundamental source of the dispute in Metekel. The autonomy and rights to self-governance that ethnic communities like the Gumez have been accorded by the federal government are threatened by this agenda. The conflict arises from marginalized populations' fear of losing their identity and autonomy, which is a response to this centralization of power (Interview, 2022).

As can be understood from the words of the interviewee, the opposition parties rather cognate the ruling party as if working against federal state structure, for them the cherished goal of the ruling party is to destroy the current federal arrangement in order to change either in its entirety (unitary state) or remaking it in other form. As they claimed, such a goal was at the heart of the conflict. They underscore that it was because of the federal system that ethnic groups like the Gumuz have exercised the rights to autonomy and self-governance, and any attempt to dismantle this structure would be a threat to their identity and way of life.

The synthesis of the thesis and anti-thesis of the ruling party and opposition parties operating currently has on the underlying causes in the inter-community conflict in Metekel area rather raises many more question than depict the clearer portrait of the conflict. Even if one may appreciate the ruling party's dedication to pin point actors held accountable for the conflict and show keen interests to be part of the solution for the ongoing problem, it fails to mention the underlying causes behind the deadliest conflict in study. Senses of territoriality and fighting for political power have always been existed in the political landscape of Ethiopia. If this was the case as the prosperity party claims, only it told us the underlying interests of the parties in conflict, not the root sources of the fight.

On the other hand, the political parties of claiming that their struggle is for the realization of the underlying interest for the Gumez community rather seemed to have overwhelmed by unfounded fears and excessive skeptics. According to their claim their existence there in Metekel area is just to protect the federal state system for not disbanded by the prosperity party. They labeled the prosperity party for being less federalist. This is just playing with words; they assigned their own goal to the prosperity party (anti-federalist) and those groups that assigned the goal coming again to protract it (prosperity party) from realizing its goal. The agenda for fighting in Metekel seems crystal clear, nothing new. It was for political power, and it is now again for political power. However, what is worth noting the federalist and anti-federalist political agenda has many more buyers in the political market since 2018. It should be underlined Ethiopia will not accept any less-federalist system over the years to come or over the foreseeable future. Thus, what is the kernel of the fight in Metekel is just the manipulation of fear and ethnicization of politics for the realization of sectarian (be it ethno-linguistic, religious or any other) goals. What was the underlying and proximate causes motivating groups to fight each other?

As stated in the preceding sub-sections, some of the problems rather associate with effective implementation of the constitution, backwardness, underdevelopment and dearth political participation etc. Thus, comprehensive strategy that takes into account the worries of all parties involved is needed to resolve the issue in Metekel. This includes initiatives to advance communication, peacemaking, and inclusive political systems that uphold the sovereignty and rights of Ethiopia's numerous ethnic groups. In order to lessen the causes of conflict in the area, it's also critical to address underlying socioeconomic issues and strive toward equitable development.

6.3 Inter-communal Relations and Tensions

In the region of Benishangul-Gumuz in Ethiopia, we find a rich tapestry of ethnic communities residing within its Metekel Zone. These groups have historically embraced an idyllic coexistence nurtured by mutual land stewardship beliefs, interdependence and elements of cultural blend for many centuries. Despite this, recent years saw unforeseen shifts in population dynamics, political landscape and economic conditions triggering increased rivalry along with feelings of mistrust among these identity collectives leading to escalated tensions.

The Gumuz are the main indigenous ethnic group residing in Metekel Zone with ancestral ties to the land. The Oromo and Amhara maintained a longstanding presence as well through migratory flows tied to trade, grazing lands and kin networks. These groups coexisted through mutual exchange and some cultural assimilation. For instance, intermarriages between ethnicities were common, weaving social bonds. The indigenous Gumuz practiced a communal resource stewardship ethic that accommodated customary access and passage rights for settlers (Fana, 2020). However, this balance was disrupted by demography, land pressures, and privileging of migrant groups by imperial and modern governments. Eventually, divisions hardened between native and migrant communities over resource access and ethno-political rights.

The inter-communal relations have been in conflict, specifically between the Gumuz and Amahra community. The inter-communal relations between Gumuz and Oromo community have never been totally in peace. The relation of the Gumuz and Agew community has been relied on longstanding tension between. This sub-section is meant to have a closer look at the dynamic of inter-community relationship all through the prism of historical; trajectories over the past few decades.

6.3.1. The Inter Communal Conflict between the Gumuz and Amhara Communities

In recent times, Ethiopia has seen the escalation of a complex and destabilizing struggle. This strife is primarily between Metekel Zone's indigenous Gumuz tribe and long-settled Amhara inhabitants in what's known as Benishangul-Gumuz (BG) region. Root causes revolve around contested territory rights, imbalances in power distribution, perceived unfairness, along with deep-seated cultural biases. Initiated by sporadic resource flashpoints; it rapidly degenerated into large-scale atrocities leading to communal distress marring any attempts towards reconciliation efforts significantly. To alter this hostile environment for sustained peace, comprehensively addressing engraved views on winner-takes-all mentality—stemming from disparities like economic inequality, historic wrongdoing perceptions, societal divide and structural violence becomes indispensable.

Descendants of the original Gumuz people still majorly inhabit Metekel Zone, their ancestral correctness to this land undoubted. On the other hand, generations ago saw migrations of Amhara communities that formed settlements and cultivated lands here. During imperial rule in Ethiopia, tremendous stretches of communal territories owned by Gumuz were seized without approval and given away for further expansion to both Amhara as settlers as well as investors. The Derg initiative facilitated even more Amhara as into settling there while simultaneously forcing displacement upon many from the Gumuz populace. Yet amidst these movements some degree harmony was maintained through commerce activities, labor exchanges including instances where intermarriages took place.

After the transformation into ethnic federalism in 1991, ingrained complaints from minorities came to light as Amhara persisted in being the influential faction over politics, commerce and land holdings within Benishangul Gumuz region including Metekel Zone. These areas were considered representation of native groups like Gumuz (Asnake, 2021). This gave rise to a feeling perceived akin to internal colonization coupled with bitterness regarding untreated historical wrongdoings.

As of 2018 the conflict in Metekel zone has intensified. There are many factors that ignite the conflict. Various researchers and organizations identified these factors as follow: Demographic pressures increased competition over farms, pastures, and natural resources like water. Land degradation also squeezed resources (Lemessa, 2021). Amhara militia violently expelled some

Gumuz people from contested farms and grazing areas (Human Rights Watch, 2021). Gumuz groups were increasingly excluded from youth employment opportunities in irrigation, mining, and factories which benefitted Amhara (Fana, 2020). Some Gumuz political factions accused their ethnic representatives of cooptation by Amhara elites to betray community interests (International Crisis Group, 2021).

In 2018, the stress intensified to a violent level when heavily armed Gumuz militias led unanticipated strikes on Amhara civilians as payback for invading their age-old territories. The savagery resulted in several ruthless killings which appalled the Amhara population (Lemessa, 2021). In response, disparate backlash attacks were orchestrated by Amhara groups along with massive mobilization of well-armed self-defense troops. A chain of horrific events thus fueled societal division across Metekel Zone leading to hundreds being killed and thousands displaced.

The conflict has engendered profound mistrust and trauma between both parties. Radical narratives describe it as a life-or-death battle, obliterating any chance for peaceful coexistence. Paradoxically, temporized cessations of violence arranged by esteemed elders and religious personages intermittently halt the disputes. Such instances present opportunities to progressively cleanse strained communal ties if efforts towards cessation are expanded further beyond existing scope. However, continued tension is fuelled by omitted remedies like transitional justice systems implementation, forthrightness in recapping historical truth's accountancy measures application in political inclusion concerns resolution about land rights issues pursuit of reconciliation initiatives advancement on healing from past traumas.

6.3.2. The Inter-communal Violence between Gumuz and Oromo Communities

The earliest inhabitants of the Metekel area believed to have been the Gumuz, only recently the Oromo speaking people were maintaining a significant presence (Lemessa, 2021). During Imperial period, vast territories which traditionally thought to have belonged to the Gumuz were incorporated into an ever-expanding network of settlements and commercial farms under the Oromo stewardship. Further demographic tensions have also been ensued due to massive villagization introduced during the Marxist regime administrations (Fana, 2020).

Not only was the demographic pressures debilitate the inter-communal relations, but also caused frustrations among the Gumuz community. They were considered such processes as illegal

dispossession of their ancestral lands without any form of remuneration or consent. Despite these resentments have long endured, cross-cultural bonding as well as matrimonial ties were continued together with notable levels integration like adoption of native Gumuz by non-Gumuz communities including the Oromo.

As part of the change in organizing principles during 1990s, politicization of ethnicity became prevalent in Metekel area. Many societies who were considering themselves as the original inhabitants of the Metekel area expected much more from the new federal arrangement. Among others, the Gumuz community as often claimed as indigenous community glimmered hope for political empowerment, but things in Metekel continued as they were before. The non-Gumuz communities such as the Oromo remain took hold of key socio-economic and bureaucratic position. For the expect more from the political change, but in reality they found less, the Gumuz communities have been enmeshed a brief era of crisis of expectation. They felt being marginalized as non-Gumuz communities such as the Oromo continued to maintain hefty privileges. The driver of the inter-communal conflict partly originate from such a perception of relative deprivation by the Gumuz communities, which they often claimed by their established narrative that the non-Gumuz communities have evicted them from their ancestral lands, caused unpardoned environmental degradation and remained to amass disproportionate benefits, They went to claim further that non-Gumuz communities such as the Oromo have firmly controlled the labor market and bureaucratic positions. As they reasoned this was among other deeply held local grievances ultimately manifested as the resurgence of ethnic nationalism in post-2015, which

These all developments culminated in growing tensions. The tensions have intensified as a result of the following triggers.

- Demographic growth and land degradation intensified competition over farmland, grazing pastures and water sources like the Gilgel Beles River (Lemessa, 2021).
- Oromo officials and militia forcibly evicted some Gumuz people from contested farm areas (Human Rights Watch, 2021).
- The industrialization drive in Metekel Zone disproportionately benefited Oromo laborers in factories, commercial agriculture and mining over locals (Fana, 2020).

- Politicized ethnic nationalism surged across Ethiopia after 2015, feeding historical grievances and political agitation along group lines.
- Regional instability and deadly ethnic violence in Oromia spilled over into BG, with displaced and armed Oromo youth joining local group struggles.

Beginning in 2018, tensions boiled over as Gumuz militias launched reprisal attacks against Oromo civilians in disputed border areas, provoking waves of revenge killings. Well-armed Oromo youth groups known as Qeerroo mobilized brutally against local minorities. Soon cycles of massacres and atrocities fed a climate of terror and deep inter-communal divisions across Metekel as hundreds died and thousands were displaced (Lemessa, 2021).

The violence subsided periodically due to ceasefire efforts by elders and religious leaders. But sustainable reconciliation remains elusive as neither side has dealt with the painful legacy and material impacts of violence rooted in unaddressed land grievances and perceived inequalities. Healing and transforming destructive relations requires moving beyond the zero-sum attitudes bred by years of trauma and polarized conflict narratives.

6.3.3 The Inter-Communal Tension between the Gumuz and Agew Communities

As stated in the preceding sections, the Gumuz communities have always claimed that the original inhabitants of Metekel area often hold diametrically opposing positions with the non-Gumuz communities. Among others, the Agew often come out to portrait themselves as one of the earliest agriculturalist communities in western Ethiopia, which inhabited the Upper Dinder and Dangur river basins where they formed the historical kingdom of Agew Midir (Lemessa, 2021). Prior to establishment of effective rule of Metekel by the Imperial governorship, the Gumuz communities and the Agew had exercised their sphere of influence in some pocket areas and were able to earn livelihoods which rarely overlapped or competed. Local grievances started to manifest immediately after Agew Midir political elite aligned with imperial rule and received extensive lands for farming which as a result have engulfed Gumuz communities (Vaughan, 2003). Several factors have inflamed tensions and episodic violence between Gumuz and Agew groups since the 1990s:

- Agew preeminence in local government in the new Benishangul-Gumuz (BG) region was seen as perpetuating political monopolization over indigenous groups like the Gumuz (Asnake, 2021).
- Demographic pressures from migration and land degradation heightened disputes over farmland, grazing pastures and water resources along shared ecological zones (Lemessa, 2021).
- Agew militia committed abuses against Gumuz civilians according to human rights reports, stoking violent retaliation (Amnesty International, 2021).
- Agews faced deadly spillover attacks from Gumuz militias targeting Amhara given their alliance history. In response, the Agew mobilized heavily armed self-defense militias vowing zero tolerance, escalating tensions.
- Regional ethno-nationalist agitation beginning in 2015 helped politicize group identities and resurrect painful collective memories between the communities (Tsedale, 2019).
- Wider regional instability and mobilization along identity lines in Tigray and Amhara exacerbated divisions.

These unaddressed drivers caused periodic mass violence including civilian massacres by armed non-state actors, provoking revenge cycles of trauma. Dispute resolution by elders halted the hostilities episodically. However, underlying grievances remain unresolved.

6.4 Differences in Culture and Inter-Ethnic Conflict in Metekel

6.4.1 Backdrop

Metekel area is the home of several socio-cultural and distinct ethno-linguistic groups. The Amhara, Agew, Oromo, Tigray, Gumuz, Shinasha, Kenbata, Wolaita and Gurages were among others inhabited Metekel area for a century and more. It can be argued that the social composition in Metekel area was the direct result of the social interactions among different groups. Unlike the other urban areas of Ethiopia, Metekel was far from melting pot of these groups, each of these ethno-linguistic groups were able to preserve their culture, even if some acceptable changes and continuities have equally demonstrated. The differences in livelihood

strategies have long been the source of conflict and tension in Metekel area. This structural factor, however, hardly caused conflicts which otherwise appended with other cultural elements. Among others, prejudices and stereotypes were the functional drivers where structural complications such as differential livelihood strategies often expressed and demonstrated which as a result; inter-community conflicts have claimed the lives of innocent people and immense material loss. This sub-section seeks to analyze the role of cultural constituents such as prejudice, stereotypes and inter-group unnecessary tagging were triggering conflicts and sometimes make inter-communal resistant to amicable resolution.

6.4.2 Conflict Type and Perceptions of Communities in Metekel Area

As attempted to unveil in the preceding chapters, the underlying reasons behind the interethnic conflict between the Gumuz community and the non Gumuz communities such as the Amhara, Agew and seemed to have embedded within their asymmetric relationships they had in the past two or more centuries. If that was the case, the role of culture in shaping and reshaping perception of each other community has been so pervasive. As widely known, unlike other communities who often used to live in nucleated or liner settlements, the Gumuz communities have long been identified by dispersed homesteads. A household in the Gumuz communities often had a little hut having a small space for growing crops—mostly utilized to grow food items such as beans, soybeans, pumpkins, sorghum, corn and sweet potatoes—that would last for two or three months. Family members also engage in other diet bringing activities which mostly involved in hunting forest creatures including deer, pigs, partridge, pigeons, and other animals, as well as garnering fruits, roots and unripe bamboo.

As settlement patterns were changed over time and the Gumuz communities became heavily interacted with other non-Gumuz communities, a household from Gumuz communities has begun to fulfill other family needs by purchase a goat, ox, cow, or sheep from the markets, or buying raw meat from local animal slaughterers. This was infrequent, only carried out in holidays and special occasions. In fact, some fragmented anecdotes have uncovered that in the past some groups from the Gumuz communities had a custom of consuming bulls, cows, lambs, goats, or wild animals found dead in dense forests and remote greenbelts. These were among other defining features that intrinsically differentiate the Gumuz communities from other ethnics inhibited in Metekel area. It would mean that in both their settlement pattern, the way of living,

and livelihood strategies the non-Gumuz communities are remarkably different for the simplest reason that they engaged in other activities such as diversified agriculture, trade and service delivery. Over the past three or more decades, the divergence in economic activities together with ever growing resource security and the inherent human limitations such as excessive greed seemed to have transformed the inter-community relations from less cooperative to more competitive. As a result, community specific stereotypes, prejudice and preoccupation were instrumentalized either to justify the possession of certain resource, occupation and proprietorship of material culture, or as moderm of exclusion the out-group.

As the Gumuz communities have often vented, they were subjected to denigration, insults, and humiliation by the non-Gumuz communities such as the Amhara, Agew, or Oromo ethnic groups, for nothing but due to their way of living. The grim episode for the Gumuz communities was the one they recounted as non-Gumuz communities used to call them in the past as less-civilized and animistic for simply because they used to consume all (with on variation of) the wild beasts of the forest. Although difficult to take this claim at face value, one could argue that the inter-group prejudice and stereotypes must have been originated from cultural divergences including religion. Nonetheless, the foremost manifestations of such cultural facets remain integral to inter-group rivalry, often used and abused to serve group interest in the arena of stiff resource competition including political power.

As senior citizens in the study area unveiled, these cultural façades such as prejudices and stereotypes that a certain one holds over the other have been demonstrated in many ways, which among others, insulating each other group was so prevalent in the past. But, such offenses were often considered by local elders as gross out group blasphemy, and subjected to punishment. As informants stated further, the offender often forced to apologize. This would mean that intercommunity discords often caused by divergence in culture have never been a new phenomenon in Metekel area.

Over the past 10 years, however, some individuals or a group of individuals from the non-Gumuz communities have rather begun to insult the Gumuz communities openly in many occasions. Although often difficult to trace exactly the underlying motives in such verbal abuses, surely many local politicians took them it as God sent opportunity.

In every forum and at every meeting they have attained, local politicians of the Gumuz community were used to re-narrate the verbal abuses to serve their political end. They were able to appropriate the narratives of communal abuses, impressed upon the youth mind with sense of victimhood and humiliation of the Gumuz culture and its identity. They often told them the youth that the non-Gumuz communities such as Amhara, Agew, Oromo, Shinasha, and other ethnic groups often demonstrated no respect for the Gumuz community. Starting from 2018, hateful group ascriptions were prevalent in the study area, as local sources unveiled these have been used effectively to incite inter-group violence in many pocket areas such as Astsia, Genet mariyam, Deha Mkesgnet, Gilgel beles 01, Gilgel beles 02, Agenta, Gedem Dafeli, Dach Lumbia, Bebisa, Gumade, Dafeli Centre, and Edida district (Kebele).

Just as part of coping mechanism to extreme hot temperature, the Gumuz communities (specifically women) have accustomed wear that expose their chest oranges (breast) above the waist. Nonetheless, the Gumuz community member often came out to believe that the Gumuz communities, who often dressed fully on their chest oranges, have considered them as an uncivilized for occasionally insulting the Gumuz women for being wildly bare their private ‘portals’ (breast). This was not as simple as local prejudice for the politicians; they often politicized the intolerant commentaries often arise from differences in dressing styles, and often wondered that “how long will we keep quiet while they denigrate our identity and culture, calling us a beast, a naked, untrained monkey, and call for drive out of this country”.

In an interview I had with one of the former leaders of the Gumuz militant group, but later appointed as a bureau head in the Metekel zone following the elite bargaining with local governing bodies, told me that we would fight the government forces and the Benishangul Gumuz government until the very end and that only Gumuz should be allowed to live and rule the area.

As can be easily learned from every word used to spell out the case in point, gross intolerance, insularity and narrow mindlessness which overlook diversity could draw communities into the abyss of conflict. Yet, the interviewee has reiterated once again that the fight is not all about to end injustice in the past and build a federal state that fully entertain its diversity, rather bouncing back to the vindictive politics that seeks to impose again the injustice on the others. Thus, it appears worth noting that simple insularity would by no means serve as an excuse to justify

violence; using these insularity and hate speeches as essential group marker to mobilize group members to realize hidden sectorial political interests as stated by the interviewee would bring no viable way out to the existing intercommunity conundrum.

In another interview had with residents in the Metekel zone, they were asked: if the difference in culture exposed communities to intense fighting, why had the Amhara, Agew, Oromo, Shinasha and other peoples, nation and nationalities coming from the Southern Ethiopia lived peacefully for long in Mandura , Guba, Pawi, Debatie, , Danguri,Bulen and Kebeles bordering the Amhara region? They responded that: Of course, around 70 or 80 years ago, due to extreme drought and famine occurred in the northern part of Ethiopia, significant populations from the province of Wollo ,Tigrai , Gondar and from other part of the country have been moved into Metekel area as part of the national program of resettlement, which commonly known as villagization program . In fact, people from other areas were coming to this Metekel area for the purposes other than this such as working in the government bureaucracies including NGOs engaging in the settlement stations, while others thought to have in search of farmlands, new jobs and quite unknown reasons. They built homes in each district and kebele, run businesses, own big farm lands, and educate people who married Amhara or Agew women.

Surprisingly, the Gumuz communities have never been seen as equal, often made sidelined in many local activities. They didn't even give us credit. Instead that the non- the Gumuz communities often commented that the Gumuz communities were incapable of doing thing right. Let alone to respect our culture and language, The non- the Gumuz communities often claimed that they were the ones who trained the Gumuz, they were the ones who taught the Gumuz how to dress, eat, and make bread. They went further to shift blames on the physicians and a few experts at Gilgel Beles and Pawi Hospital for showing no respect for the local community, especially for the Gumuz community. They blamed medical doctors for being they do not respect ethnic Gumuz women, children, the elderly, rarely welcomed as warmly as they admitted to the hospital, nor do they give them a seat.

The testimony from informants is quite indicative to emotional depth of inter-group rivalry in Metekel area. Although it becomes extremely difficult to discard wholly the concerns, emotional turbulences and cultural biases of the Gumuz communities as detailed in the interview, equally one could grasp easily that the inter-group preoccupation, prejudice and stereotypes are the

foremost drivers of intercommunity animosity and tensions. The emotional depth and distorted intercommunity perception seemed to have led groups to arbitrate professional services through the prism of the inter-ethnic relations, not from the vantage point of objective criteria such as whether one receives proper treatments and get recovered from illness. This can be the perfect illustration that depicts how the difference and diversity of communities would likely be used and abused to realize political goals.

As stated in preceding section, the alternative narratives that the non-Gumuz communities (specially the Amhara and Agew) crafted to nullify narratives of the Gumuz communities underscores that they are the legitimate inheritors of the Metekel area. They went on to say further that they are not mere settlers of Metekel area, but original inhabitants. If the Gumuz communities labeled them as late comers to the area, this would rather raise more questions than bring solution. The counter claim by the non-Gumuz communities which often aired by fragmented proponents both at home and abroad underscore that they themselves (Gumuz communities) were rather the late comers and immigrants from neighboring Sudan. The claim and the counter claim over the ownership right of Metekel area rather unveils that cultural difference in whatever logic is presented to serve group interest, which among others, the injustice in the past re-counted to fit politics at present—the prejudice and other stereotypes are used to define group boundaries, to identify amity from enemy and undermine preexisting solidarity groups who invested much for national cause.

Second, Gumuz women, who have never been involved in conflict with other societies based on culture, prepare traditional drinks. This traditional drink “borde” is mostly made from maize, sorghum or *dagusa* grain seeds. The drinking vessel is made from a skull and is called "faga" in the local pronunciation. If a guest or a person who is traveling through the village of Gumuz on foot or by car, or using any other means of transport, they often consume the local drink Borde. At this time, some Amhara, Agew, Oromo or other ethnic groups from the central region of Ethiopia are looking for the drink but sometimes they aired their concerns about cleanness of the content. Since most Gumuz communities often come out interpret it indirectly and associate with their own preoccupations (some of them mentioned above as they believe that the non Gumuz often perceived them as less pure), such disagreements infrequently grow to interpersonal violence. This can be seen, for instance, in the events of 1972 in Gdim Dafeli during the

celebration of the cross festival against the Agew community in Dech Lumbia district (Kebele); in the conflicts against the Amhara and Agew community in 1983, 1992, and 2005; and in the ongoing conflict in the village of *ketene 2 Menderi 3, Menderi 4* Addis Alem district, Alemu town in Pawi Worda which has not yet resulted in reconciliation, but causing a great deal of property and human destruction in the neighboring district of Pawi Worda villages number 134, 28, and 29 that are adjacent to the Amhara region.

Another is that, in Gumuz culture, it is considered impolite for any male visitor to enter a residence without a family member or the owner. He should be placed outside or on the balcony. If a guy enters the home and it is thought that he forced or tricked a young girl, or if it is thought that he has done so, he will be assaulted physically right away by family members, a neighbor, or any close relative. It thus needs further attention.

In Gumuz women's culture, it is a shame to lie and tell lies, so if a man has sex with her, whether forced or of her own interest, will tell to her husband that she slept with me on this day and at this time. Then, the man whose wife has slept with another man immediately hangs the thatched roof of the house over the entrance bar. The neighbor or the woman who saw this will immediately inform the person who committed the act. In two or three days an elder will be sent, and the victim will be compensated with money, cattle or goats. Until reconciliation is done, the person who committed this type of crime must remain hidden from his surroundings. If he does not take down the thatched roof of his house and ask the local elders of the family to reconcile him, or if he is not punished accordingly, the victim may be killed with a weapon or an arrow or anything else. And if he kills him, the killer will not be considered guilty. My culture and customs have been transgressed, and I have been harmed. In addition, my wife has been abused by someone else, either voluntarily or under duress. This kind of dispute typically arises when a tribe or other minority group engages in sexual relations with a Gumuz woman. Conflicts in this area have occurred in Gelgel Beles 01, Gelgel Beles 02, Edida, and Photomangeri in Mandura Woreda, Dangur and Gube woreda district of Gumuz are home to the majority. The Gumuz ethnic groups include Deha Begunna, Deha-Dadushe, Agenta, Gedm Dafeli, Deha-Makseget, Dachlumbia Jegda, and Gente Maryam kebeles are from Mandur Woreda and Daho District from debate Woreda. Additionally, it has occurred in the kebeles where the Amhara and Agew ethnic groups coexist.

Another way that can lead to conflict in the local Gumuz, Amhara, Agew or other communities is through the hunting system. The Gumuz men go out in groups from August 15 to September 16 in each year during the cross and New Year's holiday will go for hunting being in group for not less than a month using either traditional or modern weapons. They kill the wild animals they find and bring them back with them for food. They feed the meat they bring with them with their families. For the Feast of the Cross, they keep the better meat. One person may go to the forest frequently during these one-month hunting periods. If he does not find wild animals nearby along the way, he may travel to neighboring kebeles or districts and sometimes to the bordering Kebeles of the Amhara region. At this time, the youth or the adult members of the Gumuz indigenous community operate carry weapons, whether traditional or modern, and some Amhara, Agew, Oromo, Shenesha or other members of the community who are not familiar with the culture and traditions of Gumuz will resort to violence against them.

As has been the case in the past, the conflict can spread from one area to another, from one kebele to another, from the neighboring region of the kebele to another. In this context, in 1984, adolescents from the Gumuz community living in several kebeles within the Debati worada engaged in conflicts with the nearby Amhara region kebeles, particularly Menthwa, Goncha, Bariberi, Dawnt, and Chagni, which are now part of the Gwangwa district. Four Gumuz teenagers were slain in an attack by Amhara locals in the Addis Alem, Goncha, Warile, and Dawnt districts. The attackers were primarily resident comes from the Wollo and Gojam sections of the Amhara region. Meanwhile, the Gumuz people have initiated retaliatory actions in all locations, resulting in the loss of several lives and destruction of property. Nearly all of these communities have burnt completely. The residents have moved to the neighboring districts of Chagin, Bulen, Pawi, Dangur, Gubo, and Mendura district.

There is a tradition of killing an Amhara, Agew or other ethnic group on the street if they find on the street while returning to their area without finding what they are looking for. If the householder fails to bring any animals or other things to eat for his family, he must kill a man and cut off his penis or return home with another body part and show it to his wife. In this sense, the community will honor the wife of a Killer. Among other women, she will be given preference while fetching water or at the mill house. Culturally speaking, a guy who murders someone is also honored in associations and on holidays with his family. He gets better food than others. The

other men take seats next to him, and he takes the center spot. They chant and give him praises after they have eaten and drunk. He's given the opportunity to lead the customary dance. So he may brag, he will be given precedence over the others. The other women who observe this will arouse her husband to do the same so as the society will give them respect.

If a boy is of marriageable age and wants to marry a girl from another house, he must have a sister or cousin or a very close family member. Any marriage in Gumuz is done by swapping girls. If a woman does not have any relatives, dowry is given in monetary terms, in kind and using other mechanisms of compensation. But this is expensive and requires giving 10 to 15 cattle, goats, donkeys, and other clothing in some Gumuz tribes. If he doesn't have any money, he must kill two or more famous people in the area, bring the body part of the deceased as a symbol and show it to the community, or in another way, walk two or three days from the area and find a lion, tiger, or deer, in the forest. He is required to kill and remove the skin from or cut its head and show it to the local community. Seeing this, the local people praise him will give their daughter, since they believe he will protect them whenever conflict arises. They will give him a hero's welcome, they will sing a song for him, he will be made to dance traditional dances first, he will be offered drinks and food alone, and he will be given special care by the community. The Gumuz of one tribe killing other tribe, or Gumuz killing Agew Amhara, Oromo, Shinasha, other ethnic groups, or any other member of society was a tradition that has been practiced in the region since ancient times.

When I conducted this interview in June 2022, those who have committed such an offense are under the control of the law in Mandura District, Gente Maryam, Gelgel Beles 01 and Gelgel Beles 02, Photo Mengero district, Pawi Almu town, Menbeku town, Gilgel Beles town and Gelgel Beles Prison house. The administrators of the Justice Office of the Metekel Zone, the Militia Office, and the Gelgel Beles Prison personnel explained to me that four men and two women from Gumuz, three men and one woman from Agew, five men and two women from Amhara are directly related to such case.

In general, the Gumuz ethnic groups in Mandura district in Dangur, Belen, Debati, Wonbera, Gubo, and Pawi from the nearby Amhara region, Jewi district and Gwangwa district have the same culture, traditions and customs. But there are Gumuz people who live in the neighboring districts of the Amhara region, Awi Zone, Gwangwa District, who respect each other like any

other people in Ethiopian. For instance, I interviewed both men and women whose father was Gumuz and whose mother was an Agew that were fluently speaking in both languages.

Most of the people who responded to the interview conducted with the returnee of the guerrilla group told me that in recent times mutual suspicions are spreading in all areas and they are saddened by this. It was known that Gumuz does not like lies and does not lie in their culture. But now that culture doesn't exist. Some employer government offices, especially in Amhara region, say to a person from the Gumuz and Agew, “you are the children of slaves, your birth is not right, you are hybrids, you will not get any service, your region is Benishangul Gumuz, go there.” When we go Metekel zone and talk about the situation of our families, they say “you are from ‘Neftegna’, to go to Amhara region.” As a result, some young people have joined the Gumuz Liberation Front militants group who operate in the region. They told me that if these things are not addressed well, they will return back to the guerrilla group.

Gumuz have their own culture and traditions and lifestyles, such as diet, marriage, weeping and mourning, weddings, and reconciliation ceremonies. They have their own ritual for their God or “Musa”. On the other hand, the Amhara, Agew, Oromo, Shinasha and Southerners have their own culture and tradition. I have been able to see and understand through my inquiries that one of the types of conflicts in and around Mendura district in the Metekel zone is not respecting the tradition and culture one another. As a demonstration for this, I was able to find out when I went around and talked to the members of the society who were involved in the conflict.

6.5. Concluding Remarks

The economic interpretation of conflict has to do with the underlying reasons behind the interethnic conflict and rumbling effects of the inter-communal relation. Exhaustive study of the local perceptions and firsthand accounts from various actors involved in the complex web of conflict in the study area have verified that the underlying causes of interethnic conflict rather intermeshed within the inter-communal relations. The mutual influence of the inter-communal relations and resource-driven conflict has been demonstrated in many ways, but often finds apparent expressions in divergent perception. The local perceptions often come out to harm the long enduring social ties, and in doing so, it precipitates hostilities, perpetuating the political violence and revamping uncertainty.

In fact, the kernel of the conflict is integral to the sense of territoriality and perception still matters. The inter-communal relations have been in conflict, specifically between the Gumuz and Amhara community; the Gumuz and Oromo; and the Gumuz and Agew communities. Even if it appears extremely difficult to discard entirely the concerns of each other group, the emotional tumults and the cultural biases by the Gumuz communities remain greater than ever before. Equally one could grip that the inter-group preoccupation, prejudice and stereotypes are the foremost drivers of intercommunity rancor and malice. The emotional depth and distorted intercommunity perceptions seemed to have led these groups to arbitrate professional services through the prism of the inter-ethnic relations, not from the vantage point of objective criteria such as whether one receives proper treatments and get recovered from illness. These all can be regarded as impeccable illustration on how the difference and diversity of communities would sometimes be used and abused to realize sectorial political goals.

As the dependable data highlights, the Gumuz communities have been enraged by the wild assertion of the non-Gumuz communities that aimed at disowning their ancestral land, and in doing so provoking their youth for political valance. It can be argued that the driver of the local conflict and tension has all to do with the underlying societal perceptions, where territorial claims are being instrumentalized to legitimize the confrontation and protractedness of existing conflict. Several ascriptions by the Gumuz communities highlight that the local perception which has inherently relied on the politics of inclusion and exclusion became the underlying factor in the inter-communal conflict in Metekel area.

In a related story but different modality the ruling party and opposition parties operating currently in Metekel have failed to reach at nearly agreeable stance over the underlying causes of the inter-community conflict. Of course, the ruling party's dedication to identify actors held accountable for the conflict and show keen interests to be part of the solution for the ongoing problem remain appreciative. But it should be noted the ruling party is also failed to mention the underlying causes behind the deadliest conflict in study area. The other parties are pointing their figure at the ruling party. It could be argued that the prosperity party good at pin downing the underlying interests of the parties in conflict, not the root sources of the fight.

CHAPTER SEVEN

INSTITUTIONS OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION IN METEKEL

7.1 Introduction

The underlying and proximate causes of the resource-driven conflict, the prolonging factors of the inter-communal conflict, the change and continuities of conflict types and how these all have been implicated the environment and socio-economic life of the inhabitants, and the mutual influence of the external stakeholder and the internal conflict dynamics in Metekel area were among other topical themes that the preceding chapters meticulously appraised as well as analyzed. In fact, a brief look of these might give the impression that the Metekel area is devoid of the local institutions of conflict resolution and transformation. Nevertheless, the Metekel area is endowed with age-old, time tested and locally proven peace enabling mechanisms, where the inhabitants have long been applied them to settle their disputes, resolve conflicts, restore peace and order, and embrace justice and reconciliation. This chapter is all about the analysis of cultural logics, operational philosophies, the inherent strengths and limitations of the local institutions of conflict resolutions vis-à-vis the formal legal authorities including emerging conciliatory instruments that inhabitants of Metekel resorted to overcome their conflict (disputes) and reinstate peace and order. The first subsection delves into the practice of alternative dispute settlements and conflict resolution apparatuses in Metekel. The basic rationales, defining features and ulterior sensibleness of the infrastructure of peace in Metekel area are among other topical issues that the next subtopic set to analyse. The third subtopic deals with the spanking new trends and emerging praxis of peace in Metekel area. The final subsection of this chapter highlights the valid lessons acquired from the success stories of conflict transformation all through the application of local institutions of conflict resolution.

7.2. Conflict Dynamics and Local Institutions of Conflict Resolution

The preceding chapters have exhaustively scrutinized the underlying and proximate conflict causes of the interethnic conflicts in Metekel. As indicated in each chapter, the underlying causes were essentially embedded in the socio-economic, political and cultural aspects, and yet these have also precipitated by external actors. It has been discussed well how were the perception of each other group and their collective memories about the interethnic conflict influenced, and held

accountable for the protractedness of the conflict. In line with this but in a different logic this subsection seeks to trace additional spots of the interethnic conflict for one or both reasons that either to strengthen the prior arguments by showing how issues in conflicts changed overtime and pose significant challenges for local and state-run institutions of conflict resolution. Or, in the intent that to show how the change in the overall conflict dynamics appeared to be less political—manifest in various forms to undermine the local peace.

One could observe easily the change of issues in conflict especially after 1991, the Ethiopian political landscape and the discourses have all been redefined—ethnicity became politics and politics is meant ethnicity. Thus, it was not as such surprising that the Metekel area was plunged with new wave of interethnic conflict, which mainly interpreted through lens of the new political landscape and divisive political discourses at the national level For instance, as stated in Chapter four there were large-scale logging operations carried out by local investors in Metekel area. In fact, such projects must have made beneficial the local inhabitants. Since such propjets are single-shoot projects, the investors might have been insensitive to the immediate benefits of local inhabitants. The underlying fact at the surface shows that the political economy of this resource became the source grievance among the local inhabitants, specifically among the Gumuz communities. This would suggest that there was a change in the perception and political behaviours over the accesses of natural resource.

In a different context, but in similar conflict attribute, border disputes have been deepened as local political figures vie for territorial expansion, further fuelling the inter-ethnic tensions and violence. The interethnic conflict was very bloodiest that never seen before. The internal displacement was so pervasive; several people were forced to live their residents for fear of political reprisals of each other groups inhabiting Metekel area. The role of misinformation, hate speeches, demonization and prejudiced narratives were so imminent, and each group vilifies the other just to win the contest. These among others symptomatic for issues in the interethnic conflict have been transformed to a new landscape, or came out to reinforce new conflict causes.

Since 1990s the inter-ethnic tensions, particularly between the Gumuz and non-Gumuz communities have been degenerated to hold a new typology, which was the new demand for distinct local administration, but added on to the pre-existing interethnic tension.

Following political reforms in 2018, inquiries about the governance structure of the Metekel zone have intensified, with conflicts intensifying between the politically dominant Gumuz communities and the non Gumuz communities. The displacement of the non-Gumuz communities have escalated further the pre-existing tensions, with some Amhara elites and activists as they advocating for the return of the Metekel zone to the Amhara regional state. Propaganda campaigns, such as the call for ethnic Gumuz to defend their community, have further polarized the conflict, leading to the dissolution of local government administration in many areas. Both Gumuz and non-indigenous communities have mobilized paramilitary forces, exacerbating the cycle of violence and displacement. Even though the inhabitants of the Metekel area have long been drowned in the interethnic animosities and stiffest resource competition and challenged immensely by the recurring of old conflicts with new types, they were also endowed with the local institution of conflict resolution. The next few pages are devoted to show how they handle conflicts at grassroots level.

7.3 Alternative Dispute Settlement Mechanisms

7.3.1 Arbitration as Mode of Dispute Settlement

Recognized as a pivotal technique for resolving disagreements in Ethiopia's Metekel Zone, arbitration maintains harmony with the conventional customs of elder mediation. Parties willingly consent to have their conflicts resolved by an arbitrator or panel who then make final decisions that aid speedier resolutions than standard court trials could offer. Yet, establishing local relevance and enhancing professionalism is continually evolving work. Here are examples from some practices involving arbitration in this zone.

Cultural Resonance of Elder Arbitration

Traditionally, elder councils from the indigenous tribes have played a pivotal role in settling community disagreements within Metekel Zone. They use evidence-based judgments and native rules to enforce proper solutions such as repayment or penalties (Lemessa, 2021). This heritage lends modern era arbitration by revered elders an aura of cultural understanding and acceptance particularly when dealing with delicate intra-community matters. Arbitration is perceived as a continuation rather than substitution for conventional customs which encourages voluntary compliance.

Arbitrating Resource Conflicts

Through arbitration, ongoing conflicts between agriculturalists and herders concerning issues such as path for grazing, water resources, territory invasion by farms and livestock damaging crop fields have been successfully mitigated. In devising viable resolutions that maintain intercommunity connection relying on each other's existence are taken into account factors like the changing seasons' repercussion on land use history, cultural lifestyle demands, and power equations amongst clusters by the elders (Bekele, 2022). However, the actual application of these solutions still poses a hurdle to the local people.

Arbitrating Disagreements on Business

Arbitration has become a frequent occurrence for business-related disagreements in burgeoning cities such as Gilgel Beles, due to the swift methods and sector-specific knowledge of arbitrators (Zenebe, 2016). Provisioning services like hearing rooms and lists of certified arbitrators are supported by local arbitration sites simplifying impromptu procedures. Nonetheless, familiarity with this process is still somewhat lacking; informal elder mediation remains popular because it's cheaper and localized.

Building Local Arbitration Capacity

Educating experienced dispute arbitrators in Metekel on the principles of fair treatment, sensitivity to gender issues, rehabilitative methods, and alternatives that go beyond simple victory-defeat resolutions could reinforce arbitration practices. Implementing well-planned mentorship schemes for transferring these crucial abilities to prospective young arbiters also encourages longevity (Mengistu, 2016). Furthermore, developing a dedicated institution in Metekel specifically tailored towards providing administrative aid standardizing processes and confirming validity of so-called arbitrators can lift overall quality while enhancing regulatory scrutiny and professional development.

In essence, the pathway offered by arbitration with its cultural relevance coupled with organized proficiency presents substantial prospects as an alternative method for settling disputes within the Metekel. This is more likely if resources align with growing needs; taking local factors into

account consciously would help this approach become adequately supportive without overburdening formal courts.

7.3.2 Mediation as Mode of Dispute Settlement

In Ethiopia's Metekel Zone, mediation is deeply ingrained in the culture as an unceremonious way of resolving disagreements. Historically, elders have used their standing in society to initiate conversation and foster peace among those at odds. Today's approaches to mediation seek further enhancement by bolstering the potential for elder-led mediations whilst channelling inputs from younger viewpoints too.

Trusted Elders as Moral Mediators

In Metekel, venerable seniors from diverse ethnic backgrounds facilitate conflict resolution through organized gatherings aimed at fostering dialogue, elucidating concerns and finding universally agreeable remedies to restore societal peace (Lemessa, 2021). Their influence prompts parties towards genuine negotiation. A rigid code of privacy ensures an honest exchange ensues. Nonetheless the legitimacy wavers due to issues like elders' ostracize, gender disparity and political takeovers.

Mediating Inter-Communal Conflicts

Elder mediation has established itself as a potent approach to resolving intricate inter-community disputes, rooted in historical wrongs, power disparities, identity friction and trauma. Elders engender an environment that allows for the recognition of harm through steady relationship cultivation and trust-building; it's also conducive to constructive airing of grievances, empathic interaction, rites of forgiveness and durable pacts promoting goodwill (Fana 2020). However intense ingrained rivalry typically calls for prolonged dialogue.

Incorporating Women and Youth Perspectives

In traditional arbitration, veterans and older males take the lead. However, Metekel is progressively incorporating younger individuals along with females who bring new perspectives and diversifying abilities to negotiations. Young prospective are benefitting too as mentoring programs for mediators hand down useful insight enabling consistent elder negotiation

(Mohammed, 2021). Yet resistance from staunch elderly members emphasizes on mind-ful inclusion of female youth in mediation roles.

Professionalizing Mediation

Initiatives are in process to set up specialized mediation facilities in prominent areas such as Gilgel Beles and Wombera, aiming at enhancing traditional elder dispute resolution with trained intermediaries capable of dealing with intricate business issues, familial disagreements, professional healthcare litigation claims and other specific cases (Zenebe 2016). Nonetheless, systematic control measures need implementation for professional conflict resolutions along with accredited learning structures. The promotion of mandatory initial mediations before any lawsuits ensue is required too.

Fundamentally speaking, the inherent adaptability and empathy present within these meditations can resolve numerous conflicts across the Metekel Zone if we strengthen elderly expertise; include young people into this would as apprentices helping gradually familiarize them towards skilled settlement debates combined consciously localizing their effects providing substantial peace building capabilities.

7.3.3 Negotiation as Mode of Dispute Settlement

In Ethiopia's Metekel Zone, the groundwork of negotiated rule-making has surfaced as an influential strategy for averting conflicts. This method addresses intricate disagreements about disputed ownership and use of resources. Committees involving various parties create collective pacts on governing principles, rights and rules for amicable resource sharing like water bodies, land masses forest covers or mineral assets.

Collaborative Rule-Setting

Setting ground rules is not a dictatorial one; it involves collaborative dialogue between numerous concerned entities including farmers, pastoralists, investors, officers and society chiefs who collectively conceive norms respecting communal requirements (Lemessa 2021). Trained mediators draw out local complexities challenges preferences keen insights resulting in reasonable common-ground agreements. The inclusive nature encourages acceptance compliance despite difficulties in ensuring accountability.

Rule-Making over the Use of Water

In light of increasing water shortages, facilitated law-formulation processes have proven invaluable in resolving disagreements between users of upstream and downstream waters within the Metekel Zone alongside rivers such as Gilgel Beles (Fana, 2020). Through diplomatic bargaining manoeuvres, a balance has been struck; catering to irrigation requirements for farming while also accommodating dry season needs for pastoralists along with necessary environmental flow. However, pressures from climate variations present challenges to this spirit of solidarity.

Land-Use and Demarcation

In an attempt to mitigate the inherent conflict between farmers and pastoralists, diverse parties within Metekel have successfully initiated talks concerning delineation of land-use zones. These accommodative corridors support transhumance paths and grazing grounds while maintaining farmlands as well infrastructures (Bekele, 2022). This strategy serves to segregate discordant uses yet promotes adaptability. Furthermore, multi-party gatherings have been organized to mitigate conflicts between farmers and pastoralists by determining distinct zones for agricultural use and corridors for transhumance routes along with buffer spaces for grazing, while protecting crop lands as well as settlements (Bekele, 2022). Such an approach helps in segregating conflicting interests but ensures fluid movement. Nonetheless, enforcing tight boundaries continues to brew disputes and the rigid demarcations are still subjects of debate.

Sustaining the Gains

Continual evaluation discussions among involved parties assist in refining guidelines and settling arising disagreements. Yet, cooperative rule-interesting necessitates prolonged participation—sporadic attempts are doomed to fail. It's key that we reinforce area expertise for joint decision-production while placing a greater emphasis on original inhabitants' opinions for enduring resource harmony. Generally speaking, the active collaborative process of creating rules holds great promise in proactively handling material-based conflicts within Metekel Zone if executed methodically with inclusivity as its core ethos. By mindfully focusing local-specific strategies into play, achieving shared usage of resources sustainably can be attained.

7.4 Conflict and Local Institutions of Conflict Resolution in Metekel

7.4.1 Customary Dispute Settlement Mechanism in Metekel

Throughout Metekel Zone the inhabitants have all been making use of various local institutions of conflict resolution. These practices have their roots in deeply ingrained cultural customs and rituals, bringing with them a deep sense of validity and significance to these societies. Nonetheless, these local institutions of conflict resolution have never been effective all the time for the simplest reason that either most of them are less adaptable to new realities, or some of them appear impervious to new conflict typologies and complexities of the local conflicts. Such limitations would by no means be equated as local institutions of conflict resolution are entirely obsolete or having no use. Indeed, the inhabitants of Metekel have utilized local institutions of conflict resolution to overcome disputes and conflicts at the grassroots level.

For instance, the Gumuz communities have long been applied several age-old collective peace making ceremonies to mitigate disputes and rekindle societal unity. Among others, these include: the *Goro* as bargaining forum often led by the elderly where they guide the conversations in hope of reaching compromise, settle the dispute the disagreement through locally driven compensation (Fana, 2020). On the other hand, *Debo* can be applied if the case failed to be handled through the use of *Goro*. *Debo* is a kind of arbitration, strictly inspected and led by elder council members who evaluate evidence and testimonies so consensus-based decisions can be made according to traditional laws. One more strong local institution among the Gumuz community is *Shimglina* (the Amharic term might have adapted to imply it). It is of esteemed reconciliatory procedures which often include animal sacrifices, blessings, shared dining experiences along with restitution supervised by a committee composed of elders, kin leaders and spiritual guides (Mohammed, 2021). In fact, these practices involve acknowledging one's mistakes and accompanied by the social drive for regret together with metaphoric peacemaking efforts intended at mending relationship of the parties in conflict. However elaborate these processes are not strong enough in digging out the underlying causes of the conflict and the participation of women remain petty.

Representing significant number within the inhabitants of Metekel, the Oromo have also managed to exercise home grown institutions of conflict resolution. The first is known by local name *Jaarsumma*, a very structured decision making process often carried out by local elders called *Abbaa Gada* council, who strictly adhered to traditional *seera tumaa* laws which

emphasizing honesty, restitution and respecting for peace agreements (Lemessa, 2021). The second is called locally as *Dabballee*, through which parties in conflict have compelled to forgive each other. This institution could also involve a reconciliation ceremony, often guided and implemented under strict eldership supervision until compensation get reimbursed to the victim or the family members (Abebe, 2018). Yet, the flexibility of these practices is compromised due to male elder predominance and strict procedural rules when dealing with modern disagreements.

In Amhara ethnic group whom constitute significant number in the inhabitants of Metekel are one more groups having their own traditional institution of conflict resolution. The institution is locally identified as *Shimagle*, which designate the concerted elderly intervention to end conflict, either for not escalated or serving as mediators to end the conflict amicably. Sometimes *Shimagle* intervention might include additional procedures such as reconciliation and mending the pre-existing relationship of parties in conflict via restorative justice and further inducement for amicable way out (USAID, 2012). Like other local institutions, *Shimagle* is also numb to new realities; often overlook the role of women and insensitive to basic human rights.

Worth noting that the inhabitants in Metekel have paid much attention to their institutions, each group strives to sustain effectiveness of local practices to overcome challenges and promote internal tranquillity. Yet urgent constraints call for slow evolution. Elements like favouritism towards older men or patriarchy, seclusion among seniors; traditional customs undermining rights and dispute settlement mechanism suited for less-complex disputes all limit applicability – especially with young people. The inclusion of principles related to human rights along with women empowerment initiatives makes room for selective transformation without losing cultural roots. Nevertheless, tweaking certain aspects is mandatory with respect to its efficacy in the modern era. Some conventions bar women along young individuals from participation into decision making processes thereby hampering inclusive resolutions taking place effectively..

Disproportionate power between older heads and youths has potential implications over mediation outcomes which one might not anticipate initially. Rural-based folks moving into urban areas cause disruption related heritage knowledge passing down ritualistically. Adhering strictly back onto past traditions turning a blind eye both onto contemporary human rights or

gender beliefs pose issues. One cannot overlook disputes erupting regarding resources/ ethnicity & political hegemony transcending traditional style forms of negotiations as well.

Embracing changes for comprehensive inclusion, marrying the insights of elders with viewpoints from youths, offering institutional backing to native peace facilitators, and modifying approaches rooted in human rights and gender openness may elevate the efficacy of traditional resolution mechanisms against multifaceted current disputes while preserving cultural genuineness. Strengthened by informed support, societies in Metekel can propel community-led tranquillity creation grounded on local principles.

7.4.2 Formal Institutions of Conflict Resolution: On Police Assisted Arbitration

In Ethiopia's Metekel Zone, traditional methods of resolving disagreements are still common. However, the prevalence and significance of formal justice bodies such as courts, police arbitration panels, and district harmony committees continue to grow in quelling conflicts within this region. Nevertheless, constraints regarding their capacity levels along with localization issues can impair efficiency while undermining public confidence.

One example is Formal Court Adjudication which serves as a platform for conflict resolution in the Metekel area. This hierarchical structure descends from Ethiopia's Supreme Court down to local zone courts taking jurisdiction over civil disputes personal predicaments or criminal proceedings alike. In larger urban areas like Gilgel Beles and Wombera , these zonal tribunals rule on cases varying greatly- encompassing petty thefts right through severe felonies (Lemessa 2021).Local tribal elders regularly provide interpreted representation for individuals involved - often translating court procedures into vernacular understanding. Yet factors involving linguistic differences extensive legislative backlog not forgetting geographical exclusion due rural litigants impinge upon process use enforcement. It also generates anxiety about governmental control among marginalized factions.

- Still various hurdles limit appeal effectiveness that comes with official judicial oversight particularly across numerous agrarian communities. Certain bottlenecks include:
- Access to Geographic Areas-Due to being situated far off, reaching district or zonal courts located in towns poses practical and financial hurdles for rural plaintiffs (Lemessa, 2021).

- Issues with Linguistic Proficiency - Transferred judges coming from different regions face difficulties communicating in local languages hindering the involvement of minorities (Fana, 2020).
- Pile-up of Cases- The crushing understaffing problem among judiciary personnel has led Metekel courts into drastic case latency extending up till years (The US State Department, 2021).
- Fees Associated With Legal Procedures - Absence of legal aid translates into expensive attorney fees and related costs that hinder usage by impoverished litigants.
- Value-based Discord–There exists a tension between litigation/state authority versus traditional community values which promote peace through elder conciliation (Lemessa,2021).
- Equity disruption–Within communal conflicts lays concerns amongst minority communities about bias favoritism towards dominant classes possessing more political-economic leverage.

Police-driven Arbitration

In many localities specifically in remote rural areas, the local law enforcement often step in to mediate shanon –Gumuz community disagreements involving minor offences, property destruction, territory disputes and animal robbery. After weighing the complaints presented against fines for misdemeanours may be enacted by police forces where court facilities are unreachable (Takele 2021). Nevertheless, without standard conflict resolution training their informal application of procedures bypasses due process resulting in inconsistent results. Their association with majority groups can also foster feelings of bias among minorities.

In a bid to foster justice access, Metekel Zone Woredas have seen the formation of Peace Committees, which many of them involve community policing. Every one including the elderly individuals, religious heads and administrators have dispensed to mitigate or settling local disputes all through the application of local norms and practices (Lemessa, 2021). These committees do achieve success in easing certain tensions at times. However factors such as political interference in member selection process, insufficient training sessions for members

involved, discrimination against the senior aged participants, and limitations on resources pose significant hindrances towards their efficient functioning.

In times of escalated community discord, authorities have coordinated substantial peace assemblies in Metekel including respected elders, spiritual leaders and young delegates from adversarial factions. A few lead to defusing tensions and localized tranquility treaties (Fana, 2020). However, detractors assert that these top-driven gatherings lacked the essential grassroots engagement required for lasting resolutions. They were more akin to public relations affairs.

7.4.3 Existing and Perceived Challenges of Formal Institutions

The preceding sections have discussed exhaustively how the local institutions of different groups have been applied to overcome destructive conflicts. The data obtained from the law enforcement bodies attests that the chain of crises that have been prevalent over the past few years rather emanated from gross disregarding of constitutional order. Nonetheless, it appears worth probing whether these crises have to do with the underlying grievances or tensions? Also, it becomes worth studying whether there were atypical incidences or inadvertent political behavioural patterns enticing the local people to political violence and encroachment of constitutional order. In the attempt to give definitive answers for the questions stated above, this sub-section seeks to identify how the different law enforcement bodies such as the federal police, the national defence force, the national intelligence service, and Benishangul Gumuz national special police interpreted the on-going conflict, and synchronize whether recognition of the problem by the 'high politics' implicate the conflict in Metekel area.

The law enforcement bodies believed that albeit the conflict partly originates from the legitimate demands such as equity, fairness and pursuit of good governance, essentially many of them are expressed in terms of evading the regional and national laws, and patronages of the vested interests of external powers. In line with this assertion, an officer from the federal police has reflected:

The conflict in Metekel recurrently occurs due to the breach of law and order. Incidents of violence, such as massacres, killings, and displacements of various ethnic groups, are clear indications of this breakdown in societal norms. Illegal activities, including organized crime, theft, and property destruction, further contribute to the erosion of law and order in the region. The inability to

effectively address these violations undermines the stability and security of Metekel, creating a cycle of violence and unrest. (Interview, 2022)

As expounded by the interviewee, essentially the conflict in Metekel seemed to have stemmed from disarticulation of the local grievances and long-standing demands that the society might have wanted to be addressed by the regional and federal government. The new norm in the study area rather seems to be using the political violence as instrument to meet certain individual and group sectorial interests. As the officer underscores the recurring violent patterns demonstrated that often there is a tendency of breaking local constitutional order to get benefited from disorder. Thus, crimes such as homicides, massacres, and the uprooting of different ethnic groups are the foremost manifestations. It can be inferred from the interview further that violence is used and abused for the certain end. Political violence seems to be instrumentalized to acquire new wealth, to change existing economic disparity and amass grander treasures being served as external patronage. The direct victim of such a process is the constitutional law and order. In addition to the constitutional law and order, the social fabric of local people and age-old inter-community trust have been growingly undermined, which in total, the peaceful existence of different communities become at the verge of vanishing. Such a conflict dynamics rather calls for both the federal and regional governments to take concerted interventions, help the local populace to craft amicable way out from this sticky wicket.

The assertion that foreign actors are the masterminds of the violence in the region also bids concerns about the underlying motives and vested interests of outside stakeholders of the conflict. Yet, it is essential to verify whether solid facts do exist to substantiate the claim. It becomes worth stating as Ethiopia decided to construct the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) and mobilized its various constituencies for that intent, the inter-ethnic and intercommunity conflicts started to flare up and get worse. This was not a mere coincidence. Both the federal and regional governments seemed to have been observant, proactive, and pretty pragmatic. In concert with other security apparatuses, the *renaissance regiment* of the federal police was marshalled to pursue a local-driven approach to overcome the security concerns in the Metekel area. One of the High-ranking officers from the Ethiopian National Defence forces has more to say on this and other issues:

The geopolitical complexity of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) is highlighted by the involvement of external actors, particularly Egypt and Sudan. Both nations have attempted to obstruct or postpone the dam's development due to voiced concerns about the dam's possible effects on their ability to secure water supplies. According to reports, Egypt and Sudan have aided rebel organizations in the region with the intention of undermining Ethiopia's efforts to move the dam project forward. This support can come in many different forms, such as giving these groups money, weapons, and logistical help. The battle for water resources in the Nile Basin and the broader regional tensions are highlighted by Egypt and Sudan's sponsorship of rebel groups. It is essential to comprehend the intentions and strategies of outside players (Interview, 2022).

As the army officer put it rightly, the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) has never been immune from existential and imminent threats from outside, specifically from powerful downstream states such as Egypt and Sudan. In fact, the water resource along the Nile Basin has always been at the heart of several interstate conflicts, intra-state tensions and the underlying source of insecurity for many states in the proper Horn and northern Africa. What makes the case very bewildering is that the foreign policy behaviours of the downstream states (Egypt and Sudan). In one hand, in their diplomatic engagements and informal networks they had with global institutions they often shift blame over the quality, the long term viability and fairness of water sharing Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD).

On the other hand, these states have mobilized enormous resources to decelerate the construction of the dam, and thereby able to exert much influences on the federal government to reach agreement in their favor. In order to pursue clandestine foreign policy goals, Egypt and Sudan had to search patronages from within. Thus, organizing internal dissidents, equipping them with necessary ammunitions and funds have become among other viable foreign policy tools for these states. Observable facts at the surface attest that there was marked coincidence between the beginnings of the construction of Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) and the escalation of inter-community conflict, where excessive political violence, intentional massacres, and deliberate forced displacement of numerous ethnic groups became rampant in the study area. It should be noted that external manoeuvrings were essentially originate from the internal vulnerability of Ethiopia. Thus, the variable long term strategy that Ethiopia pursues to combat

the security challenges from outside must originate from tackling its internal political incongruities. The case in Metekel area is a living reminder that Ethiopia will be challenged from outside, which otherwise modernize its security apparatuses and able to address several structural politico-legal incompatibilities all through constitutional and constructive manners.

7.5 On the Infrastructure of Peace

7.5.1 The Interfaith Networks as Moral Peace Brokers

In the vibrant faith-filled terrain of Metekel Zone in Ethiopia, spiritual guides and establishments from a variety of backgrounds hold significant sway as ethical leaders and peace brokers within communities, aiding to mend rifts while fostering accord amongst discord. These churchmen utilize their societal influence along with religious doctrines on harmony, fairness and unity to mitigate hostilities, drawing different groups together via cooperative initiatives across multiple religions.

Muslim Peace making Role

In Metekel, distinguished Muslim figures such as sheikhs, imams and sharia court judges have a significant ethical influence due to the prominence of Islam within that area. In times of communal tension, public appeals inciting tranquillity and progressive conversation according to Islamic principles on community accord and fairness are vocalized by the Council of Ulemas (Muslim scholars). The commonality embodied in humanity under Allah is emphasized when conflicting factions come together for prayers organized by Imams. They deliver religious teachings inviting youth towards moderation away from extremism while encouraging elders to foster unity based on Islamic beliefs. Moreover, Muslims extend their zakat donations toward peace endeavors and intercession activities; though some stringent aspects within Islamist ideologies can create obstacles facing moderate Muslims' pursuit for diversity understanding.

Efforts by the Orthodox Church

In certain regions of Metekel, Orthodox Christianity maintains a modest yet influential role. The clergy delivers spiritual guidance to communities impacted by strife from teachings based on love, forgiveness and acceptance. Monasteries serve as safe havens for at-risk demographics like women and children amidst turmoil. Churches often encourage inter-religious dialogue with peace as the central theme through prayer gatherings, while traditional reconciliatory practices

are permitted on holy grounds bringing deeper solemnity into these processes. However, friction arises due to evangelical influences among non-Christian followers in relations terms; caution towards changes in gender roles hampers female leadership too given their conservative leanings. The lack of thorough interaction between native belief systems also proves challenging.

Efforts by Gumuz Local Beliefs

The native Gumuz belief structure is centred on clan deities, group ceremonies and taboos that strengthen societal hierarchy. Reconciliation practices in the customary culture of the Gumuz like *goro*, *shimglina* and *debo* harness power from calling upon ancestor spirits as well as clan affiliation (Fana, 2020). Leaders with spiritual influence such as *kuala* play an intermediary role between elders and gods before any ritual complexion. The intertwined nature of oral narratives within the community's beliefs both marks their identity but also highlight their contribution to sustaining peace building measures. However, widespread modernization has led young people under Gumuz tradition to question traditional norms contributing towards loosening hold during disturbances.

The Inter-faith Efforts of Peace building

Tapping into the profound societal impact, harnessing ethical power and networks of faith leaders from Islam, Orthodox Church, and Gumuz local belief system could have immense potential for promoting peace in Metekel Zone through consistent inter-faith efforts of harmony and stability. They were able to organize discussions forums about shared human moral principles and accompanied by the training sessions on mediation and trauma recovery along with unified public statements against violence. Successive community dialogue platforms across different religions were made in both aligning initiatives to encourage tolerance as well as social unity and reconciliation. Encouraging emerging youth religious alliances also nurture generational transition. Albeit delicate domains exist urging towards a universal unity while showing duties towards those less fortunate provides mutual groundwork.

Basically put - spiritual guardians of diverse beliefs operating within Metekel serve as an underused but forceful instrument advocating for serenity—they possess capabilities needed to mend rifts amongst communities by applying moral appeals derived either from their holy texts or traditional customs With adequate preparation intertwined with effective coordination; these

clerics can conduct societies' much-needed prophetic voices encouraging them toward ceasing weapons usage whilst pursuing unresolved tasks promoting tranquility.

7.5.2 Building Bridges: On the Role of Women Circles in Peace Building

In Metekel Zone of Ethiopia, women's groups play a crucial role in bridging ethnic divides and fostering unity among diverse communities. These groups are deeply embedded in the social fabric of the region, participating in a variety of organizations such as savings assemblies, farming collectives, labour unions, and funeral societies. Through these networks, women engage in collaborative efforts on common issues including income generation, health services, and mutual assistance programs. Their involvement in these diverse and influential groups positions them uniquely to address and mitigate conflicts. Women's groups can leverage their extensive social networks to detect early signs of escalating tensions and intervene with preventive measures. Their insights and actions contribute significantly to conflict resolution, as they bring a range of perspectives and practical solutions to the table. By fostering cooperation and understanding across ethnic lines, women's groups in Metekel not only support community resilience but also play a pivotal role in initiating peace-building efforts. Their efforts help to bridge divides, promote social cohesion, and address underlying issues that could otherwise lead to conflict.

Early Warning and Rapid Response

In the rustic communities of Metekel, women's savings clubs and livelihood co-ops act as early warning systems and swift response chains. This is due to their extensive peer connections across various villages (Fana, 2020). Engaging in weekly or monthly meetings permits speedy dissemination of information about potential threats from varying areas which allows actions such as soothing regional disputes through idir delegations beforehand. In times of conflict, these networks facilitate alerts, help with evacuations and provide secure refuges by utilizing mutual support structures. However lack of trust can dampen collaboration among different ethnic groups' females. To target this issue increasing platforms for cross-community dialogues & organizing activities for women are crucially required.

Informal Ceasefire Mediation

In Metekel, when escalating cycles of revenge begin to spin out of control, esteemed females in leadership positions use their honoured roles as mothers within the community to convince warring factions to cease aggression and engage in discussion (Yihun, 2019). An example from 2020 depicts Oromo and Amhara female leaders teaming up with seniors and spiritual personalities handling momentary halts between combative youth groups hailing both from Oromo and Amhara regions within parts of Metekel (Renna, 2021). Nonetheless, sustainability is impeded by an absence of support. Thus it's crucial that we invest more into negotiation capabilities pertaining ceasefire agreements while ensuring a place for women peacemakers at formal discussions.

Coexistence in Shared Interests

Women livelihood associations such as agricultural cooperatives are destined to empower females; frequently collaborate on shared financial issues and promote sustainable cooperation and mutual awareness. As an example, female farmers collaboratively produce crops, handle the sales of their product; obtain loans or training via co-operatives—fostering unity across distinctions (Bekele 2021). They also connect over similar difficulties they face as mothers which help them break up the on-going barriers. It is vital for peaceful living that we maintain these economic and social mediums used by women for positive inter-ethnic interaction amidst politically influenced surroundings.

Insights to Guide Reconciliation

Women in Metekel, as caretakers of the community, hold extensive understanding of conflict causes, power relationships and cultural aspects that often bypass male-centric committees. The contributions from such women through platforms like female-led forums and active civil society participation can introduce gender viewpoints and local necessities into peace-making procedures (Tadesse, 2022). It's vital that high-end efforts for harmony eagerly encompass these feminine perspectives at absolutely every level - this includes assigning quotas within significant organized entities. A lasting environment of tranquillity is feasible only when there's substantial incorporation and guidance by females.

To sum it up succinctly: allocating calculated resources towards networks led by women creates an effective mechanism to pre-empt conflicts across all hamlets residing inside Metekel borders

comprehensively. By advocating consistent economic & societal spaces encouraging unity amongst all womenfolk; initiating coaching programs for peacemaker roles specifically suited to their needs based among grassroots communities including unequivocally encapsulating suggestions made by them during higher echelon mediation mechanisms we facilitate communal wellbeing.

7.5.3 The Youth as Pivotal Stakeholder of Peace building and Reconciliation

In Ethiopia, the younger generation represents both a significant challenge and a remarkable opportunity for addressing local conflicts and aggression. Often associated with heightened aggression due to their large numbers and energetic nature, youths can also be powerful agents for change if engaged effectively. Their considerable energy and social influence can be harnessed through targeted reconciliation and peacebuilding initiatives. If properly channelled, young people's enthusiasm and collective action can drive positive social recovery. Efforts to involve them in peace processes, vocational training, and community development programs can transform their potential into a force for stability. By creating platforms for youth participation in dialogue and decision-making, and providing opportunities for meaningful engagement, communities can leverage their vitality to foster social cohesion and resilience. Thus, while the challenges posed by youth aggression are notable, their positive contributions to peace and reconciliation offer significant promise for the region's recovery and long-term stability.

Civic Education

The limited opportunities available for non-aggressive public involvement leaves numerous young individuals within Metekel exposed to intense ideologies. Enhancing civic guidance via peaceful groups within schools, communal discussion platforms and workshops largely concerning human rights issues along with interfaith cooperation leads toward more open-minded thinking amongst these youngsters (Mulualem and Kokebe 2021). By making democratic concepts familiar alongside presenting alternatives procedures of transformation effectively addresses the heart reasons behind extremism growth. Continuous investments made on civic educational hubs spread positivity around.

Mentoring Networks

Mentorship programs where respected elders, religious figures, and cultural leaders transmit communal values, share wisdom, and provide guidance to at-risk youth help ground young people within their cultural heritage while steering them away from militancy (Abebe, 2021). For instance, in the Gumuz tradition, elder clan heads called Kua serve as mentors and role models for youth. Strengthening cross-generational mentorship networks reconnects disjointed youth to community ethics and purpose. But barriers like elder marginalization must be addressed.

Joint Community Initiatives

Programs offering guidance to vulnerable youth, wherein esteemed elders and cultural icons pass on community principles while diverting them from extremism are effective in establishing young individuals within their cultural roots (Abebe, 2021). To illustrate, kua – elder heads of clans according to Gumuz culture—serve as reliable mentors for the younger generation. Enhancing these inter-generational networks can reinstate detached youngsters into a communal ethical system and meaning-driven lifestyle. However, challenges such as side-lining seniors must be tackled.

Economic Opportunities

Creating job possibilities and crafting skills expansion programs that resonates with the youth's interests can offer sustainable replacements for impoverished youngsters tempted towards militant activities due to inactivity or economic disadvantage (Lemessa, 2021). Enhancement of entrepreneurship among them is made possible through vocational instruction, business seed grants, apprenticeships, tech incubators and mentor-backed guidance. Existing also are cooperative economic bodies promoting mutual reliance. Comprehensive reentry assistance ought to be extended towards those youths disassociated from militias.

Creative Arts and Media

Artistic creativity, musical renditions, narratives, sports activities and interactive media programs provide a nurturing outlet for youngsters to heal emotional wounds due their past experiences. They allow youth expression of personal identities while debunking biases and foster collective vision across social demarcations via empowering methods (Pact Ethiopia 2018). Youth-directed theatre shows in the local community, public painting endeavours or mural projects; informative

podcasts about life issues; competitive sporting events as well as large-scale gatherings directed at fostering collaboration among youngsters on creative ideas have proved instrumental in promoting shared understanding along with psychological healing.

Collectively viewed through lenses spanning civic responsibilities vis-à-vis psychosocial aspects coupled with economic challenges faced by today's youths reveals that interventions best suited from peripheral perspectives constructed around youthful aspirations potentially empower these young minds creating high probability situations inspiring leadership traits amongst them leading basic reconciliation processes within grassroots level primarily focused areas such Metekel Zone is something worth noting. Continuous efforts providing prolonged monetary support specifically aimed towards tried-and-tested peace building strategies revolving round adolescent population thereby ensuring maximum favourable outcome impacts.

7.5.4 Eldership and Efforts of Peace Building in Metekel

Ethiopia's Metekel Zone typically relies on a council of elders occupying pivotal mediation roles amidst community clashes, utilizing their prestige, knowledge and dispute-settling abilities to pacify tense situations. Regrettably though, politics meddling, disillusioned youth and the migration from rural to urban areas have eroded elder influence. Strengthening these positions by bolstering trustworthiness and magnifying networks could be key in renewing peace at local level.

Trusted Adjudicators

In Metekel's diverse communities, honored groups of matured men and women are recognized as credible community mediators. Their reputation is founded on their credibility, accumulated life lessons and deep insight into cultural subtleties (Fana, 2020). In times of conflicts, these elders shoulder the responsibility to facilitate hearings assess evidences pinpoint liabilities and mediate settlements under traditional laws among different factions within the community. Given their esteemed societal status, elder's judgments embody moral weightage. Elders play a key role in advising young individuals along with clan leaders regarding important resolutions through wise counsel. They greatly influence modern peacekeeping processes when properly engaged by adding an authentic cultural perspective.

Upholding Communal Values

As the guardians of community norms, heritage and traditions that bolster societal unity, elders shape young minds through customs, folk wisdoms and guidance to induce peaceable relations amongst communities while hindering brutalities (Lemessa, 2021). Yet modernity has progressively estranged wayward youth from elderly counsel and conventional moral values. It's essential we recreate cooperative spheres where our veterans can impart cultural self-awareness along with common ethical principles to halt youthful extremism.

Limitations and Revitalization

While the advice and influence of seniors carry weight within their communities, several elements hinder their current effectiveness. The random political appointments that favour partisan elders recognized for loyalty over merit significantly weaken credibility. In addition, a wave of rural-urban migration disrupts the transfer knowledge across generations. It also compromises elder's motivational capacity due to youth marginalization from power cores; furthermore establishing patriarchal advantages often excludes women along with minority clan elders. Lastly, localized authority hinders effective coordination amongst various societies.

To rectify these deficiencies it becomes crucial to fortify independence among senior figures as well as support grassroots authenticity and inclusivity while simultaneously promoting networking between different groups in order better align arbitration procedures through involvement training programs: financial aid packages combined by robust coordinating platforms would be ideal. Revitalizing this process can help bolster seniors back into the positions for they are quite revere peace brokers.

Inter-faith Elder Councils

A beneficial approach can be seen in inter-faith elderly councils which unite respected Muslim, Christian and traditional elders to streamline communal decision making, together denouncing extremism. Joint training programs work towards universalizing negotiation standards while boosting relationships across various groups. By circulating meeting venues it ensures openness for all participants involved. This technique draws upon moral wisdom from different spiritual cultures heightening their combined efforts toward peace.

Ultimately Metekel's vast reservoir of experienced elder individuals must become revitalized as pillars of societal unity and recovery mechanisms within the community once again; technical resources along with finances should serve to support never override their role in settling disputes. Renewing stability is achieved when support delivered aids elder people reclaim an integral position as custodians of tranquillity.

7.5.5 The Role of Civil Society in Peace Building in Metekel

In Ethiopia's conflict-ridden Metekel Zone, a fledgling civil society has evolved with its primary focus on peace promotion, human rights protection and development. This includes various local non-profit organizations, community-centred bodies, charitable entities and advocacy groups operating at the grassroots level providing crucial services as well advocating for reconciliation procedures; social justice norms along with communal needs are also catered to. Despite this effectual work scope executed by such civic actors do get hindered due to restricted civic space combined with insufficient funding availability.

Early Warning and Preventive Response

In the tumultuous Metekel Zone of Ethiopia, an emerging civil society concentrates on advocating for peace, protecting human rights and encouraging development. This involves numerous home grown non-profit organizations along with community-based bodies and benevolent institutions who work hand in hand at a grassroots level to provide vital services as well as support reconciliation processes; they also address communal requirements besides upholding social justice norms. However, these impactful efforts made by the civic players often confront obstacles due to limited freedom of action coupled with inadequate financial resources.

Reconciliation Assistance

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) located in Metekel offer critical support services to those affected by community unrest, including emergency aid, trauma therapy, restoration of damaged properties and legal assistance. Various organizations also back victims seeking accountability from police forces and transitional justice (Abebe, 2021). Nonetheless, the effectiveness is limited due to their narrow penetration into rural areas. Fundamental backing for reliable Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) engaged in grassroots reconciliation initiatives is essential.

Inclusive Community Dialogues

Neighbourhood-based civil society organizations have been at the forefront of conducting community discourse among and between groups in conflict, offering inclusive avenues for nurturing trust, understanding mutual concerns, and collaboratively devising local resolutions. The goal behind these facilitated discussions is to foster empathy towards rival factions while discovering common goals such as security enhancements, service provision improvements or job opportunities which could aid with mending societal harmony (Lemessa 2021). Continual conversations provide a window into addressing deep-seated trauma and resentment that ultimately facilitate healing processes along with agreements towards localized reconciliation.

Peace Messaging and Advocacy

Utilizing various platforms such as media, community gatherings, posters and flyers, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) craft public peace messages that are sensitive to the surrounding environment. These aim to emphasize non-violence methodologies while upholding human rights values. Alongside this public outreach work, private advocacy with influential factional leaders aims at decreasing hostilities and putting an end to violations of human rights boundaries. This form of sympathize from Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) help ensure officials maintain their humanitarian pledges even though there exist cases where "interference" face backlash due largely in part by a void in legal safekeeping.

Networks and Capacity Building

As civic organizations forge links across districts, zones, and regions, they amplify early threat detection capacities, service provision methods, and advocacy efforts and enhance their influence. Yet concerns rise as foreign funding restrictions coupled with the persecution of expressive Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) challenge organizational firmness (Amnesty International 2022). A central pillar securing access to legal aid services along-side operational safety measures could potentially boost leadership development within these Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) networks offering civil society an increased capacity for peacekeeping initiatives.

In its infancy stages itself local agencies establish crucial grassroots pathways designed specifically for mediation processes focusing on dialogue basis supported by advocacy platforms which are essential minimum requirements towards establishing lasting peace in Metekel Zone. Given such unities augmented with required support mechanisms help strengthen a proactive civil society capable of supplementing existing state services thereby also create appropriate social pressures ensuring transparent state accountability synchronized responsibly amongst all sections.

7.6. Lessons of Conflict Resolution and Transformation in Metekel

The Metekel Zone in Ethiopia's Benishangul-Gumuz region grapples with rising ethnic strife and conflicts over resources recently, triggered by political, economic and social side-lining of groups such as the Gumuz. The tussle extends to disputed land/resource rights and regional fallout effects. Multiple strategies have been explored; these include secure operations, peace dialogue meetings, transitional justice measures diplomacy rooted in local customs – also embryonic hybrid systems– besides civil society's efforts toward establishing peace. But a lasting peaceful status still seems unattainable due largely to unresolved fundamental issues.

From the year 2018, local and nationwide governing bodies have engaged in significant military excursions within the Metekel Zone to curb violent community disputes and improve general peacekeeping. Countless individuals from Ethiopian Defence Forces (EDF) along with national law enforcement units, regional police forces as well as militias and special operations groups conducted sporadic joint disarmament activities focusing on armed sects plus unauthorized gun ownership (Adem, 2021). These manoeuvres led to temporary confiscation of arms alongside comprehensive communal imprisonment measures.

The aggressive security measures, while maintaining some semblance of order, have caused strained relations and marginalization predominantly within the native Gumuz community. It is perceived that enforced disarmament and random arrests often target minorities more than armed factions amidst prominent Amhara and Oromo groups (Lemessa, 2021). The absence of responsibility for abuses demonstrated by security personnel during their disarmament interventions has heightened resentments further. Human rights bodies condemn the military methodology's over-reliance on excessive force along with mass detention tactics lacking proper legal process (Amnesty International, 2021).

In essence, the force-heavy security reactions have managed to keep a lid on widespread disturbance yet prove ineffective at long-term resolution of conflict or dealing with core issues such as societal neglect and administrative shortcomings that stoke radicalism and strife. Experts believe an over-reliance on military might without appropriate safeguards for civilian life, meaningful political discourse involving wronged communities or answerability could end up isolating minority groups further leading to greater turmoil in Metekel along with neighbouring areas (International Crisis Group, 2021).

Since 2018, the Benishangul-Gumuz provincial leadership along with Ethiopia's national Peace Ministry have been instigating large-scale conventions in Metekel Zone aiming to alleviate communal friction. These gatherings include seniors, faith leaders and delegates from principal clashing ethnic sections.

As an illustration, a significant peace-making conference took place in Gilgel Beles town during September of 2020 under the patronage of regional presidency. This gathering united numerous representatives hailing from varied Gumuz as well as non-Gumuz societies within Metekel Zone for multiple days packed with speeches, prayers and debates alongside traditional ceremonies (Fana, 2020). The fundamental goal behind such occasions is fomenting discussions leading to acknowledgment of disputes thereby restoring belief while procuring common consent supporting peaceful coexistence and reciprocal acceptance. Analysts and participants have consistently contended that the reconciliation conferences to date haven't yet yielded impactful, enduring changes in reality. The complaints include:

- There's an apparent absence of genuine grassroots involvement or bottom-up viewpoints; these meetings were mainly directed by top-tier individuals, with delegates chosen by authorities.
- PR operations devoid of weighty discussion, openness about realities or accords on crucial matters like property rights disputes, fair distribution of resources, political inclusivity and socioeconomic fairness are another facet defining this issue.
- No enforceable peace agreement provisions exist having solid execution and supervising systems in place – ambiguous oral promises quickly lose substance when there's no accountability attached.

- Bearers arguing for a greater focus towards addressing principal problems perpetuating violence related to forceful land acquisition issues due to political ostracism economic unfairness etc., find their voices unheard.
- Finally, lack merited attention was shown towards recruiting armed factions who continue provoking hostilities."

Critics argue that the Metekel reconciliation conferences haven't made a significant tangible contribution apart from momentary de-escalation, and have mainly served as media-focused events to publicize government actions over conducting participatory procedures for societal harmony (Lemessa, 2021). The drive toward lasting peace needs far more grassroots involvement, downward answerability, inclusion of neglected voices and both political resolve and readiness to confront entrenched exclusion along with governance deficiencies kindling combats.

Grains of progress towards transitional justice have started to emerge within the efforts made by Metekel Zone, aimed at acknowledging multiple atrocious offenses committed against civilians. These were perpetrated jointly by various militia groups and security forces during intense periods of conflict since 2018.

In 2021, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), a state-operated entity undertook evaluation missions in the Metekel Zone that involved deep conversation with victims, community discussions as well as interactions with governmental bodies. The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) registered grave violations including more than two hundred fatalities, ten thousand families forced from their homes along with thousands kept under detention without proper legal procedures being followed up on time.

The published report deduced these abuses stemmed primarily from ethnicity-based targeting and underscored for holding responsible parties accountable; extending remedial measures to affected individuals besides introducing law amendments to strengthen rights given minor ethnic groups (EHRC, 2021). Nonetheless, actualizing these suggestions for truth, justice and reconciliation is still a significant hurdle. In Ethiopia's murky legal system allegations of atrocities against the security forces are seldom prosecuted. There remains no official commission to address this violent epoch nor any attempt at deep-dive investigation into past

events; despite some community-level native reconciliation acts like shimglina striving for spiritual resolution but lacking survivors' engagement or inputs in them. Regional Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have offered aid and therapeutic support services for displaced victims yet grapple with insufficient resources as well as constraints pertaining to human rights activism (Friberg & Tronvoll, 2021).

The efforts that represent transitional justice so far are better characterized as initial strides rather than a structured plan of attack where the state's accountability is marginal and customary procedures favours ethnic peace over addressing victim-based needs. There has also been an unfortunate lack in comprehensive strategies focused on the wellbeing of victims, supporting their path towards healing.

Despite absence at upper echelons, revered elders and religious figures in Metekel Zone persistently engage impromptu traditional mediation when community disputes surface sporadically. These esteemed local leaders utilize their prestige, connections, spiritual influence and cultural proficiency to broker temporary ceasefires while cooling down heightened conflicts until traditional reconciliation per tribal laws can take place (Lemessa, 2021).

In the early part of 2021, esteemed Oromo, Agawi and Amhara elders along with Muslim figures successfully negotiated a stop to escalating conflicts between youthful Oromo militia members and Amhara farmers in Jawi district - tensions that were triggering civilian evacuations. This informal agreement led to a temporary peace, offering folks an opportunity to return home back for farming activities. Yet, external support lacuna for local conciliators combined with suspicion among groups often result in swift unravelling of such indigenous peace-making efforts without lasting solutions or systemic shifts at hand. Cultural inflexibility coupled with reduced elder influence over decisions as well as diminished respect towards community values pose further hurdles.

In Metekel Zone areas there have been recent establishments where communities foster impromptu hybrid dispute resolution entities designed on incorporating elements from traditional mediation comprising communal heads and religious individuals aligned closely together within formal governmental administrative frameworks. These structures involve cultural seniors alongside spiritual chiefs while inviting kebele agents other times policing authorities lending

assistance into cooperative "peaceful-secure committees" present at village or even district levels aimed explicitly reliability mediating localized discordances pacifying heightened instances.

In principle, this blend of dispute resolution claims advantages like cultural understanding, community support and the joint influence of traditional and official leaders for conflict resolutions that echo locally while still having governmental authority. However in execution, there are enduring issues such as biased selection favouring individuals affiliated with authority figures, resource restrictions, lacklustre technical expertise training concerns over state appropriation and problems cooperating across dual systems (Fana, 2020). Even so emerging blended frameworks show possible progressions in governance strategies if assistance is strategically amplified.

In Metekel Zone, a budding society centred on peace promotion, human rights defence and development sprouting at the community level has surfaced. It's made up of local non-profit organizations, neighbourhood-based groups, charities tasked with building behaviour based on generosity towards others in need as well as advocacy entities. Engagement by these Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) includes: creation and operation of conflict prevention systems that indicate early warning signs for violence; swift action networks driven by volunteers; assistance for reconciliatory measures that include immediate emergency aid provision to victims along with trauma counselling services enabling them to cope better following incidents involving violent affronts; rehabilitation programs focused on property recovery after damages caused during conflicts alongside legal advice aids proffered free-of-cost or inexpensively targeting victimized individuals against offense acts committed upon them from both within their religious fraternity ('inter-faith')and/or those outside it('inter-ethnic'). Community talks have been organized encouraging social unity restoration via an improved understanding developed across distinct faiths/ ethnicities leading furthering harmony among members despite differences visible. There are also many educational drives held enhancing civic responsibility awareness coupled paired perfectly with economic empowerment tactics targeted particularly toward youth considered most likely ('at-risk'); facilitating then towards choosing livelihood paths differing substantially from attracting mob-like/violent tendencies thereby assuring safety/security continuation/re-establishment where they reside—all while advocating behind closed doors

discreetly/professionally influencing officials addressing existing governance gaps inciting this random violence expression (Friberg & Tronvoll 2021).

Unfortunately, community organizations grapple with hurdles that include restricted political pursuits considered sensitive, stringent registration requirements under strict societal laws, scarce funding and technological capacity. Also problematic is the state's monitoring of vocal critics and struggles to maintain programs sans high-level backing. Nonetheless, these groups embody hopeful initial steps towards fostering collective endurance and social unity in parallel to habitual and government-led projects.

Fundamentally speaking, stable conflict resolution has yet rise on Ethiopia's unstable Metekel Zone horizon as existing strategies remain insufficient in addressing layered root causes fuelling violence there. Conciliatory summits induced from above need more local engagement participation along with pledges for reform improvements to succeed. There are traditional methods such as elder arbitration which still hold value but find it difficult adapting to modern-age conflict intricacies. Novice democratic society formations show promise though they require strategic reinforcement for broader impact realization

Matters like land entitlements resource fairness , inclusive politics economic egalitarianism customary privileges minority shields impunity external influences all demand holistic consideration if everlasting stability were ever a goal. Local residents have noteworthy reconciliation resilience capacities provided those strengths are rightly tapped into via participative multi-layered peace augmentations. However, sensible synchronization between indigenous civic, and governmental efforts aimed at grassroots exclusive structural tiers is pivotal for lasting calm.

7.7 Concluding Remarks

Overall, the conflict in the Metekel area reflects a complex interplay of historical grievances, resource-driven disputes, and ultra-ethnic rivalries, exacerbated by existing political and economic factors. Addressing the root causes among other needs holistic approach—the local institutions could be supplemented by state-run institutions, fostering inclusive governance, promoting dialogue for peace and easing the local tensions through the applicability seemed to have been effected in Metekel, though such approaches subjected to their own limitations .

The local institutions of dispute settlement such as arbitration, mediation along with negotiated rulemaking to hand complex societal clashes as inclusively, swiftly and contextual-oriented. Strategic interventions toward such institutions would bring additional opportunity to make capable mediators/arbitrators in their effort overcome challenges in tandem with community policing. Local institutions of peace making including their rituals such as blessings, shared meals, atonement rituals and forgiveness sessions to mend social connections post-truthful confrontations and remuneration have been effective Metekel. Indeed, the findings of the study concur what other researchers have asserted (see for instance, Fana, 2020; Lemessa, 2022).

Peace building holds both aspects of procedures and end results. Thus, it often demands concerted action of the local communities which encompass local institutions of conflict resolutions, the eldership and religious elites, women, the youth, the civil society organizations and the state at different levels. In fact, such all- inclusive approach foster dialogue capable of addressing historical grievances, restore justice and enhance mutual respect among diverse ethnic groups in Metekel. To effectively address conflicts at the grassroots level, there is a critical need to enfranchise the local conflict resolution mechanisms such as customary courts and community mediation councils. Offer them result-oriented training and support to local mediators and traditional leaders augment their capacity to settle disputes amicably. Additionally, investing in livelihood development programs is paramount to alleviate socio-economic inequalities and poverty, thereby empowering marginalized groups and promoting sustainable peace.

Moreover, active involvement of youth in peace building activities, coupled with opportunities for education, skills training, and employment, is imperative. Engaging the youth as agents for positive peace and progressively enhance their roles in community affairs including initiatives to solidify local peace remain to be essential task. Women participation in the political landscape, and endeavours of conflict resolution, leadership and in decision-making processes related to peace and security has to be promoted. Through collaboration with neighbouring regions and countries, strengthening rule of law, promoting access to justice, and investing in peace education, Metekel can embark on a journey towards sustainable peace and contribute to broader efforts for regional stability and development.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1. Conclusions

The persistent and widespread nature of resource-driven conflicts, coupled with the inadequacies of existing research frameworks to adapt to emerging and evolving realities, has necessitated the initiation of this study. Resource conflicts, deeply embedded in historical, socio-economic, and political contexts, continue to escalate in complexity and intensity, particularly in regions where competition for scarce resources intersects with ethnic, cultural, and political tensions. Despite the prevalence of such conflicts, there remains a significant gap in research that not only addresses the foundational causes but also adapts to the dynamic nature of these conflicts as they evolve. This study, therefore, embarks on a comprehensive examination of resource-driven conflicts, with a specific focus on the Benishangul-Gumuz regional state and, more precisely, the Metekel zone. The primary objective is to unravel the underlying causes of these conflicts, which often remain obscured by the immediate and visible triggers of violence. By identifying the root causes, the study seeks to uncover the deep-seated grievances, historical injustices, and structural inequalities that fuel ongoing tensions and violence.

One notable finding of the study highlights the irony that the resource-driven conflicts in the Metekel zone are closely linked to the transformation of Ethiopia's state structure in 1991. As part of the effort to institutionalize a federal system and ensure self-rule, power was devolved from the center (the federal state) to the peripheries (regions). Consequently, conflicts were also transferred to the regional states. This underscores how pre-existing resource-driven conflicts, which also involve power struggles, have become intertwined with power politics. It can be argued that the dynamics of resource-driven conflicts in the Metekel zone have evolved in response to the changes in the political landscape, vested interests, and underlying claims, acquiring new significance and complexity. The emergence of new issues, interests, and goals has exacerbated the pre-existing resource-driven conflicts in the Metekel zone. Complex causality is at the heart of, and the foremost reason behind, the relapse of resource-driven conflicts in the Metekel zone. The persistence of these conflicts seems to stem from their very nature, as many in Metekel have proven resistant to peaceful resolution. The findings of this

research go beyond academic inquiry; they contribute to on-going efforts to address these multifaceted conflicts through peaceful strategies and promote lasting peace.

As discussed in preceding chapters, this research is based on the premise that people create their own realities through their lived experiences, interactions with others, and the interpretations they generate to explain their actions and reactions to their immediate environment. Indeed, this philosophical foundation greatly assisted in gathering extensive data, understanding value differences, and making sense of what has transpired in the conflicts among diverse groups in the Metekel zone. The findings reveal that, in addition to tangible resources, perceptions of resources and historical narratives have been powerful enough to create new realities in the minds of sympathizers and opponents, shaping and influencing the dynamics of the conflict. Narratives have not only been used to create new realities but also to provide historical legitimacy for underlying claims and mobilize supporters for violence. It is noteworthy that historical power imbalances, recent injustices, and group grievances have been sensitive issues often invoked by conflicting parties either to legitimize their own claims or delegitimize those of others. Thus, group narratives have had mobilizing effects, often entangled with identity politics, prolonging the resource-driven conflict in the Metekel zone.

Due to a confluence of historical, socio-political, and economic factors, the conflict in the Metekel zone has evolved into a deeply entrenched and multifaceted crisis, characterized by profound ethnic animosities, relentless competition over resources, and a complex web of socio-political legacies. These legacies, rooted in decades—if not centuries—of grievances, power imbalances, and unresolved disputes, have contributed to a volatile environment where mistrust and hostility between ethnic groups are pervasive. The historical narratives of victimization and oppression, often recounted and amplified by political leaders and local elites, have been weaponized to stoke ethnic tensions, perpetuate cycles of retribution, and justify the use of violence as a legitimate means of securing resources and asserting dominance. The enduring impact of these grim legacies has not only sustained but also escalated the scale of conflict in the Metekel zone. What might have begun as localized disputes over land, water, and other vital resources have, over time, metastasized into widespread violence that spans across entire communities and regions. This violence has manifested in numerous ways, including targeted attacks, mass killings, and acts of arson, leading to significant casualties among the civilian population, the destruction of property and infrastructure, and the large-scale displacement of

people. The displacement crisis, in particular, has further exacerbated the vulnerability of affected communities, stripping them of their livelihoods, destabilizing social networks, and creating conditions ripe for further conflict.

The research has identified paramilitary groups as key drivers of this on-going violence. These groups, often formed along ethnic lines, have become the primary actors in the conflict, wielding significant power and influence within their respective communities. Among these groups, various factions of the Gumuz rebel group have emerged as particularly prominent and organized. These factions have not only engaged in direct confrontations with their perceived enemies but have also played a central role in mobilizing and radicalizing their ethnic base, fostering a climate of fear and hostility that perpetuates the cycle of violence. Opposing these Gumuz factions are self-armed groups that claim to represent the interests of non-Gumuz communities, most notably the Amhara and Oromo ethnic groups. These groups have arisen in response to the perceived threat posed by the Gumuz rebel factions, asserting themselves as defenders of their communities' rights and resources. The confrontation between these armed groups and the Gumuz factions has further polarized the conflict, turning it into an ethno-political struggle where resource competition is deeply intertwined with issues of identity, autonomy, and historical grievances.

The presence of these paramilitary and self-armed groups has fundamentally altered the nature of the conflict in the Metekel zone. What was once a struggle over tangible resources has now been infused with the complexities of ethnic identity and political power, making resolution efforts exceedingly difficult. The intractability of the conflict is exacerbated by the fact that these groups operate with varying degrees of autonomy, often outside the control of formal state mechanisms. This has led to a situation where local and regional authorities are either unable or unwilling to intervene effectively, leaving the conflict to fester and escalate unchecked. Hence, the conflict in the Metekel zone is not merely a product of competition over resources; it is deeply rooted in the socio-political history of the region, shaped by ethnic animosities and perpetuated by the actions of paramilitary groups. The interplay of these factors has transformed local disputes into a broader and more destructive conflict, with devastating consequences for the communities involved. The study's findings underscore the urgent need for comprehensive conflict resolution strategies that address both the immediate triggers of violence and the deeper, underlying issues that sustain it.

What is perplexing in the region is that these self-defined armed groups have drawn the local population into the abyss of violence. Their supporters have often mobilized resources for this purpose through bureaucratic channels or clandestine means. As a result, political violence has become a perceived threat in the region, where different self-defined armed groups have adopted militarization as a strategy to achieve political goals. The repercussions of such actions have been immense and far-reaching, with external intervention from neighboring countries like Egypt and Sudan being a particularly vivid example. Given their vested interests in the Nile River and their longstanding disputes over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), their provocations and threats of force were not entirely unexpected. However, what is bewildering is that they have effectively exploited Ethiopia's internal vulnerabilities and sensitivities to compel changes in its policies. Reliable sources confirm that these two states have been involved in Ethiopia's internal affairs over the past two decades. Further discernment reveals that Egypt and Sudan have been effective in prolonging the interethnic conflict and hindering development activities in the region, although they have been unable to prevent Ethiopia from completing the dam. It should be noted that while paramilitary groups and their factions were the primary actors, their staunch supporters were secondary actors, and Egypt and Sudan were identified as external influencers of Ethiopia's domestic conflict. This involvement is tied to geopolitical strategic interests, shared resources like rivers, and the internal dynamics of states in the Horn of Africa.

Resource competition remains a high-stakes issue in Metekel. However, environmental degradation, underdevelopment, and deep-rooted poverty have exacerbated the interethnic conflict, making it even more fragile. Since the conflict itself has stemmed from preexisting asymmetric relationships, the transformation of issues, divergent goals, and vested interests has created a survival dilemma for each group. At this juncture, the discovery of gold mines has added to the pre-existing resource-driven conflicts in the Metekel zone. The newfound resources, which might have been seen as a blessing, have instead become additional points of contention. The regional and zone administrations seem to have limited control over the extraction and distribution of this precious mineral. The political economy of resource-driven conflicts in the Metekel zone has become a liability, as the availability of this valuable resource has attracted more actors to the pre-existing interethnic conflict.

Several reasons explain why resource-driven conflicts have proliferated over the past few decades. Local sources indicate that the inadequacies of previous resource management systems

contributed significantly, as many were ill-equipped to address the new types of conflict. The situation is further complicated by gross inadequacies in local governance, misgovernance, and chronic corruption. These issues have prevented local governance from being part of the solution and have instead exacerbated the pre-existing problems. The cumulative effect of these trajectories highlights that interethnic rivalry has transformed into a new political, economic, and legal complexity in the Metekel area.

As stated above, persistent poverty and environmental degradation remain key structural issues that contribute to the complexity of interethnic conflict in Metekel. These challenges are mutually reinforcing. The study identified that a group's heavy reliance on forest resources for energy often poses a survival dilemma for other ethnic groups in Metekel. The energy security of one group seems to be achieved at the expense of the other. For instance, the expansion of non-Gumuz communities deeper into Gumuz territories in search of firewood or farmland often leads to violent conflict, as the Gumuz perceive this encroachment as a threat to their survival. Recurrent droughts in the Metekel area and its environs often result in significant environmental degradation, which in turn adds fuel to the pre-existing conflict by intensifying resource competition or encouraging the use of violence as a viable solution.

Chronic poverty and environmental degradation remain the leading challenges in the Metekel zone. Energy insecurity is at the heart of the interethnic conflict, as the search for energy sources by one group is often perceived by others as an existential threat to their well-being. As highlighted earlier, external actors have been found to trigger and influence the interethnic conflict, making it clear that the conflict in Metekel has an external dimension. The interethnic conflict seems to result partly from the convergence of internal vulnerabilities and external manipulations.

The underlying reasons for the interethnic conflict and its implications for inter-communal relations have been identified as part of the political economy of resource-driven conflict in Metekel. In other words, the economic interpretation of the conflict suggests that the underlying causes of the interethnic conflict are intertwined with inter-communal relations, as local perceptions of resources are shaped by the conflict. Although the mutual influence of inter-communal relations and resource-driven conflict has been revealed in various ways, the most prominent expression is seen in divergent perceptions. Local perceptions often undermine long-

standing social ties, which in turn fuel resentment, propagate political violence, and contribute to extreme uncertainty.

Inter-communal relations between the Gumuz and non-Gumuz communities, such as the Amhara, Oromo, and Agew, have never been entirely peaceful. The emotional clamors and cultural biases of the Gumuz communities seem more potent today than ever before. Group preoccupation, bias, and stereotypes are major drivers of inter-communal rancor and malice. These emotional depths and biased perceptions have compelled groups to view resource-based claims through the lens of interethnic affiliations rather than objective stances or principles. These factors illustrate how group differences and diversity can be exploited for sectarian political purposes.

The findings of the study indicate that the Gumuz communities have been angered by the bold assertions of the non-Gumuz communities, which aim to negate their ancestral land rights and incite the youth to violence. These factors underscore that the primary driver of local conflict and tension is rooted in societal perceptions, with territorial claims being instrumentalized to legitimize confrontation. Several Gumuz sources emphasize that local perceptions, which are inherently based on inclusion and exclusion politics, have become a key factor in the inter-communal conflict in Metekel.

It is surprising that the ruling party and opposition parties have not reached an agreement on the underlying causes of the inter-community conflict. Although the ruling party has identified the actors responsible for the conflict, it has failed to pinpoint the root causes behind the deadly conflict in Metekel. Opposition groups, both in exile and operating locally, have accused the ruling party of failing to address the problem constructively. Nevertheless, it can be argued that while the Prosperity Party is often preoccupied with resolving the inter-ethnic conflict at the national level, it tends to downplay the significance of local-level conflicts and overlook the plight of people suffering on the periphery. The study also notes that opposition parties have not contributed to efforts to resolve the local conflict; instead, they have often fomented trouble by exploiting identity-based fault lines. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the government's role in responding to local conflicts has been characterized by superficial and inconsistent interventions.

The outcomes of the study indicate that while the government has not shown the necessary political will and commitment to resolve the conflict in Metekel, opposition parties have not displayed a constructive attitude or impartiality in addressing the same conflict. This research highlights the challenges and shortcomings in the government and opposition's approaches to the Metekel conflict and suggests that a new, more nuanced approach is needed to effectively address the root causes and foster lasting peace in the region.

8.2. Recommendations

The thesis aimed to fulfil two interconnected and mutually reinforcing objectives. The first objective was to contribute, even in a modest way, to the resolution of the complex and multifaceted conflicts arising from resource-driven disputes. This contribution is grounded in the findings of an empirical study, with the intent to offer practical, amicable solutions that can be applied in real-world scenarios. The second objective was to add value to the ongoing scholarly discourse in peace and conflict studies. Specifically, the work sought to refine existing theoretical frameworks and expand the body of literature related to the causal dynamics of resource-driven conflicts, particularly within the context of shifting issues, evolving goals, contested values, and vested interests over time.

With these dual purposes in mind, the thesis presents a series of recommendations designed to guide and inform various stakeholders. These stakeholders include policymakers and advisors across different levels of governance, community leaders engaged in conflict resolution, and scholars dedicated to advancing the academic study of peace and conflict. The recommendations aim to support the continuous and collective efforts to create a more peaceful and just world by addressing the root causes of conflicts and fostering environments where disputes can be resolved through dialogue and cooperation.

By grounding its findings in both empirical evidence and theoretical analysis, this thesis aspires not only to inform policy and practice but also to push the boundaries of academic inquiry into resource-driven conflicts. It underscores the importance of understanding the complex interplay between changing socio-political landscapes and the persistent forces that drive conflict. In doing so, the work contributes to a deeper understanding of how conflicts evolve and how they might be more effectively managed or resolved in the future. The ultimate goal is to inspire actions and

policies that are both informed by rigorous research and responsive to the realities on the ground, thereby contributing to the broader quest for sustainable peace. With these noble objectives in mind, the following recommendations are provided for consideration by various stakeholders—such as policymakers, advisors at different levels, community leaders, and academics—to support on-going efforts toward creating a more peaceful world.

- ⇒ As evidenced in the study area, conflicts have devolved to the grassroots level since power was decentralized to the regions in 1994. This indicates that effective conflict transformation is achievable only by empowering local conflict resolution mechanisms, such as customary courts and community mediation councils. To ensure these mechanisms are adaptable to new realities and challenges, it is essential to provide result-oriented training and support to local mediators and traditional leaders.
- ⇒ Tackle lingering poverty, underdevelopment, and poor governance by fostering collaboration between the federal government, regional states, and civil society organizations. This will help attract investment to the resource-rich Metekel area, support livelihood development programs, and ensure proper compensation for marginalized groups.
- ⇒ Combat the influence of extremism on unemployed youth by creating job opportunities, strengthening livelihood programs, and empowering youth as assets for peacebuilding and community engagement.
- ⇒ Enhance the coordination between formal and customary legal systems by establishing hybrid courts, training legal professionals on customary law, and increasing access to legal representation in Metekel.
- ⇒ Promote proportional political representation by involving all groups, especially marginalized communities, in governance and peace processes. This includes creating inclusive spaces for women and youth.
- ⇒ Ensure fair allocation of benefits and compensation from land and mineral development to support displaced groups and address grievances caused by unequal distribution.

⇒ Implement robust transitional justice processes to acknowledge historical injustices, promote forgiveness, and restore social bonds between conflicting groups.

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Appendix

Key Informant Interview (KKI) Questions

A) Mapping inter- and intra-ethnic conflicts and the changes (qualitative) in conflict trends in the area during the past three decades and the key drivers

- 1) What is the history of social conflicts in the area before 1983 E.C. (before EPDRF)? Which ethnic groups were in conflict (inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic conflicts)? What were the main causes and triggers of the conflicts?
- 2) What is the history of social conflicts in the area after 1983 E.C. (during EPDRF)? Which ethnic groups were in conflict (inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic conflicts)? What were the main causes and triggers of the conflicts?
- 3) What are current (after EPDRF) conflict trends and how frequent is the recurrence of the conflict in this area? Which ethnic groups were in conflict (inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic conflicts)? What were the main causes and triggers of the conflicts (political, economic and socio-cultural factors)?

B) Examine perceptions of resource conflicts and conflict related experiences of local communities

- 4) How do you assess the security situation in Mandura woreda? What type of security problems are a challenge to your society?
- 5) In your opinion, to what extent is ethnic conflict a problem in the area? Which ethnic groups are in conflict?
- 6) What do you think are the causes and drivers of ethnic conflict in the area? What do you think are the conflict actors and their roles?
- 7) Do you think the conflicts are resource based? Explain which resources are the causes and how?
- 8) What are the unique features of the conflict in Mandura woreda? (unique signs or signals of the conflict before its occurrence.

- 9) In your opinion what are the entry points, possible solutions and strategies to transform the recurrent conflict and ultimately build the peace of the community?

C) Analyze the role of actors and actor relations in the emergence, dynamics and impacts of local conflicts

- 10) What triggers/catalysts contribute to the outbreak/ further escalation of conflict? What are the stages of the conflict?
- 11) What are the damages sustained and impacted on the livelihood of the conflicting parties (Amhara, Agew and Gumuz)?
- 12) What new factors contribute to prolonging conflict dynamics?
- 13) Who are the main actors in the inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic conflict? What are their interests, goals, positions, capacities, and relationships?
- 14) Which of the actors can be identified as spoilers and Why? Are they inadvertent or intentional spoilers?
- 15) What factors can contribute to peace? What capacities for peace can be identified?
- 16) What roles can be played by the community? How are the key actors (such as women, youths, elders, religious leaders, people with disabilities and other community groups) represented in the Region and Mandura Woreda?

D) Appraise the strengths and weaknesses of formal and informal institutions in early assessment, prevention and management of resource conflicts

- 17) Is there a response from the government, the local community and other stakeholder before, during and after conflict situations? Please explain each.
- 18) Is there a local (informal) peace building institution? Please exhaustively state the peace building institutions/committees such as a council of elders, women and representatives from the youth and business community.

- 19) Who has formed the local institutions and how long have they been serving?
- 20) What is the composition of the local peace building institutions, what are their roles and responsibilities in relation to conflict prevention and management? To what extent these institutions are representative of the community in the woreda (ethnic composition, gender, age, etc...)
- 21) How do you evaluate the capacity of the local institutions, and their strengths and weaknesses in peace building?
- 22) To what extent do local peace building institution work with government (formal) institutions?
- 23) Is there an effective early conflict warning system through which information flows to the appropriate body to help prevent conflict before it happens?
- 24) How do you evaluate the role of government institutions at all levels (Kebele, Woreda, Zone, Region and the Federal Government) in conflict prevention and management?
- 25) How effective are government responses in managing and transforming the conflict, and in maintaining and building the peace of the community? What are the challenges?
- 26) What are limitations of the responses in terms of peacekeeping, conflict transformation and peace building at different stages – pre-conflict, during conflict and post conflict?
- 27) What is the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in conflict prevention and management? How effective are they? What are the strengths and weaknesses?

መደበኛ ያልሆነ ቁልፍ የመጠይቅ ጥያቄዎች

ሀ/ የእርስ በእርስ እና የእርስ በራስ በግጭቱ ተዋናዮች መካከል ግጭቶችን ማካለል እና ባለፉት 3 አስርት ዓመታት በቦታው የታዩትን የግጭት ዘመም ለውጦችን ዋና እነ ዋና ምንጮቻቸው

1. የማሕበረሰባዊ ግጭት ከ1983 (ከኢህዴድ በፊት) በኢትዮጵያ ካላንደር ዓመተ ምሕረት በፊት ታሪካዊ ዳህራው ምን ይመስላል? የትኛው ጎሳ ግሩብ በዚህ የእርስ በእርስ እና የእርስ በራስ ግጭት ውስጥ የተሳተፈው? ለግጭቱ መንስኤ የሆነው ምንድን ነው? ግጭቱ ያስነሳው ምንድን ነው?
2. የማሕበረሰባዊ ግጭት ከ1983 (በኢህዴድ ጊዜ) በኢትዮጵያ ካላንደር ዓመተ ምሕረት በፊት ታሪካዊ ዳህራው ምን ይመስላል? የትኛው ጎሳ ግሩብ በዚህ የእርስ በእርስ እና የእርስ በራስ ግጭት ውስጥ የተሳተፈው? ለግጭቱ መንስኤ የሆነው ምንድን ነው? ግጭቱ ያስነሳው ምንድን ነው?
3. አሁን ያለው (ከኢህዴድ በኋላ) የግጭት ሁኔታ ምን ይመስላል? ይህ ግጭት ምን ያህል ጊዜ በቦታው ላይ ይከሰታል የትኛው ጎሳ ግሩብ በዚህ የእርስ በእርስ ግጭት ውስጥ የተሳተፈው? ለግጭቱ መንስኤ (ፖለቲካል፣ ምጣኔ ሀብታዊ፣ ህብረ ባህላዊ ምክንያቶች) የሆነው ምንድን ነው? ግጭቱ ያስነሳው ምንድን ነው?

ለ/ የግጭቶች ምንጭ ምን እንደሆነ በጥልቀት መመርመር እና የአካባቢ ነዋሪዎች ከግጭት ጋር ተያያዥነት ያላቸው ተሞክሮቻቸው

4. በማንዱራ ወረዳ ያለውን የደህንነት ሁኔታ እንዴት ይገመገማል? ምን አይነት ደህንነት ችግሮች ለማህበረሰቡ ተግዳሮት ናቸው?
5. በአንተ አስተሳሰብ የጎሳ ግጭት በቦታው ላይ ምን ያህል ደረጃ ላይ ደርሷል? የትኛው የጎሳ ቡድኖች በግጭት ውስጥ ናቸው?
6. የጎሳ ግጭቶች መንስኤዎቻቸው እና ለግጭት የሚገፋቸው ነገር ምንድን ነው ብለህ ታስባለህ? የግጭት ተዋናዮቹ እና የግጭቱ መንስኤ ምንድን ናቸው?
7. ግጭቶች ምንጭ አላቸው ብለህ ታስባለህ? ካላቸው ምን ምክንያቶች ናቸው እንዴትስ?
8. ማንዱራ ወረዳ ግጭት ለየት የሚያደርገው ምንድን ነው (ግጭቱ ከመከሰቱ በፊት ልዩ ምልክት ወይንም ማስታወቂያ)
9. በአንተ አስተሳሰብ ተደጋጋሚ ግጭቶችን እንዳይከሰቱ ለማድረግ ምን መፍትሄ እንዴት ይፈታሉ በእንዴት አይነት ሽግግር ይቆማሉ እና ቀጣይነት ያለው ሰላም ለማህበረሰቡ እንዴት ይመጣል ብለህ ታስባለህ?

ለ/የአካባቢያዊ ግጭቶች ተጽዕኖ የግጭቶቹ መጠን መለዋወጥ እነሱን ተከትሎ የሚወሰድ አስቸኳይ ጊዜ እርምጃ በግጭቱም ላይ በአስቸኳይ ጊዜ እርዳታዎቹ ላይ ሚና ተጫዎቻቸውን በአግባቡ ማጥናት

- 10. ግጭቱ እንዲፋፋም/እንዲነሳ ዋነኛ አቀጣጣይ የነበረው ማነው? ግጭቱ ምንድን ነው?
- 11. በግጭቱ ተዋናዮች መካከል የደረሱት የንብረት እና የሰው ጉዳት ምን ምን ናቸው ?
- 12. የግጭቱ አይነት እንዲራዘም ምን ምን አስተዋፅዖ አድርገዋል?
- 13. በእርስ በእርስ እና የእርስበራስ መካከል የጎሳ ግጭት መንስኤው ማነ ነው? ፍላጎቱ፤ ዓላማ ፤ያለበት ቦታ እና አቅሙ ምንድን ነው?
- 14. የትኞቹ ተዋናዮች በካዮች ናቸውለምን? ሆን ብለው ሰውን ለመመረዝ የሚንቀሳቀሱ አሉን?
- 15. ሰላም እንዲመጣ ምን ሊደረግ ይገባል? ሰላም እንዲሰፍን ምን ያህል አቅም አለ?
- 16. ማህበረሰቡ ምን ሚና ይጫወታል? የማንዳራ ወረዳ ቁልፍተዋናዮቹ እንዴት ናቸው ? የሀይማኖትም ሊሆን ይችላል እና በማንዳራ ወረዳ ያሉት (ሴቶች፣ ወጣቶች፣ አረጋውያን፣ የሀይማኖት መሪዎች፣ አካል ጉዳተኞች ሌሎች የማህበረሰቡ ክፍሎች)

መ/ በመጀመሪያው የተቆማት ምዘናዎች መደበኛም መደባኛም ባልሆነ መንገድ ደካማ ጎናቸውን እና ጠንካራ ጎናቸውንም እውቅና ሰጠው

- 17. ለግጭቱ (በፊት በኋላ በግጭቱ ሰዓት) የመንግስት፣ የአካባቢው ማህበረሰብ፣ ባለድርሻ አካላት ግብረ መልስ ነበር?
- 18. መደበኛ ያልሆነ ሰላም ገንቢ ተቋም አለ? እባክዎ እነዚህን ሰላም ገንቢ ተቋማት ኮሚቴዎች አረጋውያን ሴቶች የወጣቶች ተወካይ እና የንግድ ማህበረሰቡ ይግለፁ
- 19. አካባቢ ተቋማትን ማን አሳወቃቸው? ምን ያህል ጊዜ አገለገሉ?
- 20. ሰላም ገንቢ ተቋማት ውቅር ምንድን ነው? ያላቸው ሚና እና በግጭት መከላከል እና ግጭትን መከላከል ላይ ያላቸው ሚና እና ሀላፊነት ምንድን ነው? እነዚህ ተቋማት በወረዳ ውስጥ ያላቸው ደረጃ (ተፅዕኖ) እስከምን ድረስ ነው የጎሳ ውቅር፣ የጾታ ውቅር እንዲሁም የዕድሜ)?
- 21. እነዚህ ሰላም ገንቢ ተቋማት ያላቸው ጥንካሬ ደካማ ጎን እና አቅሞቻቸውን እንዴታ ታየዋለህ?
- 22. እነዚህ ሰላም ገንቢዎች ከመንግስት ጋር በምን ያህል ደረጃ አንድ ላይ ይሰራሉ?
- 23. ግጭት ከመከሰቱ በፊት ግጭት እንደሚከሰት ቀድመ ማስጠንቀቂያ መረጃ ለተገቢው አካል የሚደርስበት ሁኔታ አለ?
- 24. በየደረጃው ግጭትን ለማስወገድ እና ለማስተዳደር የመንግስትን ሚና እንዴት ታያለህ (በቀበሌ፣ በወረዳ፣ በዞን፣ በሀይማኖታዊ ተቋማት እና በማዕከላዊ መንግስት)?
- 25. መንግስት ለግጭቶች ምላሽ በመስጠት፣ ግጭቶችን ለማሻገር፣ ሰላምና ጸጥታን ለማህበረሰቡ ለማምጣት ምን ያህል ውጤታማ ነው? ተግዳሮቶቹስ ምንድን ናቸው?

26. ሰላም ለማስከበር፣ ግጭት ለማሸጋገር በየደረጃው ሰላምን ለማስፈን ከግጭት በፊት በግጭት ላይ እንዲሁም ከግጭት በኋላ ያሉት ሰላም ለማስከበር ያለው ምላሾች በምን ይወሰናሉ?
27. መንግስታዊ ያልሆኑ ተቋማት ግጭት በመከላከል እና በማስተዳደር ያላቸው ሚና ምንድን ነው? ድክመቶቻቸው እና ጥንካሬያቸውስ?



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ግንቦት 17 ቀን 2014 ዓ.ም

Ref: IPSS/LT-258/2022

ለ ሚ. መ. ለ. ከተ. ው. ሁ. ሉ

ጉዳይ: ትብብርን ስለመጠየቅ

በአዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ ሰላምና ደህንነት ጥናት ተቋም የ PhD ተማሪ የሆኑት ሙሉ-ጌታ አየለ ሐሊቦ የመታወቂያ ቁጥር GSR/2371/11 የመመረቂያ ጽሁፋቸውን “Understading Resource-based Conflict in Ethiopia: Case Study in Metekel Zone of Benishngual-Gumuz Regional State” በሚል ርዕስ ጥናት በማካሄድ ላይ ስለሆኑ ለስራቸው መሳካት አስፈላጊውን መረጃ በመስጠት ትብብር ታደርጉላቸው ዘንድ በትህትና እንጠይቃለን።

ከሰላምታ ጋር



ፋና ገብረሰንበት (ዶ/ር)
የሰላምና ደህንነት ጥናት ተቋም
አዲስ አበባ

ሲዕቀልን የኛን ደብዳቤ ተጥርኝ ተን ይጥቀሱ

When replying, please quote the reference no.





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ሐምሌ 28 ቀን 2013 ዓ.ም
Ref: IPSS/LT-344/2021

በኢትዮጵያ ፌዴራላዊ ዲሞክራሲያዊ ሪፐብሊክ
ሰላም ሚኒስቴር
አዲስ አበባ

ጉዳይ፣ የትብብር ደብዳቤ እንደሚኖሩት ስለመጠየቅ፤

በአዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ ሰላምና ደህንነት ጥናት ተቋም የPhD ተማሪ የሆኑት አቶ መሉኔታ አየለ የመታወቂያ ቁጥር GSR/2371/11 በቀን 27/11/2013 ዓ.ም፣ ለተቋማችን በፃፉት ደብዳቤ የመመረቂያ ዕቃ-ፋቸውን Understanding Resource-based Conflicts in Ethiopia: Case study in Metekel Zone of Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State በሚል ርዕስ እየሰሩ መሆኑን ጠቅሰው ለዚህ የመመረቂያ ዕቃ-ፋ የሚያገለግል መረጃ ከግለሰቦች ከተቋማትና ከተቋማት ኃላፊዎች ለማሰባሰብ አሁን ባለው ወቅታዊ የአካባቢው ሁኔታ የተነሳ መቸገራቸውን ጠቅሰው በሰላም ሚኒስቴር በኩል የድጋፍ ደብዳቤ ለቤንሻንጉል ጉሙዝ እና ለአማራ ብሄራዊ ክልላዊ መንግስታት እንደሚኖሩት ጠይቀውናል።

በመሆኑም በተቋማችን በኩል ከላይ የተጠቀሰው ርዕስም ሆነ በሱ ላይ ተመስርቶ የቀረበው የመነሻ ዕቃ-ፋ ቀርቦ ተቀባይነት ያገኘ ሲሆን፣ የጥናቱም የመጨረሻ ውጤት ለአካባቢው፣ ለክልሉና ብሉም ለሀገራችን ፖሊሲ አውጭዎች በላይኛው ሁኔታ ችግርን የመፍቻ ዘዴን ያመለክታል ብለን ስለምናምን በእናንተ በኩል የድጋፍ ደብዳቤ እንዲኖሩላቸው በእነብርት እየጠየቅን ለሚደረግላቸው ትብብር በትድሚያ ክልብ እናመሰግናለን።

ከሰላምታ ጋር

ሜርሲ ፍቃዱ (ዶ/ር)
የሰላምና ደህንነት ጥናት ተቋም
ተባባሪ ለካላሚክ ዳይሬክተር



ቢዕቅልን የኛን ደብዳቤ ቁጥርና ቀን ይጥቅሱ





በቤንሻንጉል ጉምዝ ክልላዊ መንግስት የመተከል ዞን አስተዳደር ጽ/ቤት ቁጥር-02
Benishangul Gumuz Regional state Metekel Zone administration Council No-02

ቁጥር ፯.፱.፯.፩-፱፯/፯.፯
ቀን ፳፯/፱/፲፬፻፲፭

ለ ሚ. መ. ለ. ከ. ተ. ው. ሁ. ሱ.
ባሉበት

ጉዳዩ፣ የድጋፍ ደብዳቤ ስለመስጠት

ከላይ በርዕሱ ለመግለጽ እንደተሞከረው በአዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ ሰላምና ደህንነት ጥናት ተቋም የphD ተማሪ የሆኑት መ.ሱ.ጌታ አያለ ሐልቦ በቁጥር GSR/2371/11 የመመሪያ ጽሁፋቸውን 'understading Resourc- based Confiic in Ethiopia Case Stuby in Metekei Zone of Benisnguas Gumuz Regioanal State' በሚል ርዕስ ጥናት በመካሄድ ላይ ስለሆነ ለስራችው መሳካት አስፈላጊውን መርጃ በመስጠት ትብብር እንድደርግልን ሲሉ በቀን 29/09/2014 ዓ/ም በተጻፈ ማመልከቻ ጠይቀውናል።

ስለዚህ ካላይ በጠየኩት ማመልከቻ መሰርት አድስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ የዘጋ ተማር ለማመራት ጽሁፍ ዝግጅት በሰላምና ደህንነት ዙርያ ላይ ለሚኖረው የስራ እንቅስቃሴ አስፈላጊውን ትብብር እንድደርግላቸው ይህንን የድጋፍ ደብዳቤ የሰጣናችው መሆኑን እንገልጻለን።

ግልባጭ

ለተማሪ መ.ሱ.ጌታ አያለ

ባሉበት



ከሰላምታ ጋር

ጋምዳን ሮመዳን አባስ
Hamdan Romedan Abass

ኋላ ምክትል አስተዳዳሪ
Vice Chief Administrator