2. Conceptual clarification and literature review

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter I define and discuss concepts pertinent to the subject of this study. These include: ethnicity, ethnic conflict, causes of conflict, repercussions of conflict, and conflict resolution. The debates in the existing theories of ethnicity and ethnic conflict (primordialism, instrumentalism and constructivism) are also presented here. The theoretical argument gives emphasis on the instrumentalist theory of ethnicity and ethnic conflict and its relevance in African context. Much focus is given on how elite manipulation directs and instigates ethnic conflict.

2.2. Defining ethnicity and ethnic conflict

2.2.1. Ethnicity

The term “ethnicity” is a relatively new concept, first emerging in the Oxford English Dictionary in 1953, but its English origins are connected to the term “ethnic,” which has been in use since the Middle Ages. The true origins of “ethnic” have been traced back to Greece and the term *ethnos*, which was used in reference to band, race\(^2\), tribe\(^3\), a people,

\(^2\)Before World War II, the concept ‘tribe’ was the concept of choice for ‘pre-modern’ societies and ‘race’ for modern societies (Jenkins, 2001). The relationship between ethnicity and race is obscure. Whereas there is much common characteristic they are different terms. Pierre Van den Berghe (1978) illustrates “race as a special marker of ethnicity” that uses biological characteristics as an ethnic marker (Smolina 2003: 240). In the post-war era the term ‘ethnicity’ eventually replaced ‘race’. ‘Race is typically differentiated from ethnicity in terms of a contrast between physical and cultural differences’ (Banton, 1988:1-15). But racial classification is a sociopolitical construct, not biological absolute (Parrilo, 2002:13).

\(^3\)The decolonization phenomenon between the 1950s and 1970s provided the background to critiques of such concepts as ‘tribe’, which was attacked for its pejorative connotations of ‘primitiveness’ and ‘backwardness’, and dismissed as a construct of colonial regimes (Ranger 1983:250). According to Fried (1967, 1975) the word tribe is derived from the Latin term *tribus*, which was used by the Romans to refer to certain peoples who were not technologically advanced. Fried claimed that the term is often applied to a
or a group. In more recent colonial and immigrant history, the term “ethnic” falls under the dichotomy of “Us” and “Them”. The “Us,” the majority, are perceived as non-ethnics and the “Them,” new immigrants or minorities, as ethnic. At the same time, variations of the term have developed, including ethnic identity, ethnic origin, ethnocentrism, and ethnicism (Hutchinson and Smith, 1996:4–5).

The study of ethnicity confronts interrelated terminological, political and conceptual problems. There is little consensus among contemporary scholars as to what ethnicity is and what constitute ethnic groups. ‘Ethnicity is, as stated above, a recent coinage; its precise and universal meaning is not yet agreed upon’ (Jenkins, 2008:10; Merera, 2003:21; Vaughan, 2003:43). In academic writing the concept is relatively recent and it is ‘still on the move’ (Glazer and Moynihan, 1975:1), meaning different things to different people (Vaughan, 2003:43). Scholars from different fields have increasingly been using the concept ethnic and its derivative term ethnicity with particular societies in the different corners of the world, particularly since the 1970s, but they have not yet found or agreed on any satisfactory explanation (Vanhanen, 1999; Merera, 2003; Yishak, 2008; Walelign, 2011; Girum, 2011). Due to such complex and rather contentious issues surrounding the notion, understanding and elucidating ethnicity tend to be a challenging task. It seems because of this lack of precision that Markakis (1993:199) has used the term ‘chameleon like phenomena’ in his attempt to clarify the concept of ethnicity. Merera, portrays clearly how defining ethnicity is a difficult task, when he says,

particular group by a more powerful group and usually has a pejorative connotation. Scupin and Decorse (2008) maintain the view that the same types of stereotypes that many people have had in the past, and sometimes still have, about the racial inferiority, low intelligence, and cultural inferiority of indigenous or aboriginal peoples such as foragers were applied to, and still some times persist about, tribal people and societies. Fried’s criticisms have, however, sensitized most anthropologists to the vagueness of the term tribe.
‘Ethnicity’ and ‘nationalism’ are particularly elusive; they have continued to frustrate the development of common terms of reference. Even, the attempted definitions are sometimes either ideologically plugged-in or limited to local situations; hence lack universal meaning and application” (Merera, 2003:20).

Sarah Vaughan speculates the cause for the obscurity of the concept ethnicity. She says that the problem has probably been worsened by the inter-disciplinary pedigree of ethnic studies, which has left it a ‘conundrum’... subject to parochial analyses. Its ‘chameleon- like capacity’ to merge with other elements of social identity and solidarity further exacerbated the problem (Vaughan, 2003:43-44). Yinger (1997:10) contends that this usage of a variety of overlapping concepts (nation, race, tribe, ethnic group) by different scholars to assign similar phenomena complicated the making of boundaries of ethnicity. However, he suggests that, ethnicity is the concept best able to tie them together, to highlight their common referents, and promote the development of a theory of multicultural societies.

As a result of its confusing attributes, as can be observed in various literatures, scholars in the field glommed the concept ‘ethnicity’ in different ways and attempt to define and describe it differently. These include: a distinctive marker of a group’s communal legacy, which is shared and passed down through the generations (Banks, 2002); a political and ideological manifestation of an ethnic group (Merera, 2003:22); a matter of people hood (Ruane and Todd, 2004); the ‘world of personal identity collectively ratified and publicly expressed’ and ‘socially ratified personal identity’ (Geertz, 1973:268,309); a sense of group identity that can be derived from actual or perceived commonalities including religion, language and race (Edwards, 1985:6); a
matter of political manipulation, and individual decision-making and goal orientation (Barth, 1969); the products of historical forces (Gellner, 1983). To add one more to the confusion, in African context, particularly in post 1990s Ethiopia, I can say, ethnicity is an everywhere/ever-present mode of personal and social identification. Ethnicity is becoming a means by which, some individuals get job, be promoted to higher positions/posts, ID card to the membership of an association/organization, a means to get resources such as land particularly in urban areas, etc.

The wide variety of designations, however, has made the notion of ethnicity more complex. This has led to great controversy concerning the identification and measurement of the phenomenon. But the preoccupation with definition is not simply an academic exercise. It has vital practical connotation. Frustration with the inability fully to grasp and define the concept of ethnicity has led to a tendency which says: *Let us not waste much time trying to define the concept; instead let us recognize it as a major problem and put our energies into developing methods to manage it* (Hizkias, 1996). The problem with that approach is that if we do not have common understanding on what the phenomenon is, we might be wasting our energy by focusing on the wrong problems or by prescribing a remedy for a problem that has not been diagnosed correctly or for the problem that is not there totally. Doing so, could even run the risk of making the situation worse instead of remedying it (Hizkias, ibid). As a result of this controversy and lacking agreed upon definition to ethnicity, some resorted to analyze and systematically describe it rather than defining it. Of course it is easier to describe than to define ethnicity.

Accordingly, some state that, different characteristics may serve to distinguish ethnic groups from one another, but the most usual are language, history or ancestry (real or
imagined), religion and styles of dress or adornment. However, they maintain the view that, there is nothing innate about ethnicity; it is purely social phenomena that is produced and reproduced over time. Through socialization, young people assimilate the life styles, norms and beliefs of their communities (Giddens, 2001:246-347; Du-Toit, 1978:9). Members of an ethnic group share certain beliefs, values, habits, customs, and norms because of their common background. They define themselves as different or unique due to cultural features. This distinction may arise from language, religion, historical experience, geographic location, kinship, or ‘race’. These are what we call markers of ethnic group that may include a collective name, belief in common descent, a sense of solidarity, and an association with a specific territory, which the group may or may not hold (Ryan, 1990: xiii, xiv). It is not enough for a group to have certain common features because it is the interaction of various ethnic groups which according to Eriksen (1995: 251) creates ethnicity. For ethnicity to come about, [two distinctive] groups must have a minimum of contact with each other, and they must entertain ideas of each other as being culturally different from themselves. If these conditions are not fulfilled, there is no ethnicity, for ethnicity is essentially an aspect of a relationship, not a property of a group (Erikson 2002:12). In other words, ethnic groups are not isolated. Ethnic groups can only know of their existence by being in contact with others.

Premdas (1989) and Smith (1986) describe ethnicity from another facet-----objective and subjective dimensions. Ethnicity, as to them, can be analytically conceived to contain two dimensions: objective and subjective. The objective aspect of ethnicity is the observable culture shared symbols of a particular group. It may involve a specific language or religious tradition that is maintained by the group, or it may involve
particular clothing, hair styles, preference in food, or other visible characteristics. The objective factors may be fictional, but because group members perceive them to be factual, this imports solidarity to a group’s activities. The subjective aspect of ethnicity involves the internal beliefs of the people regarding their shared ancestry. They may believe that their ethnic group has a shared origin, family ancestry, or common homeland. In some cases, they may believe that people of their ethnicity have specific physical characteristics in common. It is the subjective factor, the beliefs of group members that serve the critical function of establishing group identity, uniqueness, and boundaries. This subjective aspect of ethnicity entails a ‘we-feeling’, a sense of community or oneness within one’s own in-group versus other ‘out-group. It doesn’t matter whether these beliefs are historically or scientifically accurate, genuine, or fictional. This subjective identification of individuals with an ideology of (at least imagined) shared history, unique past, and symbolic attachment with homeland is often the most important expression of ethnicity. Most groups in competition or conflict with others develop collective ethnic group consciousness (Premdas, 1989; Smith, 1986).

Hutchinson and Smith’s (1996:6–7) description of an ethnic group, or *ethnie*, seems comprehensive one in that it enables understanding the concept better. As to them an ethnic group consists of six main features. These include: 1) a common *proper name*, to identify and express the “essence” of the community; 2) a myth of *common ancestry* that includes the idea of common origin in time and place and that gives an ethnie a sense of fictive kinship; 3) shared *historical memories*, or better, shared memories of a common past or pasts, including heroes, events, and their commemoration; 4) one or more *elements of common culture*, which include religion, customs, and language; 5) a *link*
with a *homeland*, not necessarily its physical occupation by the ethnie, only its symbolic attachment to the ancestral land, as with Diaspora peoples; and 6) a *sense of solidarity* on the part of at least some sections of the ethnie’s population.

However, an early and influential reference to ethnic groups is found in Max Weber’s *Economy and Society*, first published in 1922 (1978:389-98). In this writing Weber contends that ethnic membership does not constitute a group; it only facilitates group formation of any kind, particularly in the political sphere. On the other hand, it is primarily the political community, no matter how artificially organized that inspires the belief in common ethnicity (Weber, 1978:389-98). Here Weber seems to be suggesting that the belief in common ancestry is likely to be a consequence of collective political action rather than its cause; people come to see themselves as belonging together—coming from a common background—as a consequence of acting together. Collective interests thus do not simply reflect or follow from alleged similarities and differences between people; the active pursuit of shared interests does, however, encourage ethnic identification.

As we have seen in the above discussion, Scholars from different fields (anthropology, sociology, political science, etc) defined ethnicity and ethnic group on the basis of *objective* markers (e.g., primordial elements such as language, religion, culture, common ancestry, and shared territory or homeland, etc) and *subjective* elements (e.g., belief, common psychological make-up, collective historical memory, free choice, etc). In this work, ‘ethnic group’ is defined as a pre-national group that emphasizes more than one of the elements both from objective and subjective sphere, recognizes/perceives itself and is recognized by others as a distinct cultural and/or political entity with its own
specific name. Finally, I would like to flash more light on the views of Fredrick Barth, and Merera for they have some relevance to the case in my study. ‘Ethnic feelings and associated behavior vary in intensity within ethnic groups and countries and overtime. A change in the degree of importance attached to an ethnic identity may reflect political changes… (Soviet rule ends ----ethnic feeling rises)…’ (Barth, 1969). Ethnicity is a political and ideological manifestation of an ethnic group, which emanates from their feeling of unfair governance and the resultant discontent and dissatisfaction. ‘Ethnicity involves the mobilization of collectivities for collective action to change their situation within or outside a given nation-state’ (Merera, 2003).

2.2.2. Ethnic conflict

In popular parlance the word conflict is used to mean a fight, struggle, collision or clashing (of opposed principles, ideas, interests, wills), to come into disagreement, or incompatibility (Jayaram and Saberwal, eds. 1996:4; Gove, 1976:655). Conflict is defined as a condition of disagreement in an interaction and usually occurs as a result of clash of interest between the parties involved in some form of relationship (Imobighe, 2003:32). The University for Peace states conflict as a fight or possible confrontation among two or more parties aspiring towards incompatible or competitive means or ends (2005:322). Conflict is taken by some as a struggle between individuals or collectives, over values or claims to status, power and scarce resource in which the aim of the rivals are to counterbalance, injure or eliminate their rivals’ (Goodhand, 1999:23; Kolbo, 1964:123; Coser, 1956:8).
From the above discussions, we construe that the term ‘conflict’ describes a situation in which two or more actors pursue incompatible, yet from their individual perspectives entirely just, goals. Ethnic conflicts are one particular form of such conflict: that in which the goals of at least one conflicting party are defined in (exclusively) ethnic terms, and in which the primary fault line of confrontation is one of ethnic distinctions. whatever the concrete issues over which conflict erupts, at least one of the conflicting parties will explain its dissatisfaction in ethnic terms—that is, one party to the conflict will claim that its distinct ethnic identity is the reason why its members cannot realize their interests, why they do not have the same rights, or why their claims are not satisfied. Thus, ethnic conflict is a form of group conflict in which at least one of the parties involved interprets the conflict, its causes, and potential remedies along an actually existing or perceived discriminating ethnic divide (Wolf, 2006). Simply speaking, ‘ethnic conflict has come to mean cleavages between groups based on differentiations in ethnic identities’ (Hizkias, 1996; Ahmed, 2003). When a group of people attack or target for fighting some other group of people because of their membership to certain ethnic group we can simply call it ethnic conflict.

Ethnic conflicts can also be taken as conflicts occurring between ethnic minorities and majorities. As indicated by Yagcioglu (1996), such conflicts tend to be inflexible. They can be settled for a certain period, but often relapse after some time. This is precisely because the parties involved in such conflicts usually block the satisfaction of each other’s basic human needs. The minorities tend to believe that their identity is not recognized, that they are given fewer opportunities for development, and that their culture
and, sometimes their existence, are challenged. The majorities, on the other hand, may also perceive the minorities as a challenge to their security.

Some contend that the term ethnic conflict itself is a misnomer—not the conflict is ‘ethnic’ but at least one of its participants, or to put it differently, an ethnic conflict involves at least one conflict party that is organized around the ethnic identity of its members (Cordell and Wolff, 2010). It can be also perceived as any form of civic clash within or across state boundaries when at least one of the warring parties is mobilized and organized along ethnic lines or on behalf of a certain ethnic group (Tishkov, 1999:576). For example, the conflict in Northern Ireland, Kosovo, Cyprus, the Israeli–Palestinian, Kashmir, and Sri Lanka, the genocide in Rwanda, the civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the violence in the Sudan are all, in one way or another, ethnic conflicts. This is so because their manifestations are violent and their causes and consequences obviously ethnic (Wolff, 2006: 2). Besides, most of the wars in the Horn of Africa during the last decades of the 20thC ---the civil wars in the Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Djibouti--- have been described in terms of severe ethnic conflicts (Befikadu and Diribssa, 2005:77).

However, conflicts are neither useful nor harmful by themselves. Their outcome is measured upon our opinion of conflicts, the way we manage conflicts and our attitude towards the conflicting parties. If we are able to handle conflicts, we can benefit from their potential for change; it is likely to bring basic positive changes or development in the lives of the community. According to Varsheny, the real issue is whether ethnic conflict is violent or is expressed in the institutionalized channels of the polity as
nonviolent or peaceful mobilization. If ethnic protest takes an institutionalized form in parliaments, in assemblies, in bureaucracies, or on the streets it is conflict no problem, but not violence. Such conflict must be distinguished from a situation in which protest takes violent forms, rioting breaks out on the streets and in the neighborhoods, and in its most extreme form, a planned campaign of persecution or extermination sanctioned by government and directed against an ethnic group. Given how different these outcomes are, explanations of institutionalized conflict may not be the same as those of ethnic violence and uprising. Further explanations of rioting may also be different from those for pogroms (or organized killing of minority) and civil wars. Ethnic peace should, for all practical purpose, be conceptualized as an institutionalized channeling and resolution of ethnic conflicts. It should be understood as an absence of violence, not as an absence of conflict. The world might well be a comfortable place if we could eliminate ethnic and national conflicts from our midst… (Varshney, 2002:25).

In sum, the stakes in ethnic conflicts are extremely diverse, ranging from legitimate political, social, cultural, and economic grievances of disadvantaged ethnic groups to predatory agendas of states and small cartel of elites, to so-called national security interests, to name but a few (Wolff, 2006:5-6). Arguably, the existence of conflict is not a surprising thing in itself. Conflicts are as old as human societies themselves. Historically, individuals, social groups and societies have disputed and competed against one another over scarce resources----land, money, social status, political power, and ideology. They have even fought one another and bitterly sought the exclusion and/or take-over of rivals, in order to control these scarce resources. ‘It is hardly possible to avoid conflict as long as there is human interaction: problem occurs when a society and politicians, in
particular, fail to carefully handle contradictions through tolerance, dialogue, and reciprocal accommodation of interests’ (Hussien, 2004:9).

The fact that the study of ethnicity and ethnic conflict is confronted with lack of common terminological and conceptual understanding and shared perspective, led to the emergence of three broad competing approaches to the explanation of the concepts (ethnicity and ethnic conflict). These three approaches to the explanation of ethnicity and ethnic conflict are the primordialists, the instrumentalists and the constructivists’ approaches. Below, what follows is a discussion of each of these competing views that would underpin the process of handling this research topic. To state an important observation from the outset: to fully grasp the theoretical discourse on ethnicity and ethnic conflict is at least as difficult as to define the terms. At any rate, to unpack ethnicity and ethnic conflict so as to understand them better, we need to ask: Under what conditions are ethnicity and ethnic conflict likely to arise?

2.3. Competing approaches to explain ethnicity and ethnic conflict

2.3.1. Primordialism

Primordialism often referred to as ‘essentialism theory’ or ‘objective theory’, is an early model developed in the 1960s, and is associated mainly with anthropologist Clifford Geertz (Scupin and DeCorse, 2008:606). The primordialists theory conceives the concept of ethnicity as a ‘historic artifact’ as in Geertz (1963) or as something naturally possessed from birth or as an inherent quality in one’s make-up as in Cohen (1974: xii). Primordial qualities used in this definition are common language, common name and myth of descent, shared history and other inherited characteristics common to the members of the
group (Poluha, 1998:32). According to Geertz (1963c), ethnic attachments based on assumed kinship and other social ties and religious traditions are deeply rooted within the individual through the enculturation process. Geertz states that ethnic affiliation or link or association persists because it is basic to a person’s identity. In this view, as people are encultured into a particular ethnic group, they form deep emotional attachments to it. This sentiment sometimes evident through ethnic boundary markers which distinguish one ethnic group from another.

To consolidate his arguments, Geertz illustrates how numerous third world countries were trying to build nations and integrate their political institutions based on a ‘civil order’---- a political system based on democratic representation processes rather than traditional or ‘primordial’ aspects of kinship, race, ethnicity, language, and religion. However, this new civil order clashed with older traditional or ‘primordial’ aspects of kinship, race, ethnicity, language and religion. He states that there is a basic conflict between the modern state and one’s personal identity based on these primordial ties (Geertz, ibid).

Primordialists take ethnicity as a collective identity, so deeply rooted in historical experience that should properly be treated as a given in human relations (Esman, 1994:10). They argue that ethnicity is both static and uniform in terms of attachments such as common ancestry, birth place, and shared territory, linguistic, religious and other social phenomenon (Brass, 1991:68-76). To make simple, according to primordialism, common history, traditions, language, beliefs and values are objective cultural measures that distinguish one group from another. Historical continuity is maintained by shared culture transmitted over generations. Claims of an identity group to an autonomous status
are supported by their cultural and religious concerns. Such elements as myths, memories, values and symbols are used to close ethnic group boundaries. On the other hand, identity boundaries between in-group and out-groups are established by a subjective group consciousness (Joeng, 2000:71-72).

The Primordialists (Geertz, 1963; Van den Berghe, 1995; etc) see the objective markers as crucial factors that determine ethnic identity. They see objective factors as natural, innate, given, ineffable, immutable and non-manipulable (Geertz, 1963; Grosby, 1996). As to primordialists these objective factors predetermine a group’s identity and are ascriptive elements that distinguishing one group from another.

Another advocate of the primordialist’s model, Joshua Fishman, explains ethnicity as having a kinship phenomenon; continuity within the self and within those who share an intergenerational link to common ancestors. Ethnicity is partly experienced as being ‘bone of their bone, flesh of their flesh, and blood of their blood’. Fisherman (1980) further goes on to say that the human body itself is viewed as an expression of ethnicity, and ethnicity is commonly felt to be in the blood, bones, and flesh. It is crucial that we recognize ethnicity as a concrete, living reality that makes every human a link in an everlasting bond from generation to generation. Ethnicity is thus experienced as a guarantor of life that is conceived as being eternal.

Equally, primordialists’ account of ethnic conflict contends that a group is turned into a natural community by the common bonds shared by the group members. Individuals belong to a group through primordial ties of blood, kinship, language, customs, etc. As ethnic division is relegated to pre determined (ascriptive) characteristics, group membership is supposed to be the given of human existence. The sense of self is linked
with the identity of the group of ‘primitive’ levels. Belonging to ethnic groups is tinged with raw and ‘primitive’ affects that pertain to one’s sense of self and its protection (Joeng, 2000). Threats to these primordial elements results in violent and intractable conflicts leading to irredentism and secession, thus disrupting the state boundary (Geertz, 1967).

As to Varsheny, primordialism relies on two interrelated arguments, sometimes made together. First, it often refers primordial or ancient enmity as a cause of contemporary conflict. The enmities are said to be based on intrinsic differences of race, religion, or culture, and individuals acquire the characteristics of their races, religion, or culture. Second, it argues that ethnicity inheres in human beings, in such ways that all of us certainly seek, or can easily be made to protect, our ancestry. Either way, conflict results, for a rational calculus is suppressed by the emotional ties of blood or by ancient hatreds. Primordialists further contend that human beings perform or observe not only the positive qualities of the group to which they belong but also its prejudices about other groups. Often in history, inherent group differences activate prejudices about other groups and trigger violence (Varshney, 2002). According to this view, present-day ethnic conflicts can be traced back to older animosities between groups. This view focuses on the inherent power of ethnic differences. Therefore, as to this view, almost any popular account of conflict between Hindus and Muslims, Serbs and Croats, Arabs and Jews, whites and blacks, Catholics and protestants, Hutus and Tutsis is marked by ‘old animosities’, ‘tribalism’, and ‘ties of blood’ (Varshney, ibid).

According to primordialists’ school of thought, the only possible solution to identity-based or ethnic conflict in a multi-national/ethnic society, if one takes as logical the
conclusion of the primordialists approach, is self determination to its extreme type or secession. Accordingly, a society with homogeneous objective factors is guaranteed to have political stability. However, the case of the homogeneous Somalia challenges such a prediction: serious conflicts can easily exist within a single cultural group (Kifle, 2007:47).

Primordialism has been challenged by many for presenting a static and naturalistic view of ethnicity that reduces cultural and social behavior to biological drives’ (Eller and Coughlan, 1993:200; Ratecliffe, 1994:7). The primordial assumption ignores change and dissolution of ethnic groups, not to speak of the more modern processes of fusion of ethnic groups through intermarriage. Many ethnic groups are often characterized by internal diversity that reflecting various political commitments, lineage cleavages, ideologies, class and occupational backgrounds, as well as differentially located communities (Forrest, 2004:25). Primordialists underrate people’s interest and strong commitments to rational values, senses of duties, classes and other socially constructed ends. Cooperation and intimacy among people occur not only between relatives, but also can extend to non-kin groups based on belief system, ideological commitments, professional interests and other shared possessions of common attributes outside primordial stance. Economic, social, political or environmental conditions have a capacity to engender both conflict and cooperation among peoples (Thompson, 1989:181). Though primodialism is appreciated for giving weight to people’s feelings about their identity (or its emphasize on the meaning and significance that people invest in their ethnic attachments), it could not explain why, if animosities are so historically inherent in cultural differences, tension and violence between groups tend to vary at
different times, or why the same groups live peacefully in some places but come to blows violently in other (Varshney, 2002:28-29). Some constructivist held an extreme view against primordialism. They view primordialism as theoretically vacuous and empirically undefended, unscientific and thus should be cancelled altogether from the lexicon of social sciences (Eller and Coughlan, 1993: 187).

2.3.2. Instrumentalism

It is in response to the strong emphasis on primordialism that the instrumentalists’ school of thought emerged in the early 1970s. Instrumentalism can be considered as the continuum or opposite pole of primordialism. And “its key proposition rests on the purely instrumental use of ethnic identity for political or economic ends by the elite, regardless of whether they believe in ethnicity” (Varshney, 2002:27). Instrumentalists view ethnicity as a social construct that emphasizes the sharing of cultural and linguistic characteristics and kinship roots for the purpose of group mobilization.

According to Abner Cohen, one of the most known proponents of instrumentalism, ethnic groups are a kind of informal political organizations which utilize cultural values for material motives. For instrumentalists in general ethnic groups are products of individuals/groups for specific economic and political ends. It regards ethnic identity as flexible and rooted in adaptation to social changes (Cohen, 1974). Eriksen avers ethnic relations as fluid and negotiable; that their importance varies situationally; and that, for all their claims to primordiality and cultural roots, ethnic identities can be consciously manipulated (Eriksen, 2002:21). Instrumentalists maintain the view that ethnicity is constructed by a particular elite or group driven by competition for political power,
economic benefits, social status or other motives/benefits. Simply speaking, ethnicity, as to instrumentalists, is a social, political, and cultural construct for specific interest, and it is, thus, an elastic and highly flexible instrument to serve particular or multiple objectives.

Advocators of this school of thought argue that ethnicity is a social construct influenced by situations and contexts that may be referred to as subjective factors. The subjective factors are not shared objective attributes that are given or ‘out there’. They are cognitive elements such as sense of belongingness and self-identification as well as material, political and economic forces that result in the creation of the ‘we consciousness’ in contrast to the ‘they consciousness’ (Ausenda, 1997:213). As to the followers of this view, on the one hand, cultural groups can be used as sites of mass mobilization and as constituencies in the competition for power and resources, because they found them more effective than social classes. On the other hand, ethnic categories can also be manipulated to maintain the power of a dominant group and justify discrimination against other groups in education, employment, and other social service provisions (Smith, 2001; Cornell and Douglass, 1998; Gashaw, 1993).

However, instrumentalists are also not free from blame. According to Varshney, for something to be manipulated by a leader when death, injury, or imprisonment is a clear possibility, it must be valued as a good by a critical mass of people, if not by all. Varshney further contends that a purely instrumental conception of ethnicity cannot explain why ethnic identities are mobilized by leaders at all (Varshney, 2002:30). The other thing, the instrumentalism claim of excessive flexibility of ethnic groups is questioned by the experiences of some nations (France, Greece and Switzerland) in
which identities are more fixed for longer period of time. Anthony Smith (2000:18-19) argues that the civic-territorial and ethno-cultural ideals of the nation are closely interwoven in logic there may be a good case for such distinction, but in practice it is difficult to find any example of a ‘pure’ cultural nationalism, freed from its ethnic mooring.

It is also true that ethnicity is highly susceptible to ideological manipulation and political mobilization in the promotion of collective interests. However, over emphasis on the manipulability of ethnicity often glosses over the real issues and hence tends to be dismissive rather than bent on suggesting genuine solutions. Furthermore, instrumentalists seem to ignore the possibility that marginalized or subordinate ethnic groups resort to ethnicity in self-protection and to guarantee their survival in the face of real domination and exploitation (Merera, 2003:24). To be precise, instrumentalists’ approach is also criticized for its exaggerated belief in the power of elite manipulation of the masses and neglecting of the wider cultural and traditional commonalities that tie people. In Africa, for instance, ethnic groups often retained a considerable portion of their pre-colonial linguistic and cultural identity (Forrest, 2004:29). The great majority of Africans continue to live in quite coherent tradition-bound communities. Particularly in rural areas, from pre-colonial times to the present, cultural features like kinship systems, belief systems and religious practices, mythology, languages, cultural value systems and other customary practices have been genuine (Prah, 2004:8-16).

2.3.3. Constructivism

Another model of ethnicity began to surface within anthropology during the end of 1960s was constructivists theory. The first major influence of this school was the approach by
the Norwegian anthropologist Fredrick Barth. In his edited essay (1969), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*: the social organization of culture difference’, Bath presented a new approach to ethnicity. In that writing, particularly in the introduction to that volume, Barth illustrates the fluidity of ethnic relations in different types of multiethnic societies. Although ethnic groups maintain boundaries such as language to mark their identity, as to Barth, people may modify and shift their ethnic identity in different types of social interaction/contexts. In this writing, Barth challenged the belief that “the social world was made up of distinct named groups” and proposed that the identity of the group was not a “quality of the container” (i.e. an ‘essence’ or a fixed, objective reality belonging to a cultural or ethnic group) but what emerges when a given social group interacts with other social groups.

The interaction itself highlights differences between the groups and these cultural differences result in the formation of boundaries distinguishing ‘us’ from ‘them’. A group maintains its identity, when members interact with others. Thus, ethnicity is based on one’s perception of ‘us’ and ‘them’ and not on objective reality that actually exits ‘out there’ in the real world. Ethnic boundary markers such as language, religion, or rituals serve to identify these subjective ethnic ‘boundaries’. Since these can change, ethnicity is not fixed but ‘situational’ and ‘subjective’. Barth believed the focus should be placed on the ‘boundaries’ between groups, not on the groups themselves. It was there, at these ‘boundaries’ that ethnicity was ‘constructed’. By separating ethnicity from culture, Barth made ethnicity an ever changing, socially constructed, subjective construct (Ibid).

‘Constructionists regard identity as manufactured rather than given. Identity emerges from dialectic between similarity and difference in group interaction. Owing to its
socially constructed nature, the significance attached to a particular identity varies in situations’ (Jenkins, 1997:11). Because identity is produced and reproduced by the social processes, constructivists do not consider ethnic identity fixed as suggested by primordialists (Anderson, 1993). For constructionists what matters in identity formation is the subjective factors (e.g., will, free choice, collective historical memory, belief, imagination and contextual need). As to them, identity (both ethnic and national) is social construction, and can be reformulated and recreated as contextual needs dictate. According to Gellner (1983), identity markers like culture are just arbitrary human inventions. He says that will, free choice, loyalty and solidarity, on the one hand; and fear, coercion, compulsion, on the other are important agents in the formation and maintenance of group identity.

The social constructivist approach bases on a historically grounded analysis, and views ethnic identities as social constructs defined by historical conditions in which they emerge (Berman, 1998; Markakis, 1998; Hettne, 1996; Lentz, 1995). Constructivists argue that ethnic communities are likely to be momentary as individuals ‘negotiate’ their identity and may find it advantageous to be associated with more than a single ethnic group and to move easily among them. They are likely dependent upon changing situations and milieu and their content might alter. When there is intense competition for power and resources, differences based on primordial elements may be more or less communicated, thereby creating smooth or sharp differences and borders with others, depending on the gains or losses in the political process.

With respects to post colonial societies, constructivists argue that, the principal contemporary ethnic cleavages in the post colonial societies are a creation of the colonial
power and, given immense power of colonial masters, such divisions have endured and will last for a long time (Varshney, 2002:33). The politics of differences concerns the way in which the political elite manufactures and utilizes the social meaning of difference.

For that matter the boundaries of states in Africa, by and large, were drawn by European powers at the Berlin conference, in 1884, more to try to secure a balance of power than to match with any ethnic order based on cultural and lingual variation. Quite a lot of civil wars have followed independence as different communities within the states have sought autonomy and cultural identity (Yinger, 1997:14). As a specific illustration, Mamdani relates the 1994 Hutu-Tutsi massacre as the outcome of the reconstruction of ethnicity by Belgians in that country. As to him, the Hutu-Tutsi distinction was codified by the Belgian colonial power in the 1930s on the basis of cattle ownership, physical measurements and church attendances. Identity cards were issued on this basis, and these documents played a key role in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda (Mamdani, 2001).

In the Ethiopian context, some scholars implicitly and explicitly used constructivism to explain inter-ethnic relations and conflict. For example, Clapham’s writing on the ethnic identity of the Amhara suggested that ‘being Amhara is much more a matter of how one behaves than that of who one’s parents were…’ (Clapham, 1988:24). Similarly, a number of ethnic groups in Ethiopia collectively categorize individuals who are included in the government civil service, military and others as either ‘Amhara’, ‘Christian’ or highlanders regardless of differences in ethnic background of the concerned person (Markakis, 1994:226; Dagne, 2011). For example, the Gedeo call all
new comers (both rural and urban residents), other than the members of their own ethnic people, as *kawe* (literally, Amhara).

Markakis (1998:127-146), in his fascinating article entitled ‘the politics of identity: the case of the Guraghe in Ethiopia’, reveals credibly that the Guraghe identity is developed slowly but evidently over a period of time, and in the recent years religion and state reconstructing considerably shaped the Guraghes, now divided into two. Walelign T. (2011: 285-’86), in his part, using empirical field research explained the complex process of ethnic identity formation and fissure among the Guraghe of south-west Ethiopia. In his PhD dissertation entitled *Fusion and Fission in Ethnic Identities: Ethnography of the Gurage Ethnicity*, Walelign looked into the contest on the identity of the Guraghe within the context of the Ethiopian government’s ethnicization of politics; thereby analyzed the complex and contradictory settings that created the recent schism of the ethnic identity and the invention of new ethnic identities. In his own words Walelign states as follows:

The Guraghe ethnicity has been constructed and reconstructed from diverse cultural materials and continue to be defined and redefined up to the present. The Guraghe ethnic group is not univocal and the content of its culture and other ethnic identity boundaries remain diverse. The various Guraghe groups and sub-groups and their relations are still complicated. In a nutshell, the Guraghe ethnicity in line with the constructivist’s assumption is, therefore, not atavistic, primordial survival of the archaic ‘primitive’ cultures, but rather modern product. It is the result of the expansion and incorporation of the State. It is also a result of continuous and continuing processes of social construction emanating from the encounters of the various groups with the political economy and society of the country. It is also a deliberate manipulation of diverse political actors. These processes are both historically specific and contingent on the outcome of internal and external struggles defining the membership and boundaries of ethnic communities with whom they share the same state (Walelign T., ibid).

Here we comprehend that as the case in most African societies, ethnicity among the Guraghe is on the move. We can also notice that how the Guraghe political actors using
historical and cultural inputs reconstructed the Guraghe ethnicity. Besides we see how the Guraghe political actors used the subjective manipulability, flexibility and strategic quality of ethnicity in reconstructing the Guraghe ethnicity.

As we have seen in the preceding discussion, each of the three schools of thought has its strong and weak points. In any case, they are quite helpful to carefully put the concepts of ethnicity and ethnic conflict in their proper setting. Ethnic conflicts should be understood contextually beyond the common thoughts discussed above. 'In order to better comprehend the concept of ethnicity and ethnic conflict, there is no worth in dismissing one or the other of the thoughts for depending on a number of factors as all thoughts illustrates the real nature of ethnicity' (Jenkins, 1997:46-47). While some underline the significance of primordial feelings as the bond that keeps ethnic group together, others have greater emphasis to ethnicity as a site of mobilization for certain political or economic objectives. On the whole, in understanding ethnicity [and ethnic conflict], three decisive elements need to be emphasized; taking into account the past (history of the people) so as to have comprehensive understanding of the present; politicization of ethnicity involving the preserving of ethnic groups and their distinctiveness and ‘transforming them into political conflict groups for the modern political arena; and the elastic nature of ethnicity and the wide variety of potential ethnic groups (Rothschild, 1981).

By and large, however, my study theoretically falls within the instrumentalists’ perspective that much can be learnt to carefully handle the problems related to ethnicity and ethnic conflict in my research area. In the study, I have drawn ideas from the instrumentalists’ thought which asserts that ‘the major conflicts in the Horn of Africa
have not been fought horizontally between different ethnic groups. They are rather politically motivated clashes between the state [and / or among political actors] and society’ (Mesfin, 1999). Professor Markakis(1998), the prominent analyst of conflict in the African context, succinctly puts ethnic conflict in Africa as the outcome of incompatible interests whereby politics is the ultimate cause, ethnicity and religion are factors of mass mobilization that are given prominence by the disgruntled political elites (Markakis, 1998).

Similarly, in Ethiopia instrumentalism influences both popular perceptions of ethnic identity and political discourses. The ethno-nationalist movements such as the TPLF, OLF, [GPDO] and SLF seek to instrumentalize the primordial elements of their ethnic constituencies for political mobilization. The introduction of ethnic federalism since early 1990s became fertile ground for the instrumentalization of primordial elements of identity for political mobilization (Vaughan, 2003:94-95).

Among the Gedeo and Guji, in the 1995 and 1998 conflicts, ethnicity was used to mobilize the groups into violent conflict. Political actors manipulated ethnic identity as a tool to organize and activate people in the pursuit of their hidden political and economic benefits/ends. With the politicization of ethnicity in the country’s political landscape, particularly following its expression in a formal political program of the EPRDF government in 1994, political elites, abusing the opportunity, activated elements of dichotomies at the expense of reciprocated co-existences among the Gedeo and Guji ethnic groups (chapter five and seven).
2.4. Causes of Ethnic Conflict

There is no single cause for ethnic conflict. It is rather the result of interplay of a number of factors. ‘Whilst the prevalence of diverse ethnic groups in a state may not by itself lead to violent conflicts’ (Alemayehu, 2009; Asebe, 2007; Varshney, 2002; Wolff, 2006), the specific political and economic contexts tend to influence the nature of interactions among the groups. Nevertheless, there is an emerging trend of shaping similarities and patterns that may explain the causes of ethnic conflict (Lake and Rothchild, 1996). Thus, here, I have broadly grouped the sources of ethnic conflict into three----political, economic, and cultural and historical factors.

2.4.1. Political factors

It is believed by many that political power can be considered as a vital factor for generating ethnic conflict. According to Markakis (1994), though one of the major causes of ethnic conflict in the Horn of Africa is competition over resources or the motive to secure access to resources, the role of the state in controlling the allocation of such resources is vital. Therefore, he notifies, ethnic conflicts all over Africa should be viewed and studied contextually in relation to the state in which diverse groups have competing for power and radically changing political circumstances within and around African states. In other words, the struggle for power is the most important cause of ethnic conflicts when government policies and institutions, which distribute resources, are based on ethnicity. Similarly Medhine (2003) argues that, though the sources of conflict in the Horn of Africa are the results of the interplay among such factors as poor resource utilization and unequal economic development, above all the nature of the state is at the
center of the conflicts in the region. Medhine contends that the state does not reflect the interest of the society as a whole----almost all regimes in the region are the causes and not solutions of the historical contradictions in their respective countries. Political domination and a desire for persisting control of political power; the non-participatory approach of political systems as well as the lack of democratization have further contribute to the insecurity of the region.

In this regard discriminatory government policies play a significant role in aggravating ethnic conflicts. There is a close interconnection between the ‘politics of exclusion’ and violent ethnic conflicts. The direct reason for this is the exclusion from political power and rights. This means that where power holders favor their own ethnic group and discriminate others, it is likely for ethnic conflict to arise whenever there is conducive condition for it. In connection with this, Vanhanen (1999:65) stresses that ‘ethnic nepotism, measured by ethnic division, is a common causal factor behind ethnic conflict’. Such a policy of ‘ethnic nepotism’ leads to the development of the feelings of being excluded, ignored, and discriminated against on the part of some ethnic communities. African experience in the post-independence period is a case in point (Hussien, 2004:11).

Walzer is of the opinion that nation-states normally have an ultimate goal to be achieved explicitly or implicitly to form and preserve a single nation under one political structure or a country. Basically, they aim at bringing all the members of a state into a single national or ethnic origin or into one political structure. To this effect, they aim at merging those who are different but live in the area by assimilation into one nation (Walzer, 1983 in Befikadu and Diribssa, 2005:87). However, it is extremely difficult to
assimilate everyone who is different from the dominant ethnic group (Chazan, 1991). In Ethiopia for example, during the imperial regimes, in the name of nation building, attempts were made to assimilate all ethnic groups in the south, south west and east of the country into Amhara culture and way of life after cultural dominance of over a century. In sum, the ‘politics of exclusion’ or ‘ethnic nepotism’ which favors some ethnic groups while marginalizing others can be a root cause for ethnic conflict. This in turn is a manifestation of the lack of the rule of law or a democratic environment in its entire forms. Under such circumstance, it is proper to expect the outbreak of ethnic clash, whenever there is favorable condition for it to surface.

2.4.2. Economic factors

Although political power is central, it alone cannot explain the root causes of ethnic conflict. Political exclusion should be combined with discriminatory economic policies and exploitation to produce ethnic tension. Biberja (1998) found that, in the former Yugoslavia, some ethnic groups such as Kosovo, Macedonia, and Montenegro felt that government policies worsened economic disparities and created ‘uneven development’, and that discriminatory approach contributed to inter-ethnic conflict. ‘In Nigeria, ethnic conflict is allegedly about the control of the country’s vast oil reserves. In other parts of Africa, diamonds are a major source and prize of ethnic civil war’ (Wolf, 2006). Markakis (1994), in the same way, underlines the role of economic resources in producing ethnic conflict in the Horn of Africa. As to him, regardless of the form it may take, the real cause of ethnic clash in this part of Africa is the desire to secure access to resources in the country concerned. This is similar to the argument of Harris and Reilly
(1998) that portrays economic insecurity leads to ethnic conflict where political power holders discriminate against some ethnic groups in resource distribution. In the same vein, the unfair distribution of rural land during the imperial Ethiopia that had been a vital cause for tension between the northern settlers and political authorities and the masses of southern, south western and eastern peoples can be taken as illustrative.

Befikadu and Diribssa (2005:84-91), point out another conflict-bearing economic variable worth mentioning in a multi-ethnic country or nation state in what is often termed as the ‘rage of the rich’. As to them, one way of interpreting conflicts between groups is when rebel organizations are determined to fight to secede with the land on which primary commodities are produced. Such incidences are very common. The Katangan secession movement in Zaire (Copper mining region), the Biafran secession movement in Nigeria (oil producing region), and the Aceh secession movement in Indonesia (oil producing region) can be taken as examples of the rage of the rich. In this perspective, the insurgent groups fight a political cause, that is, the injustice of the rich region at paying taxes to the poor regions.

However, scarcity of resources may contribute to, but cannot be a decisive factor for, the emergence of ethnic conflict since various groups live together without falling into a violent clash even where there are no adequate resources. Conflict takes place where some groups attempt to benefit themselves at the expense of others. This happens either when power holders distribute resources among different ethnic communities unfairly or when an ethnic group attempts to occupy the territory of its neighboring group without the consent of the community concerned to allow it some access to the available economic resource. This type of conflict is common in the pastoralists’ areas. But in
Ethiopia, most of the prolonged social conflicts have been the result of competition over the control of state machinery, which is a guarantor of access to necessary resources of survival. This means that power holders, particularly during the imperial regimes, rewarded the members of their ethnic group by providing them access to economic resources at the expense of the other ethnic communities.

2.4.3. Cultural and Historical factors

Cultural domination, together with political suppression, is considered as another source of clash. Allen (1994) states that the development of ethnicity and ethnic conflict couldn’t be examined narrowly from the economic or materialistic perspective alone. One should also consider the fact that differences in traditions, values, and the possible fear of suppression can lead to ethnic strife. Harris and Reilly (1998) contend that culture related conflict is the result of the quest for ‘cultural/group autonomy’ by the minority groups who are suspicious of cultural assimilation or suppression by the dominant group. This means that a politically dominant group may impose its traditions, values and beliefs on others. By doing so, it would suppress the language, values, and institutions of other ethnic groups (Hussien, 2004).

A further problem in the matter of ethnicity is that a conflict between the dominant ethnic group and the minority often results in external involvement (Heraclides, 1990). Another country, usually a neighboring one, gets into the conflict with the official declaration of aiming at protecting or supporting the rights and interests of the minority. Neighboring states often do so because the ethnic group that is subject to domination at the site of the conflict is the majority in the state that decides to involve. Such an
involvement of a neighboring state or country strengthens an ethnic connection and emotional bond between the minority group and the neighboring state. In most cases, the objectives of the neighboring states, as Yagcioglu (1996) argues, are more fanatic than just protecting the rights and interests of the minority. Its objective is rather to redeem or to liberate that minority group and the territory in which it lives possibly to annex it into its own territory. Such a goal and the setting of politics to achieve this invariably have an aggravating effect on minority-majority conflicts. By enhancing mutual suspicion and enmity, such an event often results in violence and sometimes even war (Yagcioglu, ibid). Practical examples in our case are the wars between government of Somalia and the Imperial government of Ethiopia and, later on, with the Derg regime of Ethiopia which was triggered by Somalia’s alleged intention to form Greater Somalia by annexing the Somali ethnic groups in neighboring Ogaden region.

Historical factors also matter. It can be a source of conflict. In areas such as Africa, the Middle East and Asia, colonial influence by governments such as the British, Dutch, Belgian, French and Germans went a long way in inciting ethnic violence in areas where people of different groups live in peace. It was the colonial powers, and the independent states succeeding them, which declared that each and every person had an ‘ethnic identity’ that determined his or her place within the colony or the post colonial system (Bowen, 1996:3). Since colonists were a much smaller group than the natives were, and so were always at a disadvantage, they would often ally themselves with a strong local leader. They created class divisions and would give those in the allied group special privileges and influence that would not extend to other groups. This would cause resentment among native groups, particularly when the favored group was a minority
group, such as the Tutsis in Rwanda. Bowen portrays that this was not the case just in Africa: some historians of India attribute the birth of Hindu nationalism to the first British census, when people began to think of themselves as members of Hindu, Muslim, or Sikh populations. The colonial powers---British, Belgians, Germans, French and Dutch---also realize that, given their small numbers in their domains, they could effectively govern and exploit only by seeking out ‘partners’ from among local people, some times from minority or Christianized groups. But the state had to separate its partners from all others, thereby creating firmly bounded ‘ethnic groups’ (Bowen, ibid).

According to Befikadu and Diribssa (2005:90), in the analysis of a conflict, the history of a country needs to be looked into. As to them, a country that has recently experienced a civil war has a high risk of further war. In Ethiopia, for example, the history of ethnic conflicts during the 20thC is often presented frequently by the insurgent groups and even by the EPRDF government. The then dominant ethnic group (the Amhara) led by the then government (the imperial regimes of Menilek, and HaileSilassie) had been reacting so brutally against the indigenous peoples of the south, south west and eastern Ethiopia. The history of cruel punishments practiced by emperor Minelik’s army (usually identified as Amharas) against the southern people is recently officially uttered to the community while the descendants of the then dominant groups (often termed as neftegna) are still living in the area. This has resulted in quite a lot of clashes between the historically indigenous communities and those of neftegna origin even though there is no more neftegna currently after such long time. The conflict between the group occurs either because of the rage of the dominated group against the dominators in history who are currently minorities and may be weaker, or the fact that the former dominant group owns
the best of the communities’ resources as compared to the majority because of their past political power and opportunity.

Conflicts can breed another conflict. Particularly if groups have history of conflict or that they have experienced conflict among each other, it has an impact upon the current relations. In this regard Megera (2011:51-52) argues that conflicts can be instigated by the past history of conflicts between particular groups. Such history of the past may make it difficult to integrate different ethnic and religious groups successfully because of their past experiences. History of conflict between different people can easily result in the continuation of the hostile relationship persistently unless some effective measures which can change the negative attitude towards one another are addressed at some point. Indeed if there is a history of conflict which had negative effect or which has left a big scar upon the other group, it would become very difficult, if not impossible, to change the type of relationship between such groups.

Professor Ali Mazrui (2004:6-8) in his key note speech in the Proceeding of the International Conference on African Conflict held in Addis Ababa from 29Nov–1Dec.,2004 stated on historical but decisive event as cause of ethnic conflict in Africa. As to him, while most African conflicts are partly caused by borders, those conflicts are not themselves about borders. Before the western colonial powers arrived, there were almost no boundaries in Africa. Most people lived in loose groupings. Their territories were unmarked. Empires came and went, absorbing new groups and being assimilated themselves, but possessing few, if any, rigid frontiers. But at the end of the last century the colonial west arrived. After the historical Berlin conference of 1884, they imposed the iron grid of divisions upon the continent. Professor Ali further states that the political
boundaries created by colonial powers enclosed groups with no traditions of shared authority or shared systems of settling conflicts. These groups did not necessarily have the time to learn to become friendly. In West Africa, for example, the large territory which the British carved out and called Nigeria enclosed three major nations and several smaller ones. Among the largest groups, the Yoruba in the west were very different from the Muslim Hausa in the north, who in turn, were quite distinct from the Ibo in the east. This artificial mix up was to lead to one of Africa’s great human tragedies, the Nigerian civil war of 1967-’70.

By and large, ethnic conflict is an outcome of a number of interrelated factors. It is thus imperative to cautiously and systematically study each of these factors and establish relationship among the attributes involved. An area based and contextual approach is useful in an endeavor to resolve ethnic conflicts by a peaceful means.

2.5. Repercussion of ethnic conflict

Ethnic conflicts are not limited to the generally conflict prone African continent alone. It is a pervasive global phenomenon cutting across cultures and societies, including those of the developed world, in each case exhibiting its own specificity. The intense nationalism that disintegrated the multi ethnic state of Yugoslavia (Malesevik,2000), the deep-rooted religious rivalry in Northern Ireland (Darby,1996) and the peripheral nationalism of the Basques (Keating,1993) in Europe as well as the religious and ethnic nationalisms across Asia are all part of the global upsurge of competing nationalisms (Merera, 2003). The bulk of existing literature tends to ignore any discussion of the effects of ethnic conflict, although this matter deserves special attention. The intensity of the effects of an ethnic
clash is determined by the nature and scope of the conflict concerned. The adverse effects of violent ethnic conflict could be categorized into political, economic and socio-cultural factors.

As experience has shown, the political effects of an ethnic conflict can be seen at two levels. The first is the weakening and possible collapse of the central government. The deposing of the military regime in Ethiopia, in May 1991, by the ethno-nationalist groups of TPLF/EPRDF forces can be taken as a case in point. Another political effect of ethnic conflict could be the disintegration of the ex-Soviet Union and federation of Yugoslavia might be an illustration. As a result of intra ethnic conflict, the republic of Somalia remained the only state less country of the world since early 1990s. What is hinted here is that ethnic conflict can play a crucial role both in the collapse of the central government; and at the extreme cases, the disintegration of the country totally.

Seen from economic angle, ethnic conflict destroys the very bases of development: environmental resources, economic infrastructure, and the social and civic ties that permit and sustain development. The damage of immense resource in Yugoslavian war among different ethnic peoples, and the overall disintegration of the country’s infrastructure and other economic resources in Somalia can be mentioned as illustrative in this case. When there is violent conflict in a country resources that otherwise could have been invested for development endeavors, would be shifted to cover the expense of the war. The productive labor force will be drained to the war front and hence production and productivity decline in the countries engaged in the war. In a country where there is violent conflict no tourism and incomes associated with tourism. Trade and other social and civil institutions
either completely or partially ceases their services as a result of which life become costly and terrible. Conflict also reported to be among the major factors of vulnerability that destroy people’s social and private property and trigger unemployment in the area.

The final and perhaps the most severe outcome of violent ethnic conflict is its social costs. According to Jeong (2000), Nazi German killed six millions of European Jews, and other ethnic minority groups. ‘The 1994 horrific war in the country of Rwanda in central Africa, among Hutu (the majority) and the Tutsi (the minority) ethnic groups claimed the life of over half a million Tutsi ethnic people within a few weeks’ (Scupin and Decoorse, 2004). Another upshot of inter ethnic conflict concerns displacement of a large number of people as refugees. According to one source, the following numbers of people were estimated to have fled their homes: 100,000 Hindus because of the war in Kashmir; 500,000 people following the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan; three million people were displaced as a result of the war in the former Yugoslavian federation (Brown, 1997:93). Ethnic conflict engenders, in addition to refugees, internal displacement. For example, in 1992-‘93, about 60,000 people were internally displaced owing to the war in Tajikistan, ex-Soviet Union. This is other than the over 100,000 people who took refuge in Afghanistan, Russia and elsewhere (Tishkov, 1999:583).

On the whole, ethnic conflict leads to the breakdown of law and order, the disruption of economic activities, humanitarian crises and a state of uncertainty which deter long run investment and development efforts and stability. Violent ethnic conflict leads to unprecedented out migration of people including vulnerable groups---- women, children, and the old as well as the disabled. Therefore, it is worthwhile to give due concern to
interethnic relations and manage it cautiously and systematically. Conflict is like contagious disease. Unwise handling of conflict gives it the opportunity to widespread all of a sudden. If once occurred, conflict must be handled at its early stages. If allowed to escalate, it would be changed to violence that cannot be easily remedied.

2.6. Conflict resolution

Conflict resolution is an issue which has become very topical in debates and discussions on Africa. This is not only because Africa is characterized by many conflicts, but because in most cases the conflicts have negative impacts on Africa's over all development. Thus conflict resolution has become decisive in solving the problem of conflicts in the continent (Mpangala, 2004). One of the distinguishing features of Africa's political landscape is its many dysfunctional and protracted social and political conflicts.

The United States Institute of Peace (2011:17) defines conflict resolution as efforts to address the underlying causes of a conflict by finding common interests and overarching goals. Conflict resolution as to the institute includes fostering positive attitudes and generating trust through reconciliation initiatives, and building or strengthening the institutions and processes through which the parties interact peacefully.

Conflict resolution is an attempt to deal with the root causes of conflict and eliminating them even by altering and restructuring the institutions, forces and systems that perpetuate such conflicts. Conflict resolution is a broad term which implies that the deep-rooted sources of conflict are addressed, and resolved. This implies that behavior is no longer violent, attitudes are no longer hostile, and the structure of the conflict has been changed (Khannas and Kueck Gert. eds., 2003; Jeong, 2000). Resolution prevents the
reappearance of future conflict by fulfilling the needs of all parties. Notably, conflict seen as inherent in the social system can be eliminated only through structural changes. ‘Conflict resolution has been a central part of the work towards building peace, promoting development and consolidating regional cooperation and democratic efforts/processes’ (Jeong, 2000).

Making a sharp distinction between conflict resolution and conflict management, Osaghae states that, the notion of resolution implies a once and for all treatment of conflicts, while management implies that conflicts cannot be disposed of in one fell swoop. While resolution suggests that conflicts can be dealt with in a rational comprehensive way, management presupposes that they are best approached from the incrementalist’s stand point. Obviously, says Osaghe, the management approach is more discerning of the dynamic nature of ethnic conflicts and conflict situations: the fact that conflicts are usually complex and that the “resolution” of one conflict could result in emerging another, the actors and issues in conflict are forever changing form and character, and that supposedly different conflicts (ethnic, religious or class conflict) are linked in important ways. Moreover, the management approach presents a more continuous strategy for dealing with conflicts and the hope is that if disagreements at the level of basic competitions can be minimized, then the scope for conflicts will be reduced (Osaghae, 1996:173). Conflict management also supports the longer-term development of societal systems and institutions that enhance good governance, rule of law, security, economic sustainability, and social well-being, which helps prevent future conflicts (USIP, 2011:17).
Conflict prevention, on the other hand, is aimed at controlling the escalation or re-escalation of violent conflict (Jeong, 2000:168). Preventing and resolving conflict before it ends into violence is far less costly, both in human and financial terms, than reacting to it once it has occurred. Action to address the fundamental causes of conflict include strengthening good governance, improving the condition of human rights, economic and social development, demolition of armaments and developing a culture of peace (Susan, 2008). Conflict prevention can be described as actions, policies, procedures or institutions undertaken particularly in vulnerable places and times so as to avoid the threat or use of armed forces and related forms of coercion by state or groups. Conflict prevention can take place in two conditions: 1) when there is no violent conflict in recent years, but significant signals of violence; and 2) when there has been a recent violent but peace is being restored, conflict prevention in this case aims to avoid a relapse of violence (Lund, 1997). A decade ago, conflict prevention was referred only to actions undertaken in the short term to reduce manifest tensions and to prevent the outbreak of violence. But these days it includes long and short term activities and responses. It addresses built in capacities of societies to deal with conflicting interests without resort to violence. It also extends to the management of conflicts with destabilizing potentials. Such work helps in delegitimating the belief that violence is an inevitable or acceptable way of resolving conflicts, making nonviolent options known and more attractive, addressing structural and immediate causes and reducing vulnerability to triggers. The goal is not to prevent all conflict. Some conflict is normal, unavoidable and often leads to bring about positive change (OECD, 2008: 16).
Despite the availability of different methods by which conflicts are handled and the performance of extremely elaborated rituals to mark conflict resolution, some scholars argue that conflicts are not often resolved. Colson (1995:80) criticized the assumption that conflicts are resolved and led to harmony. As to him some societies focus upon the issue at stake rather than the social relationship of the disputants in dealing with conflicts. They often resort to law for they simply seek remedies for their ills rather than to restore lasting peace and harmony. Thus, for Colson, though followed by rituals, negotiation and adjudication “have much less success in convincing contenders that they are in the wrong and they do little or nothing to heal ruptured social relationships or abate anger and contempt.” The publication of the United States’ Institute of Peace (2011:17) seems in favor of the above assertion. The writing states as follows: “…conflicts are a normal part of human interaction and are rarely completely resolved or eliminated, but they can be managed by such measures as negotiation, mediation, conciliation, and arbitration.”

According to pluralist society theory (often referred as pessimistic view), there is no solution to ethnic conflict, or it is not possible to bring about inter-ethnic peace and harmony. The pluralist theorists argue that, there is incompatibility of interests among different ethnic groups in a given state. Consequently, a multi ethnic state is fated to conflict and fall down if external forces do not interfere to save it (Ryan, 1995). Pluralist theory supposes that wherever there is ethnic division, there is a conflict of interest, and wherever there is conflict among ethnic identities, there will be a collapse of such a society into different states (Hssien, 2004:21). Schellenberg (1996:122) too argues that ‘neither peaceful nor violent mechanisms of conflict resolution can always completely
resolve issues. As to Schellenberg, even though decisions are made and agreements are arrived at, the parties often complain and feel that it has been unjustly treated'.

However, says Hussien, one can dismiss this assertion based on empirical evidence, which shows that there is no relationship between the degree of ethnic diversity and ethnic conflict. The mere existence of ethnic diversity in a country could not be cause for ethnic conflict. Ethnic conflict is rather basically the outcome of, among others, discriminatory government policies which favor some ethnic groups while marginalizing others. Apart from this, compromise and accommodation as pattern of inter-ethnic relations can contribute to mitigate and resolve ethnic conflict through a peaceful means (Hussien, 2004).

Against the pluralist theory, the consociationists (often called optimistic theory) believe that it is possible to preserve peace and stability among multi-ethnic states where various ethnic groups live in harmony. According to this perspective, inter-ethnic problems could be resolved internally under a democratic political environment. In a condition where by governments/policy makers avoid discriminatory course of action, one could hope to see conflicts resolved genuinely (Hussien, ibid).

Though the existence of various ethnic groups in a country could not explain the intensity of conflict, once conflict occurred in such countries (particularly along ethnic lines), it is difficult or challenging to handle it. The former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia are recent and living examples in this case. Though arguable, several researchers still agree that ‘under conducive political circumstance where the root causes of conflict are identified and addressed properly, it is possible to resolve a social conflict, which, of course, includes ethnic ones’ (Rugumamu, 2000; Gouden, 2000; Vanhanen, 1999). Peter
Wallenstein strongly argues that conflicts are solvable. He says that this is not necessarily an idealistic or optimistic position. Rather it is a realistic proposition. Most actors in conflicts will find themselves in need of negotiations at one time or another. Even if a conflict results in war and destruction, there may have been other options and alternative paths for the conflict. There are frequent statements on the inevitability of conflict, violence and war. Indeed, finding solutions may often be difficult. This difficulty, as to Wallenstein, not only arises out of political constraints, but can also be due to a lack of insight or imagination. There are also views of the desirability and even necessity of violence and war. Unbearable conditions or impossible threats may make such opinions understandable. Too often, however, the results of war negate the very hope for a better future that may initially have motivated the war. Few wars follow the paths anticipated by the actors. Short wars may avoid such pitfalls, but who is to guarantee that a war will be short? Many wars have started from this premise. Afterwards, it will be asked: were all avenues used to find a peaceful solution prior to the initiation of war? Only after this can be convincingly proven do the arguments of inevitability and desirability approach validity. Thus, the determined search for a solution is not only a moral question; it is also a rational one. This is the sole way in which a free society will be prepared to accept the strains of war. Indeed, if conflicts are exposed to such early challenges, solutions may actually be found, even in unexpected situations. Thus, conflicts are solvable and there are many and varied experiences of such solution (Wallenstein, 2002: 13)

Generally speaking conflict resolution is a comprehensive term which entails tolerance, respect for other’s culture and way of life, appreciation of differences, willingness to admit blunder and commitment to learn from past experiences, and
readiness to give and take i.e., not a ‘zero-sum-game’, where the gain of some becomes or felt to be the loss of others.

As part of African socio-political setting, the major conflict resolution mechanisms used in that continent is customary systems. So long as they are part and parcel of the society’s culture, most commonly customary mechanisms of conflict resolution have the power and ability to resolve conflict in more peaceful way, sustain a long lasting security and also bind the social structure as it was. Customary conflict resolution mechanisms (CCRMs) in Africa are generally closely bound with socio-political and economic realities of the life styles of the communities. These mechanisms are rooted in the culture and history of the African people, and are in one way or another unique to each community. Customary conflict resolution mechanisms originate from the custom (a recurring practice of what people do instead of what people are supposed to do as in law) of the people as practiced over a long period of time and accepted by the community as governing principle and hence ties the society as a breach of which entails social consequences and even punishment. CCRM are often unwritten; the rules can be traced to the customs, value systems and practices of the people which have been handed down to succeeding generations (Gebre et al, 2011:26).

Unlike the formal justice sector that principally targets at clear up conflicts between parties, customary conflict resolution mechanisms are informal and aim at restoring severed relations and hence at durable community peace. To be more specific, governmental efforts are limited to calming down the crisis without addressing the root cause and without making sure that the inter-group conflict is transformed from hostility to cooperation and smooth interaction. The formal conflict resolution mechanisms often
emphasize the resolution of the material causes of conflicts (resource and power are often the focus) without dealing with the psychological and cultural traumas that often trigger retribution. The formal system of conflict resolution mechanisms are alleged to be unsuccessful, not confidential, time taking, not under the control of the groups in conflict, rigid, client-unfriendly, costly, and inaccessible. It is only when potential and actual conflicts in Africa are understood in their social contexts that they can be resolved. Values, beliefs, interests, needs, attitudes, actions and relationships should be given due concern. Origins or the core causes of the conflicts need to be explored so as to develop a shared understanding of the past and present.

In Ethiopia, customary conflict resolution (CCR) mechanisms are widely used in all corners of the country, including in urban areas where the formal justice system is strong. However, communities in rural areas prefer the customary approaches to the formal justice system (Gebre et al, 2011: xii). CCR institutions have served historically in the absence of the state justice system as well as where it exists in the past and in the present. These institutions are localized and their constituency and jurisdiction are generally limited to particular localities within ethnic groups. CCR institutions often function at the community level, based on trust among people. For example, the gada of the Oromo, the Shimlina of the Amhara; the Xeer of the Somali; the maada of the Afar; the Abo Gerbe of the Wajerat and Raya communities in Tigray are some of the various customary institutions found in Ethiopia.
Commenting on the efficacy of customary conflict resolution mechanisms in this respect, William Ury remarks:

Emotional wounds and injured relationships are healed within the context of the emotional unity of the community. Opposed interests are resolved within the context of the community interest in peace. Quarrels over rights are sorted out within the context of overall community norms. Power struggles are contained within the context of overall community power. However, in the court system a wrongdoer stays for some years in prison and comes back. After that, families of the deceased may take revenge by killing him (Ury, 1998:28).

Nowadays, as a result of internal and external factors, customary conflict resolution institutions/mechanisms of Africa are made non functional in most parts of the continent. Formal or government-run approaches and institutions replaced the customary systems. According to Ofuho (1999), ‘for years the treatment of conflicts in Africa involving national armies revolved around conventional mechanisms that have excluded the customary approaches’. But they have little success in bringing sustainable peace and lasting security in the region.

In ending conflicts in Africa, as Bob-Manuel portrays, peacekeeping operations which have been conducted in the last few years under the auspices of the United Nations, have enabled for the establishment of peaceful processes only in very few countries, for example, Mozambique. Otherwise they usually result in failure; recent examples are Somalia, Rwanda and Angola. This is mostly because the political, military and social realities of these countries were not fully valued and realized. Thus, today’s principal pattern of conflict in Africa, in most cases, happened to be challenging to the existing and conventional tools of conflict management (Ineba Bob-Manuel, 2000). The collapse of the Somali nation-state since early 1990s and the reversion to the customary social and political institutions and methods in the northern Somaliland has shown how dynamic the systems are. The reinstatement of the gurtii system of clan elders who interfere to settle
conflicts and mediate between the fighting of different warlords have helped to sustain peace and stability in that country (Nabudere, 1997).

Many analysts charge the colonial legacy for most of the major conflicts in Africa, while others blame Africans themselves, considering the conflicts as the product of the failure of their governments. One argument that relates Africa’s failure to contain its conflicts to the disintegration of its customary conflict resolution mechanisms is credible. This argument is very sound in relation to internal conflicts. Failure to control internal conflicts can be traced in the loosening of internal bonds of communities which in turn have origin in the weakening of social value system. Colonialism, among many, has to take its share of the blame for it has disrupted African value systems (Israel, 2009:1). Some assert that colonialism destroyed the base upon which Africans define themselves, corrupted the cultural sense of self, dismantled the cultural norms and values of African society. Colonialism has destroyed or corrupted customary African conflict resolution mechanisms through its divide and rule policy. To worsen the situation, the post-colonial leadership of Africa made use of the colonial legacies. Furthermore, the nature of the national state and its leadership has contributed to the disruption of cultural value systems even in the absence of European colonial legacies (Murithi, 2006:11).

Though Ethiopia has only a brief experience under a European rule (a brief occupation of Italy, 1936-'41), many customary social value systems including conflict resolution mechanisms that belong to the various identity groups have been destroyed or corrupted in the history of the country as a result of internal cultural domination along with repressive political measures taken in the name of nation building and modernization. Cultural domination and the ambition to introduce modernization as a means of nation-
building in Ethiopia have resulted in the abolition of customary conflict resolution mechanisms. In the effort of modernizing the legal system during Haile-Silassie-I regime, for instance, laws were transplanted from western legal systems into Ethiopia and the existing customary laws were disregarded because they were thought to be the antithesis of modernity. Consequently, centrally promulgated laws and compatible legal procedures alone had been recognized by the national legal system of Ethiopia. Article\textsuperscript{4} 3347(1) of the 1960 Civil Code of Ethiopia, one of the codified laws introduced during the imperial regime, has totally repealed all laws and practices that contradict the Code. Similarly, during the \textit{Derg} regime (1974-1991), peasant associations (PAs) were the powerful instrument of formal conflict resolution at grass root levels in rural areas of Ethiopia. They had their own judicial committee to oversee conflicts and had the power to impose decisions through fines and imprisonment. Under the current regime, \textit{Kebele} Administrations (KAs) are set up, bringing together two or three of the former PAs, with similar powers to the latter. In addition, governmental teams are established to represent a maximum of 50 households, thus bringing state institutions to an even more local level. Conflicts relating to any sort are nowadays often reported to the government teams and through them to KAs (Desalegn et al, 2005:2). The customary institutions are relegated in most rural areas. In areas where these institutions are to somehow working, their relationships with the formal institutions is not appreciable.

Tache and Irwin (2003) in their study of \textit{traditional institutions, multiple stakeholders and modern perspectives in common properties: accompanying changes within Borana pastoral systems} depicted the prevailing relations between the formal local level

\textsuperscript{4}Article 3347(1) of the Ethiopian Civil Code of 1960 reads as follows: “Unless otherwise expressly provided, all rules whether written or customary previously in force concerning matters provided in this Code shall be replaced by this Code and are hereby repealed.”
administration units or the *kebele* administration (KAs), and the *gada* institution among the Borana pastoralists in the following way:

A herder bringing his cattle to an area would traditionally negotiated grazing rights with the *araddaa* council. The decision would be made according to the number of cattle already grazing in the area and forage availability. If the area were already being used to its maximum potential, the herder would be asked to explore other areas to graze under traditional grazing management system. However more recently, in the event of such a decision, herders who are ‘refused’ access may now go to the KA and gain legal permission to graze their animals in the area.

Apart from the *kebele* officials, youngest community members, alien to the customary system and inexperienced in rangeland management, are appointed and given powers of decision-making at the local level. Today, the KA officials are linked to the territorial administration of the rangelands. They operate against the advice of the elders, who are delegated clan representatives and responsible for a more flexible organization of the rangelands. This has caused conflicts between the new generations and disagreements within and among the communities (Tache and Irwin, ibid).

In sum, Ethiopia has several customary conflict resolution institutions and mechanisms that have survived the pressure of internal cultural domination and repressive political measures taken in the name of modernization and nation building. There are various such institutions that have curbed many unreported conflicts that could have otherwise damaged community bonds in that country. However, the prevailing situation shows that there is loose collaboration, if any, between customary institution and government in dealing issues in community affairs. The governments bodies at different levels fail to appreciate collaborate and complement the customary methods in any community affairs. The limited understanding of the roles played by the customary institutions by the state and particularly by the new generation has diminished the
efficacy and relevance of these institutions in most parts of the country, despite their tangible and fruitful contributions.

With this brief conceptual and theoretical understanding, now we will turn to a brief observation on the political history of Ethiopia. This consideration will enable us to have background information on the overall environs of the research. The following chapter gives much emphasis to the political and economic setting of the country in the belief that it is this factor that becomes fertile ground for friendly relations as well as incubator for conflicts.