

Ethiopia: Conflict Profile

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1. Background: Understanding Conflict

1.1. Meaning and Key Features

The term conflict has its roots in the Latin word *conflictus*, meaning 'to clash or engage in a fight' thereby signifying a confrontation between one or more parties aspiring towards incompatible or competitive means or ends.¹ This original meaning appears to have been preserved in the literal meaning of the term as Webster's Dictionary defines conflict as a battle, contest or opposing forces existing between primitive desires and moral, religious or ethical ideas, indicating usage to refer to relationships between persons, ideas, feelings, etc ... However, the uses of the term across cultures, professions, languages and contexts as well as through time indicate a more diverse understanding. In social science the term is given more formal meaning referring to "... an adversarial relationship or a disagreement between two or more persons, between groups, regions or even nation emanating from different perceptions and interests".² The following quotations are even more formal in expressing the elements of conflict as understood in contemporary social science discourse:

*"... a situation in which interdependent people express (manifest or latent) differences in satisfying their individual needs and interests, and they experience interference from each other in accomplishing these goals."*³

*"A social factual situation in which at least two parties (individuals, groups, states) are involved, and who: i) strive for goals which are incompatible to begin with or strive for the same goal, which, can only be reached by one party; and/or ii) want to employ incompatible means to achieve a certain goal."*⁴

Based on these definitions, the key elements of 'conflict' have been elaborated as interdependence, perceived incompatible goals and scarce resources, and interference.

¹ Christopher E. Miller and Mary E. King (Ed.), A Glossary of Terms and Concepts in Peace and Conflict Studies, 2nd Edition, University for Peace, 2005

² The National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, Training Manual on Conflict Management, European Union, Rwanda, Kigali, 2006, p. 7

³ William W. Wilmot and Joyce L. Hocker, Interpersonal Conflict, 5th edition, The McGraw-Hill Companies Inc., 1998 (www.etu.org.za/toolbox/docs/building/conflict.html)

⁴ Alex P. Schmid, Thesaurus and Glossary of Early Warning and Conflict Prevention Terms (Abridged Version), Sanam B. Anderlini ed., Synthesis Foundation, Erasmus University, May 1998

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Generally, the contemporary conception of inter-personal conflict attributes the following key characteristics to interpersonal conflict:

- Interpersonal conflict requires at least two parties;
- Inherently involves some sense of struggle or incompatibility or perceived difference among values, goals, or desires which goes beyond mere disagreement and involves situation in which people perceive a threat (physical, emotional, power, status, etc.) to their well-being;
- Parties to a conflict tend to filter their perceptions (and reactions) through their values, culture, beliefs, information, experience, gender, and other variables and often respond on the basis of their perceptions of the situation, rather than an objective review of it.
- While conflicts may remain latent for sometime, power or attempts to influence inevitably occur within conflicts; and,
- Is an ongoing process entailing communication about disagreements.

1.2. *Forms, Types and Levels (Classification)*

Conflict can be classified or categorized according to a number of factors depending to a large extent on the purposes intended. However, the most common classifications use two criteria, namely the level at which the conflict occurred and the intensity of the conflict. The level of conflict is often determined on the basis of the profile of the parties or the interests involved. Parties to a conflict may be individuals, groups, nations or other actors capable of harboring a set of interests that may be seen as personal, social, financial, moral or of other nature. To distinguish between these set of parties and interests, conflicts may be characterized into the following levels:⁵

- **Interpersonal Conflict:** Conflict between two or more persons over an issue considered personal or individual;
- **Intra-group conflict:** Conflict between people within the same group;
- **Inter-group conflict:** Conflicts between organizations, families, or institutions;
- **Intra-national conflict:** An internal conflict between groups within the country; and,

⁵ The National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, Training Manual on Conflict Management, European Union, Rwanda, Kigali, 2006, p. 10

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- **International Conflict:** This is conflict between two or more nations, usually for ideological reasons, territorial claims, natural resources or other interests.

At the simplest level one could distinguish between conflicts at the personal/individual, and group levels.

1.3. Approaches to Dealing with Conflict

Conflict is not inherently good or bad. In the majority of cases competitive forms of conflict serve as sources of creativity and progress. However, conflict can also be destructive where it is expressed in violence. This is particularly true for conflicts among groups at the community and national levels which have led too many times to bloodshed, loss of life, social mistrust, and destruction of resources. To address these challenges, communities and nations alike have designed various approaches in addressing competing interests or concerns constructively without resorting to violence or to mitigate the impacts of the violent expression of conflict. The following are the most prominent approaches to dealing with conflict:⁶

- Conflict management: Interventionist efforts towards preventing the escalation and negative effects, especially violent ones, of ongoing conflicts.
- Conflict prevention: The anticipation of conflict that seeks to redress causal grievances to avoid the escalation of violent forms of conflict engagement or to curtail the re-occurrence of violent exchanges or some combination of these elements.
- Conflict resolution: A variety of approaches aimed at resolving conflicts through the constructive solving of problems distinct from the management or transformation of conflict.
- Peace building: Policies, programs, and associated efforts to restore stability and the effectiveness of social, political, and economic institutions and structures in the wake of a war or some other debilitating or catastrophic event. Peace building generally aims to create and ensure the conditions for ‘negative peace’, the mere absence of violent conflict engagement, and for ‘positive peace’, a more comprehensive understanding related to the institutionalization of justice and freedom.
- Conflict transformation: Changes in all, any, or some combination of the following matters regarding a conflict: the general context or framing of the

⁶ Christopher E. Miller and Mary E. King (Ed.), A Glossary of Terms and Concepts in Peace and Conflict Studies, 2nd Edition, University for Peace, 2005

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situation, the contending parties, the issues at stake, the processes or procedures governing the predicament, or the structures affecting any of the aforementioned.

Generally speaking, the range of approaches adopted to address conflict may be seen in two categories, namely preventive and responsive. Preventive approaches, also called proactive responses, are designed to deal with the causes for potential conflict before they are manifested in violent action. Responsive approaches, on the other hand, respond to conflict that has already occurred with a view to minimizing its effects. This second category is further disaggregated into conflict management, conflict resolution and conflict transformation based on whether the solution pertains to the effects or causes of violent conflict.

1.4. Role of Civil Society in Conflict Prevention

In his report on the Prevention of Armed Conflict to the General Assembly (2001) UN Secretary General Kofi Annan⁷ has called for the full participation of civil society in conflict prevention efforts, especially where the intergovernmental system fails to address a problem that could lead to violent conflict. The report also recommended an international conference to be organized by local, national and international non-government organizations to determine their role in conflict prevention and develop regional action plans for interaction with the UN. The Security Council has endorsed this role of civil society in Resolution 1366 (2001), which states:⁸

“...the United Nations and the international community can play an important role in support of national efforts for conflict prevention and can assist in building national capacity in this field and recognizes the important supporting role of civil society.”

From a more conceptual perspective, conflict preventive is a dynamic process responding to changes in circumstances all the while strengthening existing processes for peace, responding to crises, generating mechanisms through which conflicts can be resolved non-violently. It is also a multi-actor process calling for coordinated action at different levels as well as across sectors. Building the capacities of a society to manage and address conflict peacefully requires: active and meaningful participation of all sectors of society in dialogue and peace-building; local

⁷ United Nations, Prevention of Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General, New York: UN, 2001. 4 September 2004
<<http://domino.un.org/unispal.nsf/0/b5bffc5b649239585256caa006efab6?OpenDocument>>

⁸ United Nations. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1366, Geneva: UN, 2001, 4 September 2004 <<http://ods-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/No1/524/48/PDF/No152448.pdf?OpenElement>>

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ownership of conflict prevention strategies and initiatives; and, strengthening democratic institutions and empowerment of local actors. The role of non-state actors is therefore essential for effective conflict prevention.

2. Conflict analysis

Effective conflict prevention requires a thorough understanding of conflict. Conceptual and methodological frameworks for this purpose have been developed by a range of actors seeking to improve understanding of conflict. The multiplicity of frameworks is in fact a challenge unto itself since each actor has its organizational and intervention profiles in mind while designing the respective documents. However, there are some recurring elements across the various organizational outputs, especially if the review is limited to frameworks and methods for developing conflict prevention strategies. These recurring elements suggest four key steps for the purpose, namely, analyzing the context and situation of conflict, identifying or “mapping” the key actors and stakeholders, developing possible scenarios, and, identifying actions and steps to alleviate tensions and promote the non-violent resolution of conflict.

Conflict analysis has been defined as the systematic study of the profile, causes, actors, and dynamics of conflict to understand the operational context and role of an organization for engagement in the prevention and management of conflict.⁹ The objective of the analysis is to identify, anticipate and plan for relevant conflict factors that may positively or adversely affect the success of a conflict prevention and/or management intervention. The results of the conflict analysis will thus inform the design, implementation and monitoring of the planned program. In terms of scope, conflict analysis may be undertaken at the level and thematic/sectoral coverage most relevant to the intervention. However, linkages need to be established with other interrelated levels of conflict dynamics if the analysis is to be meaningful.

Though there are a number of conflict analysis tools incorporating various components, most have some common elements. These are: conflict profile, actors, causes and dynamics.

2.1. Conflict Profile

A conflict profile provides a brief characterization of the context within which the intervention will be situated. It describes the overall political, economic and socio-cultural situation of the unit of analysis from the perspective of potential conflict. A comprehensive conflict profile identifies:

⁹ NZAID Conflict-Risk Assessment Guideline, approved by the Steering Group on 24 April 2008, Last updated 15th August 2008

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- the political, economic, and socio-cultural context such as the physical geography, population make-up, recent history, political and economic structure, social composition, environment, geo-strategic position;
- emergent political, economic, ecological, and social issues such as elections, reform processes, decentralization, new infrastructure, disruption of social networks, mistrust, return of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), military and civilian deaths, presence of armed forces, mined areas, HIV/AIDS.
- specific conflict prone/affected areas situated within this context including, areas of influence of specific actors, frontlines around the location of natural resources, important infrastructure and lines of communication, pockets of socially marginalized or excluded populations; and,
- the history of conflict covering critical events, mediation efforts, external intervention.

2.2. Causes of Conflict

The causes of conflict are factors contributing to people's grievances. Though a specific event may be the most immediate cause, violent conflict can rarely be attributed to a single cause. Typically, there are multiple causes rooted in economic, social and political structures that evolve through the course of the conflict.¹⁰ Since a complex web of interrelated factors contribute to the aggrieved status or feeling of different social section, conflicts typically have multiple causes impossible to identify exhaustively. However, the major causes can be identifies three categories, namely, structural causes, proximate causes, and triggers.¹¹

- **Structural causes** – are pervasive factors that have become built into the policies, structures and fabric of a society and may create the pre-conditions for violent conflict. Examples include: illegitimate government, lack of political participation, lack of equal economic and social opportunities, inequitable access to natural resources, poor governance.
- **Proximate causes** – are factors contributing to a climate conducive to violent conflict or its further escalation, sometimes apparently symptomatic of a deeper problem. Examples include: uncontrolled security sector, light

¹⁰ NZAID Conflict-Risk Assessment Guideline, approved by the Steering Group on 24 April 2008, Last updated 15th August 2008

¹¹ An alternative categorization classifies causes of conflict into governance, economics, security and socio-cultural factors. However, frameworks dealing with prevention of conflict almost always share these key elements.

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weapons proliferation, human rights abuses, destabilizing role of neighboring countries, role of diasporas.

- **Triggers** – refer to single key acts, events, or their anticipation that will set off or escalate violent conflict. Examples include: elections, arrest / assassination of key leader or political figure, drought, sudden collapse of local currency, military coup, rapid change in unemployment, flood, increased price/scarcity of basic commodities, capital flight.

A long standing state of conflict may also create additional causes further prolonging or escalating the conflict such as weapons, vested interests in the conflict, a generation growing up in conflict, etc ...

2.3. Actors in Conflict

The term “actors” as used here refers to all those engaged in or being affected by conflict including individuals, groups and institutions contributing to conflict or being affected by it in a positive or negative manner, as well as those engaged in dealing with conflict.¹² Actors in a conflict have varying and even divergent interests, goals, positions, capacities, and relationships with other actors.

- Interests: the underlying motivations of the actors (concerns, goals, hopes and fears).
- Goals: the strategies that actors use to pursue their interests.
- Positions: the solution presented by actors on key and emerging issues in a given context, irrespective of the interests and goals of others.
- Capacities: the actors’ potential to affect the context, positively or negatively. Potential can be defined in terms of resources, access, social networks and constituencies, other support and alliances, etc.
- Relationships: the interactions between actors at various levels, and their perception of these interactions.

There are a number of frameworks identifying actors from various perspectives such as whether they operate at the grassroots, local, regional, national or international levels. Whatever the framework adopted, two categories of actors should be given

¹² In some conflict analysis frameworks, such as the UN Inter-Agency Framework, the mapping of responses is dealt with as a separate stage. However, interventions focusing on prevention rarely call for such singular focus on mapping of actors, which is anyway dealt with as part of the normal needs assessment process.

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attention in the context of conflict prevention. The first category is that of spoilers with an interest in sustaining and even fueling the causes for conflict and who use violence to undermine attempts to achieve it.¹³ These may include, among others, groups benefiting from war economy (combatants, arms/drug dealers, etc), smugglers, “non conflict sensitive” organizations. The second category of actors capacities for peace, typically institutions, organizations, mechanisms and procedures in a society for dealing with conflict and differences of interest, that may serve as entry points to address causes of violent conflict. Examples include: civil society, informal approaches to conflict resolution, traditional authorities, political institutions (eg head of state, parliament), judiciary, regional (e.g. African Union, IGAD, ASEAN) and multilateral bodies (eg International Court of Justice).

2.4. Conflict Dynamics

Conflict dynamics is the result of interaction between the other key elements of a conflict, i.e., profile, the actors, and causes. Through scenario building, pattern identification, and trend analysis, one can identify windows of opportunity to promote preventive objectives.

3. Country Background

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE), is a country in north-eastern Africa. Geographically, the country covers a land area of 1,133,380 sq km (437,600 sq mi) of which 0.7% is covered by water bodies. It shares international borders with Somalia, Djibouti, Eritrea, Kenya, and Sudan. Ethiopia’s climatic conditions vary from cool temperate highlands over 2,500 meters above sea level, moderate warm lands lying between 1500 to 2500 meters above sea level as well as hot lowlands lying below 1500 meters.

3.1. Demography

The total population of Ethiopia is estimated at around 75 million making it the second most populous country in Africa next to Nigeria.¹⁴ In other words, nearly 10% of the population of Sub-Saharan Africa lives in Ethiopia.¹⁵ The population is growing

¹³ Payson Center for International Development and Technology Transfer, A Glossary on Violent Conflict: Terms and Concepts Used in Conflict Prevention, Mitigation, and Resolution in the Context of Disaster Relief and Sustainable Development, 4th Edition, USAID, Office of Sustainable Development, Bureau for Africa Crisis, Mitigation and Recovery Division, Payson Conflict Study Group, Tulane University, May 2001

¹⁴ Central Statistical Authority, Statistical Abstract 2005, p. 20; and, Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia, The 2005 National Statistics (2006)

¹⁵ UNCTAD, Investment and Innovation Policy Review of Ethiopia, 2002, p. 13

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at an estimated rate of more than two percent (2.31%)¹⁶ and is expected to reach 100 million by 2018 and 130 million by 2030. Life expectancy at birth is 49.03 years.¹⁷ The country has a predominantly rural demography with a substantial majority of Ethiopians (83.8%) living in rural areas. The population is considered ‘young’¹⁸ with a little more than half below 18 years (more than 51%) and less than three percent (2.7%) 65 years and over.¹⁹

Table 1: Ethiopia - Demographic Statistics

By Region (2006)²⁰	in million	%
Tigray National Regional State	4.334	5.78
Afar National Regional State	1.389	1.85
Amhara National Regional State	19.120	25.47
Oromia National Regional State	26.553	37.37
Somali National Regional State	4.329	5.77
Benishangul Gumuz National Regional State	0.625	0.84
SNNP National Regional State	14.901	19.85
Gambella National Regional State	0.247	0.33
Harari National Regional State	0.196	0.26
Addis Ababa City Administration	2.973	3.96
Dire Dawa City Administration	0.398	0.53
Total Population	75.065	
By Rural/Urban (2006)²¹	in million	%
Rural	62.9	83.8
Urban	12.2	17.2
Population Density		
Crude density (persons/km ²) (2006) ²²	68	
Net density (rural. pop/cul. land (ha) (2005/06) ²³	5.4	
Population Growth		
Population Growth Rate (2005-2010) ²⁴	2.62%	
Urban	4.06%	
Rural	2.35%	

¹⁶ The total fertility rate is 5.22 children born per woman with a birth rate of 37.98 births/1,000 and a death rate of 14.86 deaths/1,000 population (2006)

¹⁷ 45.5 UNDP 2004 and 46 UNICEF 2003

¹⁸ According to the latest official reports issued in 2006, an estimated 43.7% of the population is believed to be between 0-14 years, 53.6% 15-64 years, and 2.7% 65 years and over.

¹⁹ UNICEF, 2007: Around 39,792,000 of the estimated total population of 77,431,000 or around 51.4% are reported to be below 18 years.

²⁰ CSA, Statistical Abstract, 2006

²¹ CSA, Statistical Abstract, 2006

²² CSA, Statistical Abstract, 2006

²³ CSA, Agricultural Sample Survey, Report on Land Utilization of 2005/06 Computed, 2005/06

²⁴ CSA, The 1994 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia, Results at Country Level, Volume II: Analytical Report, 1999

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Source: MoFED, Population and Development Indicators, Population Department, 2006

Ethiopia is a nation of more than 70 ethnic groups who speak more than 80 languages. The most populous ethnic group is the Oromo (34.49%) contributing about one-third of the population closely followed by the Amhara (26.89%). Other ethnic groups with substantial contributions to the national population include the Somali (6.2%), Tigre (6.07%), Sidama (4.01%), Gurage (2.53%), Wolayta (2.31%), Hadiya (1.74%), Afar (1.73%), and Gamo (1.5%).²⁵ Similar diversity is also observed in terms of religious profile with Ethiopians following a large number of religious persuasions. Religious institutions with substantial following include the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (43.5%), and Muslim (33.9%), followed by the Catholic and Protestant churches as well as traditional beliefs.²⁶

3.2. Political History

Until the mid-1970s, Ethiopia is best described as a feudal state under a centralized imperial government. The last Imperial government was replaced by a socialist oriented military dictatorship after a popular uprising in 1974. The military government was itself abolished by a coalition of rebel forces under the name Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in May 1991. In July of the same year, the EPRDF and other political organizations established the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) under a national charter.²⁷ In June 1994 elections were held for the 547-member constituent assembly that adopted a federal constitution in December 1994. The Constitution provides for a tiered government system consisting of a federal government, 9 ethnically-based regional states and two city administrations: Addis Ababa and Diredawa.²⁸

²⁵ CSA, 2007 Census, 2009

²⁶ CSA, 2007 Census, 2009

²⁷ However, some of the major partners of the EPRDF in the TGE, notably the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the Southern Ethiopia Peoples' Democratic Coalition, subsequently left the government.

²⁸ The status of Dire Dawa as a federal city administration was not originally confirmed in the Constitution.

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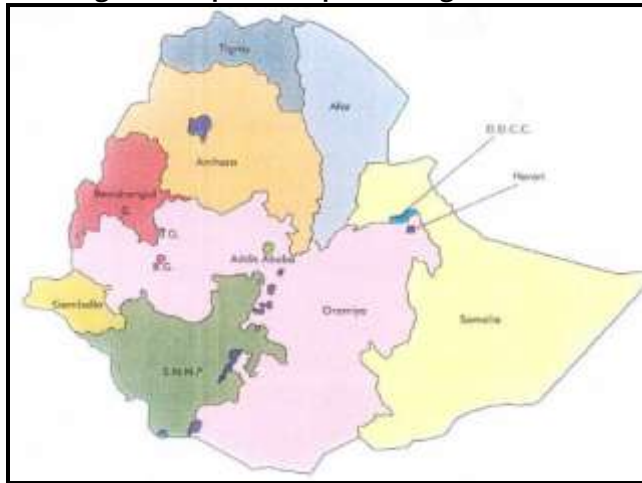
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Figure 1: Map of Ethiopia and Regional States



Source: Clingendael Institute, Ethiopia Post Conflict Assistance, 2004

The FDRE Constitution assigns extensive power to regional states to establish their own government complete with legislative, executive and judicial branches under the Federal Constitution.²⁹ The federal government is organized in a parliamentary system with two chambers: the Council of People's Representatives elected for five-year terms in single-seat constituencies; and the Council of the Federation designated by the regional councils. The prime minister is designated by the majority party or coalition in the HPR following legislative elections. The Constitution also guarantees judicial independence.³⁰

3.3. The Economy

The Ethiopian economy is predominantly agricultural with the sector accounting for 85 per cent of total employment. Production in the agricultural sector is a major part of the country's economy, contributing approximately 42% of the total gross domestic product (GDP) and 90 percent of export earnings in 2006.³¹ Agriculture is predominantly in the hands of small farmers working on individual small holdings mainly for household consumption. The main cash and industrial crops are coffee, oil seeds, pulses, cotton, sisal, tobacco, fruits and sugar cane.

²⁹ Article 50 of the FDRE Constitution: Although the Constitution confers upon regional states extensive legislative, administrative and judicial powers, some scholars and politicians argue that

³⁰ The president and vice president of the Federal Supreme Court are recommended by the prime minister and appointed by the House of People's Representatives; for other federal judges, the prime minister submits candidates selected by the Federal Judicial Administrative Council to the House of People's Representatives for appointment.

³¹ OECD, 2006 and AfDB/OECD, African Economic Outlook, 2008

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The industrial and service sectors including manufacturing, mining, hydropower, trade, tourism, and construction make up the remaining 53 per cent of GDP. Until 2005, the share of the industrial sector has not exceeded 14% of GDP and the manufacturing sub-sector (cottage industry, small and micro enterprises and medium and large scale manufacturing industries) constituted 5.5% of GDP and less than 5% total exports on average.³² The major manufactured export products include clothing and apparel, canned and frozen meat, semi-processed hides and skins, sugar and molasses, footwear, tobacco, beverages, oil cakes and bees wax.

Table 2: The Structure of the Ethiopian Economy (2000-2005)

Sector	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Agriculture	44	45	49	44	47	48
Industry	13	12	13	14	14	13
Services	41	39	39	42	40	39
Growth in Real GDP	5.4	7.4	-0.3	-3.3	11.1	8.8
Growth in Real GDP Per Capita	2.3	4.3	-3.1	-6.0	8.0	5.9

Source: NBE (www.nbe.gov.et) based on data from the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development Revised Series, 1999/00 Base) – 2004/05³³

In 2003/2004 the country recorded a GDP Growth of 11.6% mainly because agricultural production improved significantly following two consecutive drought years (2001/02-2002/03).³⁴ The growth registered during the last three years ending 2006 averaged 10.7 percent.³⁵ According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Ethiopia was the fastest growing non-oil driven African economy in 2007 with a 10.5% GDP growth. The largest contributor to GDP growth was agriculture, which accounted for approximately 42% of the total GDP.³⁶

Despite improvements in the overall economy, a recent report indicated that 23% of the population of the country still lives on less than one US dollar a day.³⁷ The same report, income per capita in Ethiopia is also one of the lowest in the world at around

³² PASDEP, 2005, pp. 149-150

³³ Amdissa Teshome, The Compatibility of Trade Policy with Domestic Policy Interventions in Ethiopia (Draft), Paper Presented at a Workshop on “Staple Food Trade and Market Policy Options for Promoting Development in Eastern and Southern Africa, March 1-2, 2007. FAO – Rome, Italy, May 2007, p. 5

³⁴ Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MOFED), Development Planning and Research Department (DPRD), Annual Progress Report (2003/04), Addis Ababa, March 2005.

³⁵ MOFED, Dec. 2006

³⁶ OECD, 2006

³⁷ UNICEF, The State of the World’s Children, 2007

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160 dollars. The Human Development Index for 2006 ranked Ethiopia 170 out of the 177 countries while the Human Poverty Index ranks the country 92 out of 95.³⁸

3.4. Gender Indicators

Gender inequality, the disempowered position of women and girls, is a characteristic feature of poverty in Ethiopia. Ethiopian women are economically, socially, culturally and politically disadvantaged in the enjoyment of equal rights, in accessing opportunities, decision-making processes, and basic resources/services. Macro-economic indicators of development for the country are consistently low for women. Based on gender related development benchmarks developed by UNDP, Ethiopia has earned a total GDI rank of 148 with index value of 0.393 in 2005 making it one of the least developed countries in terms of gender equality.³⁹

Table 3: Ethiopia-Gender Statistics (2000-2006)

Indicators	1995	2000	2003	2004	2005	2006
Female School Teachers - Primary (%)	27.6	36.9	39.6	43.2	44.6	45.4
Secondary (%)	10.4	12.7	14.5	14.7	16.6	17.2
Economically active population ('000)	26,437	30 045.0	32 568.0	33 438.0	34 323.0	...
Female (as % of total)	42.0	41.9	41.9	41.8	41.8	...
Econ. active pop. in agric. (as % of Total)	84.4	82.4	81.1	80.7	80.2	...
Female (%)	35.0	33.7	32.9	32.6	32.2	...
Male (%)	49.4	48.7	48.2	48.1	48.0	...

Source: ADB, *Selected Statistics on African Countries*, 2008

4. Conflict Profile

The most frequent underlying causes of conflict in the modern world have been ethnic or identity-based disputes arising out of ethnic, religious or linguistic differences, political conflicts involving efforts to change the form of government or the party in power; civil wars between armed independence groups and governments; conflicts for the control of natural resources such as land and water.⁴⁰ Similar factors have contributed to the turbulent history of Ethiopia which has been marked by repressive and authoritarian rule, famine, civil war, ethnic divisions, political turmoil and economic instability. The profile of conflict in the country during

³⁸ Government of Ethiopia-UNICEF: Country Programme Action Plan, 2007-2011

³⁹ African Development Bank, 2008

⁴⁰ Alex P. Schmid, *Thesaurus and Glossary of Early Warning and Conflict Prevention Terms* (Abridged Version), Sanam B. Anderlini ed., Synthesis Foundation, Erasmus University, May 1998

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the past few decades has been dominated by three forms conflict, namely political, religious and ethnic.⁴¹

4.1. Political Conflict

The political history of Ethiopia is characterized by recurrent civil war and internal armed conflict. In recent history the country had been in the grips of a popular revolution in 1974, a period of 'red terror' and armed conflict across the country, and seventeen years of armed conflict between the then Military Government and opposition groups in Eritrea and Tigray. While large scale internal conflicts subsided since 1991, incidents of political conflict – both intermittent and ongoing - still occur in the country. Recent examples include the conflict between the National Defense Forces and belligerent groups in the boarder with Somalia, and violence following the electoral disputes in 2005.

The more recent incidents of political conflict can for the most part be attributed to perceived failure of the democratization process in the country in terms of progress and in accommodating the interests of political actors with national elections acting as key triggers. This process apparently started with the boycotting of political processes, mainly the 1995 and 2000 national elections, by political parties.⁴² Some of these political parties then proceeded to adopt armed struggle as a strategy in achieving their goals opening the door for violent political conflict. Similarly, while the third national elections held in May 2005 were considered the most competitive to date, perceived partiality of the electoral system hampered the peaceful resolution of disputed election results. The subsequent call by some opposition parties for a boycott of parliament by elected opposition candidates and civil disobedience to protest the election results triggered violence in June and November of 2005 and clashes with security forces.⁴³ These events ultimately led to the arrest, prosecution and conviction of opposition leaders some of whom have since taken up political violence to achieve their desired goals despite a subsequent amnesty.

4.2. Religious Conflict

Religious tolerance has generally been a hallmark of Ethiopian society, especially among followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Muslims. Ethiopian communities have been able to co-exist in relative peace despite the short history of

⁴¹ Anemone Fritzen, Helen Byon, Anne Nowakowaski, and Anna Pollock, Ethiopia: A Risk Assessment in Brief, Based on CIPF Risk Assessment Methodology, February 2006

⁴² Pausewang, Siegfried, 'Conclusion: democracy unfulfilled?' in Pausewang et al. (eds.), Ethiopia Since the Derg: a Decade of Democratic Pretension and Performance, London, 2002

⁴³ Proclamation, No. 478/1998, An Inquiry Commission to Investigate the disorder occurred in Addis Ababa and in some parts of the country Proclamation, Federal Negarit Gazeta No.8, December 21st, 2005

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separation between church and state. The recent records of the Government of Ethiopia in the protection of religious freedoms are also considered exemplary. However, incidents of religious conflict have occurred in unprecedented numbers across the country in the past two decades. For instance, the following were among the incidents of religious conflict listed in two reports issued in 2008 and 2009:⁴⁴

- September 2006: a series of clashes occurred between the Muslim, Orthodox, and Protestant communities in several parts of western Ethiopia, starting in Dembi in Oromia Regional State and resulting in the deaths of ten persons, burning of houses and churches as well as displacement;
- September and October 2006: forcible conversion of several hundred Christians following religious conflicts in Dembi and Beshesha in Oromia Regional State;
- October 2006: killing of four EOC followers and torching of a church in Beshesha in Oromia Regional State;
- October 2006: clashes between Muslims and Protestants resulted in 9 deaths and a large number of wounded as well as burning of houses, churches and a mosque in Begi and Gidami in Oromia Regional State;
- March 2007: killing of an evangelist by local youth in Jima town of Oromia Regional State;
- April 2007: raids on the residences of evangelists and destruction of property in Bambasse town in southwest Ethiopia;
- January 2009: clashes between Muslims and EOC followers lead to the death of one policeman and injury to eight civilians in Gondar City; and,
- January 2009: a series of localized religious clashes between Muslim and Orthodox Christian youth in Diredawa resulted in one dead and 20 injured.

The structural, contributing and triggering causes for the incidence of religious conflict are likely to be multifarious due mainly to the nature of religious values. However, the nature of some reported incidents, profile of the actors and localities where the acts of violence occurred give as some insight into the possible causes.

⁴⁴ US Department of Labor, International Religious Freedom Report 2007, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 2008; and, United States Department of State, 2009 Report on International Religious Freedom - Ethiopia, Covers the period from July 1, 2008, to June 30, 2009, 26 October 2009, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4ae861450.html>

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First, many of the reported incidents involved a series of violent conflicts happening within a small period of time. For instance, all incidents of religious violence reported above for the period July 2006 to January 2009 fall within three periods: September-October 2006, March 26-April 2 of 2007, and January 8-26 of 2009. This would suggest that the factors underlying the incidents were transitory and members of the groups perceived to be in conflict lacked sustained motivations inherent to religious conflicts. This inference is supported by the positive role of religious institutions and leaders from all sides in attempting to address the conflicts such as the December 2006 joint call by the leaders of the EOC, EIASC, Evangelist, and Catholic churches for peace and reconciliation among their followers. Finally, the instigators and perpetrators of the worst incidents of religious violence in 2006 across the Western Zones of the Oromia Regional State have been identified, prosecuted and sentenced in 2007 and 2008. The only logical conclusion one can reach in relation to most of the incidents is that the religious causes of the conflict have been superseded other more potent factors possibly including ethnic and political causes.

This does not, however, explain all incidents of religious violence or preclude the presence of latent causes contributing to or triggering the violence. One incident that may not be easily explained in terms of the above argument is the January 2009 clashes between Muslims and Orthodox Christians in Gondar, which is unlike the other reported incidents in a number of ways. These include:

- The incident occurred in an area not formerly associated with violent religious conflicts;
- The time-frame for the incident does not fall within the period of related incidents between the conflicting parties, excluding the possibility of one incident instigating another as is often the case with religious conflict;
- The parties to the conflict do not fit the profile of actors involved in the other set of incidents; and,
- The triggering cause, identified as an attempt by the Muslim community to build a Mosque, is directly associated with religious values.

Though these peculiar features make the incident in Gondar distinct from those reported in other parts of the country during the three year period, the same features characterize it as a bona fide religious conflict with genuine perception of wrong on both sides. This would suggest the existence of underlying causes⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Gondar being one of the three towns (the others being Lalibela and Axum) considered sacred ground by the followers of the EOC and lacking a mosque to date, the conflicting goals of the

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constituting a potential for violent conflict if and when a sufficiently strong triggering event occurs.

4.3. Ethnic Conflict

Ethnic conflict is generally understood as a form of inter-group conflict where the causes for the conflict, the profile of the groups and positioning of individuals as parties is determined by criteria relating to psychological, social-structural, and cultural dimensions of human interaction defining ethnicity.⁴⁶ Under the Ethiopian legal system, a "Nation, Nationality or People", referring to an ethnic group, has been defined as

"... a group of people who have or share a large measure of a common culture or similar customs, mutual intelligibility of language, common or related belief of identities, a common psychological make-up, and who inhabit an identifiable, predominantly contiguous territory".⁴⁷

This understanding is most meaningful in the context of multi-ethnic states wherein the conflicting ethnic groups are members. However, since the conception of ethnicity often extends beyond political borders, the concept of ethnic conflict sometimes applies to groups within two or more national boundaries.

The characterization of "ethnic conflict" in the Ethiopian context has historically been dominated by two perspectives of state formation and expansion. On the one hand, the expanding powers identified themselves in terms of ethnicity to ideologically and politically justify the appropriation of land and install the rights of private property.⁴⁸ The occupied communities, on the other hand, capitalized on ethnicity to mobilize and resist the injustice of imposed central rule. Such characterization has led one writer to claim that the aim of ethnic mobilization and movement in the Horn of Africa (including Ethiopia) has been aiming in controlling or weakening the state as the key actor in the allocation of resources, political power

parties are obvious. Not so obvious is the timing of the incident which may be explained by more assertive exercise of religious freedom by the Muslim community.

⁴⁶ Marc Howard Ross, *The Culture of Conflict: Interpretations and Interests in Comparative Perspective*, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 1993; and, Ronald A. Remnick, *Theory of Ethnicity: An Anthropologist's Perspective*, Lanham, MD, University Press of America, 1983

⁴⁷ Article 2/5, Consolidation of the House of the Federation and Definition of its Powers and Responsibilities Proclamation 251/2001, Federal Negarit Gazeta - No. 41 6th July, 2001

⁴⁸ Messay Kebede, *Survival and Modernization: Ethiopia's Enigmatic Present: A Philosophical Discourse*, New Jersey and Asmara, The Red Sea Press, Inc., 1999, p. 53

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and social status.⁴⁹ More recently, political developments in the 1960s and 70s further highlighted and clarified the dual nature of political conflict in Ethiopia as along ethnic and class lines. Strengthened by the principle of ideologically sanctioned conceptions of self-determination, this process led to the formation of political organizations and liberation movements along ethnic lines during the 1970s across the country.⁵⁰ Having identified the central government as representing the interests of the Amhara ruling class, ethnic and regional liberation movements were able to mobilize support for political, economic and social objectives. Ethnic identity thus became an integral part of the constitutional and political system including the structure and exercise of State power in Ethiopia as well as political and social organization.⁵¹

The implications of this state of affairs to the conception of ‘ethnic conflict’ as well as the conflict profile of the country are fundamental. At the outset, the formal recognition of ethnic groups clearly defines their interests in social, political and economic terms that are easier to harmonize. Moreover, since ethnicity has been integrated within the formal decision making structure, the structural causes of ethnic conflict such as issues of social justice, resource allocation, political power are addressed at the structural level. The whole system of public decision making also functions as a mechanism for the identification and prevention of potential conflicts, as well as managing conflicts that have already occurred. In this context, the incidence of full fledged ethnic conflict in the least presupposes the failure of the formal system.

However, the process of transformation by itself poses challenges in two respects. First, the permeation of the political, economic and social structure of the society with the idea of ethnicity calls for a shift in the relationships among individuals and communities as claims are asserted and accommodated. This is likely to create situations where tension arises between exercise of newly defined rights and persisting traditional expectations. For instance, the rights of a minority ethnic group to use one’s language in education may mean barriers to employment or access to the same services for speakers of a previously preferred language. Such pains of

⁴⁹ Berhanu Gutema Balcha, Ethnicity and restructuring of the state in Ethiopia, DIPER Research Series, Working Paper No. 6, Development, Innovation and International Political Economy Research (DIIPER), Aalborg University, Denmark, 2008 (<http://www.diiper.ihis.dk/>)

⁵⁰ Teshale Tibebu, The Making of Modern Ethiopia 1896 – 1974, New Jersey, Red Sea Press, 1995, p. 176, Messay Kebede, Directing Ethnicity Toward Modernity, Social Theory and Practice, Volume 27, no. 2, April 2001, 2001, p. 12; Harold Marcus, A History of Ethiopia, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2002, p. 221

⁵¹ According to the records of the National Election Board of Ethiopia, there were about one hundred ethnic-based political parties by 2005

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change are likely to act as short term triggers for ethnic hostility, though ethnic conflict is not likely to occur in the absence of the requisite structural causes.⁵²

Secondly, while the articulation of ethnic interests and formalization of structures pays dividends, it also precludes the flexibility inherent in traditional values and structures of ethnic groups. Under normal circumstances ethnic identity, belongingness and their meaning are determined by a mix of psychological, social-structural, and cultural considerations enabling a relationship-based appreciation of ethnicity. Once formalized, these considerations evolve into formal standards, attributions and definitions devoid of contextual understanding. For instance, social networks defining an individual's ethnic group based on frequency of contacts, rights and duties associated with ethnicity and the traditions of the group will be replaced with a statement of ethnic background on the individual's ID card. The process thus displaces the components of ethnic identity essentially changing the nature of interests and structures. One likely consequence is likely to be resistance from conservative elements within ethnic groups with possible emergence of splinter groups and triggering subsequent ethnic hostility. Again, as long as the formal system is functional, the absence of structural causes precludes actual ethnic conflict.

In conclusion, ethnic conflicts by definition arise from structural causes associated with discrimination and subjugation within the context of a multi-ethnic or dual national system. These causes are strengthened by contributing causes generally relating to the weakening of state structure sustaining the status quo, which create situations in which violent conflict becomes a feasible alternative for the aggrieved ethnic group. In addition, specific events or actions may act as triggers for mobilization. Since the existence of the structural causes is a mandatory condition without which the occurrence of ethnic conflict cannot be conceived, the integration of ethnicity in the governance system of Ethiopia amounts to a holistic preventive measure for ethnic conflict. However, success in ensuring peace depends on the efficient functioning of the formal system.

⁵² The incidence of conflict between the Anyuua and Nuer ethnic groups in the Gambella Regional State may be a telling example of transitory conflicts arising until the new point of accommodation is reached.