Conflict Complexity in Ethiopia: Case Study of Gambella Regional State

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Abstract

The causes of violent conflicts in Ethiopia in general, and in Gambella in particular, are complex. Critically examining and explaining the causes entails going beyond labelling them solely in terms of one variable, such as ‘ethnic conflict’. The contestation of the study is that contemporary conflicts in Ethiopia have remained protracted, untransformed and recurring. This is largely because the past processes which gave rise to them were not properly taken into account and not properly comprehended, thereby giving rise to much superficiality in their explanations, inappropriate policies and a failure of efforts at apprehending them.

The thesis identifies four major factors and two contrasting narratives which have framed the analysis of conflict complexity in Gambella. Qualitatively designed, the study focuses mainly on the structural causes of violent conflicts since 1991 and how their constituent elements were conceived and explained by different actors.

First, asymmetrical centre-periphery relations entrenched in the state building processes of the imperial and military regimes, continued under the present regime rendering Gambella an object of extraction and repression. Consequently, competing claims of ownership of Gambella between the Anywaa and the Nuer ethnic groups evolved entailing shifting allegiances to the central government. Second, ethnic politics of the new social contract ushered in a new thinking of ‘each ethnic group for itself’; it made ethnic federalism a means of consolidating the regime’s political philosophy, depriving the local community of a genuine political representation, leading to broader, deeper and more serious violence. Third, land policy of the
The incumbent favoured its political party affiliates and foreign investors, thus inducing more violence. Finally, external dynamics impacted on internal conflict complexity.

The study has argued that single factor approaches are inadequate to explain what has constituted violent conflicts in Gambella since 1991; it has concluded that internal conflicts are complex, and their constituent elements are conceived of, and explained, differently by the local peoples and different levels of government. Nevertheless, given commitment and a political will, the local and national governments, as well as peoples at grassroots level, have the capacity to transform the present, and to prevent future violent conflicts in the region.
Acknowledgements

I praise the LORD for His never failing love in all walks of my life. My deepest gratitude and appreciation go to Prof. Donna T. Pankhurst, my PhD supervisor, for her empowering and insightful advice and supervision which enabled me to complete the thesis as planned. Her chapter by chapter critical reading and incisive comments on the draft and final versions of the thesis made me think that a PhD project is not a lonely activity.

I would like to thank Addis Ababa University for funding my studies and research. I like to acknowledge Dr Jean-Bosco Butera, former Director of University for Peace, Africa Programme, Prof Andreas Eshete, former President and Prof Tsige G.Mariam, former Vice President for Graduate Studies and Research of the Addis Ababa University for their invaluable and professional cooperation while I was doing the research.

Mrs. Michele Mozley, Research Administrator, School of Social and International Studies, University of Bradford, deserves special thanks for her support during my studies at Bradford. Col Sandy Wade, former Defence Attche of the British Embassy in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, deserves a special mention for his material support throughout the PhD project.

I am also grateful to the Gambella Peoples National Regional State leadership and the peoples for their cooperation, friendliness and ever-memorable assistance during the field data collection. Many people have helped me while I was doing the research; I am indebted to them all.

Lastly, I owe a great deal to my wife, Wro.Tigist Gemechu and our children, Tinsae and Tsega Yonas for their patience, understanding, and lasting love.
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Acronyms

AAPO All Amhara People’s Organisation
ADP Anywaa Democratic Party
ALF Afar Liberation Front
APDO Anywaa Peoples’ Democratic Organisation
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<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>ARDUF</td>
<td>Afar Revolutionary Democratic Unity Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARRA</td>
<td>Administration of Refugees and Returnees Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOARD</td>
<td>Bureau of Agricultural and Rural Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUD</td>
<td>Coalition for Unity and Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECSA</td>
<td>Ethiopian Central Statistical Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPLF</td>
<td>Eritrean Peoples’ Liberation Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPRDF</td>
<td>Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Democratic Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDRE</td>
<td>Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD</td>
<td>Focus Group Discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GGDR</td>
<td>Greater Gambella Democratic Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNUM/A</td>
<td>Gambella Nilotes United Movement/Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPDC</td>
<td>Gambella Peoples’ Democratic Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPDF</td>
<td>Gambella Peoples’ Democratic Front</td>
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<tr>
<td>GPDM</td>
<td>Gambella Peoples’ Democratic Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>GPDO</td>
<td>Gambella Peoples’ Democratic Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPDUP</td>
<td>Gambella Peoples’ Democratic Unity Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPLM</td>
<td>Gambella Peoples’ Liberation Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>GPLP</td>
<td>Gambella Peoples’ Liberation Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPUDM</td>
<td>Gambella Peoples’ Unity Democratic Movement</td>
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<td>GPUP</td>
<td>Gambella Peoples’ Unity Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>GTP</td>
<td>Growth and Transformation Plan</td>
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<td>Full Form</td>
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<td>HAB</td>
<td>Horn of Africa Bulletin</td>
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<td>IDI</td>
<td>In-Depth Interviews</td>
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<td>MPDO</td>
<td>Majang Peoples' Democratic Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPDP</td>
<td>Majang Peoples' Democratic Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEBE</td>
<td>National Electoral Board of Ethiopia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisations</td>
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<td>NPDO</td>
<td>Nuer Peoples’ Democratic Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>NUDP</td>
<td>Nuer Unity Democratic Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONC</td>
<td>Oromo National Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>OLF</td>
<td>Oromo Liberation Front</td>
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<tr>
<td>ONLF</td>
<td>Ogaden National Liberation Front</td>
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<tr>
<td>SENPIM</td>
<td>South-western Ethiopian Nilotic-Omotic Peoples Independent Movement</td>
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<td>SEPDC</td>
<td>Southern Ethiopian Peoples’ Democratic Coalition</td>
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<td>Sidama Liberation Movement</td>
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<td>SNNPRS</td>
<td>Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples’ Regional State</td>
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<td>Saudi-Star Agricultural Development</td>
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<td>TEFL</td>
<td>Teaching English as a Foreign Language</td>
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<tr>
<td>TPLF</td>
<td>Tigrean Peoples’ Liberation Front</td>
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<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>United Nations Higher Commission for Refugees</td>
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**Timeline of Major Events Related to Gambella Conflicts**

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>Trade relations of Anywaa and Nuer with the highland Ethiopians reached climax.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883/6</td>
<td>Imperial trading posts were established in and near Gambella.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>Ethiopia defeated Italian colonial forces in the battle of Adwa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>Ethiopian forces reached the Sobat and Nile river confluences near Gambella.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>Ethiopia and British colony of Sudan held joint conference to settle the western frontier dispute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>Boundary treaty between Ethiopia and the British colony of Sudan was signed; in the agreement majority of the Anywaa and a few Nuer were in Gambella; most Nuer were left to the British colony of Sudan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>The Port of Gambella was inaugurated by the Ethiopian central administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>Ethiopian government appointed a governor to Gambella.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>Gambella became a district under Illubabor province of Ethiopia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>The Ethiopian government attempted to control slavery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
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<td>------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>The Ethiopian government established Liberation Bureau in Gambella and Addis Ababa to wipe out slavery from Ethiopia and in 1932 it established anti-slavery court.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-1930s</td>
<td>The Anywaa beat the British who attempted to disarm and compel them to pay tribute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-1930s</td>
<td>The combined Ethiopian and British pressure broke the Anywaa capability to fight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936 – 1941</td>
<td>Italian colonial force occupied Ethiopia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>Italy occupied Gambella.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>Boundary treaty of Ethiopia and the British colony of Sudan of 1902 was revised with the Italian colonial power, but no agreement was reached.</td>
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<td>1950s</td>
<td>The Anywaa became restive politically again rebelling against the Ethiopia central administration.</td>
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<td>1960s</td>
<td>The rebels became under control by the Ethiopian central administration.</td>
</tr>
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<td>1960s</td>
<td>The Anywaa resistance continued, and they connected with the Anya-nya movement in South Sudan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>The Haile-Selassie regime came to an end and the military regime <em>(Derg)</em> took over the state control.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1984 – 1985</td>
<td>The <em>Derg</em> started villagisation by settling 2000 indigenous peoples (the Anywaa by uprooting</td>
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them from their original location) near Perbengo in Gambella.

1985  Alwero Dam of Gambella was constructed by the technical support of the former USSR government.

1984 - 1986  Resettlement of 50,000 – 60,000 peoples mainly from northern provinces of Tigray and Welo and some from Kembata and Hadiya of the Shewa province (southern Ethiopia).

1980s  Gambella was made to be a military training centre/base for SPLA/M.

1987  Gambella Peoples’ Liberation Movement (GPLM) was established headquartered in Sudan; the same year attacked and burned police station in Gambella killing a number of policemen and civilians working there.

1989  GPLM continued a series of attacks on government institutions in cooperation with other Ethiopian opposition groups in Sudan such as OLF, EPLF, TPLF, ONLF and ARDUF.

May 1991  SPLA/M refugees mainly composed of the Nuer ethnic group attacked the Anywaa ethnic group killing in hundreds.

May 1991  The Anywaa attacked highlanders (settlers) killing over 200 and displacing 30,000 to 40,000 people.

May 1991  GPLM and EPRDF controlled Gambella.

July 1991  More violence led by a Nuer prophet leading to the death of more than 200 people.
August 1991  The prophet’s army attacked mainly the Anywaa ethnic group in Itang.

March 1992  GPDUP of the Nuer was established as a political party.

May 1992  The first election since EPRDF government took control was held.

August 1992  The allies (GPLM and EPRDF) fought in Gambella town forcing the GPLM leave for Sudan.


1995  Majang-Anywaa conflict, claiming a number of innocent lives, and destruction of properties.

1995  The Gambella administrative structure was remapped.

1995  GPLP was created by the ruling party to replace GPLM.

1998  Bloody clash took place between the Anywaa and the Nuer killing over 65 people and displacing over 3000 people.

1998  GPDC was created by the Anywaa educated group to replace GPLM.

2000  Election was held where the GPDC posed to win, but made to short live.

2002  GPDC, GPLP and GPDF were dissolved and merged to create yet another party, GPUDM.
December 2002 The Anywaa attacked the refugee camps in Gambella killing about 40 of them.

17 November 2003 The Anywaa ‘bandits’ killed five private contractors working in Gambella.

13 December 2003 The Anywaa ‘bandits’ killed eight UN affiliated ARRA workers who went to investigate the 17 November 2003 killing.

13 December 2003 Over 400 Anywaa were killed on the same day in the most devastating violence in the region to date

2004 – 2012 Sporadic violence continued mostly related with retaliation, resource conflicts, and political representation in the region.

2010 – 2012 Villagisation and resettlement of over 45,000 people was planned to have taken place.

March 2012 The Anywaa ‘bandits’ killed about 24 innocent people.

March 2013 The Ethiopian Defence force killed the ring leader of the bandits that killed 24 people in March 2012

16 April 2013 New President was elected from the Nuer ethnic group for the first time since EPRDF came to power

December 2015 Violent conflict flared up in the Gambella town and Itang involving mainly Nuer refugees and the Anywaa ethnic group.
PART I

We, the Anywaa ethnic group, feel emotional, helpless, hopeless, insecure, traumatised and our very survival is threatened... we have been targeted as security threat to the killil as well as federal government since December 2003… (Ugala, one of the Anywaa participants in FGD, 3 April 2013, Gambella.)

The Anywaa’s perceptions of the whole Gambella as their own property; involvement of some officials of the killil in the violence; sense of retribution by some highlanders settled in Gambella whose 1991 grievances had not been addressed; power struggle between the Anywaa and the Nuer political representatives… were among the factors which led to the massacre of the 2003 in Gambella...( A Report of the Ministry of Federal Affairs on the 2003 Violence in Gambella, Presented to the House of Peoples’ Representatives of the FDRE, Vol. 3 page 3, March 2004).

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the Chapter

Causes of violent conflicts in Ethiopia in general and in Gambella in particular are complex. Critically examining and explaining the causes entails going beyond labelling them solely in terms of a single variable, such as ‘ethnic conflict’. The contestation of this study is that contemporary conflicts in Ethiopia have remained protracted, untransformed and recurring. This is largely because the past processes which gave rise to them were not properly taken into account and not properly comprehended, thereby giving rise to much superficiality in their explanations, wrong policies and failure of efforts at apprehending them. Transforming the contemporary and preventing the emerging conflicts necessitate analysing and comprehending conflict complexity critically and imagining the future Ethiopia rather than dwelling on the tense ethnic relations which prevailed at different moments in the history of the country. Accordingly, this Chapter first identifies the
most important gaps in the previous theoretical and empirical literature. Second, it presents research questions, hypothesis and delimitation. It then briefly describes the significance of the study to the field of peace and conflict research, to national and local policy formulation, and to the local or indigenous peoples. Finally, the Chapter outlines the structure of the thesis.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Internal conflicts have been common features of the long history of Ethiopia which reached a climax during the era of princes (1769 – 1855) known also as zemene mesafint in Amharic (Crummey, 2000; Levine, 2000; Marcus, 2002). In the 1960s and 1970s internal conflicts, headed mainly by trade unions, student movements, ethnic identity groups, and men in military uniform, brought down the emperor Haile-Selassie’s regime ushering in the military or the Derg’ government into power in September 1974 (see Clapham, 1994; Vaughan, 2003; Abbink, 2006; Berhanu, 2007; Assefa, 2012). The military, in its turn, was overthrown in 1991 by ethnically organised rebel group later transformed itself into the Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). The EPRDF prescribed ethnic federalism as the panacea to all conflicts in Ethiopia and entrenched ethnicity as its political philosophy in 1991 and institutionalised it in 1995 (Vaughan, 2003; Vestal, 2007; Reid, 2011; Assefa, 2012). As Markakis (1998: 139) states, ‘under the EPRDF regime, overnight, ethnicity became a legitimate and preferred principle of political organization, and provided the foundation for a reconstructed Ethiopian state’. The field data from Gambella Peoples’ National Regional State or Gambella killil2 (Focus Group

1 Derg or alternatively spelled as Dergue is an Amharic term to describe the Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC), which led Ethiopia from September 1974 – May 1991.

2 killil is an Amharic term equivalent to national regional state. Rather than repeating the long phrase, ‘Gambella Peoples National Regional State’, I have used the term ‘killil’ or ‘Gambella’ or ‘the region’ or ‘Gambella killil’ or ‘Gambella region’ interchangeably throughout the text to address the case study area. Note also that the word ‘Gambella’ is used to distinguish three entities: (a) the killil as a whole; (b) the name of the town, i.e. the seat or the headquarters of the national
However, ethnic federalism was not to be the predicted panacea. A number of existing internal conflicts in the country, such as the ones led by the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) intensified, and others, such as that headed by the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) continued unabated (see Ramsbotham, et al., 2011; Solomon, 2012; Hagmann, 2014). New internal conflicts have mushroomed since 1991 across the country, the type, number and intensity of conflict increased in Gambella. The following remark in public media by the Minister of Federal Affairs of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) highlights the latest violent conflict in the killil:

Dr. Shiferaw Tekle-Mariam, Federal Affairs Minister, called on the peoples in Gambella State to fight those forces bent on destabilizing peace and development in the State... The Minister said the anti-peace elements are preaching that the voluntary resettlement programme and extensive investment activity aimed at transforming the community in the State into a better life are unimportant to the public with their intention of misleading them.... “The public should rally behind the government in the fight against anti-peace elements.”” (The Ethiopian Herald, 3 March 2012. Vol. LXVIII, No.163)

Field data from of the killil reveals the tension further. In Focus Group Discussions, one of the participants articulated the local peoples’ narratives in the following terms:

The bones and spirits of our ancestors are being dug and ploughed by the foreigners. Land is identity; hence, to lose it is to lose identity. If my land has been taken away by the investors, so has been my identity. When we were born, according to our culture, parts of our umbilical cords were buried here, so were of our parents’, and of grand parents’ and of great, great, grandparents.
Elsewhere in Ethiopia, violent conflict between the Sidama and Guji, and Borana and Somali, ethnic groups (see Negussie, 2013) and the ‘Sidama and the federal government’ (Kifle, 2007:4) in southern Ethiopia have been going on since the entrenchment of ethnic political system in the country. Benishangul Gumuz is another example of intrastate conflict today, between settlers and indigenes in western Ethiopia, (see Vaughan, 2006; Mesfin, 2011).

Violent conflicts in eastern Ethiopia have also increased, i.e. between Oromo and Somali (see Fekadu, 2009; Negussie, 2013); Afar and Issa/Somali (see Yayneshet and Kelemework, 2004). In the same vein, in the northern Ethiopia, the Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Party (EPRP) fighting the EPRDF government in the Amhara regional state (see Sudan Tribune, 20094) is yet another example of internal conflict in the country. More violence erupted and continued in the Oromia region since 2014 reaching climax in December, 2015 (see Kennedy and Ademo, 2015) and in Gambella serious violence flared up in December 2015 and January 2016 involving mainly the refugees from South Sudan claiming over 20 lives (see Davison, 2016; Ethiopian Reporter5 2016). The only place where violent conflict has reportedly reduced since 1991 was the Afar-Tigray administrative border conflict over natural resources (see Lenaerts, et al., 2014). According to the authors, the reduction was due to the heavy presence of the state and, ‘at a great cost and in an unsustainable way’ (Lenaerts, et al., 2014:45).

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3 For ethical consideration the identity of the participant has been kept confidential.


5 Ethiopian Reporter (Amharic) 22 January 2008 Ethiopian Calendar). (1 February 2016) vol.21 no.1644
In short, violent conflicts in Ethiopia have increased in breadth and depth following the introduction of ethnic political system in the country. Studies also indicate that administrative border conflicts within Ethiopia were generated after the EPRDF controlled the country since borders among regional states were ‘demarcated’ along ethno-linguistic principles (Negussie, 2013; Tamene, 2013; Lenaerts, et al., 2014; Kennedy and Ademo, 2015). These events brought into question the effectiveness of ethnic federalism in addressing internal conflicts in Ethiopia, as had been stated in the 1995 Constitution of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE). In other words, the studies mentioned have concluded that ethnic politics of the EPRDF regime is a problem, and not a solution for internal conflicts in Ethiopia. At the same time, they reduced the conception of internal conflicts in the peripheries of Ethiopia to ‘ethnic conflict’ in the main. Whereas I concur with their overall conclusion, I argue that reducing the explanation for internal conflicts in peripheral areas of Ethiopia to merely ethnic identity questions ignores the complexity of internal conflicts in the country.

While I acknowledge that the issues of ethnicity in Ethiopia remain important in the state building processes (Merera, 2011; Mesfin, 2011; Asnake, 2013), I maintain in this thesis that the sources of internal conflicts in the country are multi-dimensional and far more complex than ethnic identity questions alone. I concur with Brown (2001), Coleman, et al. (2007) and Leonardi (2011) who argue that internal conflict is a complex phenomenon which is activated by different sets of factors. It means no single-factor explanations such as “ancient hatreds” or “ethnic identity claims” in isolation will be able to account for internal conflict (ibid). This can be demonstrated in the Ethiopian context, taking Gambella killil, the case study area of this research. Internal conflicts in this context are explained in terms of the dynamic interaction of underlying factors e.g. discriminatory political systems, or socio-economic marginalisation such as land polices, or ethnic identity questions and their transition to tipping points or triggering factors (Horowitz, 2000; Brown, 2001; Smith, 2007; Mazrui, 2008; Young, 2009;
Williams, 2011). Hence, reducing internal conflict to a single-factor explanation fails to address conflict complexity in contemporary Ethiopia.

1.3 Research questions

In order to fill the above identified gaps, I have raised the following main and sub-research questions:

1. What constituted conflict complexity in Gambella since 1991 as conceived by the local peoples and local as well as federal governments?

1.1 What was the focus and purpose of the state building processes, expressed also as political factors, during the imperial and military regimes of Ethiopia?

1.2 Has ethnic federalism, as a political factor, fared any better in managing conflict complexity in Ethiopia as compared to its predecessors?

1.3 What roles have ethnic identity factors played in conflict complexity in Gambella as conceived by the indigenous peoples and regional and federal governments?

1.4 How have pre-1991 economic factors or land policies of the previous regimes contributed to the current conflict complexity in Gambella?

1.5 How have large-scale agricultural investment and villagisation impacted on conflict complexity in Gambella as conceived by the local peoples and the regional as well as federal governments?

Indigenous peoples or local peoples in this context refer to the descendants of the inhabitants of the land they used to occupy who have been able to perpetuate their cultural distinctiveness and who are subjected to exploitation, marginalisation and exclusion (Oxford International Encyclopedia of Peace, 2010:405). They are also described as ‘ethnic groups’ when discussed in relation to other groups of peoples in the study context. One of the most essential characteristics of these peoples is their special relation to land. This relation is not exclusively economic but also social, cultural, and spiritual making the survival of indigenous peoples intrinsically linked to the survival of their territories, most importantly land and land-related resources (ibid).
1.6 What roles have external factors played in conflict complexity in Gambella as perceived by the local peoples as well as local and federal governments?

1.4 Research hypothesis

I hypothesise in this research that the dynamics and interaction of ethnic identity questions and political marginalisation by the central governments of Ethiopia; a political power struggle between the Anywaa and the Nuer; and land use policies of past and present Ethiopian regimes; along with external dynamics, constitute underlying factors of violent conflicts in Gambella since 1991. Moreover, the local peoples’ narratives are diametrically different from those of the local and the federal government in accounting for what constituted violent conflict since 1991 in Gambella.

1.5 Delimitation of the study

This study is limited in its scope to violent conflict in Ethiopia since 1991 in the main taking evidence from Gambella killil. It has not covered all areas of Gambella but limited to four woredas: Gambella zuria woreda, Itang, Abobo and Pugnido were focus points for observation and data collection. These are the areas where most Anywaa-land is located, the three largest investment companies which were selected for this study are situated and most conflicts were reported to have taken place. As discussed in Chapter Two, in order to comprehend and explain conflict complexity in Gambella I limited myself to a variant of qualitative methodology for data collection and analysis where conception of the locals and that of the government at federal, regional and local levels have been taken into account. Even though the conclusion drawn from the data is largely limited to the research
context, it may provide insights into the understanding and explaining of violent conflict in similar contexts.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The significance of the research can be seen from three major angles: peace and conflict research; national and regional policy; and local peoples’ perspectives of the killil.

From a peace and conflict research perspective, the study is significant in that it attempts to explore, understand and explain complexity of violent conflict by studying the dynamics and interaction of violent conflict in Gambella. It then substantiates its claims with theoretical evidence from previous studies and empirical data from the field. By so doing, it fills the existing gap in the present literature and may serve as a source of reference for other researchers in the discipline.

Further, it has national policy significance. It guides policy designers to view conflict occurrence from multi-dimensional perspectives so that they are able to make informed decision in their attempt to preventing, resolving, managing and transforming conflicts and building peace in Ethiopia. The findings can also be used as policy inputs for the regional government to prevent violent conflict and transform existing policies to improve the quality of life of the local peoples. Furthermore, the research is significant in making heard the voices of the Gambella indigenous peoples in a systematically articulated manner.
1.7 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis has been organised in three parts which are broken down into twelve chapters. Part I comprises three chapters. This First Chapter has introduced the purpose and scope of the research, whereas Chapter Two presents methodology and methods of the research. It describes the techniques of data collection and analysis, provides background of participants and ethical considerations, and justifies the use of qualitative approach to collect and analyse data which involve emotions, imagination, perceptions and stories.

The Third Chapter deals with conceptual and theoretical frameworks of the study. The conceptual framework focuses on contextual definitions of violent conflict, ethnicity, identity, narratives, and complexity. That is followed by the discussion of conflict complexity, demonstrating why a complexity approach is more effective in understanding and explaining violent conflict in Gambella, rather than the single variable approach that has prevailed in policy as well as academic arenas in Ethiopia today. The theoretical framework is articulated in terms of four interrelated structural factors, briefly outlined as follows.

The major structural factors in the research context are: political factors as expressed in terms of state building processes in Ethiopia, the main part of literature related to Ethiopia, are dealt with in Part II Chapters Four and Five. The major component of literature related to Gambella, Chapter Six, makes comparative analysis of Gambella conflict landscape as contrasted with other lowland peripheries, which are the outcomes of state building processes in Ethiopia. Ethnic identity factors are discussed in Part III, Chapter Seven; whereas economic factors expressed in terms of land policies are analysed in Chapters Eight to Ten; and finally, external factors,
which include colonial legacy, refugee influx and across-border processes are critically examined in Chapter Eleven. However, it should be noted that the structural factors themselves are interrelated, for example, economic inequality or political marginalisation can be related to ethnic identity issues; external factors e.g. colonial legacy is responsible for dividing the same ethnic groups into different nations making one ethnic identity group a minority by subjecting them to being victims of economic as well as political marginalisation because of their identity and number in political or economic representation. Hence, the division is not water-tight (see Figure 3.1 for schematic depiction of the framework); the classification or compartmentalisation is meant for the convenience of analysis as is customary practice in most conflict literature (see Brown, 1997: 577).

Two of the most salient triggering factors in the context of Gambella discussed in Chapter Three are: election and political elites. These are more frequent and widespread as compared to others. For instance, cattle rustling was common among the Anywaa, Murle and Nuer and triggered violent conflicts in the past. However, because of heavy presence of federal police force for the last over twenty years, the degree of cattle rustling has declined. Other triggering factors such as unemployment of youth, or sudden surge in price of food or fuel, are less significant as compared to the two factors mentioned above.

Finally, Chapter Twelve synthesises various themes of violent conflict and contradictions within the narratives on conflict factors at different levels; it then concludes the study on the basis of the conceptual framework, theoretical and empirical literature and field data on conflict complexity in Ethiopia as evidenced in Gambella. On the basis of the conclusion, the study proposes policy options and practical implications of managing conflict in this distinctly complex and unique killil of Ethiopia.
Chapter Two

Research Methodology and Methods

Qualitative research begins with assumptions and with the use of interpretive frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem… The final written report includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researchers, description and interpretation of the complexity of the problem and its contribution to the literature and/or a call for change (Creswell, 2013:44).

2.1 Introduction

The previous Chapter outlined the research problem and questions entailing appropriate research design. The present Chapter maintains that qualitative methods are more suitable to capture imaginations, perceptions, perspectives and stories (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Creswell, 2013) than statistical modelling in this research which seeks to critically analyse and explain conflict complexity in Gambella. The first section of the Chapter explains the rationale for using a variant of qualitative methodology. The second section deals with data collection techniques; the third one pinpoints specific challenges in the field data collection process I faced and some techniques I employed to handle them. The fourth section is devoted to the issues of research ethics, and the fifth part summarises profiles and number of participants involved in the study. The last part is devoted to description of the process of data analysis and summary of research design.
2.2 Rationale for Using Qualitative Methodology

Three points explain the rationale for using qualitative methodology in this study. First, some researchers (see Bryman and Cramer, 1990: 97) argue that quantitative positivist methodology, with its apparent objectivity and emphasis on statistical models and accuracy is suitable for conflict research. This is because, they argue, if one follows this methodology, the findings will be generalisable, reliable, replicable and valid (ibid). In contrast, others (see Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 46; Hamersley and Atkinson, 1995:90; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011:20) argue that ‘qualitative methodology of social constructivist approach’, based on grounded theory with its ‘thick description’ of the reality in natural setting better suits the violent conflict research in third world countries like Ethiopia.

Both arguments have some validity in that any academic research needs to be systematic and based on a theoretical foundation taking account of the research context. However, seen from the questions raised, the nature of data sought, the participants involved, and the context identified in the present research, quantitative methodology does not effectively capture the subjective experience and perceptions of the community about conflict complexity in Gambella. Hence, it is appropriate to employ qualitative methods to collect data in an under-researched and little known context with a view to exploring, understanding and explaining complexity of violent conflict.

Nevertheless, ‘there is no single’, ‘universally accepted way of doing qualitative research’ (see Denzin and Lincoln, 2011:12; Creswell, 2013:43 – 65). From among a number of debates on the qualitative methodology, I have focused on two salient arguments and opted for one: the first argument underlines the importance of being aware of the philosophical debates and the methodological developments arising from the various types of qualitative methodologies in order to secure the quality of the
research process and findings. Those who pursue this line of argument reason that different methodological approaches are underpinned by particular philosophical assumptions entailing consistency between the philosophical starting point and the methods they adopt. It follows from this argument that maintaining consistency is one way of producing more ‘valid’ findings (Morse et al., 2001). The second line contends that the methods associated with a range of philosophical positions have something to offer. Thus, they conclude that better quality work is produced if the full range of research tools and quality assurances available are considered (Seale, 1999).

As valid as both lines of the debates are, when viewed from a practical angle, the former version of qualitative methodology is more compatible with the present project than the latter, which is rather unrealistic given time and resource constraints to use ‘the full range of research tools and quality assurances available’. Notwithstanding the different perspectives, there tends to be a general agreement that a qualitative approach that reflects the overall research design and takes account of the research setting and yields better qualitative research practice can be adopted to a research project (see Putnam, 1990; Sayer, 1992; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Creswell, 2013). Hence, I have adopted a variant of the qualitative methodology which fits the research design and reflects the research context. Secondly, unlike quantitative, the selected qualitative research methodology is responsive to a particular research culture, and historical and social context. As Denzin and Lincoln (2011:12) put it, such qualitative methodology is ‘a situated activity that locates the observer in the real world’.

Finally, the distinctive characteristics of the selected qualitative methodology are pertinent to this study in terms of: (1) small scale samples that are purposively selected on the basis of salient criteria (Patton, 1990) which are described in the research design section; (2) interactive data collection methods which involve close contact between the researcher and participants, allowing for emergent issues to be explored (Miles and
Huberman, 1994; Creswell, 2013); (3) analysis which may produce detailed description and classification, identifying patterns of association and explanations (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003); and (4) findings which tend to focus on the interpretation of social meaning by mapping and ‘re-presenting’ the narratives of the research participants gathered through conversations and documents (Seale, 1999).

It follows from the above methodological assumptions that semi-structured face to face in-depth interviews (IDI), focus group discussions (FGD) and document studies are appropriate in this research context. However, these tools of data collection have both weak and strong elements which need to be considered.

2.3 Data collection

2.3.1 In-depth Interviews

Perceptions data about violent conflict need to be elicited from purposively selected participants through individual semi-structured face-to-face in-depth interviews. Such an approach is suitable for identifying individual perspectives, personal experiences or opinions, and for gaining detailed information on a specific research question. These techniques also lend themselves to confidentiality and are therefore suitable for discussing sensitive and personal topics. They can be effective in exploring complex issues with individual participants for clarification or explanations (Current, 2004; Sapsford, 2006; Coleman, et al., 2007). As will be seen in Chapter Seven, it was in in-depth interview with the Chair of Elders in the Regional Council of Gambella (IDI, 6 October 2012, Gambella) some of the salient features of un-peaceful relations between the Anywaa and the Nuer were revealed through casual conversation between individuals from the two ethnic groups (see appendix M).
In-depth interviews do nonetheless suffer from the following major defects (see Miles and Huberman, 1994; Current, 2004; Coleman, et al., 2007; Creswell, 2013): (1) they are time consuming; (2) selecting the ‘right’ participants can be problematic; (3) the selected participants may not tell the truth for fear of confidentiality being breached; (4) the tools to elicit accurate information may not be effective; and (5) data recording may be difficult.

In order to rectify the first and second defects, I assigned sufficient time for each question based on a compromise and consensus with participants, and I kept in close contact with key informants and visited study sites two times: before going to Gambella, I spent four weeks (15 July – 16 August 2012) with the Gambella community in Addis Ababa and in-service trainees (or sometimes known also as summer students) at Addis Ababa University to do pilot study which helped me to refine my interview and focus group questions, to have deeper understanding of specific study sites in Gambella, key informants, and research participants. In the first phase of my visit to Gambella I spent one month (5 September – 6 October 2012) and in the final phase, for three weeks (20 March – 5 April 2013). To improve defects listed 3 to 5, I cross-checked the information by other means, e.g. focus group discussions as well as documentary evidence; prepared flexible, general and guiding questions/themes in line with the advice of Miles and Huberman (1994) and Creswell (2013) before the interviews and focus group discussions; and took notes during the interviews and compared them later. I had planned to use video and tape-recorders but the participants were not willing. They expressed their grave concern about their own and my personal security. Hence, I and my research assistants had to rely on note-taking and subsequently to check their accuracy with the participants in the feedback sessions (See appendix A for over all thematic areas of the questions we used for all participants).

Whilst useful for collecting private reflections and sensitive data from individuals, in-depth interviews were not the most convenient tools to capture community level perceptions about violent conflict in Gambella.
Some respondents did not share vital information, presumably out of fear of being exposed. Moreover, in-depth interviews themselves did not expose these flaws. To fill this gap, I used FGD which supplemented the data gathered using in-depth interviews.

2.3.2 Focus Group Discussions (FGD)

As argued in the foregoing section, in-depth interviews lack the group context of a focus group. When debate and discussion on an issue were desired for uncovering new insights or unanticipated issues on conflict complexity, focus group discussions proved to be more effective means of data collection (also see Miles and Huberman, 1994; Hennink, 2007; Criswell, 2013). Perceptions about the land use policy of the current government, villagisation and violent conflict nexus, as has been discussed in Chapter Ten were captured through FGD. Through this mechanism the dynamics and interaction between villagisation and violent conflict were identified as part of conflict complexity in the killil, as will be seen in detail in the Chapter mentioned.

The advantages of FGDs are that they replicate peoples’ natural social interaction rather than an artificial or experimental setting as in a quantitative survey; as a result, participants hopefully find the focus group environment more comfortable and enjoyable, which may impact positively on their contribution to the discussion (Fern, 1982; Rubin and Rubin, 2012). Second, focus group research is relatively structured and focused to generate data that were easily comparable between different groups (Rubin and Rubin, 2012). Finally, at a practical level, a one-hour focus group discussion generated a large volume of data and identified a greater variety of views, opinions and experiences than the same time spent in individual interviews (See Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Rubin and Rubin, 2012). Fern (1982:39) found that a focus group discussion (FGD) generated about 70% of the original ideas that were identified in a set of individual interviews with the same number of people. This happens because the comments of one
participant may trigger a series of responses from others and reveal insights about an issue beyond that of a single interviewee (ibid). This also happened in my research context. It was the group discussions which enabled participants to reveal their own views and opinions of the topic discussed, which uncovered ideas or issues unanticipated by the researcher.

There were also limitations in employing FGD. Although group members stimulated each other in the discussion, there was also a tendency by some group members to dominate the discussion, either due to an authoritarian tone or in the time spent talking. This, to some extent, inhibited a few members who remained quiet or simply agreed with the views of a few dominant participants. Furthermore, the group setting afforded less confidentiality than in the in-depth interviews. As David and Sutton (2004) suggest, reduced confidentiality may led some participants to refrain from contributing in the group on some issues. The group discussion included only a limited number of issues to provide sufficient time to discuss each issue in detail.

Finally, there were also limitations related to focus group data analysis. It ought to be remembered that focus group data are a product of interactive discussion with other participants. Therefore, the method is not suitable for data on individuals or for gathering information politically sensitive topics. In focus group discussions participants have changed their views and provided contradictory opinions during the course of the discussion. That too was taken into account during analysis and additional data were collected to supplement them.
2.3.3 Documents

While some researchers argue that documents are more suitable for quantitative discourse analysis than for qualitative research (Fairclough, 1995), in order to complement in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, documents can be appropriate means of data collection in qualitative studies (Wax and Wax, 1980; Creswell, 2013) and this is what I have done in my study. I have to acknowledge, however, that documents were also replete with various problems including: accessibility, authenticity, reliability and clarity of meaning, among other things, which required critical reflection and careful planning in my part.

The most useful documents in my context were official government documents, newspaper reports, civil society and international NGO reports, and news releases on websites. As analysed in Chapter Seven, these documents made clear that there were diametrically different narratives about the 2003 violent conflict in Gambella between the killil and federal governments. Differences also emerged in accounting for issues that led to the conflict and the way the conflict was handled by both federal and killil governments. As these documents indicate, the local peoples' narratives about the number of victims of the 2003 violent conflict were distinctly different from that of the federal government.

In Ethiopia, which is predominantly an oral, illiterate society, data retrieval systems remain backward and accessibility to some documents proved difficult, if not impossible. For example, out-dated archival record-keeping practices, and the secretive government documents posed challenges. To address these issues, I had to create effective contacts within the appropriate institutions.

To establish the authenticity of the document (see Scott, 1984: 6) the first question to ask is whether the evidence is 'genuine and of unquestionable
origin'. Often the origins of the document may well be unproblematic, especially if the original version was produced in published form such as a public report, or if it is part of a collection held and catalogued in a national/regional archive. Even though this argument is evidenced, it needs further means of supporting the claim, i.e. in order to authenticate the originality of a document, additional means such as talking to the author(s) or consulting people whose cases were reported or other eye-witnesses, or copy of the same case somewhere else, e.g. at different level of the government were needed.

When the authenticity of the documents has been established to the researcher’s satisfaction, the next key stage is to appraise reliability, that is, how far its account can be relied on to use as source of data. Several writers have argued (see Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000; McCulloch, 2004) that, in order to overcome these potential problems of reliability and bias, it is necessary to make use of a wide range of different kinds of documents which represent alternative viewpoints and interests on the same topics/issues. This is a form of triangulation – ‘examining from more than one vantage point’, (Schwandt, 2007:298) – through which the truth will emerge from testing different kinds of documents against each other. To this end, I used typical government official reports (the document of 2005 Enquiry Commission appointed by the House of Representative and presented by the then Minister of Federal Affairs of the FDRE), news reports⁷, and NGO documents (selected on the ground of comprehensive coverage as well as credibility by the community as compared to other documents as has been discussed in subsequent chapters).

Notwithstanding the shortcomings, documents were of vital significance in this project. They have been used in conjunction with in-depth interviews and focus group discussions as tools of qualitative data gathering. In spite

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⁷ (The Ethiopian Reporter for its wide coverage and credibility; the Ethiopian Herald, official media of the government; Policy Handbook of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Sudan Tribune for specific information related to Ethiopia-Sudan border in 2009)
of careful planning, I still faced some difficulties in the field work and managed risks to the participants and myself during the field data collection process using the three tools discussed above.

2.4 Risks in the Field Work

Three major arguments surround risks in the field data collection in general and in the context of my research in particular. First, Wax and Wax (1980:29) argue that in general ‘field work risk’ as such does not deserve an independent discussion because by very nature, any qualitative research which takes place in a third world country like Ethiopia potentially involves danger. Rather, the argument goes, overall research design should pay more attention to dealing with ‘minimising risks in the field research’ (op cit., p.30). While it ought to be admitted that the design issues should take account of the field dangers, I argue that types of common dangers specific to the context must be identified and managed. It is also conventional wisdom that facing and tackling such experience provides insight as it is a normal part of the range of threats experienced by research participants in their daily lives (Burgess, 1984). Besides, any precaution of the risk ought to be based on informed analyses and risk assessment; hence, the topic deserves a separate discussion (see also Lee-Treweek, and Linkogle, 2000; McCulloch, 2004; Creswell, 2013).

The second controversy is a corollary of the first argument: since there could be a wide range of problems related to field work in the study context, it is hardly possible to anticipate and enumerate all of them; aspiring to do so is unrealistic before going to the field (see Burgess, 1984; Robson, 2002). In my research context, four most common risks have been identified as frameworks for conceptualising the dangers based on reading and experience: physical, emotional, ethical (which are discussed separately) and professional risks (McCulloch, 2004; Creswell, 2013) as discussed below.
2.4.1 Physical Dangers

To state the obvious, research on a community replete with internal conflict, presents potential physical dangers to researchers (Burgess, 1984). In such cases the consideration of the consequences of physical threat is of paramount importance to staying alive in the field. In my research setting, for instance, there is little provision of hygienic drinking water and a wide range of infectious diseases, which could lead to serious adverse health consequences which could contentiously be categorised as a physical risk. These risks range from contracting intestinal parasites to having an adverse reaction to anti-malaria medication. Understanding these situated threats provided me with quality data and greater appreciation of participants’ lives and experiences whose safety and well-being should always be placed as equal to protecting my physical as well as emotional well-being.

In my preliminary visit to the Gambella community in Addis Ababa for four weeks in July 2012, I refined my interview instruments and pilot studied each FGD items; and the first four weeks’ (early September to early October 2012) stay in Gambella, I was able to manage the field risks by staying close to community members, and taking precautionary steps such as antibiotics, having vaccination before my departure and taking necessary dietary care. In my second visit of three weeks’ in Gambella, 20 March – to the end of the first week of April 2013, I took similar cautionary steps which helped me to complete my research.

2.4.2 Emotional Danger

I tend to agree with the idea that one of the most controversial issues in the field research appears is to prevent the distress of participants (Wax and Wax, 1980; Robson, 2002; McCulloch, 2004; Creswell, 2013). The controversy, emanates from the concept of ‘distress’ as expressed in the British Sociological Association’s Statement of Ethical Practice (1992: 704), which explicitly states that one of the researcher’s key priorities is ‘to
prevent the distress of participants’. Within this model the participant was
given primacy in terms of protection from negative consequences:
‘[researcher]...should consider carefully the possibility that the research
experience may be a disturbing one and, normally, should attempt to
minimise disturbance to those participants in research’ (British Sociological
Association 1992: 705). However, one of the difficulties faced by social
researchers in general, and in the present PhD research in particular, is that
consequences can be difficult to predict and the definition of what is
distressing differs from person to person, culture to culture and over time. I
tried to minimise emotional risk of individual participant by according it a
centre stage in the research process and addressing them fully on the basis
of mutual respect, dignity and professionalism. I did this by following the
ethical standard of the University of Bradford and that of the Graduate
School of the Addis Ababa University.

2.4.3 Professional Danger

In a third world context like Ethiopia professional danger is a serious risk
associated with the consequences of challenging or deviating from existing
norms, occupational dynamics and collegial preoccupations as well as
political ideology (see for similar discussions Robson, 2002; McCulloch,
2004). Hence, I had to be cautious in the selection of research participants,
i.e. mixing from different age groups, gender, various educational, religious
and political backgrounds and wording the questions in interviews as well as
focus group discussions. I made sure that none of the questions
endangered physical and professional life of the research participants as
well as my own. To this end, as already indicated, I prepared flexible
question schedules before the interviews and conducted feedback sessions
with the participants after writing the analysis of the data. The feedback
session was conducted in March 2013 in Gambella with the members who
took part in the research in September and October 2012 (See Appendix C
for reference letter from the Addis Ababa University, Institute for Peace and
Security Studies written to Gambella).
2.5 Dealing with Problems Related to Field Data Collection

The third and final contentious point comes from whether it is possible at all to predict and prepare a mechanism to deal with the risks expected to encounter in the field (Burgess, 1984a, 1984b; Robson, 2002; McCulloch, 2004; Creswell, 2013). I have to admit that it is rather too idealistic to aim for a risk-free field research project. Nevertheless, formulating prominent problems and seeking possible ways out as preventive mechanism minimised the risks. In addition to physical, emotional and professional security problems discussed already, time factors, logistics and language problems were substantial threat affecting the quality of the data sought.

The timing of my fieldwork was quite crucial and was based on local knowledge. For example, undertaking fieldwork during the rainy season was difficult and uncomfortable in Gambella where flash floods and malaria are common and water-related diseases are widespread. But I did not avoid the rainy season; otherwise, I could actually miss much of the farming activity, when people were working at their hardest, when food was in short supply, and when community health and welfare were often under considerable pressure which helped me to fully comprehend the research context (see for similar descriptions Wax and Wax, 1980; Creswell 2013). Qualitative social science researchers such as Creswell are critical of what they call ‘dry season biases’ (op cit, 2013:195). They maintain that field research undertaken entirely in the dry season may be logistically more straightforward, but it fails to appreciate the annual seasonal pattern and the pressures which exist at specific times of the year (Creswell, 2013:197) to understand the real setting. In other words, key aspects of rural poverty which could account for violent conflict in Gambella could have been missed by not doing fieldwork in the rainy season. So I collected the data in both rainy (September – October, see Figure 2.1 below) and dry seasons (March and April).
I relied mostly on the key informants, and contact persons and local experts regarding the logistic arrangements for my fieldwork. I had to modify my plans several times because of security risks in a particular local area or kebele and where the roads were impassable due to heavy rain in August. Two crucial factors I faced were the need for persons accompanying me on my fieldwork who were well aware of the culture, language, mores and customs of the three major ethnic groups. As I am from a different background in terms of skin colour, culture, and location (I am from southern tip of Ethiopia) I was seen as neutral which was of help in being seen as unbiased. Most crucial was the lack of local language skills, and so there was a concern about losing the meaning of the issues in translation. To fill this gap, I had two local experts who served as interpreters/translators (one with LLM in Law from Ethiopian Civil Service College, and the other with MA in Social Work from Addis Ababa University). For these purposes I heavily depended on the Gambella Teacher Education and Health College, Regional Justice Bureau and Regional Bureau of Rural and Agricultural Development. On the whole, I cannot overemphasise how significant it was for me to be aware of specific risks related to field work and designing possible mechanisms to deal with them in advance.
2.6 Ethical issues

The PhD thesis I am writing is of a British university and is being done under the supervision of the same university where individual human rights and liberty are respected and valued. In contrast, ‘group rights’ are considered human rights for ethnic federal system in Ethiopian context as provided in its 1995 constitution. Hence, it is a requirement that I fully respect both individual human rights and liberty as well as group rights reflecting both research contexts, which render ethical issues of paramount significance in my PhD project. Though the majority of the population are not able to read and write, that does not imply that they are not able to behave ethically or practise ethics. Nor does it mean that they do not expect to be respected or require others to behave ethically, i.e. act honestly and respectfully. Therefore, ethical issues are imperative in social science research in Ethiopia in general and in the present qualitative research in particular.

In order to address the ethical concerns raised above, I have discussed three major issues: issues of gaining access to the field; issues related to informed consent, confidentiality/anonymity in relation to research participants; and issues related to reporting findings of the research.

2.6.1 Access to the Field

Factors that affected my access to the field could be seen at two levels: community leaders and community members. First, some local leaders in the research context are suspicious of researchers; they feel insecure when they see anybody coming to research their community and sometimes give excuses to avoid researchers. Moreover, they don’t easily understand the aim of the research. These factors, I believe, reflect the country’s socio-political level of development: most public policies in Ethiopia are designed by the governments without consulting the public. Moreover, in the long
tradition of Ethiopia, the state/government or ‘mengist’ has been associated with ‘law-giver’, ‘law-maker’ ‘protector’ and ‘god-like’ entity; hence, the idea of peoples’ involvement in research for policy formulation or academic purpose is an alien concept. Even though some people may be curious to vent their concerns out to strangers, the fear of repercussion such as imprisonment or depriving them of their lands or dispossession of other properties haunts these people. Hence, they prefer silence or avoidance of the researchers.

Challenging factors at community level include gender, language, and educational background (see Taylor and Bogdan, 1998; Robson 2002; Oliver, 2003). To begin with, when I considered the role of women in the violent conflict in killil, taking gender as a variable and decided to interview women, culturally, only females interview females; hence, it was necessary to employ a female research assistant. Shockingly, there was only one woman who was educated to the level of a master’s degree and another recently enrolled for her first degree and two women with a college diploma from over 300,000 people of the killil (IDI with the former president of the region, October, 2012, Gambella). As a result, I was able to talk to only two women, in sharp contrast to 52 men (See appendix B for the list of the participants whose names were changed save their sex).

The language of interview was another problem that needed due attention as already mentioned above. Similarly, educational background of the participants was another concern. In order to cope with these circumstances, I had made formal and informal contacts, and undertaken systematic planning, and repeated visits to Gambella for data collection (see appendix C, D and D1). Advantages of such activities are that they: (1)
reduced tension by familiarising me with the community and their culture, and (2) built my confidence and that of the participants. Nevertheless, I recognised that understanding people and their social context is a gradual process. Hence, I suspended quick judgment, cross-checked information and remained open-minded throughout the data collection and analysis.

Regarding both community leaders and community members as research participants, I and my assistants approached them politely, showing the documents from all relevant political-cum administrative structures proving that we were researchers on peace and development from Addis Ababa University/University of Bradford (for supporting documents from the killil, see appendix D and D1). We made as clear as possible the general and specific objectives and benefits of the research for Gambella as well as Ethiopia in the peace building efforts. We also explained to them that the results would be disseminated through workshops, seminars and conferences to the policy makers, and leaders at both regional and federal levels so that they could give informed consent.

2.6.2 Informed Consent

Conceptually, informed consent implies two related activities (Faden and Beauchamp 1986): participants need first to comprehend and second to agree voluntarily to take part in the research and their role within it. Yet, many of the research participants do not read and write which means all the activities ought to be carried out orally through interpreters. Faden and Beauchamp (1986:70) argue that research participants need to understand, first, that ‘they are authorizing someone else to involve them in research and, second, the details of what they are authorizing about’.

In practice, however, the requirements of informed consent have proved anything but straightforward in my context. First, as several researchers have noted (see e.g. Miles and Huberman, 1994), the formal nature of the
consent process that has been mandated by universities’ codes or local committees tended to compromise both the possibility of gaining genuine consent and of providing assurances of anonymity. Second, the assumption of individual autonomy within informed consent protocols fails to recognize the coercive nature of some institutional, community and family-based relationships (ibid). Despite the differences regarding informed consent among researchers, the first advantage of using informed consent is that there is a free will in entering into a contract. Secondly, it lays foundation for a shared responsibility of the participants in the research process because they own the data. Thirdly, informed consent makes the researcher feel emotionally safe because they have data and sources of the data. However, the first disadvantage of informed consent, as I observed, is that it cannot be a foolproof mechanism of keeping participants in the research process. Secondly, some field researchers (see Denzin and Lincoln and, 2011) advise that requirements for informed consent are not always necessary or appropriate and that researchers should be able to conduct covert work regarding politically sensitive issues, e.g. interviewing rebel groups that operate outside and inside Ethiopia in clandestine. Instead, I used press releases of the rebels from websites, interviewed one surviving victim of the 2012 violence and press statements of the killil government which were detailed in Chapter Ten.

Finally, informed consent is a process, not a onetime event (see Miller and Bell, 2002; Sin, 2005 for further discussions): for instance, I had to seek consent from the respondents at the initial, second, and third round of data collection. Hence, I found it useful to be engaged in continued negotiation, including paying them a token amount for the time they spent with us, being context-sensitive, reflexive and flexible with both data collection and analysis.
2.6.3 Confidentiality/Anonymity

Three points which are related to this problem were seriously considered: first, the results of ethical practice, i.e. I considered what would happen if the practice did not exist and made a decision what to do about it. For instance, some interviewees were reluctant to reveal details about themselves thinking that the information they provided could be passed on to third parties, despite assurances to the contrary. Furthermore, as I am not from this killil I expected to be seen as a relatively neutral investigator who would not side with any of the conflict parties in the region and the information one party gave could not be shared with others as already stated above. I was aware from the literature that ‘where there can be no trust between informant and researcher, there are few guarantees as to the validity and worth of information in an atmosphere where confidence is not respected’ (Rubin and Rubin, 2012: 102). Hence, I took with me research assistants and interpreters from the respective ethnic groups. This approach worked and we built confidence and were able to obtain the data we sought.

The second point worth serious consideration was related to individuals' rights. Allen (1997:200) maintains that everyone has a right to limit access to his or her person. Such a right encompasses informational, physical and proprietary privacy. Beauchamp and Childress (2001:90) argued that ‘our right to privacy rests on the principle of respect for autonomy’. On this basis, I requested participants politely and in line with the cultural norms to make decisions about whether to share the knowledge I was requesting.

Moreover, together with the research assistants, we endeavoured to honour the promises associated with the research. These included: prohibition of disclosure or release of any information obtained from them; description of storage and/or handling of paper copies of confidential data; and a requirement to notify them of security incidents. The above practice encouraged accuracy in the research process for the respondents told us that they felt free to express their opinions. They also expressed their
willingness to share any information as long as we were not recording electronically.

I was also aware of the disadvantages of these principles, which arise from the contentious nature of the concepts: what is confidential or private for one individual/culture may not necessarily be the case for another. Moreover, anonymity does not make data retrieval very convenient or easy for reuse by the researchers as well as authorised others. Finally, ‘sensitive data collected anonymously might cause further ethical concerns’ as Robson (2002:70) argues. This project has used various interviews to elicit narratives whose ingredients are value-laden facts, feelings, belief systems, legends, folkelores, metaphors and proverbs. Since these nuances of expression are claimed to belong to the community, accrediting them to individual respondents is arguably itself unethical; hence, it is appropriate that anonymity ought to be maintained. To deal with difficulties related to data retrieval, I used fictional names, (except for high-ranking officials who granted permission to use their given and family names), so that confidentiality or anonymity will be maintained. I also agreed to (1) keep the information and the informants’ names confidential; and (2) get their permission if the data is requested by a third party.

2.6.4 Reporting and Ethical Issues

Reporting the findings\(^\text{10}\) makes ethical issues public as Rubin and Rubin (2012) argue. I had planned some strategies to deal with these issues which

\(^{10}\) Most qualitative research scholars (Lincoln and Denzin, 2011; Creswell, 2013) disapprove of the term ‘finding or findings’ suggesting that the term is associated with statistical or quantitative research paradigm. Note that I have used the term ‘finding’ throughout the research in its conventional sense to mean an outcome, or a result of the data collected and analysed.
included: systematic coding, recording and triangulating of the data, and revising them against the research questions. These activities alleviated the problems of using politically incorrect and non-standard academic language. Following ethical standards, acknowledging sources duly, remaining critical and open-minded in my writing were all vital approaches that I have used to deal with ethical issues in reporting.

2.7 Profile of Research Participants

As indicated in Chapter One, I must acknowledge the limitation of my study in terms of: the number of participants, only 65 with heavy emphasis on the Anywaa participants and the majority of them being in the age range of 27 and 57 as they are the hardest hit in the violent conflicts; Anywaa geographical location, since it is the main site of violence; and three months for field data as indicated above. However, since it is qualitative case study based on field data following the practical experience of Miles and Huberman (1994), Denzin and Lincoln (2011) and Creswell (2013), the research contributes its share by focusing on salient factors of conflict complexity; hence, it plays its part in enriching the literature, making policy recommendations and pointing out further areas for research. Accordingly, this section summarises the background of research participants in the Gambella killil and at Federal level in Tables 2.1 and 2.2 below (see appendix B for the detailed background).

The following table (Table 2.1) summarises personal characteristics of the participants from the killil. Total participants number of participants both from the killil and the federal level is 64; they represent different ethnic, age and professional backgrounds. The criteria of selection are based on purposive sampling following Patton, (1990) and Miles and Huberman,
All participants from Gambella who were involved in the research have lived in the region for over 20 years.

Table 2.1 Background of research participants from Gambella

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Ethnic group</th>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25 – 35</td>
<td>36 – 46</td>
<td>47 – 57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Anywaa</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Highlanders</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Majang</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Nuer</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Total from the killil</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Tabulated by the researcher*

Table 2.2 depicts background of the participants from federal level, Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia where federal government is situated. These participants have been selected on the basis of their pertinence to the federal affairs and agricultural land related issues, central points of the research. It is the House of Federation that is ultimate judge of regional affairs and affairs related to ethnic federalism. I involved one member who volunteered to give in-depth interviews. The next most important office in relation to ethnic relations in the regional administration is the Ministry of Federal Affairs and two members volunteered to be interviewed. Moreover, on land and land related issues, the Ministry of Agriculture was pivotal point and two representatives were interviewed on land policy and investment on agricultural land in Gambella.

11 The number of Nuer settlers in the Anywaa localities suddenly surged to over 260,000 in November 2015. Because of this dramatic change of reality in the case study area, I had to add some new data. From Anywaa and Nuer ethnic groups I interviewed ten elderly people over 50 years of age (five from each group) in case there were unheard voices in my previous data (see appendix N for the list of participants who took part in the FGD (23 – 29 November 2015) from each ethnic group).
### Table 2.2 Background of Research Participants at Federal Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Place: Addis Ababa)</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>40 – 44</td>
<td>45 – 49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Speaker, House of Federation, FDRE</td>
<td>15.01.13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Members, Ministry of Federal Affairs</td>
<td>17.02.13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture</td>
<td>20.02.13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total from federal level</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Tabulated by the author

### 2.8 Data analysis

While some social science researchers maintain that ‘data analysis is treated separately from data collection’, others argue that ‘in qualitative research, generation and analysis of data are often interwoven and take place concurrently’ (see Hamersley and Atkinson, 1995:21; Creswell, 2013:179). The former argue that the analysis requires a skill different from data collection, the latter contend that ‘We should not generate data without substantial analysis going on simultaneously’ for both researcher and participants are part of the data being collected and analysed (Hamersley and Atkinson, 1995:22). They further state that letting data accumulate without using a preliminary analytical technique along the way is ‘a
technique for unhappiness, if not total disaster’ (ibid). In the same vein, Burgess (1984) states that research design, data collection and data analysis are simultaneous and continuous processes. Potter and Wetherell (1990) go one step further when they question whether the term ‘analysis’ is appropriate in qualitative research, because, in their view it relates to a distinctive set of procedures that belong to the discourse of quantitative research. Even though both arguments are valid and sound, in this research, I carried out the data collection and analysis simultaneously.

2.8.1 Description of the Process of Data Collection

Sometimes qualitative data are produced through snapshot methods, such as a one-off survey (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011); but more typically they are a product of data collection over a period, such as the material produced through in-depth interviewing or focus group discussions as was done in this project from July 2012 to April 2013. Unlike the snapshot survey, these methods have produced data which illuminated more directly the interactions and interconnections of violent conflict in Gambella.

2.8.2 Transcribing the Data

A transcript reflects an interview as fully as possible by being verbatim, even though it is a partial representation of the interview, due to the absence of non-verbal communication (Creswell, 2013)). A strict verbatim account was also not possible because of the reliance on notes rather than audio recording. I created the transcripts from our notes and made the decisions about where to add punctuation. Punctuating is one of the beginning points of the process of analysing and interpreting the material (ibid) and must be done thoughtfully. A detailed and careful transcript that re-creates the verbal and nonverbal materials (emotions, gestures, etc.) of the interviews has been of great benefit (ibid) in this project.
2.8.3 Classification and Identification of Themes

The process of classification is part of the practical reality of qualitative research (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The data collected through face-to-face in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and document/media reports have been classified. As already mentioned above, the field data analysis under each theme is accompanied by previous findings either confirming or disconfirming. In some cases, the analysis remains the only answer to the research question posed being the original contribution of the study.

2.8.4 Description and Analysis of Data

‘Description of the data’ collected lays ‘the basis for analysis, and analysis lays the basis for further description’ (Robson, 2002:190). Through analysis, I obtained fresh views of the data. The analysis progressed from initial description, through the process of breaking data down into constituent parts and examining how these parts interconnect to a new account based on the reconceptualisation of the data. The core of qualitative analysis arguably lies in these related processes (Seale, 1999). The first step was to develop thorough and comprehensive descriptions of the phenomena under study which encompass the context of action, the intentions of the actors, and the process in which action was embedded (Miles and Huberman, 1994) as can be seen in Chapter Seven regarding the issues, actors, context and processes of 2003 violent conflict in Gambella.

In the analysis cum description, the context is important as a means of situating action, and of grasping its wider social and historical import (ibid). This requires detailed descriptions of the social setting within which action occurs – the range of historical and cultural background of Gambella e.g. contending political parties, rebel groups, ethnic identities, contribution of major historical factors and institutions which were briefly described and
analysed in Chapter Four (see also pages xv – xx for timeline of major conflict in Gambella); and the spatial context, the network of social relationships, i.e. Gambella’s relations to South Sudan and in Ethiopia. Hence, contexts are seen as a key to meaning, since meaning can be conveyed ‘correctly’ only if context is understood (see Sperber and Wilson 1986; Vygotsky, 1987).

2.9 Summary

This Chapter has argued that qualitative methodology and methods are more appropriate to the present research context to deal with the conflict complexity in Gambella in the time frame stated. It described the types of data sought, i.e. perceptions, stories, newspaper reports, and official documents. To collect, analyse and interpret such data which involve emotions and feelings, a statistical approach is less relevant; hence, I used in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and documents. Several challenges of the fieldwork arose but I was able to find appropriate ways of handling as discussed above (see Table 2.3 for the summary of the research design below).
Table 2.3 Summary of the Research Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Main Question:</strong> What constituted conflict complexity in Gambella since 1991?</td>
<td>Face-to-face semi-structured in-depth interviews (IDI); Focus Group Discussions (FGD); unstructured field observation; official documents; previous literature; and media reports.</td>
<td>Thematic and chronological approach to analyse conflict complexity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sub-research questions have been framed thematically from Chapters Four to Eleven</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A common question to all sub-research questions:</strong> How do the local peoples conceive and explain what constituted violent conflict in the killil since 1991?</td>
<td>Focus group discussions; Face-to-face semi-structured in-depth interviews with purposively selected participants.</td>
<td>Comparing the field data, evidence from official documents, media reports and the previous literature with the local narratives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A common question to all sub-research questions:</strong> How does the Ethiopian government, represented at different levels, conceive and explain what constituted violent conflict in Gambella since 1991?</td>
<td>Official documents and media reports. Face-to-face semi-structured in-depth interviews with purposively selected participants.</td>
<td>Comparing the government narratives with field data which includes local narratives, evidence from official documents, media reports and literature reviewed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to provide theoretical foundation to the empirical data both from the field and previous studies, framing the research conceptually and theoretically appears to be essential, which is the subject of Chapter Three below.
Chapter Three
Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks

Conflict complexity surfaces when one type of conflict element interacts with other conflict elements, e.g. when ethnic identity factor interacts with lack of political representation, economic marginalisation, or external factors, ‘it takes a qualitatively different form of expression of internal conflict, which is observed as conflict complexity’ (See Crocker, 2001: xviii).

External factors, e.g. the Nuer refugees vying for economic and political resources in Gambella impacted on domestic politics of the killil by making the Anywaa ethnic group minority on their own land since the independence of South Sudan, 9 July 2011 entrenching structural change in political landscape. On 16 April 2013 political landscape indeed changed in Gambella: after 22 years in the presidency, the Anywaa lost it to the Nuer who became visible both in South Sudan and Gambella. Following the 15 December 2013 coup in Juba, South Sudan plunged into a civil war with the resultant effect of over 260,000 mostly Nuer refugees flowing to Gambella (In-depth Interview with the UNCHCR authority in Gambella, IDI, 26 November 2015, Gambella), which has further complicated the position of the Anywaa as these refugees are exclusively settled in the Anywaa zone. This in turn entailed the involvement of the Federal Government of Ethiopia in South Sudan’s peace process, without which peace and development in Gambella in particular and in Ethiopia in general is unthinkable. As can be seen, external factors interact with political, economic as well as ethnic identity factors revealing significance of focusing on complexity in order to critically analyse and explain violent conflicts in Gambella.

3.1 Introduction

Chapter Two critically examined the type of research design, which is suitable to collect and analyse empirical data and explain conflict complexity in Gambella. However, key conceptual terms such as ‘conflict complexity’ need to be defined in the research context. Hence, defining core concepts and delineating theoretical framework of the study is the focus of this
Chapter. By so doing, it paves the way for answering the main research question, which seeks to establish what constituted conflict complexity in Gambella since 1991 as conceived by the local peoples and the regional as well as federal governments.

Analysis of dynamics and interaction of the major elements of violent internal conflict explains conflict complexity better than reducing all conflicts in Gambella to ‘ethnic conflict’. Hence, the Chapter provides first, conceptual definitions of key terms related to conflict, and complexity. It then examines theoretical literature of the elements of structural factors of internal conflicts and their dynamics and interaction with a view to revealing conflict complexity in Gambella.

3.2 Conceptual Definition of the Key Terms

Conflict is not intrinsically bad, requiring elimination. It is rather the type of conflict, the way it was conceptualised and managed that requires conflict pathology to be cured (see Burton, 1990; Varshney, 2005; Rothchild, 2009a; Arendt, 2012; Kriesberg and Millar, 2012). Conflict is broadly conceptualised as an inherent human characteristic manifested in social interaction, which can be source of energy for growth and improvement or destruction and impoverishment depending on the way it is understood, managed or responded to (Burton, 1990; Horowitz, 2000; Arendt, 2012; Kriesberg and Millar, 2012).

In this instance the conflict to which I am referring to is defined as a dispute of two or more parties over incompatible goals expressed through competition to utilise natural or political resources (see Mazrui, 2008:23; Ramsbotham, et al., 2011:7-10). My focus in this study is on violent conflict
which is conceived as the interaction of two or more actors with incompatible interests, values or positions which draws on political, economic, ethnic identity, and external factors.

Conflict does not necessarily involve violence at all times; however, if it does, violence serves as a medium since conflict and violence are interconnected. Violence, either physical, cultural or structural, (see Galtung, 1990) in this context has five essential elements: (a) an identifiable actor or group of actors; (b) an identifiable action, or behaviour; (c) a clear physical or psychological harm which results from the action; (d) an identifiable victim who suffers the harm; and, (e) more or less clearly identifiable objective to achieve as a consequence of the violence (see Brown, 1997; Cederman et al., 2011; Brunk, 2012).

Violent conflicts have been given different labels. For instance, intractable conflicts (see Coleman, 2006a, b; Ramsbotham et al., 2011) are destructive or violent conflicts which persist for long periods of time and resist every attempt to resolve constructively. They sometimes appear to take on a life of their own, which makes them intractable. They are so named essentially because they appear impossible to resolve. Other researchers, (see Azar, 1990), have termed them protracted social conflict; Burton (1987) calls them deeply rooted conflict, whereas Goertz and Diehl (1993) term them enduring rivalries and Pearce and Littlejohn (1997) call them moral conflict. Pugh and Cooper (2004:24) conceptualise them as civil conflict summarising four theses to understand them: ‘ancient ethnic hatreds’; ‘new barbarism’, ‘poor governance’ and ‘economic agenda’.

As my field data revealed (FGDs, October 2012; IDIs, April 2013) conflicts in Gambella appear to be both intractable and violent. They mainly revolve around the dynamics and interaction of incompatible goals to achieve political and natural resource; historical injustices, division of the two major ethnic groups, i.e. Anywaa and Nuer between Sudan and Ethiopia by the
colonial power, marginalisation of the killil by the central Ethiopian Government in the state building processes and asymmetrical relations between the centre and periphery as will be seen in detail in Chapters Four and Five.

*Ethnicity* is conceived as an end (Horowitz, 2000:211) or a means (Williams, 2011:113 – 126) or a social construction (Coleman, *et al.*, 2007:56) in a conflict situation. In the first case, it is a social unit, with a common language, territory and belief systems. In the second case, it is a vehicle for group mobilisation in an ethnic conflict, whose boundary is defined by the elite’s will to recruit followers (Coleman, 2004; Williams, 2011). And in the last case, ethnicity is constructed by and emanates from socio-political and historical contexts.

In this study, ethnicity takes all three forms described above as one of the respondents stated in the focus group discussions (Haileyesus, the highlander who has lived there for 34 years; FGD, 15 September 2012, Gambella town):

We (the highlanders of Gambella) associate the Anywaa ethnic group with settled way of practising agriculture; the Nuer with pastoralism as a way of life. The highlanders who are combinations of different ethnic groups of Ethiopia are branded as one ethnic group; they are workers in government offices, farmers, traders, teachers, soldiers, police officers … For us ethnicity is an identification of one’s original geographical location – where they came originally from to settle in Gambella during Emperor Menelik, Emperor Haile Selassie, the Derg or the EPRDF regime. Or it may be a religion, e.g. most orthodox Christians in the killil are labelled as highlanders or even as Amhara while they may be an Oromo, a Wolaita, a Tigre or a Guraghe.

*Identity* is a subjective construct; ‘it is what people perceive themselves to be, and what others perceive and label them, which principally establishes it’ (Sen, 2008:7-10). An individual or identity group can have more than one identity. And defining a person or a group on the basis of only one identity following a single-factor explanation is missing the point of understanding
human beings as complex and dynamic entities. For instance, a person can be a male, a born again Protestant Christian, an Ethiopian, an Anywaa, an African, an architect, an athlete, a human rights activist, yet one individual.

In the present study, the ethnic identity of the two prominent conflicting ethnic groups in Gambella, the Anywaa and the Nuer, is expressed differently. While the Anywaa identity is said to be tied to territory, fixed settlement, ownership of ancestral land, water banks, forest resources, and blood purity (this contentious issue will be discussed in Chapter Seven), the Nuer identity is linked to cattle herding, mobility, transhumance, expansion of grazing land and water points, and intermarriage with other ethnic groups (Evans-Pritchard, 1940; Dereje, 2011). Both ethnic groups are located in South Sudan and Ethiopia as will be seen in detail in Chapter Six.

*Internal conflicts* are more than one single concept. They are understood and conceptualised differently by different authors for they are complex. For example, they are known as ‘resource conflicts’ (Homer-Dixon, 1999), ‘civil conflicts’ (Rupesinghe, 1995), ‘ethnic conflict’ (Horowitz, 2000; Jacoby, 2009), ‘civil wars’ (Collier, *et al*., 2005), ‘identity conflict’ (Sen, 2006), ‘new wars’ (Kaldor, 2007) and ‘intra-state conflicts’ (Ramsbotham *et al*., 2011). I have used all these terms depending on the detail to consolidate my argument that internal conflicts in Ethiopia are far more complex than ethnic conflict alone.

*Narratives* in this context are defined as different accounts for elements of conflict complexity in Gambella provided by the local population and the Ethiopian government represented at various levels. I have used synonyms of the term ‘narratives’ e.g. accounts, conceptions, discourse, explanations, imaginations, meanings, perceptions, stories and views. As will be seen in subsequent chapters, local peoples and the federal and regional
governments hold, in the main, distinctly different views regarding the conflict constituting elements in the Gambella killil since 1991.

*Complexity* is a rather difficult term to define; it can mean different things to different people. Complexity, in this study, is defined as a phenomenon which emerges from interacting and dynamic events, systems, or peoples. At the heart of most real-world examples of complexity, is the situation in which people are cooperating or competing for some kind of limited resource – for example, food, space, power, or wealth (see Harrison, 2006; Harrison and David, 2006; Miller and Page, 2007; Erdi, 2008; Mason, 2008; Hendrick, 2009; Loode, 2011).

Conflict complexity, therefore, is a conflict condition which surfaces when one type of conflict element interacts with other conflict elements. For instance, when ethnic identity factor interacts with lack of political representation or relative deprivation, ‘it takes a qualitatively different form of expression of internal conflict, which is observed as conflict complexity’ (Crocker, 2001: xviii). According to Coleman, *et al.*, (2007) and Loode, (2011) conflict complexity cannot be understood by reducing conflict factors to their individual components or single labels. Conflict complexity is mainly characterised by ‘self-organisation’ and ‘emergent properties’ which arise from the interaction of individual elements (Loode, 2011). By the same token, ‘interactions’ are behaviours and communications occurring in reaction to other elements, systems or environments in conflict context (Loode, 2011).

Although every conflict is unique in terms of history, issues, context, etc., all components of conflict function as interdependent elements of a larger system with dynamic properties (Coleman, 2006a; Coleman *et al.*, 2007). If a conflict becomes intractable, ‘change in any specific issue – even resolution of the issue that initially instigated the conflict – is not likely to
terminate or even lessen the conflict’ (Erde, 2008:18). What remains constant and perpetuates the conflict are the dynamics that define the relationships between psychological and social mechanisms within and between individuals and groups. Once the parties to conflict have developed a stable way of thinking about and behaving towards one another, the problem no longer revolves around issues per se but rather centres on the mental and behavioural patterns defining the relationships and institutions that form the context of the conflict (see Coleman, 2006b; Coleman et al., 2007; Hendrick, 2009; Loode, 2011). The field data from Gambella (see Appendix M) demonstrates these instances.

As will be discussed in Chapters Seven and Eight the mode of response to violent conflicts in different parts of Ethiopia including Gambella by the past and present regimes, reveals the interaction and dynamics of conflict elements. Metaphorically, responses to violent conflicts by the Ethiopian governments in the past and present, may be likened to micro-biological illustration of removing one type of insects from the garden only to have another set of insects next day for they have capacity of re-emerging, self-organising and adaptive capacity as a result of interaction and dynamics (Waldrop, 1994; Coleman, et al., 2007).

Interestingly, so are human species with self-organising capacity and self-criticality to re-emerge. This can be exemplified if we take the Derg regime which believed that the ‘best way to kill the fish is to dry the pond’. Hence, it moved hundreds of thousands of people from Tigray and Wello in 1970s and 1980s under the guise of resettlement in Gambella (as discussed in Chapter Ten) and other lowland peripheries of Ethiopia (Pankhurst, 1990: 128 – 132) but actually it was meant in order to ‘dry the source of rebels’; although in the event, it was only to multiply the rebels and finally to speed up the regime’s demise.
To deal with intractable violent conflict situations, it will not be possible to see the multiple layers of complexity by relying on one lens or by seeking for single-factor explanation. ‘At least three lenses are essential to see different aspects of a complex reality’ (see Lederach, 2003:7). The first lens allows us to focus on the immediate situation: presenting problem as it were, which could be a symptom of intractable conflict; the second lens will allow us to see past the immediate problems and view what is happening in human relationships at a deeper level; thirdly, we need a lens that helps us to envision a framework that holds these together and creates a platform to address the content, the context, and the structure of the relationship (ibid). Analysing the dynamics and interaction of internal conflict factors is not just about including all possible parties to a conflict, stakeholders as well as those who may indirectly influence the outcomes; it is rather a systematic analysis of major underlying and triggering factors of conflict (Sandole, 1999, 2006; Hughes, 2004; Fowler, 2008) as has been illustrated in Chapter Seven on the basis of empirical data from Gambella.

Finally, several authors have applied a complexity approach to explore, understand and explain internal conflicts. Some of these are, Ruane and Todd (2003) in the Middle East and Cyprus; Current (2004) in Somalia, Rwanda and Serbia; and Coleman, et al. (2007) in the Congo Democratic Republic. Their findings conclude that ethnicity as a category does not necessarily lead to conflict but where there is conflict with an ethnic component, the dynamics and nature of ethnic identity in relation to other identities provide important elements for unravelling the conflict causes and developing responses as part of a conflict transformation approach. Posing the question about community rather than ethnicity, they sought to discover how the many elements that constitute a community become ordered, sometimes to the extent that the solidarity experienced, and the resistance to change engendered, play an important role in conflicts at group level. They established that the answer is in a particular dynamism and interaction. The research findings, however, do not predict change, or
provide general laws about internal conflict and its resolution, but rather direct readers where to look for critical phenomena. The present research pursues this direction.

In short, the complexity approach to conflict analysis has ‘both explanatory power and ability to grasp the multiplicity of meanings which emerge from dynamics and interaction of internal conflict elements’ (Ramsbotham et al., 2011:58). It discourages the overemphasis of single-factor explanation for internal conflicts, allowing for the analysis of social actions within and across systems with particular emphasis on the interactions (ibid). The following section broadens and deepens the conceptual framework by providing a theoretical framework for structural and triggering factors of internal conflicts in the study context.

3.3 Theoretical Framework

Internal conflicts in Ethiopia and in sub-Saharan Africa in general are becoming more and more complex. The long-standing violence in Sudan’s region of Darfur (see Flint and de Waal, 2008; Francis, 2008; Porto, 2008); the recent violence erupted on 15 December 2013 as a coup attempt which has claimed the lives of thousands of civilians in the South Sudan, the newest nation in the world (ICG, 2013; IRIN, 2013); political, constitutional, and secessionist crisis as well as Islamic jihadists and terrorist group movements in Mali since 2011 (ICG, 2012, 2013; Francis, 2013); and religious-identity movements in Ethiopia (Horn of Africa Bulletin, HAB, 2013); recent violent conflicts in Oromia (Kennedy and Ademo, 2015) as well as Gambella, (Davison, 201612) and radical Islamism and resource driven violence in Nigeria (IRIN, 2012) signify the complexity of intrastate conflicts in the sub-Saharan Africa. The following sub-section explores and

analyses the structural factors of intrastate conflicts in Ethiopia taking the case of Gambella.

3.3.1 Major Structural Factors

Major structural elements of conflict complexity identified in current literature in Ethiopia, Gambella in context of the sub-Saharan Africa (see Collier and Hoeffler, 2002; Messay, 2004; Sambanis, 2004; Sach, 2005; Stiglitz, 2006; Collier, 2009; Mazrui, 2009) are: political factors as manifested in the state building processes, which are discussed in Chapters Four and Five; ethnic identity factors, which are analysed in Chapter Seven; economic factors as expressed in land and land use policies of Ethiopia, which are detailed in Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten; and external factors including colonial legacy, which are analysed and explained in detail in Chapter Eleven. These points have been depicted schematically as follows:
Figure 3.1 Structural Causes of Conflict in Gambella: Theoretical Framework

Structural or underlying factors are not categorical, as dynamic and interactive, they are in a continuum and interlinked: simply put, these compartments are not water-tight. I have thematically organised and portrayed them in the above framework as political, ethnic identity, economic, and external factors, separately even though they are interlinked, in order to reveal their dynamism and interaction, which constitute conflict complexity in the killil following the tradition of conflict research (see Brown, 1997:577). Hence, the double arrows horizontally indicate that political factors can intensify or reduce levels of ethnic identity factors and economic inequality or marginalisation, which is evident in Gambella. It is also
acknowledged that economic differences are linked to ethnicity as will be illustrated in Gambella taking the case of the participation level of indigenous population in agricultural investment in Chapter Nine – only two indigenes took part in the investment activities for they were structurally marginalised from bank-loan systems and denied political access to land deal (see also Ojot 2013:140).

External factors, e.g. the Nuer refugees competing for economic and political resources in Gambella impacted on domestic politics of the killii by making the Anywaa ethnic group minority on their own land since the independence of South Sudan, 9 July 2011 creating structural violence. On 16 April 2013 the political landscape changed in Gambella: after 22 years in presidency, the Anywaa lost the election to the Nuer who became visible both in South Sudan and Gambella. Following the 15 December 2013 coup in Juba, South Sudan plunged into a civil war with the resultant effect of over 260,000 mostly Nuer refugees flowing to Gambella, which has further complicated the position of the Anywaa as these refugees are settled exclusively in the Anywaa zone (IDI, 26 November 2015, Gambella). This in turn entailed the involvement of the Federal Government of Ethiopia in South Sudan’s peace process, without which peace and development in Gambella is unthinkable. It follows that external factors interact with political, economic as well as ethnic identity factors showing significance of focusing on complexity in order to critically analyse and explain violent conflict in Gambella. These major factors are discussed below.

**Political Factors**

Some researchers on sub-Saharan African politics maintain that economic growth, poverty reduction, trade and development aid need to be promoted in order to prevent internal violent conflicts in Africa (Sach, 2005; Stiglitz,
2006; Collier, 2009). It follows from their recommendations that governments of these countries build a developmental state which focuses on economic growth as is the case in Ethiopia today. Their contention is that if there is economic growth, if household expenditure and welfare incomes increase, it is less likely that there will be internal violence in an African country in question. They seem to imply that it is economic growth, not political development, which is a preventive mechanism of internal conflicts in Africa.

By contrast, I ally myself with other writers who suggest that state building processes (see Chapters Four and Five for state building processes in Ethiopia as the pillar of political factors in conflict complexity) as manifested through four main political dynamics, play pivotal roles in generating internal conflicts in Ethiopia in general and in ‘lowland peripheries’ (Markakis, 2011:15) like Gambella in particular: discriminatory political institutions; overall political culture of the country; intergroup politics; and peripheral or ethnic minority politics (see Brown, 2001; Smith, 2007; Williams, 2011; Assefa, 2012; Solomon, 2012; Clapham, 2013).

First, in a general sense the prospects for conflict in a country depend to a significant degree on the type and the degree of fairness of its political system albeit its impressive economic growth or GDP as is the case in Egypt or Libya (Mo Ibrahim Index, 2013:3). Closed authoritarian systems are likely to generate considerable resentment over time, especially if the interests of some ‘ethnic and clan affiliations’ are served while others are trampled (Williams, 2011:39). Resentment can build up if some groups are excluded from, or inadequately represented in, the government, the courts, the police, political parties, and other state and political institutions. Consequently, the legitimacy of the system as a whole can, over time, be called into question. Likewise, internal conflict is likely if repression and violence are commonly employed by the state to solve all internal conflicts.
in its state building process as is the case in many post-conflict as well as in-conflict countries in Africa including Ethiopia (ibid). This becomes more pronounced when we look at the state building process of Ethiopia as Markakis contends:

Waged against determined opposition, the state building project has incited endless conflict and stained the pages of the country’s history with the blood of generations. Today the struggle continues, and so does the bloodshed and the misery it brings (Markakis, 2011:1).

Second, the nature of the prevailing political culture has a substantial effect on the generation of violent conflict (Vaughan and Tronvoll, 2003:32). There appears to be a link between the type of political culture entrenched in a society and the discourse of the ruling elites – ‘the metaphor they live by’ (Lakoff & Johnsen 2003:12). ‘Political culture’ in this context refers to ‘the attitudes, beliefs, and values which underpin the operation of a particular political system’ (see McLean and McMillan, 2003:414). Robertson states that a political culture is the totality of ideas and attitudes towards authority, discipline, governmental responsibilities and entitlements, and associated patterns of cultural transmission such as the education system and even family life as in child-rearing patterns e.g. in Myanmar (Burma)’ (see Robertson, 2002:380).

The political culture of Ethiopia has been more conducive to the emergence of autocratic leaders than collective leadership (Bahru, 2002:249). This phenomenon contributed to the prevalence of exploitative relations between the ruling few in the centre and the marginalised majority in the periphery which has led to ethnic nationalism and a corresponding resentment by those who were discriminated by the central state as was experienced by Gambella and other lowland peripheries in Ethiopia (Mesfin, 1994; Asafa, 2004; Mesfin, 2011; Assefa, 2012).
In some places, nationalism and citizenship are based on ethnic distinctions as a political culture, which tends to undermine the idea that everyone who lives in a country is entitled to the same rights and privileges (see Brown, 1997, 2001). Although the existence of the civic nationalism conception as a political culture is no guarantee of stability, conflict is more likely when ethnic conceptions of nationalism predominate. Brown (1997:17) argues that whereas civic nationalism normally appears in well institutionalised democracies, ethnic nationalism is spontaneously necessitated by three conditions when: (1) an institutional vacuum occurs or completely collapses; (2) existing institutions are not fulfilling peoples’ basic needs; and (3) when satisfactory alternative structures are not readily available.

By contrast, other scholars (e.g. Kidane, 2007:67) argue that ethnic nationalism could provide an answer for most social ills in multi-ethnic societies like Ethiopia where a few ethnic groups reigned for centuries. Kidane seeks to illustrate his argument with reference to what is being practised on the ground in the current Ethiopia where ethnic politics has been entrenched since 1991. The very constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 1995, states: ‘Every Nation, Nationality and Peoples in Ethiopia has an unconditional right to self-determination, including the right to secession’ Article 39 (1). As stated in the constitution, priority is given to ethnic political structure and ethnic nationalism. However, in sharp contrast to Kidane’s argument, ethnic-based conflicts have occurred on an unprecedented scale in Ethiopia since the introduction of ethnic politics recorded in the constitution as already stated in Chapter One (see for further argument Abbink, 2011; Clapham, 2009, 2013; Tronvoll, 2009a; Markakis, 2011; Assefa 2012).

Thirdly, studies show that the prospects for violence in a country depend to a large degree on the dynamics of domestic intergroup politics (see
Horowitz, 2000:12-13). The prospects for violence are great, if groups – whether they are based on political, ideological, religious or ethnic affinities – have ambitious objectives, a strong sense of identity, and confrontational strategies. Internal conflict is especially likely if objectives are incompatible, groups are strong and determined, action is feasible, success is possible, and if intergroup comparisons lead to competition, anxiety, and fears of being dominated (ibid). According to this line of thinking, ethnic conflict is often provoked by elites in times of political and economic trouble in order to fend off domestic challenges (Brown, 2001:220-222). This tendency was demonstrated in the Gambella case in the context of the 2003 violence as the official documents and field data revealed, which is analysed in Chapter Seven. Ethnic nationalism, hence, leads to ‘Ethnic bashing and scapegoating’ as the mass media are employed in partisan propaganda that further aggravates inter-ethnic tensions (ibid).

Finally, states with ethnic minorities in the periphery are more prone to conflict than others, and certain kinds of ethnic demographics are more problematic than others as will be seen in Chapters Four and Five in detail (see also Smith, 2007; Tripp, 2009; Reid, 2011; Williams, 2011). It is important to note, however, that ethnic homogeneity is no guarantee of internal harmony: Somalia is the most frequently cited case for ethnically homogenous state in sub-Saharan Africa; yet it has been torn apart by clan warfare and a competition for power among local warlords for over twenty years now (Brown, 2001; Reid, 2011; Williams, 2011). This is apparent in most states, particularly those carved out of former empires, with complex ethnic demographics and face serious ethnic problems of one kind or another. Consequently, in most parts of Africa including Ethiopia, arbitrary borders have divided some ethnic groups and situated them in two or more countries sowing the seed for potential internal violence (ibid). The cases of Nuer and Anywaa of Gambella have been detailed in Chapters Six and Eleven.
On the whole, political factors, particularly state building processes, which are analysed in detail in Chapters Four and Five, play pivotal roles as underlying factors of internal conflict complexity. They are critical in the satisfaction or frustration of individual and identity groups. However, political factors alone cannot fully account for the complexity of internal conflicts; other factors such as ethnic identity questions need to be revisited.

**Ethnic Identity Factors**

Some researchers in social sciences maintain that there is no such thing as ‘ethnic conflict’ per se; the phrase is socially constructed and used as a pretext for resource competition or a political agenda (see Suliman, 1999; Harff and Gurr, 2004; Kassahun, 2009), while others argue that ethnic identity in its own right is an issue and can be a source of conflict; to this end, Horowitz (2000:300) argues that ‘ethnic identity question is source of African conflicts’, and Mazrui (2008:37), contends that ‘conflict among black Africans is very often rooted in ethnic differences’. ‘No other forms of social identity in the early twenty-first century has a comparable power except for the closely related forms of collective affiliation, race and religion’ (Young, 2008:25). Denny and Walter (2014) underline the salience of ethnic identity in initiating civil war by stating boldly: ‘If a civil war begins, it is more likely to be initiated by an ethnic group than any other type of group.’ (op. cit., p.199).

However, I suggest that ethnic identity factors are serious issues, and that they are one of several elements in conflict complexity in Gambella. As a means to an end, some political elites use ethnic identity as a pretext for their own political gain as discussed in Chapter Seven. Baker (2003) and Williams (2011), for instance, argue that ethnicity is as likely to result from conflict as it is to cause it. Lemarchand (2003) concurs with them in the
myths about ethnic differences in Rwanda were manipulated by political elites who were responsible for distorting these myths and turning them into vehicles for genocide.

Another very important factor related to ethnic identity conflict in Ethiopia is relative deprivation as was uncovered in the field data (IDIs, FGDs, September 2012). Harff and Gurr (2004), relate ethnic identity conflict in Africa to relative deprivation, a function of a growing gap between the expected and the actual needs that causes frustration and mobilizes identity groups to engage in violent conflict. So, the greater the deprivation an individual or a group perceives relative to their expectations, the more widespread and intense is their discontent. Theoretically, deprivation leads to grievance (Collier and Sambanis, 2005) which is an individual as well as a group concern that manifests itself collectively. Hence, grievance lies at the core of the motivation to organize in response to the mal-distribution of natural as well as political resources, such as land, income or political access as has been discussed in Chapters Nine and Ten. Studies from other parts of Africa show that discrimination appears to be associated with resistance, if it is related to power, or with insurgency, if it has to do with social customs (ibid). Research by Gurr (1994:5-6) supports the above argument that all the 233 ethnic groups he studied in Africa, experienced discrimination, either economically (147 groups), politically (168), or both. In the period from 1945 to 1989, more than 200 of these 233 groups organized politically to defend their interests against the government or other ethnic groups. In at least 80 cases, the conflict escalated to violent internal conflict (ibid).

In terms of ethnic identity as an end, Brown (1997:20) has identified two cultural and perceptual factors that are interlinked with ethnic identity issues. The first is cultural discrimination against minorities. Problems include inequitable educational opportunities, legal and political constraints on the
use and teaching of minority languages, and constraints on religious freedom (ibid). In extreme cases draconian efforts to assimilate minority populations, combined with programmes to bring large numbers of other ethnic groups into minority areas, constitute a form of cultural genocide. Examples are evident from the military government of Ethiopia under the guise of resettlement and villagisation during the Derg regime (see Pankhurst, 1990). As the data from Gambella reveal, the practice of cultural discrimination, i.e. imposition of atheism and considering all cultural belief systems of the indigenous population as backward by the military regime made both the Anywaa and Nuer feel aggrieved and marginalised (ibid). The relocation of the highlanders in Gambella by the military government sowed the seed of violent conflict that re-emerged after over thirty years now as will be seen in Chapter Seven.

Likewise, group histories and group perceptions of themselves and others have been at the heart of identity-based conflicts in Africa (Zartman, 2010). It is true that many groups have legitimate grievances against others for crimes of one kind or another committed at some point in the distant or recent past. Some ‘ancient hatreds’ have legitimate historical bases (see Kaldor, 2007). However, it is also true that groups tend to ‘whitewash and glorify’ their histories and they often demonise their neighbours, rivals, and adversaries as will be seen in Chapter Six of the Anywaa and Nuer in the ways that they interpret and explain their own and each other’s history. Stories that are passed down from generation to generation by word of mouth become part of a group’s lore. They often become distorted and exaggerated with time, and are treated as received wisdom by group members, which then serve as a factor in ethnic identity conflict as was seen in Gambella in relation to Anywaa and Nuer interpretation of the word ‘Gambella’ and names of rivers as well as river banks as discussed in Chapter Six.
In sum, ethnic identity is not a fixed entity since various sociological and political processes are underway in every society. It is the dynamics and interaction of various factors that lead to violent ethnic conflict, for example when: ethnicity overlaps with economic factors, identity and resources (Horowitz 2000; Smith, 2007; Reid, 2011); an ethnic group fears extinction (Harff and Gurr 2004); foreign infiltrations are imminent on their territory (Turton, 2006a, b); rebel organisations are financially viable to claim ethnic identity (Collier, 2001, 2007, 2009); grievance or ancient hatreds are revived (Horowitz, 2000); past injustices are reminded and tied to ethnic identity differences (Regassa, 2010); and myths are created and reproduced to justify the violence (Lemarchand, 2003). In short, ethnic identity factors alone do not lead to internal conflicts; rather, it is its dynamism over time and interaction with other factors including economic factors that give ethnicity prominence in conflict complexity as argued below.

**Economic Factors**

The roots of much of the conflict in modern-day Africa are, just as they were in pre-colonial days, ‘neither ideological nor political, but economic’ (Iliffe, 2007:1). Those who favour this argument state that the modern-day ‘frontiersman’ is engaged in a struggle for control of desperately needed economic resources for the chance of a better life (Baker, 2003; Nyang ‘oro, 2003). They further contend that the scarcity of resources and concomitant social inequality are central to understanding warfare on the continent. Likewise, Clayton (2003:43) maintains that ‘the tensions resulting from underdevelopment and competition for scarce resources form a common underlying theme’ for violent internal conflicts in Africa. They further claim that the best predictors of violent internal conflict are low average incomes and a high dependence on raw materials exports such as oil and diamonds. Collier (2001, 2007, 2009), one of the supporters of the above line of thinking, denies that grievance causes major armed conflicts, and looks instead to greed – economic agendas are causes of violent conflict. He
states that when income per person doubles, the risk of civil wars halves and that for each percentage point by which the growth rate rises, the risk of conflict falls by a point.

When critically examined, the above argument is flawed. First, empirically comparing the above argument with the realities on the ground in Ethiopia, it can be seen that statistical figures obscure the true picture of violent internal conflicts. For instance, Ethiopia’s economic growth has been reported by the Ethiopian government, the World Bank and IMF to be in double digits, since 2003, according to Ethiopian Central Statistical Agency (ECSA, 2007). Yet Ethiopia ranked 173rd out of 187 countries in human development index (UNDP, 2013); and following Angola and Chad, Ethiopia ranked worst in the new food index (Oxfam, 2014) on the basis of four core concerns for consumers.13

Second, 8 – 15 million people have been suffering from lack of food at the time of writing. The economic growth rate has not protected people from violent deaths. In 2006 alone, about 200 civilians were shot dead in the capital by the government security forces while demonstrating after a sham election (Abbink, 2006; Kassahun, 2009; Tronvoll, 2009a). Official figures from Ogaden, Eastern Ethiopia, suggest that 1,500 were killed

13 The Good Enough to Eat index looks at four core concerns for consumers around the world: a. Do peoples have enough to eat? - Measured by levels of undernourishment and underweight children b. Can peoples afford to eat? – Measured by food price levels compared to other goods and services and food price volatility c. Is food of good quality? – Measured by diet diversification and access to clean and safe water d. What are the health outcomes of peoples’ diet? – Measured by diabetes and obesity.
(Ramsbotham, et al., 2011:68) and in Gambella in 2003 over 400 violent deaths were reported (see Human Rights Watch, 2012; ICG, 2013; The Oakland Institute, 2013). A related study by Hagmann (2014:30) in Somali Regional State of Ethiopia states that:

In recent years, and partly to counter its poor democratization record, the Ethiopian government has begun to claim development successes as its own, in particular the country’s double-digit annual economic growth. In the Somali Regional State these are both real and imagined: the federal government has undoubtedly made substantial investments in the Somali Regional State over the past decade, including a new international airport, a university, and new roads… Critics argue that this development emphasis is simply propaganda…

More dramatically, some authors (see Reid, 2011; Stiglitz, 2012) argue that economic growth may even aggravate the propensity for violent conflict: economic growth benefits some individuals and groups more than others (ibid). The Mo Ibrahim index (2013:3-4), taking Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia, demonstrates that economic growth is not a guarantee for internal stability. Economic growth is not necessarily the answer to violent conflict as one can observe what has been going on in Northern Africa and the Middle East since February 2011. Even if a country’s overall economic picture is improving, growing inequities and gaps can aggravate intrastate tensions. To the credit of the EPRDF, there is impressive infrastructure development, widespread education access and health services. However, an index of economic growth is not necessarily correlated with absence of internal conflict or reduction of ethnic identity based conflicts among the majority of ethnic groups in Ethiopia as mentioned in Chapter One.

What is more, the argument is theoretically flawed because discriminatory economic policies have potential themselves to be sources of internal conflicts in African contexts in general (see Horowitz, 2000; Stewart, 2002; Williams, 2011) and in Ethiopia in particular. To begin with, discriminatory
economic policies, whether on the basis of social class or ethnicity, or political partisanship, can generate resentment and frustration which trigger violence, as can be illustrated the land issues in the lowland peripheries, particularly, in Gambella,

‘Land remains the most valuable resource in Ethiopia, and is the object of perennial conflict and political controversy. Every regime that has ruled this country in the past century has sought to control and exploit this resource by manipulating the system of land tenure’ (Markakis, 2011: 26).

Furthermore, unequal economic opportunities, or ‘horizontal inequality, and vast differences in standards of living, are all signs of economic policies that disadvantaged members of society which many may see as an unfair and/or illegitimate’ (Stewart, 2002:3).

On the whole, it may be inferred from the above analysis that economic explanations of violent internal conflicts shed some light on conflict complexity in the research context, but it does not provide a sufficient explanation for violent conflicts; hence, one more underlying factor, external factors, should be considered for better explanation of conflict complexity in Gambella.

**External Factors**

As already stated above, since the independence of South Sudan on 9 July 2011, the Nuer presidency in Gambella on 16 April 2013, and the 15 December 2013 coup in South Sudan with the consequent influx of the Nuer refugees to Gambella, the political weight of the Nuer changed posing existential threat to the Anywaa of the killil bringing about structural change in the political landscape of the killil. In the following sections I will focus on external factors as a colonial legacy in Ethiopia – an uncolonised African
country but connected to a colonial legacy through the frontier state of Gambella.

In most literature on conflict in sub-Saharan Africa (see for example, Reader, 1998; Arnold, 2006; Mazrui 2008, 2009; Williams, 2011) it is argued that colonial legacy, as an external factor, has been a major source of the region’s ills in two major ways: by disrupting the existing socio-political and cultural fabric; and, by creating artificial colonial boundaries which fuel intra- and interstate violent conflicts. In the former case, the colonial system totally transformed the historical and political geography of sub-Saharan Africa, and the depth and intensity of alien penetration of subordinated societies continues to cast its shadow at present. Mazrui (2008:39) underlines that “black” violence in Africa in general often has “white” roots’, and Clayton (2003) draws attention to some of the unfortunate consequences of colonial rule: ‘colonial administrators distorted native customs and authorities as well as reawakened ethnic tensions; their economic policies were misguided at best, exploitative at worst’ (op. cit. 44-45). Lemarchand (2003) shows some of the subtler ways in which Western cultural influence worked to corrode African society. Mentioning specific instances, Lemarchard maintains that European colonial powers played a rather crucial role in the destructive myth-making of the Great Lakes region. It was they, he argues, who first propagated the belief that the light-skinned Tutsi were of Semitic origin and, therefore, superior. Hutu elites then manipulated the myths to ascertain the foreign nature of the Tutsi and thus help to legitimize Hutu aggression leading to an unprecedented genocide in Rwanda in 1994 (see Dallaire, 2003; Melvern, 2005).

It is further argued that Africa’s colonial boundaries were decided upon in Europe by negotiators with little knowledge of and consideration for local conditions. ‘The boundaries cut through at least 177 ethnic “culture areas” dividing pre-existing economic and social units distorting the development of entire regions’ (Reader, 1998:562). This artificial nature of interstate borders
in Africa is a glaring colonial legacy. These borders were colonial constructs, the product of negotiations and treaties between the colonial powers who largely ignored African political realities. Consequently, existing state structures serve as fertile ground for inter- and intra-state violent conflicts.

Convincing and evidence-based as the forerunning arguments are, their conclusions are limited for two reasons: first, they appear to imply that the un-colonised parts of Africa are immune to violent conflicts; and second, they seem to render colonial legacy a scapegoat for all Africa’s conflicts. To begin with, Ethiopia’s being an uncolonised country has not prevented it from being a theatre of violent internal conflicts. Ethiopia is not better off compared to African countries which did experience colonialism, with regard to: the degree of violent internal conflict; the extent of discrimination of ethnic groups by central state; the nature of political institutions; and overall socio-economic development.

Examining the literature cited above and in Chapter Six, sheds some light on how far and in what ways the history of Gambella is comparable to African experiences of European colonialism. Disrupting the existing socio-political and cultural fabric and creating artificial colonial boundaries which fuel intra- and interstate violent conflicts are distinctive features of colonial practices (see Clayton 2003: 46). These are expressed in terms of the division of Anywaa and Nuer ethnic groups in South Sudan and Gambella by creating artificial colonial border. This left an indelible print on intrastate violent conflict, at times backed by kith and kin across border feeding light arms and small weapons whenever conflict occurs either side of the border. To this extent, the experience of Gambella is comparable with the Somali in Ethiopia, Djibouti and Somalia, divided by the British colonial system creating artificial borders, as discussed in Chapter Six. Furthermore, pre-colonial social and political structures and institutions were dismantled and substituted with chiefs and clan-leaders with a new concept of territoriality as was evidenced in the case of Anywaa similar to what had happened in
Kenya to the Kikuyu, and Maasai ethnic groups (Cheeseman, et al, 2015:98). What is more, the Protestant Christian religion predominates (at over 70% in Gambella, according to ECSA, 2007) as is the case in South Sudan or Uganda. Further, Gambella was a source of resource plundering by the British colonial power via Sudan including slaves, ivory, gold, etc., which is a similar experience to South Sudan. At various times Gambella was seen as a lynchpin to control Lake Tana, the main source of Blue Nile, by the British (see Bahru, 2008:158).

Secondly, one of the key factors for violent conflicts in Africa, which are sometimes seen as a colonial legacy, is the failure of African political institutions, and prevalence of state fragility (Arnold, 2006; Mazrui, 2008; Reid, 2011; Williams, 2011). A sacred duty of a state in principle and practice is to provide security and promote the welfare of its people. Many sub-Saharan African governments have failed to do so (see Mazrui, 2003, 2008; Young, 2008), being susceptible to military coups, corruption and failure in democratic governance (ibid). Field data from Gambella reveals that even the former liberation movements who pledged to fight corruption and injustice found themselves more corrupt since their underlying assumptions are one and the same: ‘winners take all’ as will be revisited in more detail in Chapter Eleven. As human conditions of the ordinary citizens on daily basis demonstrate in the sub-Saharan Africa today, the underlying source of much of Africa’s post-independence violence has been attributed to the manner of state formation shaped by the colonial legacy (see Mazrue, 2008; Young, 2008; Mo Ibrahim Index of Governance in Africa, 2013).

Nevertheless, taking colonial legacy in isolation is more of a reductionist orientation; in the conflict complexity approach, the colonial legacy is only one element that interacts in the ecology of conflict with others to constitute violent internal conflicts as discussed in some detail in Chapter Eleven.
In this sub-section, I have attempted to show that political, ethnic identity, economic, and external factors are understood as some of the constitutive elements to explain the conflict complexity in the present research context. However, I am not asserting that these factors are all that can explain the complexity, rather they are the most pertinent and it is mainly the dynamics and interaction of these elements and transition to tipping points which appears to explain internal conflict complexity better than a single-factor approach to conflict analysis in Gambella. In the following section I will very briefly examine triggering factors which transform structural elements to manifest violence.

### 3.3.2 Conflict Triggering Factors

Triggers are catalytic factors which transform structural elements of conflict into deadly violence. There are a number of instances where triggering factors surfaced in Ethiopian social movements. Although demonstrations by university students and demands for political and economic reforms from the urban elites marked the first overt discontent towards the imperial regime, the immediate event that triggered the 1974 revolution was to a great extent attributed to the mutiny of the Territorial Army’s Fourth Brigade at Negele in the southern province of Sidamo on 12 January 1974 (Lefort, 1983 as cited in Ojot, 2013:129). Everyday events like personal arguments can trigger a violent conflict; such a triggering factor occurred between an Anywaa and a Nuer leading to bloodshed in Itang district on 7 July 2000 (see also appendix M). It swiftly degenerated into violence leaving more than forty people dead from a single engagement. In the days that followed, at least twenty-one villages were burned, hundreds were killed and tens of thousands of people were displaced (see Dereje, 2011:158). As will be seen in Chapter Seven, one of the triggers of the 13 December 2003 massacre of the Anywaa was the killing of eight Ethiopian government
officials who were on their way to open a new refugee camp for Sudanese refugees in an area that the Anywaa considered their territory.

In fact triggering factors can occur in countless ways as long as there is structural violence simmering beneath. In Gambella, and other parts of Ethiopia, violent conflict is triggered by raids and counter-raids of cattle, and disputes over grazing lands and/or water wells (see Salih, 1999; Reid, 2011; Hoth, 2013). ‘Traditionally, a major trigger of the Anywaa-Nuer conflict is Nuer cattle trespassing into Anywaa farmland where both groups live in neighbouring villages’ Ojot, (2013: 129). The most frequent additional triggering factors in post-1991 Ethiopia and in Gambella are elections and the behaviour of political elites, which are discussed below.

**Elections**

Two main conditions portray how elections can be critical thresholds of violent conflicts in African countries (Collier, 2009) including Ethiopia (Assefa, 2012:30). First, false expectations and incorrect perceptions of the local peoples and international community that ‘election’ means ‘democracy’ (Collier, 2009:20), which is not discussed here for it is less significant to the topic under discussion. Second, which is my focus in this sub-section, is ethnic loyalty, which far outweighs the competence and performance of political leaders in determining the outcomes of elections in Ethiopia, since the introduction of the ethnic political system as discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

Election-triggered violent conflict can be evidenced from 1992, 1995 and 2000 in Gambella and the 2005 election all over the country as discussed below. The locals who knew who they voted for and the international observers who were following the procedure, before, during and after election
remained dumbfounded when they realised that the Electoral Board declared the incumbent to be the winner ‘following the prior instructions behind the scene from the offices of the incumbent’ (Assefa, 2012:19). According to the EU delegation Chief (EU EOM, 2005) and confirmed by the Ethiopian Electoral Board, the EPRDF and allied parties won 367 (67 per cent) parliamentary seats, while the opposition took 172 seats (31 per cent), with 109 going to the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) (see Lyons, 2005:3). Lyons summarises the election result as follows:

The ... serious domestic challenge to the EPRDF took place in the 2005 parliamentary elections. These elections presented the Ethiopian peoples with a remarkable opportunity to express their political views by participating in a poll that for the first time in history offered them a meaningful choice. In contrast to earlier elections in 1995 and 2000, opposition parties did not boycott the poll, but instead competed vigorously across the most populous regions. Live televised debates on matters of public policy, opposition party access to state-owned media, and massive peaceful rallies in the final week of campaigning made it clear that these elections would represent a decisive moment in Ethiopia’s political development… However, a very chaotic vote counting process generated controversy and violent protests [which led to deaths, detentions and disappearances of many Ethiopians] Lyons, (2009: 171).

The international community expressed their disappointment. According to Lyons, (2009) the chief of the European Union election monitoring group concluded that the process ‘did not live up to international standards and to the aspirations of Ethiopians for democracy’ (op. cit., p. 3) and ‘many rejected the results as fraudulent’. Consequently, the locals took to streets and expressed their sense of injustice. Many outpoured onto the streets only to find themselves either in prison or in hospitals or in the worst cases, in the grave; hence, bloody violence following a sham election, which has been a common phenomenon in Africa since the end of the Cold War (see for further discussions, Abbink, 2006; Collier, 2009; Lyons, 2009; Tronvoll, 2009b; Assefa, 2012).
In the same vein, some people vote for or against the incumbent regardless of performance but because of their ethnic identity, which is alleged to be the basis of most voting in ‘the bottom billion’ (Collier, 2009: 28). Political parties in Ethiopia are ethnic-based parties, and voters are normally ethnic voters, who are more likely to cast their vote for a member of ethnic parties to court their support (Kassahun, 2009:39). Under such conditions, the logic of elections changes from one of convergence on policy positions to one of extreme divergence. In this context politics becomes a centrifugal force. The result is an increasingly polarised political process, in which strategic incentives for office-seeking politicians often push them in the direction of encouraging ethnic hostilities and perceptions of group insecurity (ibid). Societies are then further divided into competing ethnic identities, and as a result, ethnicity is by far the easiest basis on which to organize political loyalty. An obvious problem that arises is that because the loyalty is not issues-based, neither is the performance (see Chapter Five for detailed discussions).

A common form of behaviour by politicians is, therefore, mutual exclusion, a situation often exacerbated by adversarial campaign rhetoric directed against political rivals. Rejection of common ground becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, as the less often leaders meet, the less they are able to explore their common concerns and possibilities for cooperation (Kassahun, 2009; Assefa, 2012). This creates a vicious cycle, as ‘outbidding’ by ethnic entrepreneurs, who push the mean political position further away from the moderate centre towards the extremes, becomes a familiar pattern (ibid). The consequences can be and have often been devastating: moderate forces are quickly overwhelmed by more extreme voices, leading to an ongoing cycle of violence and retribution (see Harbeson, 2009; Tripp, 2009; Zartman, 2010; Williams, 2011). This tendency becomes clearer when we examine the role of political elites below.
Political Elites

While sham elections are able to attract mass violence, political leaders can provoke elite-generated violence in a number of ways (see Ismail and Graham, 2009). Major active internal conflicts were pushed directly or indirectly by internal, elite level forces in most sub-Saharan African countries (ibid). Although neighbouring states sometimes meddle in the internal affairs of others, the case in point is Eritrea’s relations with Ethiopia as will be seen in Chapter Seven, ‘the decisions and actions of domestic elites often determine whether political disputes veer toward war or peace’ (Ismail and Graham, 2009:7–9).

In this section, I argue that internal elite factors in sub-Saharan Africa in general, and in Ethiopia in particular, may be manifested in the form of power struggles involving civilians or military leaders, and ideological contests over how a country’s political, economic, and social affairs should be organised. Admittedly, these categories are not water-tight and influence each other. It is nonetheless important to make these distinctions, however rough they might be: there are several, distinct motivational forces at work here with identifiable critical thresholds of internal violence. Put simply, ‘conflicts such as these are deliberately designed and executed by bad leaders in the country’ (Brown, 2001:525).

Some conflicts are in essence power struggles between and among competing elites. Of the two types of internally-driven elite-induced conflicts, power struggles are clearly the most common. Some are sustained government campaigns to repress ethnic minorities and democratic activists. Government repression is a prominent feature of other conflicts as well, but power struggles are particularly intense and the ‘ethnic card’ is played very aggressively. Examples in sub-Saharan Africa abound: Angola,
Burundi, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Liberia, Rwanda, Uganda and Somalia (see Ismail and Graham, 2009:7–9).

One type of power struggle is particularly prominent and pernicious: it accounts for the slaughter in Rwanda, and has played a role in the conflicts in Burundi, Cameroon, Kenya, Nigeria, Sudan, Togo, Zaire, and elsewhere (Horowitz, 2000:230; Dallaire, 2003:25; Melvern, 2005:79). The starting point is a lack of political elite legitimacy, which sooner or later leads to elite vulnerability. Vulnerabilities can be brought about by weakening state structures, political transitions, pressures for political reform, and economic problems. Those who are in power are determined to fend off emerging political challengers and anxious to shift blame for whatever economic and political setbacks their countries may be experiencing (ibid). In cases where ideological justifications for staying in power have been overtaken by events, they need to devise new formulas for legitimizing their rule. Entrenched politicians and aspiring leaders alike have powerful incentives to play the ‘ethnic card’, embracing ethnic identities and proclaiming themselves the champions of ethnic groups (Brown, 2001).

This produces a shift in terms of public discourse from civic nationalism to ethnic nationalism and to increasingly virulent forms of ethnic nationalism as discussed above. Ethnic minorities are often singled out and blamed for the country's problems: ethnic scapegoating and ethnic bashing become the order of the day (Reid, 2011; Williams, 2011). When power struggles are fierce, politicians portray other ethnic groups in threatening terms, and inflate these threats to bolster group solidarity and their own political positions; “perceived threats are extremely powerful unifying devices” (Horowitz, 2000: 236). When leaders have control over the national media, these kinds of campaigns are particularly effective: a relentless drumbeat of ethnic propaganda can distort political discourse quickly and dramatically (ibid). “Political campaigns such as these undermine stability and push
countries towards violence by dividing and radicalizing groups along ethnic fault lines” (Brown, 1997:29). For many politicians, tearing their countries apart and causing thousands of people to be killed are small prices to pay for staying in or getting power (ibid).

As will be seen in detail in Chapter Seven, the report of the 2005 Enquiry Commission established by the Ethiopian Parliament to investigate the causes of violent conflict in Gambella killil for the 2003 violent conflict concluded that some of the regional leaders and few security forces were involved. The document demonstrated that the political elites inside the country were one of the triggers in order to maintain their power. In the same vein, the Minister of Federal Affairs of Ethiopia, Dr Shiferaw Teklemariam, made the following statement in the Ethiopian Reporter, 15 November 2014 about the causes of violent conflict erupted in November 2014 in Gambella where a number of casualties were reported14:

... In fact, one can see that such a conflict is orchestrated and triggered largely by anti-peace elements that were waiting for the right moment to do so. Mostly these peoples appear as if they are advocating the well-being of one particular ethnic group while in fact they are inciting destructive attitudes and promoting hatred. ... These peoples can be at times in the government structure itself while forging a formidable link (network) with peoples who are outside the system...

In short, triggering factors of internal conflict may take different shapes in different conflict settings. In the foregoing section, I have highlighted two major factors (i) sham election with its devastating effects; and (ii) internal political elites through power struggle and ideological antagonism have

been key triggering factors of internal violent conflicts in post-1991 Ethiopia in general in Gambella in particular.

3.4 Summary

In this Chapter I have focused on conceptual and theoretical frameworks and identified four underlying factors of intrastate conflict complexity in Gambella: political; ethnic identity; economic; and external factors including colonial legacy. From among a number of triggering factors, two main ones, which are the most frequent in Ethiopia and Gambella are sham elections, and the deliberate actions of leaders inside the country to perpetuate their political supremacy via the manipulation of ethnic loyalties, in post-1991 Ethiopia. The focus of Chapter Three was to lay out the framework of analysis under the four themes identified and schematically presented to answer the overarching research question: **What constituted conflict complexity in Gambella since 1991 as perceived by the local peoples and the regional as well as federal governments?**

Political factors during imperial and military regimes and their impact on the post 1991 Ethiopia is the focus of Chapter Four on the basis of the fascinating work of John Markakis (2011), *Ethiopia: the last two frontiers*. The Chapter acknowledges that political factors expressed in state building process of pre 1991 significantly impacted on the post 1991 conflict context; however, it argues that political factors are only one of structural causes of conflict complexity in Ethiopia. By so doing the Chapter attempts to answer the first subsidiary question: **How have the past political factors of the imperial and military regimes impacted on the present conflict complexity in Ethiopia?** It is to this argument which we now turn.
Part II

Following from the theoretical framework laid out in Chapter Three, Part II outlines one of the structural elements of conflict complexity: political factors, which are expressed in state building processes during imperial, military and ethnic federal regimes. Chapters Four and Five are literature relating to Ethiopia accompanied with field data from Gambella, whereas Chapter Six is part of literature relating to Gambella backed by the data from the killil. Accordingly, Chapter Four builds on the work of John Markakis (2011), Ethiopia: the last two frontiers, whereas Chapter Five draws on the work of Jon Abbink (2011), ‘Ethnic-based federalism and ethnicity in Ethiopia’. Finally, Chapter Six compares and contrasts Gambella with other lowland peripheries (viz. Afar, Benishangul Gumuz, Borana, Somali, and South Omo, which were formed through state building processes) to assess how Gambella is distinct from them and the role of its distinctiveness in conflict complexity in the killil.
Chapter Four

Political Factors: State Building Processes in Ethiopia during Imperial and Military Regimes

When you reach a city or land to fight against its inhabitants, offer them terms of peace. If they accept, they shall become subjects and give you tribute… but if they refuse go forward to assault and oppress them… (Quoted from guidance offered in the compendium of customary law of Ethiopia, Fetha Nagast (Law of the Kings) in Markakis (2011: 95) in the context of state building process during Menelik)

The policy of assimilation should be at the top of our reforms; for without the union of the Amhara and Galla [sic], it is impossible to visualize the future with certainty or enthusiasm… (Cited in Markakis (2011:125) quoting Bahru (2002:132-133) in the context of state building process during Haile-Selassie).

The Derg’s task was to ensure that the centre controls the periphery; hence, they set about it with radical zeal, making andinet (unity) and Etiopia Tikdem (Ethiopia First) their mottoes… (Cited in Markakis (2011:161) in the context of state building process during the Derg).

4.1 Introduction

The main argument of Markakis (2011) in this seminal work\textsuperscript{15} is that the underlying ethos of the imperial, the military and ethnic federal regimes was to build a nation state under the Abyssinian hegemony through violent means even in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century; yet the process is incomplete (Markakis, 2011:1-2). This Chapter extends this argument. It maintains that the empire-

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\textsuperscript{15} Ethiopia: the last two frontiers is one of the key source materials for the thesis.
state-building strategies relied on the *neftegna-gabbar (gun carrier-peasant)* system, an assimilation policy of the imperial regimes (Markakis, 2011:110 – 111) and the radical militaristic cum socialist model of the *Derg (op cit., 161)*. These created fragile centre-periphery relations in pre-1991 Ethiopia, which remain as one of the major underlying elements in conflict complexity in the country today. Markakis (2011:35) further argues that the crux of the problem is a failure of the Abyssinian elite to share political power with the peripheries to any meaningful extent. While I concur with him that the centre’s failure to share political power with the lowland peripheries is a necessary factor to cause internal violent conflicts, I maintain that ‘political power sharing’ or the ‘state building process’ represents only one element of structural causes; hence, it is not sufficient to explain the problem under discussion. The present study attempts to fill this gap by focusing on the dynamism and interaction of political factors with other underlying elements including external factors in order to comprehend and explain conflict complexity in Ethiopia taking the case of Gambella since 1991.

The Chapter first highlights the centre, highland and lowland peripheries. It then analyses political factors, i.e. the imperial and military state-building processes. By so doing, the Chapter contributes to answering these sub-research questions: *What was the focus and purpose of pre-1991 political processes expressed as state building strategies? How have these political factors under the imperial and military regimes impacted on the post-1991 conflict complexity in Ethiopia?*
4.2. Centre-Periphery Relations

4.2.1 The Centre

'The centre', the power house of politics, economy and defence, refers to Abyssinian (Amhara and Tigray) society and culture. In turn they were pervaded and structured by an ideology, i.e. Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity (see Markakis, 2011:34 – 35) which had been the provider of legitimacy of the state at the centre. It was a pillar of the imperial dynasty; it supported the system with a founding legend such as Fetha Nagast (the Law of the Kings) that interwove faith, nation and throne in an indissoluble union with a mythical past and a prophetic future. The power of 'the Elect of God' - one of the emperor's many titles - came from God, therefore it was unlimited, unaccountable and unchallengeable: 'when asked to stop in the name of the King, water stops flowing.' (Markakis, 2011: 33-34).

What defines the centre is the monopoly of political power and the hegemonic position it occupies in the state. The state building processes of imperial and the military radiated from the centre subjugating the highland and lowland peripheries of Ethiopia since the last quarter of the 19th century, which laid foundation for most violent conflicts in the peripheral regions in post-1991 Ethiopia. What Abbink states (2002: 157), cited in Markakis (2011:7), supports the above argument: 'Ultimately the notion of centre-periphery relations should not be based on geographical or cultural criteria, but primarily on a model of the structure and distribution of political power' (see Figure 4.1 below which highlights centre-periphery relations in Ethiopia).
Dividing centre and periphery in a static fashion as in the above diagram in the dynamic context of Ethiopia is a task nigh impossible. What I have attempted to do here is to broadly sketch out, centre, high and lowland peripheries on the basis of political, geographical, ecological and demographic factors premised on Markakis’ (2011) work. On this premise I
maintain that the dividing line of centre and periphery lies between population groups that are fully integrated into the structure of the state and the hierarchy of power that governs it, and those that are only partially integrated, or not at all (op cit., 7 – 8). Arguably, sketching centre-periphery dividing line in this manner, allows for the discussion of the factors that make the integration dynamic.

There are elite groups on both sides of the centre/periphery divide, for example, but it does not mean they belong to the same ruling class, since the peripheral elite are creations of the centre and wholly dependent on it. The elite at the centre make decisions; the elite in the periphery implement them. To use Markakis’ apt description: ‘The elite in the centre continue to rule; the elite in the periphery continue to administer’ (Markakis, 2011: 282). Despite changes in the social composition of the elite at both ends over the past century, the feature of their relationship has not changed. Empirical data from Gambella is self-evident:

We, in the Regional Bureau of Investment of the Gambella killil are not involved in the process of dealing with the investors … if investors fail to pay tax, our duties are to report to the federal government; our role is to implement the policy made at federal level; hence, we have no say on the policy itself. (Chief, Investment Bureau of the killil, IDI, 4 April, 2013, Gambella).

As the data reveal, what defines the periphery is its marginal position in the power structure of the state; or more precisely, its exclusion from state power, more than geographical location. Hence, ‘powerlessness, economic exploitation and cultural discrimination add up to a severe form of marginalisation, the defining features of the periphery’ (Markakis, 2011: 7).
4.2.2 The highland peripheries

The highland peripheries include the region that lies roughly below the line that joins the Blue Nile River in the west with Addis Ababa in the east, sometimes called 'southern highlands' (see map 4.2). Its role in state building processes in Ethiopia was crucial in the past and will prove decisive in the future (see Markakis, 2011: 12). Here, integration made significant progress, because conditions were favourable and the state made the greater effort. The highland periphery shares the same physical environment with the Abyssinian homeland, its agrarian economy provided a sound basis for the surplus extraction system devised by the imperial state, and the indigenous cultures and authority systems adapted themselves to the indirect system of imperial rule imposed on them. As a result, the interaction between the centre and highland periphery was bidirectional (see Fig 4.1) and proceeded relatively smoothly, and the process of integration that underlay state building progressed faster and farther in this region (Markakis, 2011: 12). Furthermore, sedentary hoe and shifting cultivation was the dominant mode of production of the highland periphery, existing in a number of small states ruled by hereditary monarchies, some of which had long histories and survived until the days of Menelik. Such entities include, Gamo, the Gibe and Gojeb kingdoms, Goffa, Guraghe, Hadiyya, Kaffa, Kemabatta, Kulo-Konta, Oromo, Sidama, and Wolaita (see Markakis, 2011: 36-39).

However, the narratives of the subject peoples of the highland periphery is different from that which Markakis (2011:36-39) presents. A case of highland periphery was graphically illustrated by a social anthropologist Braukämper (1980:435 cited in Eide, 2000:18), who made a study of Hadiyya in southern Ethiopia which could be representative of the many critical voices of highland peripheries. According to him, after the conquest by the Abyssinian Empire a new chapter in the history of the southern peoples began, bringing unprecedented change in their socio-economic base. In his view, the annexation had mostly been glorified by Ethiopianist historians as an act of unification for modern Ethiopia, but from the viewpoint of the subjected ethnic group it was the worst act, similar to colonial brutality:

The annexation of the south … from the viewpoint of the subjected ethnic groups was considered as an act of colonial expansion, which in its degree of oppression apparently surpassed European imperialism in Northeast Africa. In general, the conquered peoples were reduced to a status of serfs of the state, a system varying in certain details from province to province (Braukämper 1980:435 cited in Eide, 2000:18).

It is also worth noting that there was never a single homogenous periphery in Ethiopia. Instead, different parts of the territory were incorporated in different ways, and to very different degrees of integration (Levine, 2000:69-82). So, highland peripheries vary in the degree of integration; and so do the lowland peripheries as discussed below.
4.2.3 The lowland peripheries

Gambella is a lowland periphery and it is the topic of the study; thus, more emphasis is placed on the lowland peripheries. Markakis contends controversially that lowland periphery poses a critical test for the nation-state building project (2011:45). On the contrary, I argue that the most decisive threats for state-nation building have almost always come, not from the periphery, but rather from the very centre and highland peripheries as life experience and Ethiopian history demonstrate. Evidently, it was the Tigrean rebels, TPLF together with Eritrean People’s Liberation Front (EPLF) and Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) from the centre and highland peripheries respectively that caused rapture and regime change in Ethiopia in 1991. Haile-Selassie’s regime was collapsed mainly by the threat from 1960 coup d’état (Bahru, 2014:55) – (coup d’état was not in 1961 as Markakis 2011:116 records), then it was the military, coupled with student movements in the centre, which brought about the 1974 revolution; hence, it was the division within the centre, rather than the strength of the periphery, that caused threat to Ethiopian nation-state building process. However, I agree with Markakis that the lowland peripheries play significant roles in challenging the state building processes; hence, they have been accorded centre stage in this sub-section.

Markakis (2011) uses the phrases ‘lowland peripheries’ and ‘pastoralists’ interchangeably throughout his book as if the settings or the concepts were synonymous which they are not. Another problem emanates from the generalisation of lowlands as pastoralists, as it can lead to primordial thinking. Since there is dynamism and interaction of the population, regarding lowland periphery as a fixed way of life denies variation, change and complexity of conflict landscape. Whilst most of the Nuer, if not all, are pastoralists, most of the Anywaa are not (being sedentary farmers, fishermen, business-people, civil-servants…), nor are the
highlanders/settlers (being traders, teachers, health workers, civil-servants, bankers...), or the Majang (who are bee-keepers, sedentary farmers, business-people, civil-servants...). All of them live in the lowland periphery of Gambella. This is true in other lowland peripheries as well; for example, some parts of Borana, parts of Benishangul Gumuz, Somali of Jigjiga\textsuperscript{17} as well as South Omo are not pastoralists.

Five distinctive features generally characterise pastoralist cum lowland periphery as Markakis (2011:40 – 41) maintains: (a) clan system; (b) strict gender disparity; (c) a common religion; (d) lack of formal state structures; and (e) ecology. To begin with, one organising principle of the lowland periphery is blood kinship, which takes the form of the patrilineal descent within the social group commonly referred to as the clan, whose members claim descent from a common male ancestor. The clan provides its members with their identity, a network of solidarity and security, and a structure of authority vested in clan chiefs and elders. The clan welds its members into a corporate body that acts on their behalf in all matters, and commands their absolute loyalty. In this system of social organization, there are many gradations in the depth of clan kinship within which an individual can identify and act (see Markakis, 2011:30).

It is worth noting, however, that clan systems are more pronounced in Afar and Somali than in Gambella, or in South Omo. For example, the Anywaa are more territorially orientated than to the clan system and they have kings (\textit{kwaaro}) and nobles (\textit{nyieya}) that lead the Anywaa community who live in and outside Ethiopia rather than an Openo or a Lul clan (Dereje, 2011: 57 – 61). Likewise, the Nuer community is known more for its ‘structured anarchy’ (Dereje, 2011: 79), with their focus on transhumance, than for territoriality or strict clan leadership like that of the Somali or Afar. South Omo is rather complex and less amenable to a simple classification. A varied topography

\textsuperscript{17}The current name of Jijiga is Jigjiga as the Regional State of Ethiopian Somali has made it clear since 2011. So, I have used the changed name in this thesis.
and climate of that area offer ‘strikingly different environments, and the transition of one zone to the other over a distance of only a few kilometres is as noticeable in temperature, vegetation and crops as in culture’ (Abbink 2000: 533) quoted in Markakis (2011:71). In short, specific lowland areas have specific geographies and social organisations that make them distinct from each other. Hence, it is appropriate to conclude that not all lowland peripheries are pastoralists neither do they have identical clan systems as an organising principle of the society.

Secondly, there is variation regarding religion in lowland peripheries. Markakis argues (2011:39) that Islam, rather than Christianity, made progress among the lowlanders quoting Ullendorf (1965: 114): ‘Perhaps its [Islam’s] simple and clear cut theology [which] makes a special appeal to the less sophisticated peoples in the hot and arid regions, with little or no civilization of their own’. Putting to one side this rather over-simplistic characterisation of people’s views in these regions, Markakis seems to generalise that Islam is a common denomination for all lowland peripheries. It is acknowledged that Islam is widely practised in Afar, Somali, Gabbra of Borana and Bertha of Benishangul Gumuz. However, it is not as popular a religion in Gambella, South Omo, Gumuz and among the Guji Oromo. Hence, it would be inappropriate to conclude that Islam is a religion of all lowland peripheries.

The third distinctive feature of lowland peripheries is rigid gender segregation, which is proclaimed in a wealth of caustic proverbs (Markakis, 2011:41). ‘Women can grow tall, but without wisdom’, and ‘the leadership of a woman makes water flow upwards’, are examples from the lowland Oromo. Here they see eye-to-eye with highlanders: ‘A woman and a donkey can’t be kept straight without the stick’, is an Amhara equivalent. The preference for male children is universal among pastoralists. ‘People desire a son as they
desire rain’, say the Afar, and the Somali add that ‘one boy is worth four girls’.

As it can be deduced, tragically, that it is this negative perception that leads to the exposure of new born girls to die, reduced feeding for female children, and an overall reduced female lifespan (ibid). This has been widely reflected in official reports in Afar as well as Somali in terms of infant mortality rates as well as life expectancy. In 2007 the rate for infant mortality for males in Afar was 107/1000, for females 133/1000. The under-five mortality rate was 150/1000 for males and 206/1000 for females. Gender disparity increased dramatically with age. There were more than twice as many males as females in the 65-69 age brackets in 2007, and the average life span for males, was 53 years and for females 47 years (see Markakis, 2011: 47).

The above statistics about gender disparity were crosschecked (ECSA, 2007) and found to be accurate; however, the perceptions expressed about the gender difference are not so accurate and universal. There are also positive views about women. For instance, the Amhara proverb ‘set yelakew mot aiferam’ translates as ‘he who was sent by a woman does not fear even death’, and means that women are decisive in leadership. This particular saying was popularised in relation to the heroic deeds of Empress Taitu, the wife of Emperor Menelik, in her decisive leadership role in the Battle of Adwa against Italian invasion in 1896. Another comes from the highland periphery of Wolaita: ‘set mela atatam’ which means ‘women never lack wisdom’, meaning ‘whatever heroic deeds a man plans to perform, he has to consult a woman, then his dream comes true’. The same is true with the Anywaa’s customary practice during reconciliation in the lowland peripheries; it is women who sprinkle water on the heads of the rivals symbolising both women and water are source of life; hence, nobody should refuse the final verdict of life. Our research in Afar society shows that if someone killed a person and hid behind a woman, it is a taboo to kill that person; and the woman intercedes between the killer and the victim’s family taking the case
to the elders of the community (Tadesse and Yonas, 2006:16). These positive aspects were neglected in the above argument about gender issues in the centre, highland as well as lowland peripheries.

Fourthly, the apparent absence of formal state structures creates the impression of anarchy in the lowland peripheries (Markakis, 2011:42). Markakis (2011:42) argues that pastoralist societies are not without government - institutions, laws, leaders - otherwise they could not exist as communities. He underscores that customary law is precise, comprehensive, and efficient because it is known and respected by all members of the community.

While Markakis’ argument is fascinating, it needs to be pointed out that the foundation of the customary law is gender inequality. Simply put, they make clear segregation between male and female members of the community as our research in Afar shows (Taddese and Yonas, 2006:15). When interpretation and enforcement is required, it is the task of the male elders, who also mete out punishment for violations. Again, women elders were not allowed to participate in the process, even though they could appeal on behalf of a victims’ family as mentioned above. Worse still, the blood compensation for a woman is half that of a man, i.e. if the victim were a male, two camels or four cows are to be paid for compensation; however, if it were female victim, one camel or two cows are to be paid (ibid). However, I concur with Markakis (2011:42-43) that, arrived at by consensus, elders' decisions are usually unchallengeable and pastoralist communities have clearly defined structures of leadership, although authority is limited in scope and exercised only in conjunction with the male elders.

Finally, in terms of ecology, the lowland peripheries inhabit environments ranging from desert/arid, semi-arid to highly wet and fertile lowland areas. Their ecology is as varied as their religion and social structure. Borana, South Omo, Gambella, and Benishangul Gumuz, share an ecological niche,
live in physical proximity and have common historical experiences (see Markakis, 2011: 65). The ecology affected significantly the process of interaction and integration of the periphery with the centre. For instance, various branches of Oromo were differentially exposed to the integration project of the Ethiopian state and responded in various ways. As a result, some Oromo groups in the highland periphery are fairly well integrated in the national economy and dominant culture. By contrast, Oromo communities in the lowland periphery, especially the pastoralists, Borana, Guji, and Gabbra are among the least integrated (see Figure 4.1 above also see Markakis, 2011: 65). Interaction of peripheries with the centre was more conflictual than cooperative as the analysis of the imperial and military state building processes demonstrate below.

4.3 State Building Process under Menelik II (1890 – 1913)

When you reach a city or land to fight against its inhabitants, offer them terms of peace. If they accept you and open their gates, the men who are there shall become subjects and give you tribute, but if they refuse the terms of peace and offer battle, go forward to assault and oppress them, since the Lord your God will make you master of them. (Emphasis added). Quoted from guidance offered in the compendium of customary law of Ethiopia, Fetha Nagast (Law of the Kings) in Markakis, (2011: 95).

Map 4.3 Colonial map of the Horn of Africa, adapted from Markakis, (2011:88)

The empire building process of emperor Menelik radiated from the centre whose energy spilled over to highland and lowland peripheries to conquer their lands, plunder their resources, subjugate and enslave their people from which the centre draws additional strength as Figure 4.1 (centre-periphery
relations) illustrates. While building an empire is a monumental feat of construction, it is also a deed of enormous destruction for those who are swept aside in its path (see Markakis, 2011: 89). The most powerful of the provincial rulers and the torchbearer of empire building, Menelik of Shoa (1889-1913) is a milestone in Ethiopian history. His reign marks the full restoration of imperial authority in the Christian kingdom, its vast territorial expansion (see map 4.3 above), and transformation into an empire, and the planting of the seeds for its development into a modern state (Markakis, 2011: 90); however, it also planted the seeds for potential violence with serious consequence for the incorporated peripheries in the post-1991 Ethiopia.

Four major factors were responsible for the success of the campaign. The first one was ideological force. It was derived from the legendary book of *Fetha Nagast*, (Law of the Kings), which inspired and created firebrands akin to the Biblical characters, such as the warrior King David to whom ‘the LORD promised that Israel would subdue and subjugate Palestinians under his leadership’ (I Chronicles XVIII: i – viii). Menelik appears to have drawn a parallel passion for power from the *Fetha Nagast* accompanied with his military might.

Secondly, as Markakis, (2011: 91) argues, superior military power accounted for the swift success of Menelik’s campaigns. In this respect, the Christian kingdom was far superior to any of its opponents. The military had always served as the pillar of state authority in Abyssinia. The largest and best equipped standing force was the emperor’s own army (*chewa*) whose size varied according to imperial resources. A standing professional army, it consisted of trained soldiers – infantrymen, archers, horsemen, musketeers – many of them non-Abyssinian freemen and slaves. Provincial rulers maintained armies of retainers for their own purposes, and supplied them to the emperor’s forces when they were commanded to do so (ibid).
Thirdly, in addition to manpower and weaponry, the Abyssinians had a decisive advantage in the organisational capacity of centuries-old state, with a hierarchical structure of authority and clear lines of command serving both civil and military functions. The nomenclature of the structure included many military titles, such as ras (army commander), fitawrari (commander of the vanguard), kengazmatch (commander of the right wing) and grarzmatch (commander of the left wing). Automatically transposed for purposes of war, this structure was far superior to anything possessed by other states in the region (see Markakis, 2011: 92).

Finally, the resource-hunger of campaign leaders at the centre was a central factor. Human beings themselves were a major resource: they were enslaved and traded in markets that grew dramatically in the wake of the expansion. Nevertheless, the invasion met with determined, even fierce resistance from Adarei of Harar, Gedeo, Hadiyya, Kaffa, Kambata, Sidama and Wolaita. The arms trade had not penetrated the interior of the Horn before Menelik’s expansion, and none of the groups in its path possessed firearms in adequate numbers making them an easy prey. They fought mostly with spears and daggers, bows and arrows, against rifles (see Markakis, 2011: 90 – 91) against the expansion campaign, which was interpreted differently by different people.

For those who argue in favour (see, e.g. Levine 2000: xxii), the ‘expansion’ was the finale in the struggle for the ‘reunification’ of Ethiopia, a process began by Tewodros, who ended the civil wars of zemene mesafint, or ‘era of princes’ (1769 – 1855) as mentioned in Chapter One. In their views, the Horn of Africa had been under the control of the Emperors of Abyssinia from about the beginning of the Christian era until the revolt of Gragn Mohammed, in the sixteenth century (see Markakis, 2011:93). Levine asked a rhetorical question: ‘Should the imperial expansion be viewed basically as a subjugation of alien peoples or an in-gathering of peoples with deep historical affinities?’ (Levine 2000: xxii).
For those who argue against, the expansion was a colonial invasion which resulted in mass killings, destruction and expropriation of property, plundering, enslavement, and genocide. ‘At the time, Ethiopia was a slave-owning medieval state and … slavery in the Oromo states of the Gibe River region was downplayed as a minor derivative of the Abyssinian trade’, (Leenco 1999: 156; Asafa, 2005: 72) cited in Markakis (2011: 98).

Either way, I maintain that the expansion process, common in nation-state building process of Western Europe and elsewhere (Tilly, 1990:67), was bitter and incurred heavy human and material cost. It entrenched structural factors for future violence, as the following sub-sections highlight the price the high and lowland peripheries had to pay.

4.3.1 State building in the highland peripheries

Menelik’s rule had diverse consequences for the peoples of the conquered regions, depending partly on the reception they gave the invaders and partly on the wealth of their regions. Resource expropriation was the main focus and purpose of the state building process in the highland periphery expressed in terms of, among others things: slave ownership, livestock, land, and gabbar labour.

To begin with, the conquered territories were divided into fiefdoms assigned to Menelik’s victorious generals to govern and exploit. The ethos of the system was captured in the saying that they were given these territories ‘to eat’ (Cerulli 1933: 125) cited in Markakis, (2011:97). Resource expropriation was a priority, for it was the only way to compensate the soldiery and to replenish the imperial treasury. The Abyssinian ruling class and its allies acquired vast number of slaves and even exchanged them as presents. Menelik and his wife reportedly had 70,000 slaves and Aba Jiffar 10,000. A slaving expedition in the southwest, led in 1912 by Menelik’s heir, Lij Yasu,
netted some 40,000 Dizi slaves and trekked them to Addis Ababa where only about half of them arrived alive (see Markakis, 2011: 97).

Secondly, livestock was valuable resource, especially following the wiping out of the herds by the rinderpest epidemic of the 1890s (Markakis, 2011:94). Special expeditions were sent to move livestock in vast numbers from the lowlands, especially the Somali areas, to the northern highlands. The Arsi Oromo lost so much livestock they were compelled to take up cultivation, and at the same time espoused Islam. Ivory was another valuable commodity for which the southwest was known, and was hunted assiduously until the elephants disappeared from the region (ibid).

Thirdly, and by far the most important resource in the conquered territories was the land: still in good condition, unaffected by erosion and thinly populated (op, cit.: 98 – 99). The land of highland peripheries was possessed freely by Abyssinians who carried arms, known as ‘neftegna’ (‘gunmen’), a name widely applied subsequently to all northerners who settled in the periphery. It was this neftegna-gabbar nexus, which was the foundation of Abyssinian imperial rule. The gabbar had to surrender a portion of the land’s produce to the landlord as tribute (gibr) – the amount varied between one-quarter (erbo) and one-third (sisso). In addition, the gabbar paid the asrat (tenth) tithe levied by Menelik in 1892. The gabbar was also obliged to provide the landlord with honey, meat, firewood, dried grass and other essentials (ibid) in addition to their labour.

Lastly, the gabbar labour was required for a variety of purposes: to cultivate the fields set aside for the landlords’ kitchen (hudad); to grind the neftegna’s share of the grain produced in his fief and carry it to his house in town; to build his house, maintain his fences, care for his animals, and act as his porter, messenger and escort. Whether holding an official position or not, the neftegna exercised great power over the gabbar. He was responsible for maintaining law and order in his fief, for the collection of state taxes, for the performance of other obligations to the state, and for the administration of
justice, in the course of which he imposed fines and collected fees from the *gabbar* that he kept for himself (see Markakis, 2011: 101).

What follows from the above analysis is that the *neftegna* system caused the loss of independence and many deprivations leaving a scar in the psyche of the subjugated peoples in the name of state building in pre-1991 Ethiopia. A Wolaita saying sums up their feelings: ‘Menelik gave the land to the Amhara, and other people to the birds’, meaning the loss of land reduced people to corpses to be eaten by predators (see Markakis, 2011: 101). The situation was even worse in the lowland peripheries as the following analysis demonstrates.

### 4.3.2 State Building Process in the Lowland Peripheries

Lowland peripheries suffered as severely as, and in some cases more severely than, the highlands. The imperialist scramble for outposts on the Red Sea fragmented the Afar nation, dividing its people under three flags – Ethiopian, Italian, and French – a burden they bear to this day, albeit under flags of different colours. Of the five Afar sultanates only Aussa survived and was to enjoy an unusual degree of autonomy under Ethiopian rule up until recently. The others faded away, leaving scarcely a trace of their existence (Markakis, 2011: 102).

In the same vein, having taken Harar on the easternmost heights of the southern plateau in 1897 (not 1987 - as was written in Markakis, 2011: 102), Menelik’s generals saw the vast lowland plain stretching south to the Indian Ocean and east to the Red Sea. They invaded the Somali homeland where they met little initial resistance; however, the occupation and plunder of resources soon faced fierce opposition that had the severest consequences for the Somali people and their relationship with Ethiopians to this day (ibid).
The expansion campaign moved from Afar and Somali in the east to Borana in the south whose hegemony had already ended when Menelik's soldiers appeared from 1891 to 1899. Overawed by the lethal efficiency of the invaders' firearms, the Borana chose to submit. Their country was given to the victorious general, Fitawrari Habte Giorgis 'to eat'. The drawing of the border between Ethiopia and Kenya in 1903 was a major blow to Borana power. Dividing the people between two states put the Borana at a disadvantage vis-a-vis rival ethnic groups on both sides of the border (see Markakis, 2011:103) leaving conflict legacy there to this day.

From Borana, Habte Giorgis sent messengers to the Arbore of South Omo asking them to submit. However, unlike the Borana, the Arbore chose defiance, and the messengers were speared to death. Habte Giorgis' reprisal was savage. All four Arbore villages were burned to the ground, the men massacred and the women and children taken as slaves. Arbore tradition recalls this calamity: ‘Menelik’s army swarmed over Arbore land. Hyenas ate the dead as well as the living’ (Wolde Gossa Tadesse 2006: 297 cited in Markakis, 2011: 104).

The expansion campaign moved from Arbore of South Omo to Gambella where slaves and ivory were easily available. Here, as elsewhere, Ethiopia faced the two European imperialist powers, Britain and France, which were engaged in a reckless race for territorial annexation that brought them to the brink of war in the so-called Fashoda Incident in 1898. Ethiopians were involved by sending a force from Gore to accompany the French on their way to Fashoda. When it reached the confluence of the rivers Sobat and Nile, it planted the Ethiopian flag and returned to its highland base (see Markakis, 2011: 104). In addition to slaves and ivory, Gambella developed coffee and rubber production, and used the only navigable river in Ethiopia, the Baro River, for transportation to the centre of Sudan. The British convinced Menelik to allow them to establish an inland port in Gambella under their own administration, a stipulation that became part of the 1902 boundary agreement. Inaugurated as a free port in 1904 (Bahru, 2008:148) (not 1907
as Markakis, 2011:105 records), Gambella became an important entrepôt for Ethiopia’s foreign trade. The immediate consequences of subjugation for the Anywaa were awful. A traveller who visited the area in 1899-1901 found them in dire straits, ‘pillaged by the Galla and Abyssinians’ (Austin 1902: 14) as quoted in Markakis (2011:105) the problem they sustained to this day.

Moreover, the Nuer incursion that had begun in a massive way earlier, when the Anywaa abandoned the lowest reaches of their land to escape Mahdist raids, was now a mortal threat. A historian noted: ‘The Nuer left the Anywaa shattered. Many had died opposing the Nuer advance. Others had perished from the famine which followed, and all suffered the loss of cattle. At the end of the century, the Anywaa appeared near extinction’ (Collins 1971: 203) as quoted in Markakis (2011:105). This situation reappeared in a qualitatively different and existentially threatening way for the Anywaa after the independence of South Sudan on 9 July 2011 and after 16 April 2013 when the Nuer assumed political power both in South Sudan and Gambella as discussed in Chapter One and in subsequent chapters.

Remaining on the western frontiers, keen to occupy the gold-producing area and to cut out the Oromo middlemen, Menelik set up small garrisons in Benishangul (see Markakis, 2011: 106). What followed there was an orgy of slave trading, fuelled by increased demand in the Ethiopian highlands and the markets in eastern Sudan. Sheikh Khojali al-Hassan of Benishangul (Assosa) was the principal trader specialising in breeding child slaves, with branches in the Sudan managed by his wives and sons. Consignments of slaves were sent to Addis Ababa regularly. It follows from the above analysis that Menelik’s state building strategy was responsible for formation of modern Ethiopia and entrenchment of structural factors for violent conflicts in the past as well as in the present whose statuesque was maintained in the succeeding regimes as discussed below.
4.4 State Building Process under the Regime of Emperor Haile-Selassie (1930s – 1974)

The policy of assimilation should be at the top of our reforms; for without the union of the Amhara and Galla [sic], it is impossible to visualize the future with certainty or enthusiasm...It is for the Galla [sic] to become Amhara (not the other way round); for the latter possesses a written language, a superior religion and superior customs and mores (emphasis added). Cited in Markakis (2011:125) quoting Bahru (2002:132-133).

Map 4.4 Political Map of Ethiopia during Haile-Selassie, (Markakis, 2011:132)

It may be inferred from the above quotation that state builders have always ‘feared the failure to homogenize increased the likelihood that a state ... would fragment into its cultural subdivisions’ (Tilly 1975: 44). In this sense homogeneity and a shared national identity endow the state with legitimacy and reduce the need to use force as the instrument of rule. Striving for legitimacy, ‘empires construct themselves around a specific culture that they intend to defend, promote, or possibly expand’ (Badie 2000: 48), quoted in Markakis (2011:108). Thus, saddling itself with this burden, Ethiopia had been encumbered by homogenisation process through assimilation as a way of state building process as discussed below.

I have argued in the previous section that Emperor Menelik campaigned to form a homogenous state around a specific Abyssinian culture that he was committed to defend and promote in about a quarter of a century guided ideologically by Fetha Nagast. Building a state capable of ruling what he had formed took the succeeding regime twice as long. ‘In fact, building did not begin in earnest until the end of World War II’ (see Markakis, 2011: 108).
The intervening period was consumed in a struggle for power at the centre that ended with the accession of Emperor Haile-Selassie to the throne in 1930, seventeen years after the death of Menelik. Even worse, soon afterwards Ethiopia was attacked for a second time by Italy (1935-1941).

The Italian interlude was a mini-rupture; however, it had a significant consequence. First, it exposed an underlying rift among the Abyssinian core, high and lowland elite: Ras Hailu of Gojam and Amedi Ale of Wello (Amhara core), Haile-Selassie Gugsa and Seyoum Mengesha (Tigrai core) collaborated with Italians. From highland peripheries, Abba Jiffar of Jimma was summoned to Rome by Mussolini and Emir Suffian of Harar was sided with Italians. Moreover, petitions were signed by leading Ororno chiefs in Wallega, Jimma and Illubabor and submitted to the British Consul at Gore, proposing the formation of a Western Oromo Confederation to be ruled by Britain under a mandate from the League of Nations, to which the British did not respond. The Consul reported to London (FO 371, 20206, HN 09582. 24 June 1936) quoted in Markakis (2011:113):

The Galla [sic] provinces have disarmed the Amhara officials and soldiers in their areas and the Galla [sic] hereditary chiefs have assumed control of the government in their areas. All Galla [sic] chiefs have sent seals and signatures and delegations asking the League of Nations to place the provinces of Western Abyssinia under British mandate.

From lowland peripheries while the Guji elite were overjoyed and sided with the Italians, some Somali joined Eritreans, who were under the Italian colonial system by then, to fight on the Italian side. Secondly, in spite of its fascist acts, the Italian invasion made Ethiopian Muslims more visible in Ethiopian politics, demolished slavery as well as gabbar-nettegna systems and speeded up the centre-periphery integration by building more roads throughout the country (see Markakis, 2011:113 – 114). Finally, it separated the struggle for power at the centre before 1935 from the centralisation of power and its application to homogenous state/nation building, under the guidance of an absolute monarch, after 1941 (see Markakis, 2011:108 -109).
Despite the external influence, homogenisation through assimilation policy as state building strategy continued unabated by the imperial regime in the diverse cultural, historical, linguistic and socio-economic context, which paved the way for intra-state conflict complexity with wide and deep impact on the fate of Ethiopia. This section examines: first, the state building attempts of Haile-Selassie internally and externally before the Italian occupation; second, it analyses state building strategies in the high and lowland peripheries after the independence; and finally, it summarises the discussions and raises implications for potential violent conflict.

4.4.1 State building attempts before Italian occupation

Internally, to formalise the state building process, Ethiopia acquired its first constitution in 1931, (which was revised in 1955 to accommodate the Eritrean issues after confederation with Ethiopia in 1950 only to be abrogated when the same was annexed in 1962 with devastating implication). The Constitution was an early monument to the kind of formalism that was to become a noted trait of governance in Ethiopia. The gist was contained in Article 4 of the revised constitution that stated simply: 'In the Ethiopian Empire supreme power rests in the hands of the Emperor', whose person was declared 'sacred', his dignity 'inviolable', and his power 'indisputable' (see Markakis, 2011:109).

Externally, on 28 September 1923 Ethiopia became a member of the League of Nations and it was forbidden from engaging in the slave trade under the terms of the Brussels Act of 1890 (Abdussamad, 1999:441-442). To counter the European criticism, Ras Tafari issued an edict in 1924 imposing heavy penalties on the slave trade without, however, abolishing the legal status of slavery itself. Later, Ethiopia became a signatory to the Slavery Convention
of I926 (see Abdussamad, 1999: 442-443). Even so, slavery continued in Ethiopia until the Italian invasion in October 1935 (op. cit. 445). Nevertheless, the existence of slavery did not stop Ethiopia’s interaction with foreign experts and advisors, the Emperor most needed to modernise his country. After gaining independence, most substantial work of the state/nation building was undertaken in the highland peripheries as discussed below.

4.4.2 State building process in the highland peripheries

Once independence was restored, controlling the highland periphery, exploiting its resources and binding it closer to the centre preoccupied the imperial regime. As the map (map 4.4) shows, the regime divided the country into provinces, awraja and woreda (see Markakis, 2011: 114 –115). The focus of Haile-Selassie was on the highland periphery, where a measure of success was achieved. By contrast, little progress was made in the lowland periphery, where the regime became involved in debilitating struggles to suppress secessionist rebellions. It employed different techniques to build a unitary state: among them were actively engaging the highlanders in economic activities and attendant social differentiation; and making Amharic language a symbol of unitary state (see Markakis, 2011:125).

For Haile-Selassie, engaging the population of highland peripheries was a crucial factor in binding them with the centre. The shift of the state’s centre of economic gravity southwards involved people of diverse ethnic origins. Non-Abyssinians dominated trade, transport and construction, both as owners and employees, and provided the bulk of skilled and unskilled labour in the service sector, in manufacturing and commercial cultivation. Most of them lived in towns, where Amharic was essential for communication and where their children were educated. In other words, they were caught in a socioeconomic nexus woven by and dependent on the Ethiopian state. Such
life-defining associations can be the first step towards national integration. People 'become nationalists through genuine objective, however obscurely recognized' (Gellner 1964: 173) quoted in Markakis (2011: 132). This was even truer of those engaged directly with the state in civil service mainly in education sector, and in military posts. While control of the state service and the military remained firmly in Abyssinian hands, others, particularly Oromo, were recruited through the education system and were to be found at all levels, even though non-Abyssinian representation at the top remained symbolic (see Markakis, 2011:131-132), which prevails in post 1991 Ethiopia.

Yet another dimension to the process of social differentiation was the appearance of other Christian sects to compete with Orthodox Christianity. Protestant versions of Christianity, having reached Eritrea with the Italian colonisers, now moved southwest to Wellega. 'The evangelical movement from the very beginning of its history in Ethiopia identified itself with the periphery' (see Eide 2000: 12); the people in the periphery 'gained a sense of worth and pride in their cultural identity' (ibid.). Moreover, the imperial regime allowed missionaries to work outside the Abyssinian homeland, and sought to use them to spread Amharic in the periphery. Missionaries were pioneers in the use of vernacular languages for religious and secular education in Ethiopia. They translated the Bible into indigenous languages using the Geez alphabet shared by Amharic and Tigrigna. This had an ambivalent effect. On the one hand, it spread familiarity with the alphabet of the dominant language among subordinate groups, and on the other, the appearance of a shared language in written form was a catalyst in stirring consciousness of their own ethnic identity and solidarity. However, that angered the officials inducing the following remark (Marcus, 1987: 137) cited in Markakis (2011: 133):

In December 1933, the government newspaper Berhanena Selam criticised the missionaries for using indigenous languages 'since it creates obstacles to unity'. 'It was government policy', it stated, 'to have all the people in the country speak
Amharic, with language unity there is also unity of ideas.' This would facilitate mutual understanding and intermarriage [assimilation]. 'Thus the border peoples and the central inhabitants will become related.'

Following the above train of thought, one can speculate that it was no accident that the seed of Oromo nationalism took root in the minds of missionary-educated youth. This was also true in lowland regions, particularly in the Anywaa community of Gambella as field data reveal which was arguably the basis of identity-based conflict in pre-1991 Ethiopia.

In the same vein, a Ministry of Education report in 1955 declared: ‘the promotion of Amharic at the various levels ... is an important task that is fundamental to national integration.’ To smooth the path of the preferred official medium, the regime sought to eradicate all other indigenous languages, including Tigrigna. Amharic was named the official language of the state in the 1955 Constitution but, long before that, no vernacular was allowed to be printed, broadcast, taught, or spoken on public occasions. This practice laid foundation for identity-based conflicts impacting on post-1991 political processes and violent conflicts in Ethiopia. Private schools were permitted to use foreign languages as long as they taught Amharic as a subject, but no school could use an indigenous language, or teach it as a subject. Proficiency in the official language was required for entry to the University, although its language of instruction was English (see Markakis, 2011,125 – 126). The exclusiveness afforded to the official language was reflected in the ethnic composition of university students as the following data reveal.

In the entering class of 1968, Amharic-speakers accounted for 55.5%, Tigrigna-speakers (including Eritreans) for 23.5%, Oromo-speakers for 10.4%, and Gurage-speakers for 2.3% (Cooper & King 1976: 273) cited in Markakis (2011: 129). A survey in the same year of students who sat for the
Ethiopian School Leaving Certificate Examination upon completing secondary level showed 60% Amharic-speakers and 22% Tigrigna-speakers, including Eritreans (Langmuir & Getachew 1968), cited in Markakis (2011: 129). Needless to say, the blanket ban on languages other than the official one hindered the study of the language, history and culture of subordinate groups (ibid) sowing the seed of ethnic identity conflicts in pre-1991 Ethiopia with devastating effects on post-1991 Ethiopia.

What follows from the above analysis is that state building strategy of Haile-Selassie in the highland periphery, despite the positive aspects of modernisation-cum-centralisation (Markakis, 2011:116), promoted assimilation as the only strategy, attempting to suppress other identities, languages, and culture, which has remained a time-bomb for violent conflict in the country. More contradictions, inequalities and exclusions are yet to be seen in the lowland peripheries in the state building strategy pursued by the regime as discussed below.

4.4.3 State building process in the lowland peripheries

Unlike in the highland peripheries where new institutions were set up, the administrative structure of the Emperor at the lowland periphery rested on the traditional leadership of local communities. The imperial regime found the cost of integrating the lowlands uneconomical. Markakis (2011:134) compares the regime's attitude with a British colonial official who, referring to the Northern Frontier District of Kenya, said, 'it is useless to put schemes of expenditure in an area which is costing ... a great deal and yielding practically no revenue." Because land in the arid lowlands was not a resource coveted by highlanders, it was not parcelled out in the nettegna-gabbar formula. Its status remained legally ambiguous, leaving it open to seizure by the state or by individuals in the future (ibid). The cases of Afar,
Somali/Ogaden; Borana; South Omo; Gambella and Benishangul Gumuz, in this order, may give more insight into the Haile-Selassie's strategies.

To start off with, there was no sign of the imperial state in Ethiopia's share of Afar territory, and the nearest administrative post was in the town of Dessie on the escarpment, where the governor of the region had his headquarters (see Markakis, 2011:136). In the same vein, 'in the late twenties, it was estimated that the vast Ogaden "wilderness" was garrisoned by no more than 50-60 soldiers' (Barnes 2000: 120) quoted in Markakis (2011:136). In 1932, a rough, 100km road was cut to link Jigjiga to Harar. Emperor Haile Selassie himself came to Harar the same year and summoned the Somali notables to a meeting that lasted a whole night. He then made a series of promises for reform, and asked the pastoralis leaders to help the Ethiopian army defend their country against the whites. The Somali elders did not mince their words:

‘Why should we fight the Italians’, one asked, ‘when it was the Ethiopians who called us dogs, abused our women and killed our animals?’ Another derided the Abyssinian titles bestowed on them, and said, ‘everyone knew that the lowest Abyssinian official had more authority than the highest ranking Somali’ (Markakis, 2011:141 – 142).

However, the imperial government's relation with the Borana was different from the Somali. Although it had left the Borana alone to deal with their aggressive Somali neighbours in the past, the government was now prepared to listen to Borana complaints favourably; it took measures to halt Somali expansion into southern Sidamo province. It acceded to Borana demands to declare the region west of the Genale River, Borana rist, [Borana land] and to withdraw recognition from the Somali balabbat. It also distributed weapons to the Borana and Guji Oromo with which they promptly attacked the Somali (see Markakis, 2011:150).
Similarly, in the post-1941 administrative reorganisation, South Omo became an *awraja* in Gemu Gofa province, with Jinka its capital; however, the life of *neftegna* stationed in the lowlands was an unenviable one. Posting somebody there was considered punishment. '*Amelu kekefa lakew Gemu Gofa' ('If someone misbehaves, send them to Gemu Gofa') people said. The *neftegna* appropriated land, which led to scarcity and was strongly resented by the people. By the late 1960s, a social division emerged with the *neftegna* and *balabbat* landowners in one class and the *gabbar*, now tenants or holders of dwarf plots, in another. These underlying class tensions came to the peak during the 1974 Revolution (see Markakis, 2011: 154).

In the same vein, mainly interested in the ivory trade in Gambella, the Ethiopian government tolerated the assertion of Anywaa power, even their unwillingness to pay tribute regularly, until they went too far (Gambella literature is revisited in Chapter Six). In 1931-32, the Anywaa resumed raiding the Jikany Nuer and the Murle inside the Sudan, escaping reprisals by retreating into Ethiopia. '*The Abyssinians have never administered the Anuak [sic] who lie within the Kingdom of Ethiopia - at least not in the sense understood by civilized peoples' was an anthropologist's verdict in 1940 (Evans Pritchard 1940: 13) (see Markakis, 2011: 156 – 157).

Finally, Gubba, current seat of the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), of Benishangul Gumuz flourished for a time as a market for gold, ivory, slaves, beeswax, honey and cattle of local origin, guns and coffee from the highlands, and cloth, grain, sesame and other agricultural products brought in by the Jallaba traders from the Sudan. Its ruler, Hamdan Abu Shok (1898-1938), was the biggest trader in the region and a regional figure important enough to be invited to Haile Selassie's coronation in 1935. He was not important enough, however, to avoid being taken hostage to Addis Ababa when he failed to pay tribute (see Markakis, 2011:159). On the whole, despite relentless efforts, the lowland peripheries were not as integrated as the highland to the centre during the Haile-Selassie’s regime (see Figure 4.1), which left the sense of exclusion and marginalisation in the population
of the periphery with far reaching implications for intrastate conflict in Ethiopia that brought about the 1974 revolution.


To be a ‘genuine Ethiopian, one has to speak Amharic, to listen to Amharic music, to accept the Amhara-Tigre religion, Orthodox Christianity, and to wear the Amhara-Tigre shamma [white traditional robe] in international conferences. In some cases to be an 'Ethiopian', you will even have to change your name. In short, to be an Ethiopian, you will have to wear an Amhara mask’… (On the Question of Nationalities in Ethiopia by Wallelign Mekonnen) (Emphasis added) cited in Markakis (2011:164).

Map 4.5 Political Map of Ethiopia during the Derg

As set out in the preceding section, the crudeness of the assimilation or ‘Amharisation’ policy, (see the above quote) was carried out in the name of national integration. It was one of conflict complexity elements that set the scene for the 1974 revolution. The issue was first raised indirectly in the late 1960s, a time when ‘defining what “being an Ethiopian” meant, which started to occupy the minds of students. They seemed to grab every opportunity to pose the question: ‘Is Ethiopia one people or many peoples?’ (See Markakis, 2011:163). The Derg did not expressly condemn nor defend the 'Amharisation' policy of the imperial regimes, and Colonel Mengistu himself

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18 Source: https://www.google.com/search?q=map+of+ethiopia+during+derg&tbm=downloaded 03 April 2015.
cast doubt on the meaning of the term when he once said: 'In Ethiopia, the correct meaning of Amhara is highland dweller. If this is the case, who then is Amhara?' (See Markakis, 2011:185). Although the question remains unanswered to this day, it contributed to the fall of the Emperor’s regime and the birth of the 1974 revolution.

Markakis (2011: 161) compares the 1974 revolution with the French, Russian and Chinese revolutions for its radical nature. Like those historic events, the revolution in Ethiopia swept away the material and social foundations of an ancien regime. Unlike them, it failed to produce a new social order; thus it proved barren. The radicalism that inspired the revolution had its ideological roots from abroad: Marxism, Leninism, Maoism… and those who imbibed it were the youthful urban intelligentsia; its messengers were university and secondary school students, with nationality questions and land issues topping their agenda. ‘The Ethiopian radicals set about the task [of creating a new order] armed with an ideology borrowed whole cloth from abroad, and proceeded single-mindedly to try and turn a pre-modern society into a post-modern utopia, making no concession to time or place’ (Markakis, 2011:180). The ‘student movement’, as it was known, enlisted children fated to be devoured by the revolution they unleashed (ibid). However, although Markakis recognizes the role of the students as the harbingers of the 1974 revolution, he does not sufficiently emphasize the central importance that the ‘national question’ assumed in the student movement in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s. Far from seeking to maintain ‘centre hegemony’, they had come to question the fundamental tenets of that hegemony (see Bharu, 2014: 129 – 138).

The student movement divided the centre and created a political vacuum inviting intervention by the Derg, a radical Marxist military junta ruled Ethiopia for the next seventeen years; as a state building strategy, the Derg remapped Ethiopia (see map.4.5 above) dividing it into twenty administrative
regions (akababi) and five autonomous regions (ras-gez) (Markakis, 2011:180). The Derg, as well as the students, the prime-movers of the revolution, were fervent nationalists committed to the preservation and consolidation of the state inherited from the Abyssinian empire builders, and regarded centre hegemony as the cornerstone of the project (Markakis, 2011:161). It was the weakening of centre control over the periphery, which was the rationale for the Derg to take up the state power. To strengthen the hegemony, they started with radical zeal, making andinet (unity) and Etiopia Tikdem (Ethiopia First) their mottoes. However, both the Derg and the students were also aware that some policies of the imperial regimes were proving counter-productive (ibid).

It is argued in this section that the Derg regime, although initially garnered support from most highland peripheries for its radical land policies, and to some extent the ethnic identity questions, it repeated the old authoritarian system in the new ‘socialist model’ which brought about equality in poverty in the country sowing the seed for potential violence to reappear in post-1991 Ethiopia. By so doing, it produced more ‘national liberation fronts’ and ‘movements’ and entrenched structural factors for conflict complexity in the country as its state building strategies in the high as well as the lowland peripheries.

4.5.1 State building process in the highland peripheries

As a state building strategy mainly in the highland peripheries, the land reform of February 1975 provided a lasting contribution of the Derg. The reform made land state property, which facilitated population control. The rebuilt state had a vastly wider, longer, deeper and firmer reach than its predecessors. For the first time in the country’s history, it could be said that most of the state’s subjects became aware of its presence and felt its impact (see Markakis, 2011: 180 - 181).
In the same spirit, the *Derg* attempted to address the ‘nationalities questions’ by lifting the ban on vernacular languages. Cultural diversity was accepted in principle, and ethnic songs and dances became a staple feature of public festivals. Ethnic cultural associations proliferated, and the first tentative steps to study the history and culture of subordinate groups were taken. It was now possible to translate the Bible into vernaculars, to invent alphabets for languages that did not have them, and to use them in religious services. A degree of recognition was accorded to the vernaculars through a massive adult literacy campaign waged in the 1980s. Fifteen languages were selected: Amharic, Oromo, Tigrigna, Wolaita, Somali, Hadiya, Gidole, Tigre, Kambata, Sidama, Kunama, Afar, Saho, Silte and Kaffa-Mocha – whose speakers it was estimated accounted for 90% of the population. Amharic served as the ‘model language’ and the Geez script was used for all. By the eleventh anniversary of the campaign in 1990, the *Derg* claimed to have made 18.7 million adults literate, thereby reducing the national illiteracy rate from 93 to 25%, even though critics found this a gross exaggeration (see Markakis, 2011:186).

Moreover, the revolution made it possible for Islam to emerge from the shadows of the past and for its adherents to attain equal citizenship status with Christians. Accordingly, three Islamic festivals, along with five Christian, were declared public holidays (see Markakis, 2011:186 - 187). Muslim names began to appear in the lists of state, party and military officialdom, and even in the membership of the *Derg*. It stated an ambition for gender equality by organising women under Revolutionary Ethiopia Women’s Association (ibid).

To further consolidate the state building process, the *Derg* moved land-hungry peasants from the north *en masse* to the south, i.e. from the centre
and highland peripheries to the lowland. The idea had been the dream of Ethiopian rulers at least since Menelik. Resettlement had been considered by the Haile-Selassie regime, when a pilot project was started in the 1950s and moved some 20,000 families by 1974. A Settlement Authority was founded in 1976 and was absorbed in a Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) in 1979. At the outset, it proceeded gradually; about 100,000 people were moved by 1983. Some 700,000 were moved within two years (1984-5) as referred to in Chapters Six to Eight. They came mainly from Wollo (62.4%), Shoa (18.4%), Tigray (15.3%), and were taken to the south and south-western lowland peripheries of Ethiopia, such as Gambella and Benishangul Gumuz (see Pankhurst, 1990: 121; Markakis, 2011:174). This laid foundation for pre-1991 violent conflicts in the lowland peripheries and facilitated the situations for post-1991 conflict complexity, which are further discussed below and in Chapter Five.

4.5.2 State building process in the lowland peripheries

The lowland experience of military rule fell into two distinct phases. The first was the initial, fleeting period of political agitation by the student zamacha, (campaign) and the commotion and discord it caused in some communities. The second and longer phase covered the regime's efforts to start the process of lowland integration into the renovated Ethiopian state at the centre. These had diverse effects on different regions. Areas where a degree of settlement and urbanisation had already taken place and sizeable numbers of highlanders were present, such as the Awash River Valley of Afar were most affected. Summing up the experience of the settlement policy towards the close of the Derg era, one author described it as a ‘welfare programme… There was no lasting benefit to the region from any of the regime’s development interventions’ (Abdulahi Bedri Kello 1989: 105) cited in Markakis (2011:214).
Areas chosen for highlander resettlement, such as Gambella and Benishangul were likewise impacted, as were localities where large development projects - dams, irrigation schemes, state farms – were sited; all experienced violent conflicts related mainly to land and ethnic identity issues as pointed out above. Interestingly, the only note from the march of the revolution that found a distinct echo in the lowland periphery were 'self-determination' and ‘national liberation fronts/movements’. Consequently, militant 'national liberation fronts' and movements mushroomed in the lowlands emulating the highland and the Abyssinian core rebel groups, which were established earlier, (e.g. Eritrean Peoples' Liberation Front, EPLF; Tigray Peoples’ Liberation Front, TPLF; Ethiopian People Revolutionary Party, EPRP; Ethiopian Democratic Union, EDU; Oromo Liberation Front, OLF; and Sidama Liberation Movement, SLM, etc.) (see for detailed lowland periphery ‘fronnts’ and ‘movements’ including Afar Liberation Front, (ALF) Gambella Peoples Liberation Movement,(GPLM) … Markakis, 2011:184-191).

In the same vein, the impact of the socialist experiment on the Somali inhabited region of Ethiopia was even worse. The southeast was depopulated as people fled the violence of Ethiopia Somali war of 1977/1978 and the anticipated retaliation of the Ethiopian regime, to languish in refugee camps in Somalia for the next ten years. Commercial farming on the Jigjiga plain did not survive the political upheavals that followed the demise of the imperial regime in 1974. Highlander farmers left the area and the dislocation of the grain market that resulted from the influx of famine relief food, forced most commercial producers to abandon the land (see Markakis, 2011: 214).

The Somalis who fled the country formed a political party known as Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) in Kuwait in 1986 following the principles of
‘self-determination’ and ‘national liberation front’. Its programme called the Ogaden an Ethiopian colony, defined the issue as 'decolonisation', and its goal ‘the liberation of Ogadenia by all possible means (see Markakis, 2011: 215).

Unlike in the Somali, the revolution did not impact heavily on Borana. Land reform had little meaning in the pastoralist habitat, and the kebele that were formed made no distinction between pastoralists and cultivators (Markakis, 2011: 216). In 1987 it was upgraded to an administrative region, whose territory included the mainly Somali inhabited Dolo woreda in the southeast corner. Many Borana found employment in the local administration and others became political cadre. Having gained favour with the military regime, the Borana now recovered recently lost territory and water sources in the east. Thus, playing the Ethiopian card proved a successful Borana strategy.

As it was the case in Borana, several initiatives boosted the process of integration of the fringe periphery of South Omo with the highland peripheries and the centre at initial level. The reorganisation of the state in the late 1980s raised South Omo's status to administrative region. Its people were introduced to state provided education for the first time, with primary schools in many villages and a secondary school in Jinka, the regional capital (see Markakis, 2011: 219).

However, the honeymoon period of the Derg in South Omo did not last long. The closing of churches and mission schools was strongly resented and, on a few occasions, forcefully resisted. In the 1980s, the grievances of people in South Omo accumulated, and 'as the revolution wore on after the late 1970s, the state became ever more unpopular in Maale' (Donham 1997: 327) cited in Markakis (2011: 219). Whereas the imperial regime had levied taxes on heads of extended families, the Derg taxed all married households. Contributions demanded by the 'call of the motherland' were an additional burden. Local officials interfered with trade, and the new road network
became a venue for extortion. Transportation of certain goods - wood, hides, skins, animals, incense, and sorghum - was made illegal. Vehicles were searched, identity documents checked, goods were confiscated and fines were imposed. This was resented by South Omo and made some of them rebel against the system, though not openly (ibid).

Similarly, the impact of the socialist state in Gambella on Anywaa society was 'profound and far reaching' (Kurimoto 1997: 799) cited in Markakis (2011:220). The first shock came with the arrival of some 500 zamacha (campaign) students who set about to convert a pre-literate society to 'scientific Marxism' with missionary zeal. Security conditions forced them to congregate in the towns of Gambella and Itang, but this did not dim their enthusiasm. The Anywaa word agem that signifies the deposal of a king or village headman was adopted for 'revolution;' suitably enough, because the zamacha targeted Anywaa traditional leader and balabbat who had served under the imperial regime. Labelled 'reactionary', 'anti-revolutionary' and 'feudal', the perplexed nyieya and klaaro were rudely removed and replaced with the chairmen of the newly formed kebele (Markakis, 2011: 220).

The second shock was the Derg's resettlement programme; more than 60,000 peasants from the highlands were settled in four sites in Gambella region. They came from various parts of the highlands, but became known locally as Kambaate from the name of the region, Kambata, where many of them came. Other parts of Ethiopia were involved in this programme, but its impact was greatest in Gambella, where the proportion of settlers to natives reached 40%, the highest in the country (see Markakis, 2011: 221 – 222), which will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

On the other hand, the initial impact of the Revolution on the Nuer was less evident. The pastoralists lived dispersed in the remote districts of Gambella
where the student zamacha did not reach. Their livestock economy was not affected by the reforms enacted in Addis Ababa, nor was their highly diffused system of traditional authority disturbed. At first, the Derg sought to maintain a balance between them and the Anywaa, neither of whom it considered capable of assuming responsibility for government. In a sort of apprenticeship, an Anywaa and a Nuer were appointed deputies to the provincial administrator in 1978. As the disaffection of rural Anywaa became manifested violently in the late 1970s, the balance shifted in favour of the Nuer, who were regarded politically as reliable (ibid), more of this will be seen in Chapter Seven.

Gambella’s neighbouring region, Benishangul Gumuz featured in the schemes of the military regime mainly as a suitable site for resettlement of excess population from the exhausted northern highlands. As noted earlier, the sparsely populated western escarpment had been the destination of a spontaneous population movement from the highland to lower elevations for a long time, displacing in the process the autochthonous Gumuz people. This continued throughout this period unopposed and sometimes facilitated by the regime (Markakis, 2011: 225). The highlander influx was greatly expanded by the resettlement programme of the 1980s. More than 100,000 settlers came to Metekel awraja and occupied two sites, Pawe and Beles. Situated in the Beles River basin crossed by several of its tributaries, and supported by the Italian government, the project earmarked around 250,000 ha of what was classified 'unoccupied/uninhabited' land (Markakis, 2011: 225). Some 18,000 Gumuz living there ‘were displaced, leaving their former settlement, cultivation fields, hunting and fishing areas as well as their socio-cultural space …No form of support to compensate them for their losses was extended. No effort was made to integrate them into the social development processes’ (ibid), which was to be repeated in the Anywaa zone of Gambella in the 21st century reflecting fundamental similarity of the Abyssinian ethos of control and repression forming fertile ground for conflict complexity in Ethiopia.
4.5.3 Change and continuity

It follows from the above analyses that one of the most outstanding changes the Derg brought about was the 1975 land reform, which was an authentic revolutionary act, a landmark in the country’s history symbolising a clear rupture with the past by wiping out the socio-economic and political foundations of the *ancien regime* (Markakis, 2011:170). The reform severed the link that had joined class and national divisions in a politically explosive blend, and had a greater impact on the centre-periphery relationship than any other event thereafter. The impact of the reform was felt mainly in the highland periphery, where it eliminated both the *neftegna* and *balabbit* classes, and proved popular as discussed above. The *gabbar* suddenly discovered, that ‘they too are children of Adam also, and from now on will live like other men.’ (Markakis, 2011:170). Moreover, ‘the three pillars of the state of imperial regimes - the tax collector, policeman, and judge - disappeared from the Ethiopian countryside’ thanks to the Derg regime (see Markakis, 2011: 171).

Equally important departures from the Abyssinian model were the Derg’s pronouncements on ethnic equality, cultural emancipation including gender equality and the use of vernacular languages in schools and public places and, above all, the ‘abolition of discrimination on the basis of religion…’ which resulted in recognition of the equality of Islam and Christianity (ibid). Another significant departure was that the Derg accepted the student movement radical thesis that national contradictions could be resolved through the class struggle, and put their faith in the soldiers to see this through. However, the class-struggle thesis led to another dictum: ‘The Revolution ate her children’; through class-struggle about a million young
lives perished in red-terror during the Derg regime, even though exact figure has proved difficult (see Bahru, 2002: 239, 247; Gebru, 2009: 41-42).

In addition, the socialist model brought the lowland periphery under greater direct control from the centre than it had been under the previous regimes. The lowlands were included into a strengthened administrative network, and an effort was made to link their economy with the national market. This provided the institutional setting for the emergence of new auxiliary elite to replace the balabbat in the periphery. Unlike their colleagues in the highlands, however, the cadres’ role in the lowland periphery was negligible (see Figure 4.1) - not simply because their number was itself negligible, but because in the scientific Marxist scheme of things their nationalities were not considered ready to ‘assume the responsibility of government’ (Markakis, 2011: 226-227).

In spite of significant departure from the past regimes, the underlying political structure remained the same: the state building strategy was meant for maintaining the Abyssinian/Amhara supremacy at the expense of both highland and lowland peripheries. This can be evidenced by observing the ethnic composition of top-ranking military leaders in the country during the Derg era (see the following table):

Table 4.1 Ethnic composition of military leadership during the Derg era

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amhara</th>
<th>Oromo</th>
<th>Tigre and others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>65%</td>
<td>20+%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: adapted from Markakis (2011: 186 – 187)

Another manifestation of continuity was the declaration of Ethiopia’s unity, which emphasised that ‘Ethiopia shall remain a unitary state, without ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural differences’, according to the 1987
Constitution of the military Government, irrespective of the existence of over 80 ethnic and linguistic groups. In short, the Derg regime was a militaristic and socialist model of maintaining Abyssinian hegemony which entrenched violent conflict in the country with fatal consequence of dividing the country on an ethnic basis and making it a landlocked nation under the succeeding regime, i.e. post-1991 Ethiopia as will be seen in Chapter Five.

4.6 Summary

It is fair to state that the present Ethiopia is a creation of Emperor Menelik (1889-1913), who forged the empire state with a combination of force and diplomacy in his state building endeavours. His military campaigns defined the borders of the Ethiopian empire-state borders – borders he concluded with the colonial power. One of the immediate consequences in high and lowland peripheries, however, was the dismantling of indigenous states that vanished, along with their history and culture. Land-hunger was an enduring and compelling reason for the expansion. Thus, control of land, subjugation and exploitation of the rural producer brought about neftegna-gabbar system.

Unsurprisingly, the great majority of the neftegna were Christian, Amharic and Tigrigna-speaking Abyssinians, a distinct nation representing the ‘centre’, in high as well as lowland Ethiopia inhabited by many other groups, speaking various languages and adhering to various faiths, labelled as the ‘periphery’. The distinctiveness of the Abyssinian core identity was accentuated by a monopoly of political power, economic privilege and superior social status remained during Haile Selassie and the Derg regimes. It should be noted, however, that there were variations in the degree of integration with the centre, particularly the highland periphery were relatively more integrated with the centre than the lowland peripheries during the regimes as indicated in the introduction of this Chapter (see Figure 4.1). Again, among the highland peripheries there were variations in the degree of
integration with the centre. The same applies to the lowland peripheries, even though they were less integrated with the centre relative to the highland peripheries. Hence, different political games overlay the centre-periphery structural relations. However, despite the differences, it may be concluded that, the relationship between the centre and the periphery in the main was asymmetrical. In short, the pre-1991 asymmetrical centre-periphery relations, created during the state building process, had been one of the underlying factors for internal violent conflicts, whose impacts are clearly being manifested during the incumbent.

In short, the focus and purpose of Chapter Four have been to critically examine the aims and processes of state building strategies of the imperial and military regimes and how these processes sowed the seeds for further violence in Ethiopia which surfaced during the new social contract, on the basis of Markakis’ (2011) work. Building on it, Chapter Five investigates the political processes of the incumbent in its state building efforts. The focus and the purpose of the Chapter are to unearth the state building strategies of the EPRDF on the basis of Abbink’s (2011) and Markakis, (2011) works. It further explores and critically analyses continuity and change during the incumbent relative to the pre-1991 regimes. By so doing, the Chapter examines whether ethnic federal system has fared better in managing conflicts and how it affected conflict complexity in the country in general and in Gambella in particular.
Chapter Five

Political Factors: State Building Strategies of the EPRDF

We can attain our objectives and goals only if Revolutionary Democracy becomes the governing outlook in our society, and only by winning the elections successively and holding power without let-up can we securely establish the hegemony of Revolutionary Democracy. If we lose in the elections even once, we will encounter a great danger. So, in order to permanently establish this hegemony, we should win in the initial elections and then create a conducive situation that will ensure the establishment of this hegemony. In the subsequent elections, too, we should be able to win without interruption ...We have military and political superiority, as well as considerable accumulated material resources ... (quoted in Markakis, 2011: 270 from the EPRDF document prepared for its members).

‘The EPRDF has liberated you from the Derg; you won’t pay money for the “call of motherland” anymore; you won’t pay tax; your children will not be recruited for national service as they were in the Derg era’, said an EPRDF cadre in the 1995 election campaign in one of the kebeles in Wolaita, the highland periphery... He then asked them: ‘Who do you think is better for you, the EPRDF or the Derg?’

‘Haile-Selassie is better for us; you can’t lead a country as diverse and vast as Ethiopia without collecting tax or recruiting young people for military service’, one of the elders in the meeting responded. (Personal observation)

Map 5.1 Political map of Ethiopia during the EPRDF regime (see Map 4.1 in Chapter Four)
5.1 Introduction

Political factors were one of structural elements in conflict complexity in Ethiopia during the imperial and military regimes as argued in Chapter Four. The Chapter focused on the state building strategies and political processes of the pre-1991 regimes with the resultant effect of these processes on the post-1991 Ethiopia conflict landscape. Continuing the debate, Chapter Five analyses and evaluates the role of political factors in conflict complexity in Ethiopia today with a view to critically examining if the new social contract has done any better in managing violent conflicts in Ethiopia and to assess continuity and change in relation to the preceding political systems. To this end, the present Chapter draws on the works of Abbink\(^{19}\) (2011) and Markakis (2011) with further data to support the argument in order to answer the sub-research questions: ‘Has ethnic federalism as a political factor done any better in managing conflict complexity in Ethiopia?’ ‘What has continued and changed during the EPRDF reign compared to the previous regimes?’

Abbink (2011:605) argues that ethnic politics and violent conflict over the last twenty years deepened in the wider society of Ethiopia because the focus of the Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Democratic Front (DEPRDF) governance mode has been on differences and antagonism rather than similarities and cooperation. He has divided the phases of ‘experimenting of ethnic politics’ into four (Abbink, 2011:598): (a) 1991 – 2000 (transitional and stabilisation period); (b) 2000 – 2003 (nationalist reconfiguration and the ruling party reaffirmation after the Tigrean Peoples’ Liberation Front (TPLF) division following Ethiopian-Eritrean war of 1998 – 2000); (c) 2003 – 2005 (broadening EPRDF); and (d) since May 2005 to present (democratic developmental state). Abbink (2011:598) has evaluated the ‘experiment’ at each phase over twenty years using a six point benchmark: (1) self-

\(^{19}\) This work is one of my main reference materials for the project.
determination; (2) preventing violent conflicts; (3) exercising cultural rights; (4) consultative decision-making; (5) an open-economic arena and economic partnership; and (6) issue-based non-discriminatory politics for the federation as a whole. He has acknowledged the recent economic growth seen in the new dynamics including ‘hydropower schemes’ as well as ‘commercial agriculture ventures’ (op cit., 609). He established that on the one hand the EPRDF broke away from the past by being unique in Africa and dividing the country on an ethnic basis and institutionalizing the principle of self-determination or secession in the Constitution, next only to the old Soviet Union (op cit., 600). On the other hand, the EPRDF kept continuity seamlessly maintaining centralism and authoritarianism by entrenching Abyssinian hegemony under the ideological code of revolutionary democracy (op cit., 611). He further argues that the various conflict resolution mechanisms applied by the regime lacked sustainability, and the constitutional provision gave legal basis for ‘illegal opposition’ groups such as Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) for further violence (op cit., 608). He has concluded that the ‘experiment’ of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia intensified the conflict by ethnicising politics; hence, it needs amendment. In his view, a lack of ‘imagination’ and ‘active work’ transcending ethnicism and neglect of opportunities over the twenty years of the EPRDF regime are responsible for the failure of the ‘experiment’ (op cit., 613). I concur with most of the points he made in his argument on the basis of the field data from Gambella that the introduction of ethnic politics exacerbated violence in Ethiopia:

An Amhara is concerned with issues of the Amhara ethnic group when elected to the Gambella Regional Council from the highlanders; the Anywaa with the Anywaa’s and the Nuer with the Nuer issues. No one is concerned about any other person outside their ethnic roots; yet these leaders use public office and public money to address their respective ethnic advantages (Lual, in in-depth interview 12 August 2012, Addis Ababa).

Simon from the same group, same place and date, added that:
These [the above mentioned] political leaders were made to behave this way (every elected official in the regional council is expected to favour their respective ethnic groups) so as to implement ethnic politics in the *kiliil*. The priority of ethnic politics has been to capitalise on ethnic difference rather than similarities and cooperation among the community, prioritise ethnicism over professionalism, and put party politics before public service (Simon, 12 August 2012, Addis Ababa).

It follows from the field data that as a result of the state building strategy of the incumbent, different ethnic based parties mushroomed and the old ones re-emerged in the Gambella inspired by TPLF/EPRDF model: Gambella Peoples Liberation Movement (GPLM), Gambella Peoples’ Unity Party, (GPUP), Gambella Liberation Party (GLP), Gambella Peoples Democratic Organisation (GPDO), Nuer Peoples’ Democratic Organisation (NPDO), Anywaa Peoples’ Democratic Organisation (APDO), Majang Peoples’ Democratic Organisation (MPDO) since 1992, and each of them contributed to violent conflict occurrence and escalation in Gambella. The field data also shows that ethnic entitlement produced a weak leadership structure, as it upholds attribution rather than achievements leaving no space for ‘issues-based non-discriminatory politics’ (Abbink, 2011:598).

Even though most of his arguments are balanced, some of Abbink’s assessments appear to have been made mainly from his own perspectives; different narratives of the government and the case study areas he covered were not considered adequately. Abbink’s work reduced conflict between the Nuer and Anywaa in Gambella into resource typology neglecting the complex nature of conflict there. To begin with, the impact of violence in South Sudan after its independence in July 2011 on Gambella, which is posing existential threat to the Anywaa ethnic group, has not been considered at all. Anywaa became the minority politically, economically and in terms of security since the independence of South Sudan and after April 2013 when a Nuer president took office of the regional Government for the first time in the EPRDF regime.
Furthermore, it is discernable in Abbink’s work that the political representation of the highlanders in Gambella Regional Council was misconstrued (op cit., 606). In this regard, there is a significant difference between the field data I gathered and Abbink’s conclusion. It is evident that highlanders were marginalised from political participation following the constitutional provision that political sovereignty lies on the indigenous peoples or the majority of the region. In the 2010 as well as 2015 elections, 11 and 8 seats out of 156 and 155 respectively were won by the highlanders (Office of the Regional Council, Gambella, 2013, 2015, see Chapter Nine table 9.2 for details), which was better than no political representation. The highlanders were not completely marginalised. This difference is important because most conflicts in Gambella have been related to political representation; one such instance is the 2003 violent conflict between the Anywaa and the highlanders, which was partly attributed to the total exclusion of highlanders from political participation in the killil (see Chapter Seven for detailed discussions).

Equally important, the discourse of the government on violent conflicts should not have been underestimated since the government continues to be the main actor in the conflict. Federal as well as regional governments’ narratives of the case study areas were not reflected sufficiently in Abbink’s work. I cannot overemphasise how vital the role of the state in the Ethiopian context is. It is historically regarded as provider for and protector of the society: land belongs to mengist\textsuperscript{20} – (Amharic word for government/state); schools, health centres, security, every bit of business and employment opportunities are under complete control of the government. It is therefore a key actor and a decisive factor in the society’s survival as daily experience

\textsuperscript{20} There has never been any distinction between government, ruling party, state and a ruler in power in Ethiopian political history. It is a well-established perception of the state and the ruler, mengist in Amharic, as mighty authorities which cannot be challenged, constituted the Ethiopian governments’ structural weapons in suppressing dissents.
shows in Ethiopia. Any conflict mitigating mechanism that does not involve the government/state at different levels may have little impact on the ground. Common ground that both the state and the local people agree on should have been identified sufficiently before judging the experiment as a failure.

Moreover, in his attempt to assess the ‘experiment’, Abbink (2011) has used a six-point criterion, highlighted above as the benchmark and concluded that the experiment was a failure. However, if we take his 3rd point, ‘exercise of ethno-cultural rights’, on the basis of the field data, I suggest that in the state building process of the current regime – irrespective of all the incumbent’s limitations – unheard voices were heard, and faceless and forgotten peoples were made visible in Ethiopian politics. Their identities, languages, and cultures were recognised and respected to a certain extent; diversity was introduced and given far more prominence than during the previous regimes. Had it not been for the state building strategy of the incumbent, it is difficult to imagine, for instance, that Haile-Mariam Dessalegn, a Protestant Christian from Wolaita ethnic group, could be the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, in an authoritarian political culture, die-hard conservative Orthodox Christian dominated Ethiopia. Other notable achievements of the current regime in its state building process include the expansion of education, construction of health centres, basic infrastructure, and a degree of self-rule of ethnic identity groups including the use of vernaculars.

Furthermore, should each of the above six points be taken in its own right or in interaction with other variables to make the judgement? I argue that the answer lies on the interaction of the factors, and the narratives of both the government at different levels and the local peoples. Without taking account of the different aspects of the story, understanding, explaining and transforming the present conflict, transcending ethnicity, and building a better and united Ethiopia may remain a utopia.
Very interestingly, however, the work of Abbink (2011) brings to light some of fascinating realities in today’s Ethiopia: while forming a political party in Kenya on the basis of ethnicity is banned by law, it is the norm in Ethiopia where Ethiopians are made to accept that they are first and foremost a member of their ethnic group’, and only second as Ethiopians (Abbink, 2011: 597). Further, that the government is seeking legitimacy through economic performance rather than political development, civil liberty, human rights and equitable distribution of wealth among its citizen is self-evident (op cit., 598). I concur with his argument that focusing only on economic factors at expense of human rights, good governance and democratisation process under the guise of ‘democratic developmental state’ since 2005 (op cit., 598), has not helped to mitigate violent conflicts which are visible on the ground as illustrated in Chapter Three taking cases from northern Africa and the Middle East. It needs to be underlined, as Kofi Anan states: ‘Democracies have far lower levels of internal violence than non-democracies ... In an era when more than 90 per cent of wars take place within, not between, states, the import of this finding for conflict prevention should be obvious.” (cited in Mills, 2014: 22).

Undemocratic and top-down approaches of the imperial and military regimes paved the way for the current government to decide on ‘ethnicising politics’ and ‘politicising ethnicity’ as I have argued in Chapter Four. This was reflected in Abbink’s work; nevertheless, there is a vital need to include not only the grassroots, but also the government at different levels i.e. accommodating diverse views, investigating their stories, and comprehending conflict complexity. It is this understanding of the complexity of conflict in Ethiopia that should guide us to conclude that the experiment needs amendment in its fullest sense. The present thesis, therefore, seeks to fill this literature gap by analysing and evaluating different narratives of
various actors at different levels to get the full picture of the violent conflict in Gambella, which is considered a microcosm of violent conflicts in Ethiopia.

In this Chapter I argue that the very state building strategies of the incumbent have contributed to conflict complexity in Ethiopia since its establishment in 1991. Four major issues have been identified and discussed: first, ideological foundation of the EPRDF; second, its state building strategies in the highland peripheries; its state building strategies in the lowland peripheries; and finally, its continuity of and departure from the previous regimes. By analysing and evaluating these points, this Chapter contributes to answer the sub-research questions stated above.

5.2 Ideological Foundations of the EPRDF

*Fetha Nagast* (Law of Kings), expansion and assimilation to build a unitary state were the ideological driving forces of the imperial regimes (Markakis, 2011:95) as pointed out in Chapter Four. Marxism-Leninism and authoritarian cum patriotic Ethiopian nationalism embodied in *Ethiopia First* (*Etiopia tikdem*) was the Derg’s ideological basis (Markakis, 2011:161). This section identifies: (1) ideological foundations of the incumbent; (2) explanations for the choice of such ideological orientation; and (3) consequences of the choices in state building process in the current Ethiopia.

To begin with, unlike its predecessors, the EPRDF’s political ideology is peasantry-focused and emanated from Maoist guerrillas (Clapham, 2009:183), Albanian socialism (Clapham, 1998:49) and neo-Leninist revolutionary democracy (Abbink, 2011:597), which culminated in ethnic federalism. In this model, devised by the TPLF, which metamorphosed into
the EPRDF, ethnic identity is the basis of politics. Consequently, ‘[i]dentities of previously non-dominant groups were constitutionally recognized and the idea of pan-Ethiopian identity de-emphasized’ (see Abbink, 2011:597).

Secondly, three factors could encapsulate the explanation for adoption of revolutionary democracy as ideological orientation (Abbink, 2011: 598): (a) the military victory in 1991 by an ethno-nationalist movement of the TPLF over centralized tyrannical military rule after a successful ethno-regional mobilization of insurgence; (b) the ideological idiom of student opposition movements, the armed opposition in the later years of the imperial regime, and the Derg regime that saw “the national question” as the main cause of Ethiopia’s problem above all others; and (c) the need of the ethno-regional insurgent movements, present among an important number of Ethiopian population groups in 1991, to come to a shared political agenda to address perceived as well as real “ethnic grievances”.

I would like to build on Abbink’s argument by adding two more factors that paved the way for ethnic nationalism: (d) internally, in addition to insurgent movements, there were peasant uprisings related to land administration in Bale (the cradle of Oromo Liberation Front) and in Tigray (genesis of TPLF) in 1970s (see Gebru, 2009:16), which contributed to the fall of the imperial regime and the rise of ethnic sentiments; (e) externally, in the late 1980s and early 1990s the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the soviet Union and scrapping of its military aid to the Derg as well as emergence of an ideological vacuum for intellectual space of imagination to mobilise people for a social change, i.e. the ideology of communism needed to be replaced with something else, such as ethnicism or religious radicalism, have played some role in propelling ethnic politics in Ethiopia. These phenomena provided fertile ground for conception, birth and growth of ethnicity and ethnic politics. They led to a strong territorialisation of ethnicity: ethnicity was territory, with exclusivist tendencies, and forms of mixture, which did not
really fit the scheme, especially in the towns and cities that were mixed and pluralist. Moreover, as daily experience shows in rural Ethiopia, there were several problems in the countryside as rural districts were held to be the territory of one “original” ethnic group, and of one only (see Abbink, 2011: 599), which did not match the reality on the ground.

Finally, the consequence of the ideological framework is conspicuous on the ground. It led to the task of remapping Ethiopia and redesigning the administration on the basis of ethnic politics. The principles were outlined in the Proclamation to Provide for the Establishment of National/Regional Self-Government (No.7, 1992 quoted in Markakis, 2011: 234). Regions were ‘established on the basis of settlement patterns, language, identity, and consent of the people concerned’ (Article 46). In fact, the operating principle was language and the only other tools available to the Boundaries Commission for this formidable task were the rudimentary ethnographic and historical data gathered by the Institute for the Study of Ethiopian Nationalities (ISEN) in the 1980s (Abbink, 2011:599; Markakis, 2011: 235).

Nevertheless, when revolutionary democracy or its offshoot – ethnic federalism - is tested on the ground contradictions arise: on the one hand, it is conceived generally as a system that facilitates diversity in government. On the other, a rigidly uniform system is imposed that does not allow the slightest departure from the prototype designed in Addis Ababa. In fact, attempts to do so are regarded as subversive. In fundamental ways, the prototype was based on the experience of the TPLF during the long years of civil war, and reflected the party's unwavering conviction that its own formula was made for success. As was the case with the military regime, strict uniformity applies in all fields of state activity and all parts of the country. It is most obvious in the structure and procedures of killil governments (see Markakis, 2011: 241-242). This becomes clearer in the document prepared for EPRDF members:
... Peasant class is the pillar of Revolutionary Democracy. Just as the centre of our economic development program is the rural part of the country, so, too, the focus of our political work is the peasantry. We should mobilize its members through social, political and economic organisations of its own. We should identify and transform into our strong cadres those prominent peasants who have earned the respect of their communities (quoted in Markakis, 2011: 248).

So, revolutionary democracy assumes that, following the land reform and other 'levelling' measures, the Ethiopian peasantry are a homogenous class with common needs, interests and political outlook. Therefore, it could be approached from a class perspective. Political participation in this context presumes a commonality of interests that makes political pluralism irrelevant and competition harmful. On the contrary, pluralism reflects class divisions that are not present in peasant society in the view of the EPRDF political ideology. Therefore, there is no need for more than one venue (party) for political participation in popular democracy. Only EPRDF – the dominant party – ‘awra party, in Amharic’ – (Abbink, 2011:602) is required. Confirmed by the TPLF's experience in Tigray, this became the political compass of the EPRDF. It redoubled its efforts to 'capture' the peasantry and secure an impregnable political base in the countryside from where it could rule the country (see Markakis, 2011: 249).

Moreover, revolutionary democracy with its emphasis on difference and antagonism runs contrary not only to western liberal democracy, but: (1) to everyday life philosophy of ordinary Ethiopians where plurality and unity is the essence of communal life as the Amharic saying goes: ‘dir bi’abir anbessa yasir’ – ‘if threads are interwoven, they can tie a lion’. (2) It also contradicts the very Constitution itself (see Article 32 sub-article 1) regarding citizen’s right of movement and living in places of their choice in Ethiopia; (3) it contradicts the principles of ‘developmental state’ too where common nationhood, skilled labour power, free movement and freedom to work for the development of the country irrespective of ethnic background is vital. In the
words of one of the champions of developmental state leadership, the late Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew:

The success of once poor Singapore has been dependent on social cohesion through sharing the benefits of progress, equal opportunities for all and meritocracy, with the best man or woman for the job, especially as leaders in government...leadership is a gel in holding society together;... developing a common nationhood is prerequisite for development and advancement... (Emphasis added) (Quoted in Mills, 2014:572).

Although revolutionary democracy conveys politically correct notions of inclusiveness, direct participation, and accountability, it sets clear limits to pluralism in political life. If the EPRDF had its way, only ethnic based political organisations would be legal. The Popular Registration Act compelled all Ethiopians to declare a nationality that was shown in their identity card. Declaring oneself 'Ethiopian' was not acceptable for it implies pro-unity ideas. Abbink (2011:612) summarises it thus:

Common citizenship is still underdeveloped, because it is not the basis of constitutional sovereignty and rights as ethnicity is the prime basis of people’s identity: for voting in elections, for party membership, and for identifying yourself when you come to a police station to report a stolen object (Abbink, 2011:612).

Interestingly, starting with the July 1991 conference, the regime regarded any efforts to organise on an Ethiopia-wide basis as subversive. While it supported the right of ethnic groups to political representation, it also rejected pluralism on that level, because it reflects class divisions that are incompatible with the official conception of peasant society. Accordingly, it sponsored only one political organisation per nationality, forcing local rivals to join the opposition (Markakis, 2011: 249 – 250). EPRDF’s political intolerance is evident in its unwillingness to engage with alternative political points of view. Evidently, the Southern Ethiopian Peoples’ Democratic Coalition (SEPDC), the Oromo National Congress (ONC), as well as a
couple of other small factions belonging to the so-called 'legal opposition' expressed their political interest to work with the EPRDF. Ideologically, they were in a basic agreement with the federal redesign of the state and support state ownership of land. In contradistinction, the late Prime Minister slammed the door in their faces saying in a 1994 interview: ‘We don't seek to get other groups to join us, for it would require the EPRDF to change and dilute its programme in order to accommodate them.’ (See Markakis, 2011:250). The 1993 EPRDF document underscores that revolutionary democracy did not mean sharing power with others, let alone surrendering power to them:

We can attain our objectives and goals only if Revolutionary Democracy becomes the governing outlook in our society, and only by winning the elections successively and holding power without let-up can we securely establish the hegemony of Revolutionary Democracy. If we lose in the elections even once, we will encounter a great danger. So, in order to permanently establish this hegemony, we should win in the initial elections and then create a conducive situation that will ensure the establishment of this hegemony. In the subsequent elections, too, we should be able to win without interruption ...We have military and political superiority, as well as considerable accumulated material resources (quoted in Markakis, 2011: 270).

The 2010 and 2015 elections proved that the incumbent had built the hegemony of revolutionary democracy by officially winning 99.6% and 100% respectively with each election the country losing its promised democratic foundation. These figures were questioned by the opposition groups. To further entrench the ideological hegemony of revolutionary democracy, new institutions for conflict mediation were instituted through state organs like the House of Federation (HoF), the Ministry of Federal Affairs (MoFa), district or regional courts and the ruling party branches. Almost in all kilil, with the exception of cities, newly emphasized ethnic groups pleaded for their own separate administrative division (see Abbink, 2011: 604).
Following the ideological line, territories have supposedly become mono-ethnic, even if they were not so historically; they cannot be shared by two or more groups. Acrimonious conflicts have often been the result. One case was the repeated expulsion of northern (re)settlers of “Amhara” origin from Wollega, western Ethiopia, in 2000 (and later in 2005), which reportedly happened with the connivance of the local authorities (Abbink, 2011: 604). It is to be recalled also that various regional state constitutions carry the clause that the “sovereignty” in the region resides in the majority ethnic group or people, thus excluding the other inhabitants. What is more, the actual power and interference of the federal government in regional and local affairs has become stronger than under any previous regime (Abbink, 2011: 605).

As already mentioned, the classification of Ethiopia’s citizens primarily in terms of their ethnicity as well as the strong territorialisation of identity groups has been accompanied by and perhaps been a casual factor in numerous new local-level conflicts about who is what. Also conflicts erupt frequently about the right to have a job in the local ethnicized administration, about voting or candidature rights and about borders. Borders between regions, zones and districts have been the recurring issue of conflicts, many of them violent and with numerous casualties. According to Abbink (2011:605) 5000 to 6000 people were killed over the past 20 years in such “ethnic” and “border” conflicts with clear implication of the revolutionary democracy. The correlation between ethnic politics and violent conflicts become vivid as we focus on the state building process of the incumbent in the highland peripheries below.

5.3 State Building Strategies in the Highland Peripheries

Expansion to and assimilation of the periphery was the central aim of the integration process of imperial and military regimes as argued in Chapter
Four. This section concentrates on the state building strategies of the incumbent in the highland peripheries in terms of (1) its multicultural re-definition of Ethiopia's national identity; (2) the façade of political power-sharing; and (3) the insincerity of ethnic political project and the consequences thereof in internal conflict complexity.

To begin with, rather than seeking to suppress cultural diversity, the EPRDF celebrated the multicultural re-definition of Ethiopia's national identity. Tilly argues that: ‘...state builders have always feared the failure to homogenize increased the likelihood that a state ... would fragment into its cultural subdivisions' (Tilly 1975: 44). Turning Tilly's thesis on its head, the EPRDF seems to have feared the failure to fragment Ethiopia into cultural subdivisions, might threaten its grip on power. Hence, the EPRDF embraced diversity and saw Ethiopia’s survival in difference and antagonism. In the words of its architect, the late prime minister Meles Zenawi:

Diversity must not be wished away, camouflaged, suppressed. It must be embraced as it is, it must be allowed free expression ...It must be possible for people to assert their own national and cultural identity ... within the context of their common Ethiopian identity ... We believe there is no incompatibility, no inherent conflict in being at the same time an Amhara and an Ethiopian, an Oromo and an Ethiopian ...and so on (quoted in Markakis, 2011: 279-80).

There may not be an inherent contradiction in embracing ethnic and civic nationalities at once, as argued in Chapter Three; however, a contradiction occurs when ethnicity is territorialised and territory is ethnicized as the facts on the ground have revealed for the last over twenty years in Ethiopia. As already stated, in 2000 and 2005, a number of Amhara were evicted from Oromia region of Wellega essentially because of the emphasis on ethnic identity over ‘common Ethiopian identity’.
Secondly, purported political power sharing or self-administration has been a major step forward in the highland periphery, which has two obvious benefits in the state building strategy. One is the engagement of a large segment of the intelligentsia in the affairs of local government, with the accompanying perquisites of power, social status and economic privilege. Furthermore, ethnic federalism provided an institutional base for the new class of subordinate elite in the highland peripheries, who were assigned greater responsibilities and corresponding power than was the case under previous regimes. However, as mentioned in Chapter Four: ‘the elite in the centre continue to rule; the elite in the periphery continue to administer’ even though the highland peripheries are more integrated than the lowland peripheries with the centre (see Figure 4.1 in Chapter Four). The second benefit is generous federal assistance in terms of budget subsidies, a package of development programmes in education, health, energy, transport and communication, all of which have improved facilities and played a role in providing some employment opportunities for the local population (Markakis, 2011: 281). Nearly all parts of the country are now served through a vigorous road construction programme, establishments of new universities and health centres that have absorbed the bulk of international development aid and the federal budget (ibid).

Finally, the efforts mentioned in the foregoing section are part of state building strategies in highland peripheries of the incumbent with some positive impact; however, whether this strategy is sustainable is a vital and an open-ended question when the efforts are evaluated in terms of sincerity and the consequences thereof. It is visible on the ground that ethnic federalism does not bring about the equitable sharing of wealth and power, and did not end the historical hegemony of the centre. As Badie (2000:48 quoted in Markakis, 2011:108) explicitly states ‘empires’ in this case [ethnic federal government] construct themselves around a specific culture that they intend to defend, promote...’ The very idea of ethnic federalism of the EPRDF appears to lack sincerity, i.e. it was meant for defending, promoting
and maintaining the hegemony of revolutionary democracy more than benefiting the majority of the citizens as the following conversation between the local people in the highland periphery and an EPRDF cadre demonstrates:

‘The EPRDF has liberated you from the Derg; you won’t pay money for the “call of motherland” anymore; you won’t pay tax; your children will not be recruited for national service as they were in the Derg era’, said an EPRDF cadre in the 1995 election campaign in one of the kebeles in Wolaita, the highland periphery… ‘Who do you think is better for you, the EPRDF or the Derg?’ he asked.

‘Haile-Selassie is better for us; you can’t lead a country as diverse and vast as Ethiopia without collecting tax or recruiting young people for military service’, one of the elders in the meeting responded (Personal observation).

The insincerity remains the structural fault line that continues to destabilise the nation state-building project (see Markakis, 2011: 281-282). Consequently, failure to advance towards political integration by redressing the historical imbalance in the centre/periphery relationship brought about two forms of regime’s opponents: ‘legal’ and ‘illegal.’ The first represents parties that accept ethnic federalism but challenge the EPRDF monopoly of power, and yet participate in the political process. ‘Illegal’ opposition represents movements which, having tried the ‘legal’ route found it futile and turned to rebellion (ibid).

‘Legal’ and ‘illegal’ oppositions could be illustrated by taking two recent examples with different objectives: first, the OLF with an aim of secession was legal during the transition period, which was later made ‘illegal’ and terrorist organisation. Given its claim to represent the largest nationality in the country, OLF is clearly the most important party in the ‘illegal’ opposition. Mindful of this, the architects of the federal project sought to involve the OLF at the design stage, and succeeded in securing its participation in the
transitional government (Markakis, 2011: 282). Intriguingly, the regime at the same time was grooming another Oromo political group, Oromo Peoples’ Democratic Organisation (OPDO), the current bedfellow of the EPRDF. When the insincerity of the incumbent loomed large, however, the OLF resigned from the transitional government in October 1992 leaving behind four ministerial positions and 12 seats in the parliament, which it was allocated. Its army went back to the bush making its headquarters in Asmara (ibid).

A further example is the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD - kenejit) with the aim of building a united and democratic Ethiopia Composed mainly of intellectuals from highland peripheries, it was the legal opposition group until the election of 15 May 2005. Unfortunately, it was made ‘illegal’ when it claimed a sweeping victory in Addis Ababa and other major cities in Ethiopia (except Mekele, capital of Tigray) exposing the insincerity of the ethnic political project. Consequently, it chose the ‘illegal route’ changing its name from kenejit into Ginbot 721 and was labelled by the incumbent as a terrorist group; its name – kenejit was given to a façade opposition party working for the incumbent.

Similarly, the Sidama Liberation Movement (SLM) in the 1990s sought to challenge the EPRDF. Invited to attend the July 1991 Conference, the SLM was represented by its founder, the late Wolde Emanuel Dubale, and was allocated two seats in the transitional assembly. Any hopes that its members had of leading their community were frustrated by the appearance of a Sidama Peoples’ Democratic Organisation (SPDO) headed by another Sidama, Abate Kisho, who went on to become the president of Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS) – in short – Debub kilil. To prove that the ‘centre elite rule and the periphery administer’,

21 Ginbot 7 is Ethiopian calendar, which is May 15 in reference to the date, CUD won the election in most cities of Ethiopia in 2005.
genuine political authority in Debub was in the hands of Bitew Belay, a TPLF central committee member. He exercised his influence from Hawassa until 1998 when he was made head of the regional affairs department in the Prime Minister's Office (Markakis, 2011: 285 – 286).

On the whole, the state building strategies of the incumbent in the highland peripheries epitomises the EPRDF’s ideology in practice – building the hegemony of revolutionary democracy maintaining the political power monopoly of the Abyssinian centre by redefining the Ethiopian identity, and façade of power sharing with dire consequence of asymmetrical centre-periphery relations. It follows from the above analysis and evaluation that the incumbent’s state building strategies appear to be one of the structural factors of conflict complexity in Ethiopia; a trend which continues in the lowland peripheries as discussed in the next section.

5.4 State Building Strategies in the Lowland Peripheries

The past regimes needed to integrate the lowland peripheries into the centre for: natural resources, e.g. fertile land, gold, ivory; slaves for free domestic labour and international trade – until 1930s; extraction of taxes; conscription of young men and boys; and so on. Even though the EPRDF appeared to be different at surface level, essentially it continued the trend. The rationale for the EPRDF to integrate the lowlanders to the centre is expressed in terms of: (1) the resolutions of the July 1991 conference, which committed the transitional government to 'give special consideration to hitherto neglected and forgotten areas', (Article 16); and (2) the 1995 Constitution, which required both the federal and killil governments 'to provide special assistance to nations, nationalities and peoples least advantaged in economic and social development' (Article 89 sub-article 4). What is more, pastoralist rights to land for grazing and cultivation as well as
the right 'not to be displaced from their own lands' were also enshrined in the Constitution (Article 40 sub-article 5) (see Markakis, 2011: 288). As will be seen in Chapters Nine and Ten, the empirical data from Gambella show that 'the right not to be displaced from their own lands' remains a rhetoric and no more a reality.

Taken at face value, ethnic federalism seemed to have raised the profile of the lowlanders. First, for the first time communities were congregated in their own killil, zone or woreda, with a degree of self-administration and recognition of their distinct identity and way of life. Second, self-administration restored some of the autonomy they had lost, and the recognition of their languages was the first step towards restoring the dignity of their cultures. Finally, federalism also produced resources allocated to the killil by the federal government, and these became the basis for competition among local elite factions and the substance of lowland politics. These were major and quite unanticipated gains, for which the lowlanders were beholden to the new regime (see Markakis, 2011:280). It was not surprising then that politics here were ruled by the clan formula rather than the guidelines issued by the EPRDF, which gradually led to political chaos, administrative paralysis and a total waste of resources in some lowland peripheries such as Ethiopian Somali killil (ibid). Against this backdrop, this section analyses and evaluates the state building strategy of the EPRDF in the lowland peripheries focusing on: (1) its drive for integrating the lowlanders into the centre; (2) the degree of its awareness of political and social configuration of lowland peripheries; (3) its choice to engage NGOs in capacity building in the lowland peripheries; (4) its political power sharing process with the lowlanders; and (5) effectiveness of its state building strategies in damping violence in the lowland peripheries.

To start off with, the EPRDF needed the lowland peripheries primarily for economic benefit as its predecessors did. During the first decade of the 21st
century, the lowlands acquired priority status in the EPRDF’s search for a way out of the country's economic predicaments. Drilling for petroleum, pursued by previous regimes, was revived in spectacular fashion (Markakis, 2011: 291). The lowlands also figured prominently in the new strategy of agro-industrial development on leased land. Nearly all the land earmarked for agro-industry is in the lowland belt, especially in Afar, Gambella and Benishangul Gumuz. This sparsely populated terrain holds vast stretches of land that the regime describes as barren and unused (ibid).

However, land alienation on such scale has had manifold consequences for the lowlanders, whose livelihood is dependent on some form of agro-pastoralism (see Ojot 2013). Arguably, it has already alienated the peripheries further from the centre, even though the EPRDF appeared to have raised the profile of the lowlanders initially. Close examination reveals that by alienating the peripheries EPRDF boosted the potential of insurgent movements already active in the frontiers. Some of the insurgents were quick enough to grab the opportunity to denounce the policy as 'neo-gabbar – new feudal system'. For instance, an OLF statement in September 2009 stated: 'the current Oromo farmland transaction between the TPLF regime and third parties is a continuation of the serfdom you have been subjected to for more than a hundred years.' (Markakis, 2011: 292). Large scale investment in agriculture by alienating the peripheries from their land not only induced violent conflicts as will be seen in Chapters Nine and Ten, but also exposed the incumbent’s lack of understanding of the socio-political and economic configurations of the context.

Secondly, the EPRDF had scarce knowledge of the lowlands when it came to power. The late Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi admitted: 'we went in there blind' (Markakis, 2011:280). An EPRDF official explained: 'These are clan based societies, unlike our peasantry, and we did not know if our political experience suited them!' (ibid). Moreover, EPRDF did not genuinely allow
opposition political parties for one and the same ethnic group in lowland peripheries as it did for the highland. For example, in the highland peripheries the TPLF/EPRDF created Oromo Peoples Democratic Organisation (OPDO) against Oromo Liberation Front (OLF); it formed Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM) against All Amhara People’s Organisation (AAPO), pitting them against each other.

To overcome an initial wariness of clan-based societies of the lowland peripheries, EPRDF resorted to the same political formula used in the highlands. It came up with a series of PDOs (Peoples’ Democratic Organisations) and formed, reformed, merged and split, and changed names and leaders in the years that followed. Nonetheless, these efforts produced neither political stability nor administrative effectiveness. They failed to make the best use of the federal subsidy – the carrot the regime offered the lowlanders (Markakis, 2011: 280 – 81). The failure is mainly attributed to the lack of political imagination of the EPRDF to understand and appreciate the social context of the lowland periphery which laid the seeds of violence there.

So as to rectify the failure, the EPRDF wielded the stick with the charge of corruption against most of the leaders that had lowland officialdom rotating between office and prison. It also groomed a corps of lowland elite called ‘regional intellectuals’. Young people with secondary education were sent mainly to the Civil Service College in Addis Ababa from where they returned on graduation to be appointed to senior positions in the killil administration. These novices with degrees were backed by highlander deputies with the required skills and experience (see Markakis, 2011: 287). Yet, this effort yielded varying effects depending upon specific contexts of lowland peripheries; while this formula worked relatively well in Afar, Benishangul Gumuz and Gambella where the highland deputies supported the neophytes of revolutionary democracy, it failed in the Somali killil. Perhaps the Ogaden situation best illustrates this:
The regional government in the Ogaden is not performing well and, supported by federal security, responds with strong armed force to suppress the rebel movement of ONLF as well as civilians suspected of assisting them. An emergency law situation is in place and the humanitarian and food situation remains dramatic (Abbink, 2011: 608).

Studies by Markakis (2011: 310) and Hagmann (2014:36) reveal that the Somali killil has been without real governance for two decades. Delayed, incomplete and disorderly elections produced contested results and short-lived administrations that collapsed amidst charges of embezzlement and criminal behaviour. In the process, the region gained an unenviable reputation for swallowing federal subsidies that vanished without promoting meaningful development in any field (ibid). It follows from Chapter Four and the present Chapter that the relationship of the Ethiopian state with its Somali subjects under ethnic federalism is as volatile as it has been since the making of the empire. As Markakis (2011:328) observed: ‘The Somali “regional intellectuals” proved neither subservient nor reliable, or able to run the killil administration'. The modus operandi of administration in the Somali killil is best described as the ‘circulation of the elite’ – the top post there changed hands no less than eleven times between 1992 and 2009, and nearly all presidents of the killil exchanged office for a prison cell, from where they sometimes returned to office (ibid).

EPRDF’s failure to understand the lowland peripheries was also evident in the southern and western borderlands. Managing federalism in this immensely complex and challenging setting would have been extremely difficult under any circumstances. The EPRDF did not make it easier by failing to depart from the rigid PDO and gimgema - evaluation formula used to administer the highland peripheries, the vehicle steered by ‘regional intellectuals'. The problem here is the sheer inadequacy of this vehicle, which
made central intervention all the more necessary and obvious. Save in the
most superficial sense, decentralisation has been a failure: in reality, the
result was to bring the borderlands under tighter central control than ever
before. In 1996 *Gumi Gayyo Assembly* (*cultural gathering for different social
affairs*), the Borana presented a petition to the presidents of Ethiopia and the
Oromia *killil*:

> It is an understandable fact that after the demise of the previous regime there
have been vital misunderstandings between the Borana community and the
present regime ...In our opinion, the very root cause of the conflict is that the
government believed and considered the community of the Borana as being
OLF fighters and more precisely, identified us as a whole anti-EPRDF (quoted in

The above quote is comparable with the Anywaa’s feelings and perceptions
of the EPRDF and the *killil* government, which were gleaned from the field
data from Gambella:

> Our memories, identities and history have been burned and the Anywaa have
been targeted as security threat to the *killil* as well as the federal government
(Ugala, FGD, 3 April 2013).

Thirdly, in order to build the capacities of the lowland peripheries both local
and international NGOs were invited to participate in the pastoralist sector by
the regional and federal governments on condition that they ‘worked in line
with government policies’ (Markakis, 2011: 288). The *woreda* empowerment
scheme assigned responsibility for development and it was here that the
NGO sector was supposed to link with the state. However, since the *woreda*
budget for capital expenditure is insignificant, nearly all development
interventions in the lowlands are funded and implemented by NGOs. In most
cases, NGOs form a nominal partnership with the *woreda* administration to
secure permission and local official cooperation (ibid). NGOs activities cover
a very wide range: famine relief, support of vulnerable groups, such as children, women, the old and the disabled, health care, vocational education, employment creation and many others according to Markakis (2011:288-89). The main strategy follows the guidelines set by orthodox development theory, which focuses on promoting agro-pastoralism through sedentarisation and crop cultivation, improved livestock quality and access to the national market, and natural resource conservation through water harvesting, fodder production, and similar activities (ibid).

However, studies (e.g. Markakis, 2011: 288) indicate that this strategy for pastoralist development was found wanting on several grounds. I agree with the findings that the policy ignores the laws of climate and environment in the arid region that make regular cultivation unsustainable and inappropriate, without other resources to support human existence. Sedentarisation ignores the fact that livestock production in this ecological niche has to be mobile, and that traditional pastoralism is not a mode of production for the market; but it is a way of life with its own social organisation and culture that are based on movement. Although herders engage in market transactions, they do not primarily produce livestock for the market. I concur with Markakis (2011: 289) that settlement and commercialisation would affect not only the pastoralist economy; they would irreparably damage an ancient way of life. From the state's point of view, the logic in this outsourcing of development activities in the lowland periphery is clear. In promoting sedentarisation and commercialisation of pastoralism, NGOs are implementing state policy. However, their aid neither deterred violent conflicts nor improved the political rights of the pastoralist communities, which have been the theatre of violent conflict since 1991.

Fourthly, the façade of power-sharing, through the nominal nature of the regional power of the lowland periphery, as in highland peripheries, exposed the insincerity of the EPRDF regime in its state building strategies. A case in
point is Borana among other lowland peripheries: the Gumy Gayoo assembly stated above, that took place in 2003 in Dire woreda in Borana Zone, was attended by some 5,000 people. They included the Oromia killil president and other high OPDO officials, who took the opportunity to condemn the OLF as well as the 'legal' opposition of the EPRDF. The gathering demonstrated that the peripheral elite carries out the wishes of the centre and the so-called power-sharing is just a façade as already mentioned in Chapter Four. When the conflict with the Somali ethnic group was raised in the ceremony, one elder addressed the regional OPDO officials bluntly:

We in fact know that you do not have the real authority to solve our problems. In that case, you better allow us to go directly to your masters so that we can tell them our problems ourselves. (Ibrahim Amare Elemo 2005: 47, quoted in Markakis, 2011: 332)

The following in-depth interview with the head of the Investment Bureau of Gambella killil (Ato James Tut, IDI, 4 April 2013, Gambella town) depicts a similar façade of power sharing between the centre with peripheries:

We were not involved in the process of dealing with the investors. Our duty is to implement what we are told by the federal government. Moreover, if investors fail to pay tax, the duty and responsibilities of the Regional Bureau of Investment of the killil is to report to the federal government; the Bureau has no role of levying or enforcing tax on the investors.

Finally, ethnic federalism did not reduce the frequency or the intensity of conflict in the lowlands. Managing it became a problem that confounded the combined efforts of the federal and killil governments that were supplemented by NGOs until recently. Initially, the Department of Regional Affairs in the Prime Minister's Office, formed in 1995, kept a distant watch over developments in the periphery, while army commanders and security officials stationed in the lowlands were responsible for keeping the peace. The Ministry of Federal Affairs (MoFA) was created in 2001 to take the 'emerging regions' under its wing. In addition to the Department of Regional Affairs...
Affairs, the Ministry's portfolio included the Federal Police and Prison Service (*op cit.*, 290). Yet the role of the traditional authorities who are well versed with context is excluded.

In a surprising move, having initially shunned ‘traditional authorities’ as a ‘feudal class’, the EPRDF later sought their involvement and now it uses them as mediators alongside civil and military officials. Councils of Elders with an advisory role were formed at the *woreda*, zone and *killil* levels. Their effectiveness in performing this function depends on several factors. The main one is the degree to which traditional culture still rules society and customary authority retains its traditional status. While this varies from one community to another, tradition and customary authority generally have lost ground everywhere. A familiar sign of this is the readiness of young warriors to disregard and bypass their elders. Elder status is further undermined by the summary way in which state officials often treat them; throwing them into prison for noncompliance is routine. Elder influence is also limited by the fact that often they instigate conflict themselves. Finally, elder influence is nil when the resources in dispute are externally generated and beyond community control (see Markakis, 2011: 290; Abbink, 2011: 604).

This instance can also be seen in Afar. Traditional authority is indispensable in the management of local community affairs, particularly in matters concerning land and justice (Markakis, 2011: 290). Nonetheless, ethnic federalism marked an abrupt change in the previous Afar system of government which never had a unified structure or a single ruler to represent the *killil*. A centralised system of decision making represented by the *killil* was now imposed on people whose affairs seldom extended beyond the local community and were managed by their elders. The absence of customary figures of authority at *killil* level meant that the Afar chiefs are excluded from that level of government, and have no appreciable influence in the new political process. The situation is different at the *kebele* and *gott*
level – (the smallest unit, termed also as neighbourhood composed of five to nine members for political control by the incumbent) – where the new government structures were late in emerging and have yet to take root two decades later.

In short, the state building strategy of the EPRDF in the lowland peripheries produced mixed results: the incumbent needed the lowland peripheries mainly for economic benefits alienating the indigenes from their ancestral land in the name of developmental state while denying citizens’ rights to live in any part of the country of their choice, contradicting the Constitution and developmental state principle. By promoting sedentarisation it denied the traditional customary value of the pastoralist way of life which is more environmentally friendly than commercial farming of which the EPRDF was accused of violating both fundamental human rights of ownership as well deforestation of the indigene lands. The uniqueness of the EPRDF from all previous regimes, as will be seen in the following section, exacerbated the degree of violent conflict in the country in general and in the lowland peripheries in particular.

5.5 Continuity and Change

Continuity is most conspicuous in the strong authoritarian political culture the incumbent inherited from the past, i.e. by its absolute control of political, economic, social and security space. One typical example is a flow of policy orientation. Whenever there is a new policy orientation, ideological indoctrination flows from the centre to kebele, as was a ritual practice during the Derg era (at present it cascades from the federal to the level of gott – neighbourhood in rural areas – and to 1 to 5 member cell or group in cities). Added to this are uncompromising approaches to and zero-sum game of
politics, prevalent during the imperial as well the military, and are seamlessly being replicated under the incumbent.

Continuity can also be found in the implementation of development policies on the ground such as the large socialist scheme of resettlement, villagisation, and dispossession of ancestral land of the indigenes (see Abbink 2011: 610). The policies were attempted under the Derg regime, albeit with a different ideological justification. Now the same approaches are used with the ideological justification of ‘democratic developmentalism’.

Changes from the previous governments, may be encapsulated in three major aspects of the EPRDF: (1) its political ideology (the source of its all governance policies) as embodied in the Constitution of 1995; (2) its security/defence structure; and (3) its position on Ethiopia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.

First, ethnic politics is the hallmark of the EPRDF. As a result, the vision of ethnic politics signalled the EPRDF’s break away from the Amharisation project of assimilation pursued by the previous regimes. To this end, the vision of the incumbent is seen as proof that ‘Amharisation’ is no longer the goal of national integration and the hallmark of cultural pluralism is the validation of vernaculars – the use of mother tongue in primary education, mass media, law courts and other public arenas. As Markakis (2011: 280-281) argues, ‘... asserting one’s own national and cultural identity ... within the context of their common Ethiopian identity was a vision, which was … universally welcomed in the peripheries’ (ibid). This statement of Markakis, however, needs to be qualified because it is after this vision statement of ethnic federalism that most conflicts occurred in the peripheries as is discussed throughout this thesis. Hence, the clause, ‘...universally welcomed in the peripheries’ begs the question, for evidence on the ground in Afar,
Benishangul Gumuz, Borana, Gambella, Somali and South Omo killil proves to the contrary. Although I align myself with Markakis’ argument that vernacular is the heart of one’s identity, using it in the media or education or other public arena has not dampened violent conflict in the country.

Rather, ethnic politics is an elaboration of the political ideology of TPLF/EPRDF which constitutes the building blocks of the 1995 Constitution (see Abbink, 2011: 599) that distinguishes it from all other previous Ethiopian regimes. As discussed in Chapter Three, the two most salient and still much debated elements here are: (a) the definition of ‘political sovereignty’ which is vested in the ‘nations, nationalities, and peoples’ of the country (article 8); and (b) the secession clause in article 39. I concur with Abbink (2011:599) that this remains a bone of contention since it reflects the underlying dilemma of the Constitution as a document emphasizing the differentiating instead of unifying elements of the federation.

The full text of Article 39 sub-article 1 of the 1995 Constitution of the EPRDF regime reads: ‘Every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has an unconditional right to self-determination, including the right to secession.’ (Emphasis added). Comparing it with Article 1 of the 1955 revised Constitution brings to surface the vision of the incumbent:

The Empire of Ethiopia comprises all the territories including the islands and the territorial waters under the sovereignty of the Ethiopian Crown. Its sovereignty and territory are indivisible… (Emphasis added).

In the same vein, when Article 39 of the 1995 Constitution is compared to the 1987 Constitution of the military regime, Chapter One, Article 1 sub-article 2, it is obvious that the EPRDF is distinct from all modern time rulers of Ethiopia:
The People’s Democratic Republic of Ethiopia is a sovereign state **whose territory comprising the land, airspace and territorial waters, including the islands, is indivisible and inviolable.** (Emphasis added).

The justification for such a far-flung departure from its predecessors lies in the secession/self-determination Article, which was succinctly summed up by the founders who metaphorically regarded Ethiopia as a house:

‘If you don’t open the doors and windows of a house, those confined within will break the doors and walls and run out to get fresh air. So leave the doors and windows open for the people to feel free and relax inside the house.’ (See Markakis, 2011: 233).

Arguably, the source of ‘a closed house’ metaphor and the root of self-determination or secession concept in turn emanate originally from the context of decolonisation of the European empires. This fact was either intentionally ignored or misunderstood by the forerunners of ethnic politics:

The principle of self-determination provides that the people of the colonially defined territorial unit in question may freely determine their own political status. Such determination may result in independence, integration with a neighbouring state, free association with an independent state or any other political status freely decided upon by the people concerned (see Shaw, 2008:257).

Intriguingly, the concept of self-determination is an extension of the TPLF/EPRDF’s agenda and its unwavering political position on the Eritrea’s quest for independence during armed struggle against the *Derg* regime – that Eritrea was a colony of Ethiopia; hence, it has to be liberated. By the same logic, all ethnic groups in Ethiopia were under the colonial power of Ethiopia; therefore, they have to determine their own fate through self-determination. To implement this aspiration, Article 39 is a quintessential element of state building strategy of the incumbent. One can discern this
tenet from the late Prime Minister Meles’ argument in his Amharic monograph (Struggle of Eritrean People – Whence to Where?): ‘It is appropriate and scientific to say that Eritrea is the colony of Ethiopia.’ quoted in Yacob Haile-Mariam (2010:48).

The flaw in this assumption is conspicuous when one seriously considers the major ingredients of colonialism as a process and system and evaluates Ethiopia using this as a benchmark. Considering the concept of colonialism in its most fundamental form, the country’s technological basis, its needs for exploitation of raw materials, its ‘civilising mission’, and markets for the processed products, Ethiopia does not qualify to be a colonial power during 19th and early 20th centuries. As Clapham argues:

> The ultimate basis of colonialism was technological, and its principal motive was economic. The states of Western Europe developed inventions and forms of organisation which enabled them, slowly at first, to control others and thereby to acquire wealth (Clapham, 1985:13).

Even though some writers argue that Ethiopia was ‘an internal’ colonial power in the Horn of Africa (Leenco 1999: 156; Asafa, 2005: 72) cited in Markakis (2011: 98), they do not provide sufficient evidence that qualifies Ethiopia as such. While I concur with their argument that Ethiopia adopted expansion and assimilation policies and suppressed its citizens/subjects in the process, I do not share their position that it colonised other ethnic groups in the country and qualifies to be a colonial power per se like the European colonial power in other parts of Africa.

It is very important to note, however, that the above argument does not mean that the imperial and military regimes were better off in terms of dampening violent conflict in Ethiopia. The essence of my argument is that the political ideology of the EPRDF and its embodiment in the Constitution gave legal
ground for identity as well as resource-based violent conflict in the country at present.

Second, the manner in which the defence forces and security establishments structured during the incumbent makes the regime different from the previous ones. Under Haile-Selassie the ethnic composition of the military was far more diverse than the civil branch of the state (see Markakis, 2011:186-187). It was generally believed that the ranks of the common soldiery included a large number of Oromo (ibid). The hierarchy also included Oromo officers, several of whom reached the rank of general, as did four Guraghe officers from southern Ethiopia. The bulk of the officer corps was of Abyssinian origin, and Muslims were clearly absent in it (ibid). Similarly, during the Derg regime, the ethnic composition of the armed forces was quite heterogeneous. In the late 1970s, the composition of the enlisted ranks was about 33% Amhara, 33% Oromo and 25% Tigre, with the remainder coming from other groups as stated in Chapter Four (see Markakis, 2011: 186-187).

In sharp contrast to the previous regimes, most if not all of the top military leaders come from the TPLF core in the current government. Comparing with the previous regimes on the one hand, and observing the overall per cent of population size they represent on the other, it is clear that the EPRDF’s state-building strategy is unequivocally ethnic politics. The following table and graph depict the incumbent’s military top officials following ethnic lines (see table 5.1 and figure 5.2 below).
Table 5.1 Ethnic Composition of Military Leadership since 1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Military ranks</th>
<th>Tigre</th>
<th>Amhara</th>
<th>Oromo</th>
<th>Agew</th>
<th>SNNPR</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population size (%)</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National level: highest rank command chiefs</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heads of army commands</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heads of army command divisions</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HQ combat service and combat support staff commanders</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military training centre commanders</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of generals</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Figure 5.1 Ethnic Composition of Military Leadership since 1991

Source: [www.ethiomedia.com](http://www.ethiomedia.com) downloaded 15 December 2014
Third, the incumbent’s position on Ethiopia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity is plainly stated in Article 39 of the 1995 Constitution: its focus is on difference more than cooperation, ethnicity more than national identity, and secession rather than unity, which are the features that set EPRDF apart from all previous regimes. Following the Charter of Transitional Government (1991-1993), the blueprint of the 1995 Constitution, the port of Assab was ‘given’ to Eritrea by the incumbent, depriving Ethiopia of sea-routes and making it a land-locked country. A number of books and articles were written on this issue and I will cite only once source – a book written in Amharic by a professor of International Law at Addis Ababa University, Yacob Haile-Mariam:

The English equivalent is roughly as follows:

Among all EPRDF’s deeds, bad as well as good, its decision to make Ethiopia a landlocked country remains the most prominent one so long as Assab, the sea route of Ethiopia is not returned to Ethiopia! After long, long time and many, many generations, people would still ask: ‘who was EPRDF?’ The answer would not be ‘a government, which constructed roads, schools or clinics’. However, the answer would be ‘the EPRDF was an Ethiopian government that rendered Ethiopia a landlocked nation by closing Assab, its sea-route’ (Yacob, 2010:63).

In a nutshell, in the state building process all modern time rulers of Ethiopia e.g. Emperor Tewodros, Emperor Yohannes IV, Emperor Menelik, Emperor Haile Selassie and the military regimes attempted to have sea-routes for Ethiopia. It is only the EPRDF that made Ethiopia a landlocked nation by design (Yacob, 2010: 48 – 63). This makes the incumbent unique from all
other modern time rulers of Ethiopia with far-reaching historical consequences for violent conflict in the country.

How has the uniqueness of the EPRDF affected conflict situation in Ethiopia? The irony is ethnic federalism was meant to resolve age-old and prevent new violent conflicts in the country as argued in Chapter One. On the contrary, ethnic federalism fuelled violent conflicts creating tensions among ethnic identity groups despite some of its positive contributions in exercising cultural rights i.e. celebrating diversity by making unheard voices heard. What is more, ethnic federal structure has generated competition between ethnic groups, mainly their aspiring elites, about ‘resources’ e.g. land, water, minerals, federal funds, and communal or religious identity for they have a political interest to take position against each other (see Abbink, 2011: 612).

Four points may explain, according to Abbink (2011: 608), why there is tension in the ethnic federal system of Ethiopia: (a) strong administrative control from the centre into all regions; (b) economic and budgetary dependency of ethno-regions on the federal centre; (c) insufficient decentralization in administrative and economic practice; and (d) a district voting system tied to the national ruling party and its allies where the “first past the post” system guarantees that a local ethnic majority represented by a party linked to the EPRDF always wins the vote and rules the region.

Building on Abbink’s (2011:608/613) contribution, I would like to add four more points why there is tension in the system: (e) insincerity of the incumbent’s political power sharing process with the periphery, i.e. the regional leaders lack decision making power; theirs is to implement what has been issued by the centre as field data demonstrate from Gambella; (f) unaddressed structural grievances, such as lack of equity in wealth distribution creating horizontal inequalities, e.g. almost all large scale
agricultural investment in Gambella is run either by foreigners or political party affiliates or party members, all of whom were from outside Gambella marginalising the locals; (g) failure to understand specific conflict context – the incumbent uses a formula it used to diffuse tension elsewhere in the country, which most of the time backfired and exacerbated violence; and finally, (h) adopting linear and quick-fix approach by the incumbent instead of listening to different narratives and seeking to understand conflict complexity. These have been some of the points that could explain the tension. On this account, the past over twenty years of ethnic federalism has shown a neglect of opportunities, and has yielded an unexpected hardening of political attitudes on the side of the incumbent, adding more fuel to conflict complexity in the country.

5.6 Summary

The foregoing analysis and evaluation revealed political factors of conflict complexity in Ethiopia today. The state building strategies of the EPRDF have been examined focusing on foundations of its political ideology; the process of and rationale for integrating the highland and the lowland peripheries; impact of the state building process on violent conflict; and continuity and change. In the main, the rationale for the integration of the periphery to the centre revolves around extraction of resources, tax and multi-purpose human labour. Whereas authoritarian political culture epitomises seamless continuity, political ideology characterises the uniqueness of the incumbent essentially.

It follows from the above discussions that both momentous changes and remarkable continuities over the last twenty years in the patterns of governance and in ethnic tensions are visible. First, the changes are a testimony to the things achieved and the challenging tasks ahead; second,
the continuities are indicative of the unresolved problems and the unfulfilled promises that the country has yet to deal with. Ethnic federalism has fuelled the fire of violence rather than preventing future conflicts and transforming existing ones. These problems would require additional political cum legal engineering that could better engage Ethiopia’s citizens, depoliticize ethnic identity, and reduce the politics of top-down rule, distrust and threat, indicative of a strongly authoritarian political culture lingering from the past as already indicated above.

The following Chapter builds on what has been discussed here. It describes the research context by contrasting Gambella with other lowland peripheries and entities under colonial grips to assess how the uniqueness of the killil from others contributed to the complexity of conflict there.
Chapter Six
The Uniqueness of Gambella Conflict Landscape

Since the Independence of South Sudan on 9 July 2011, the Nuer presidency in Gambella on 16 April 2013, and the December 2013 coup in South Sudan with the resultant influx of the Nuer refugees to Gambella, the political weight of the Nuer changed posing existential threat to the Anywaa of the killil. This dynamism and across border political processes is one of the distinctive features, which made Gambella stand out among all other peripheral lowlands rendering it a distinct landscape for conflict complexity in Ethiopia… (From the analysis below).

6.1 Introduction

Chapters Four and Five critically examined political factors, as realised through the state-building processes of the imperial, military and current regimes of Ethiopia. From the two Chapters it follows that because of continuity of asymmetrical relations between the centre and the lowland peripheries over the three regimes, violent conflicts remain protracted and untransformed in the country. The present Chapter compares and contrasts Gambella as a case study landscape with other lowland peripheries in Ethiopia based on the works of Bahru (2008), Dereje (2011), Markakis (2011), Regassa (2010), Tessema and Triulzi (2010), and Regional Bureaux of Gambella (2012) in the main. Analysis of the ethnic configuration of Gambella thus serves as a lead into critically analysing the role of ethnic identity factors as one element of conflict complexity in the killil in Chapter Seven. The present Chapter also contributes to answer one of sub-research questions: ‘What roles have ethnic identity factors played in conflict complexity in Gambella?’
Gambella resembles other peripheries in Ethiopia in various ways. One of the most significant similarities is the labelling. Emerging regions ‘tadagi killiloč’ and EPRDF affiliated political parties, ‘agar dirjitoč’ respectively, are the labels Gambella and other lowland peripheries and their political organisations were tagged with in the political landscape of post-1991 Ethiopia (see Markakis, 2011: 45 – 85). Moreover, Gambella also hosts multinational ethnic groups in its urban and rural settings as is also the case in other peripheries. Thirdly, Gambella resembles other peripheries in being conflict-prone region, marginalised politically, socio-economically, and backward in terms of infrastructure. Furthermore, as is the case in Afar, Somali, Borana and Benishangul, Gambella is relatively sparsely populated, a feature which was used as justification for resettling peoples in the killil, from the killil itself and other parts of Ethiopia, during the imperial, the military and the current regimes. Environmentally, it is one of the hottest areas infested with tsetse flies and malaria, as is the case in South Omo and Benishangul Gumuz. Finally, because of its porous borders, it is a place where illegal cross-border arms, drugs, cattle, etc. trades are conducted, as is also common in other lowland peripheries in Ethiopia.

What makes Gambella distinct from other lowlands such as Borana and South Omo, if not all other lowland peripheries in Ethiopia, is its experience of the colonial legacy, which is conceptualised in this study as an ‘external factor’. Hence, the history of Gambella is comparable to the majority of African experiences of European colonialism in a number of ways, even though Ethiopia was uncolonised, as discussed in Chapter Three. Among them is the division of the Anywaa and Nuer ethnic groups between South Sudan and Ethiopia, in a comparable way to the Somali being divided between Kenya, Ethiopia, and Djibouti by the European colonial principle of divide and rule. Furthermore, pre-colonial social and political structures and institutions were dismantled and substituted with chiefs and clan-leaders with a new concept of territoriality as was evidenced in the case of Anywaa similar to what had happened in Kenya to the Kikuyu, and Maasai ethnic
groups (Cheeseman, et al., 2015:98). What is more, the Protestant Christian religion predominates (at over 70% in Gambella, according to ECSA, 2007) as is the case in South Sudan but in sharp contrast to other lowland peripheries in Ethiopia, which practise Islam, indigenous faiths, and/or Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity.

Further, Gambella was a source of resource plundering by colonial power via Sudan as well as by the Ethiopian imperial power, including slaves, ivory, wild/forest coffee, and gold. At various times Gambella was seen as a lynchpin to control Lake Tana, the main source of Blue Nile by the British (See Bahru, 2008:158). In addition, the strategic and historical position it had held in the past, for instance, as a trade post in early twentieth century and a theatre for Arab-Israeli proxy war during 1960s, make it distinct from the rest of the lowland peripheries as will be seen later in some detail. Most importantly today, the potential for oil production, the relative abundance of fertile land for large-scale agricultural investment by foreign and domestic investors, and significant fresh surface waters for irrigation, and rivers for pastoral and agricultural activities, render Gambella unique among all lowland peripheries. This resource-wealth certainly makes a contribution to conflict and I shall explore the extent to which it may be considered the centre of gravity for conflict complexity in Ethiopia.

6.2 Gambella and Other Lowland Peripheries in Ethiopia

Apart from Gambella, lowland peripheries comprise Afar, Benishangul Gumuz, Boranaland (including Gabbra and Guji), South Omo (with multitudes of ethnic groups), and Somali killil (see Markakis, 2011:45-87). They are one of the last two frontiers, which remain to be integrated into the Ethiopian polity, in the words of Markakis (2011:1). Each of them is very
briefly discussed below in order to assess the distinctiveness of Gambella, and the extent to which this makes it a focus point for conflict in the country.

6.2.1 Gambella

According to the Bureau of Agricultural and Rural Development (BOARD) of the killil (2012), Gambella is one of the nine regional states of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia with the size of 25,803km². It is located on the south-western corner of Ethiopia, 776 Km away from Addis Ababa, in the lowlands of the Baro-Akobo River Basin between latitudes 6°22’ and 8°30’ N, and longitudes 33°10’ and 35°50’ E. (see the map below).

Map 6.1. Administrative map of Gambella as of May 2012 (UNOCHA website, 2012)

Its altitudes range between 300 and 2300m above sea level and is characterized by a variety of topographic features (ibid). The eastern part is characterized by high mountains and rugged terrain (about 8% of the area lying in the highland at altitude of over 1500m). These areas include the highlands of Godere and Dimma woredas, east and northern part of the Gambella woreda. The central part is characterized by elevation of 500-1000m and is estimated to cover about 44% of the total area and includes most of Gambella Zuria, Abobo, Itang, part of Godere,
Jikawo, Gog and Jor woredas. The low lying flat plain land is found on the western part and is estimated to occupy some 48% of the total area. The elevation ranges between 300m and 500m and is characterized by its perennial swamps (ibid).

Dense and thick tropical forest covers the elevated western edge, savannah forest grasslands whereas marshlands cover the lowland plain as far as the border with South Sudan, according to the Bureau. The northern plateau slopes westward and Gambella is part of its drainage system crossed by several rivers and innumerable streams which flow into the Sobat River in South Sudan and then to the White Nile. ‘The lowland plain is part of hydraulic complex and large parts of it are seasonally (i.e. June to November) flooded, while marshes cover substantial areas’ (Markakis, 2011:77-78). It is bordered by the Sudan Republic and South Sudan in the southwest, northwest and north; the National Regional State of Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples’ Region (SNNPR) in the south, southeast and east; the Oromia National Regional State in the north, northeast and east; and Benishangul Gumuz National Regional State in the north (ibid).

The average temperature is 17.5⁰c – 37.5⁰c and the mean annual rainfalls higher than other lowland peripheries, at 900-2200 mm (see figure1 below) which is adequate for cultivation of many crops and ensures a well distributed surface water system, (Gambella Villagisation Centre, 2011:2 -13). Baro, Akobo, Gilo, and Alwero rivers, which feed the Sobat River, mark some of the region’s provincial and international boundaries. Akobo and Baro rivers form the border with Sudan, and Baro runs along part of the boundary between Oromia and Gambella in the country (ibid).
According to Ethiopian Central Statistical Authority (ECSA, 2007), Gambella has total population of 307,096, consisting of 159,787 men (52%) and 147,309 women (48%); urban inhabitants number 77,925 or 25.37% of the population, the remaining 229,171, or 74.63 % live in the rural areas.

According to the census, the population is mixed in terms of ethnicity and religion. The Nuer numbered 64,473 (40% of the total) the Anywaa, 44,581 (27%) the Highlanders 39,194 (27%) the Majang, 9,350 (6%) and the Opo and Komo combined 4,802 (3%). The total number of peoples has increased when compared with the 1994 census (see table 6.1 below).

Table 6.1 Gambella: Population by ethnic group in 1994 and 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Population in 1994</th>
<th>Per cent (%)</th>
<th>Population in 2007</th>
<th>Per cent (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anywaa</td>
<td>44,581</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>64,984</td>
<td>21.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuer</td>
<td>64,473</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>143,286</td>
<td>46.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majang</td>
<td>9,350</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>12,280</td>
<td>3.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opo/ Komo</td>
<td>4,802</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1,214</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlanders</td>
<td>39,194</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>83,510</td>
<td>27.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>162,400</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>305,274</td>
<td>99.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The term 'highlanders' is widely used to denote peoples who come from other parts of Ethiopia to Gambella. Alternatively, ‘fair complexion’ or ‘red peoples’ designates peoples who are not indigenous in the killil.
It further shows that the population density overall (ranging from 2.9 per sq.km in Gog woreda to over 20 in Godere) is among the lowest settlement pattern in Ethiopia, implying that Gambella is a sparsely populated region with vast land. However, there is a striking imbalance between the Anywaa and the Nuer areas (see Table 6.1). As can be seen in the map (see Map 6.1), the Anywaa, who comprise 27% of the total population, dominate some 70% of the region’s land area. The majority of the Nuer, who comprise 40% of the population, live in four districts of Jikaw, Lare, Wantua, and Akobo that cover 24% of the region’s total, and have the highest density in the region (ibid). The riverine lands of the Anywaa territory are highly valued for dry season livestock pasture. Nevertheless, they cover only 0.5% of the total of the region, and are a major attraction point for Nuer agro-pastoralists (ibid) playing a significant role in violent conflict formation.

Ethnic Configuration of Gambella

All rivers e.g. Openo (Baro), Akobo, Gilo, Alworo… are the names given by us, the Anywaa peoples. These places bear the Anywaa language because the river banks, the fertile land, and rich forests are located on our ancestral land which made us sedentary agriculturalists’ (Ojaga, the Anywaa participant, FGD Gambella, 03 April 2013).

The very name of the killil, Gambella, comes from two Nuer words: *gam* and *bell* (‘a’ is a plural marker); the former refers to a ‘shortage of’ or ‘lack of’ and the latter refers to ‘provision’. Hence, ‘we lack provision’ or ‘we face shortage of provision’ to indicate incidents that occurred during early twentieth century when we, the Nuer peoples, were trading with our neighbours in Ethiopia (Lual, the Nuer participant, IDI, Gambella, 4 April 2013).
Three indigenes, the highland cum settler population and refugees (which are separately discussed in Chapter Eleven) characterise diverse, dynamic, interdependent and interactive ethnic groups in the *killil*. Each of them is briefly described and analysed below.

**The Anywaa**

Gambella region is identified historically with the Anywaa, the oldest and, until recently, the largest indigenous group in the region (see Dereje, 2011: 32 – 50). According to the first national census of 1984 (Illubabor Region, 1984) the Anywaa, numbered 28,000 and the Nuer 27,000 (ibid). The Anywaa belong to the Nilotic cluster that is dominant in Southern Sudan, and in the past lived in the Sobat River Basin from where they gradually displaced by the Nuer (Regassa, 2010:5; Hoth, 2013:20). One account puts their arrival on the eastern side of the Akobo River as early as 15th century, and emergence of their forest kingdom in Ethiopia in the 18th century. The Anywaa live along the great, slow rivers of Baro, Gilo, Akobo, Alwor, and Pibor that cross their land, and upon which they rely for transportation, fishing and irrigation (Dereje, 2011:48 – 49). The pattern of the settlement laid the basis for the Anywaa identity as it was surfaced in the FGD in the *killil* as quoted in the introduction of this sub-section.

Water and land have a special place in the Anywaa’s life. As Bayleyegn, (2000:32-36) observed, the spiritual life of these riverine peoples is deeply infused with values derived from water. They believe that sprinkles of water thrown by women upon disputants pacify vindictive feelings. The Anywaa’s belief-system regards water as the basis of existence, the world of immortality, and the eternal abode of the souls. There are around fifty-one ritual places related with the spiritual qualities of water (ibid).
For Anywaa a lineage system is very important in the ethnic group with age-group/grades (Dereje, 2011: 45). However, their village settlements are not clan-based, though in some of them one clan may be dominant. Clusters of villages form groups with a sense of solidarity and a loose identity, and common interests to promote in regional politics. These are not political units but rather geographical and ecological ones (ibid). The sedentary Anywaa have a strong sense of territoriality, self-identification with areas of land – and proprietorship – ownership of land that contrasts with the Nuer’s migratory ethos as discussed in the following section.

The Nuer

Unlike the Anywaa, the Nuer occupied remote areas where the imperial state lacked adequate resources to govern effectively (see Regassa, 2010; Tessema and Triulzi, 2010). However, the Nuer’s resilience to withstand the malaria infested remote land, made them attractive to both Ethiopia and Britain, which was colonial power in the Sudan as stated in Chapter Four. Britain and Ethiopia competed to win the political loyalty of the Nuer, and this allowed the Nuer room for manipulation of the international boundary, while the militarization of the Anywaa posed a threat to both the Ethiopian state and the Sudan which was under the British colony (Regassa, 2010:69).

Tessema and Triulzi, (2010:180) argue that the first contact between imperial Ethiopia and the Nuer occurred in 1898, when Ethiopia sent a small contingent in support of the French (Bonchamps mission) in the upper Nile region. They are neighbouring Nilotic peoples who live in the Sobat River Basin, and form the second largest group in neighbouring South Sudan,
after Dinka (seeTessema and Triulzi, 2010: 170 – 175). The bulk of the Nuer, estimated at as many as one million, are found in the Upper Nile province of Southern Sudan where they are a major political force. Still today, they are pastoralists and have followed the Anywaa into the well watered and lush pastures of Gambella employing various survival strategies (ibid). In recent decades, there was a massive influx of Nuer driven out of Southern Sudan by the civil war to Gambella region (see UNICEF, 2014:1-4). The recent fight (since December, 2013) in the newly independent south Sudan has driven about two hundred thousand refugees, mainly the Nuer to Gambella (South Sudan briefing, July 2014: 3 – 7).

Presently, the Nuer are dominant in four districts out-numbering the Anywaa: Lare, Jikaw, Wantua, Akobo – and share Itang district with Anywaa and Opo. Nevertheless, three kebeles in Jikaw and six in Akobo are still inhabited by the Anywaa (BOARD, Gambella, 2012). On the whole, their area is characterised as: dead flat; predominantly clay soils; very thinly and sporadically wooded; covered with high grasses in the rains; subject to heavy rainfall; traversed by large rivers which flood annually; and when the rains cease and the rivers fall, it is subject to severe drought. As a result, ‘their land is more suitable for cattle husbandry than for horticulture’ (ibid).

The Nuer do not, except in a few favoured spots, live in one place throughout the year. The floods drive them and their herds to seek the protection of higher ground. Hence their life is of necessity migratory, or, more strictly, transhumant (BOARD, Gambella, 2012:17). A further reason that urges them to change their abode according to the seasons is that their milk and meat diet has to be supplemented by grain and fish (July to October) very similar to that of the Somali, in eastern Ethiopia. The most suitable place for the cultivation of millet is inland, on the edge of slightly elevated ground in the Anywaa territory, (see Tewodros, 2007:5; BOARD, Gambella, 2012:17).
The Anywaa resistance obliged the Nuer to take a different approach by adopting peaceful penetration through adoption of Anywaa children, intermarriage and alliances. They used their cattle wealth to marry Anywaa women whose price was much lower compared to the Nuer women. Whereas the dowry of three cows was sufficient to get married to an Anywaa woman, the dowry of 25 cows was required to marry a Nuer woman (see Tewodros, 2007:20). This data was supported by the interview with the focus group discussions (FGDs, 6 October, 2012, Gambella). Furthermore, children of these marriages, be it with an Anywaa or a Nuer woman, become Nuer, while in the past the Anywaa concept of ethnic purity based on patrilineality did not allow the reverse (ibid). As stated, the Nuer practice favoured integration of outsiders into their kinship system on the basis of equality and assimilation into their culture (see Dereje, 2011:32 – 38).

As a livelihood mechanism, the Nuer spiritual leaders called ‘prophets’ play a leading role in community decision making (Dereje, 2011: 206; Hoth, 2013: 25 – 27). They perform various functions, such as disease healing, blessing men to prevent them from being killed in battle, helping women to conceive children, prevent the death of infants, mediate peace between clans and seal peace agreements with spiritual rituals, guide communities where to establish settlements, and curse wild animals harmful to peoples and cattle. They can also provoke conflict and lead peoples to fight as can be seen in Chapter Seven. They were prominent during the colonial period in opposition to the British administration in southern Sudan, and provoked the latter to wage war against them (ibid). In Gambella there are other indigenes in addition to the Nuer and Anywaa including Opo, Komo and Majang. However, I will take up only Majang for its significant roles in violent conflicts in Gambella relative to Opo and Komo.
The Majang

Majang zone is the home of the third largest indigenous group in the killil. Although they enjoy ‘political control’ of the zone, they are a minority in Gambella. According to the 2007 census, the population of the zone was estimated to be 59,248. This includes a sizable group of highlanders who live in kebele 12, and the Majang whose population is about 13,000 (ECSA\textsuperscript{24}, 2007) live in kebele 18. Majang also live dispersed in parts of Gambella region as well as Yeki woreda of the SNNPR and Oromia. The Majang are forest dwellers who have lived off the land without livestock and minimum cultivation (Dereje, 2011: 148 – 151).

The Majang had no political organisation of any kind, registered by Ethiopian National Electoral Board\textsuperscript{25} (Regassa, 2010:101). However, they are represented in the House of the Federation in line with the Constitution of FDRE\textsuperscript{26}. Although the Majang lack corporate lineage organisation, they do have clans (komwoyir) similar to the Anywaa. Of the 40 Majang clans, the Meelanier clan wields ritual and political power in the zone, among the 40 clans, if not at regional or national level (ibid). Most of the political and spiritual leaders called tapath are from the Meelanier clan. At present, it is from this clan that prominent leaders are drawn (ibid). In addition to Majang, the Gambella killil accommodates the highlanders/settlers that make a significant contribution to the conflict complexity in the region. It is to this community that I now turn to.

\textsuperscript{24} ECSA, Ethiopian Central Statistical Agency

\textsuperscript{25} In Ethiopian political system, political parties representing specific nationality groups have to register with the National Electoral Board (NEB).

\textsuperscript{26} Every nationality of Ethiopia is represented in the House of Federation with or without political parties. The Constitution of the FDRE article 61, sub-article 2 states that: ‘Each Nation, Nationality and Peoples shall be represented in the House of Federation by at least one member.’
Highlanders and Settlers

One of similar features across all the lowland peripheries is the settlement of the highlanders in urban as well as rural areas. A fourth ethnic group in Gambella are the highlanders, an immigrant community known by the Anywaa as *degegna* (highlanders), by the Nuer as *buny*, and generally *gala* (red skins) to distinguish them from the indigenous ‘black’ population (Regassa, 2010:70; Tessema and Triulzi, 2010:125). In the 1994 census their number was nearly 40,000 of the region’s inhabitants. In the 2007 edition they exceeded 60,000. Although the pioneers of this group arrived in the lowland regions at the end of the nineteenth century, the bulk of the highlanders are immigrants and are considered alien by the indigenous population. Although ethnically diverse including Amhara, Guraghe, Hadiya, Kembata, Oromo, Tigray and many others from the highlands, they represent a community of economic and political interests (ibid). They dominated the modern sector of the Gambella economy and the state bureaucracy where they perform technical tasks (ibid). In 2007, of a total 5,719 civil servants, 3,033 were highlanders, with Oromo and Amhara together numbering 2,411. There were more than twice (1765) the Anywaa as there were the Nuer (805) in the civil service (see table 3 below).
Table 6.2 Ethnic Identity of Civil Servants in Gambella

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic group</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anywaa</td>
<td>1303</td>
<td>462</td>
<td>1765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuer</td>
<td>669</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majang</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Komo</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opo</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oromo</td>
<td>865</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>1337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amhara</td>
<td>729</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>1074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tigray</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guraghe</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>4006</strong></td>
<td><strong>1713</strong></td>
<td><strong>5719</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Resettlement of the highlands in Gambella gradually started during Emperor Menilik II and Emperor Haile-Selassie (see Dessalegn, 1990:56). Nevertheless, its magnitude increased during the Derg regime (ibid). In the 1980s some 60,000 highland farmers were made to settle in the Gambella region. They came from various highland regions, but they came to be known locally as kambaathe from the name of the region, Kambata, where many of them came. The proportion of settlers and highlanders to local population in Gambella reached about 41% at present (ibid). All of them were settled on the Anywaa land with serious consequences for the local communities in terms of loss of riverine land, fishing resources, deforestation, water diversion and soil erosion (Regassa, 2010:110).

However, following the collapse of the Derg in 1991, the Anywaa attacked the settlers and forced most of them to leave the region. The retaliation by highlanders was yet to come after almost a decade in December 2003 where over 400 Anywaa were massacred and forced to leave their ancestral land as discussed in Chapter Seven.
6.2.2 Afar

A striking difference between Gambella and Afar starts from the terms used to describe each killil. 'Barren', ‘bare’ or ‘desert’ are words used to describe two-thirds of Afar amounting to more than one-tenth of the country's area (see Markakis, 2011:45). Gambella, on the other hand, is associated with dense tropical forest, abundant surface water and rainfall, and savannah grasslands. In the Afar Depression, the end section of the Great Rift in Africa, where the land's surface sinks to 155m below sea level, the first-time visitor encounters the most awesome spectacle staged by nature: sun baked deserts and salt flats, active volcanoes and molten lava lakes - the 'hell hole of creation' as it was put in an early unflattering description (Nesbitt 1935) quoted in the above work, whereas contrasting geography and hydraulics characterise Gambella.

The estimated size of the Afar killil is 100,860 square kilometres dwarfing Gambella, only about 25,000km². Traversed by the great river trailing a green ribbon of vegetation along its banks, the Awash River Valley in the south is its other defining feature. The second longest (700km) river in the country and the major drainage system on the eastern side of the northern plateau, the Awash is the only river in Ethiopia that flows eastward. The climate of the Great Rift is uniformly hot and dry, ranging from semi-arid to arid. According to local records, annual rainfall in the Middle Awash Valley during 1970-2003 had a mean rate of 558.4mm, while the annual precipitation deficiency rate for the period was above 95%, which means that twice as much rainfall was required for sustained plant growth unlike in Gambella. In sharp contrast to Gambella, the rainfall pattern in Afar is highly erratic and drought is a regular visitor (see Markakis, 2011: 46).
According to the 2007 census, 1.25 million of Afar live in Ethiopia in contrast to a little over 300,000 peoples in Gambella. All are Muslim and overwhelmingly rural, whereas over 70% of the population of Gambella practise Protestant Christianity, according to the census cited above. Similar to Gambella, mostly Amhara, Oromo and Tigray, form the bulk of the urban population of Afar. The census showed a striking gender disparity, with 786,338 males to 624,754 females. The influx of male highlanders in the towns partly accounted for this, but the gap is wider in rural areas (see Markakis, 2011:47). The Awash Valley has the best resources for livestock production, which could be compared with Baro River of Gambella, the only navigable river in Ethiopia and one of major water resources of the Gambella killil. Wet season grazing and browsing is relatively easy in Afar because of the availability of open rangeland, the free movement of livestock through the range, and the proximity of dry season pasture on the Awash River banks. The exceptional resources of this area made it the object of on-going violent conflict and contention between the Afar and Somali similar to the violent conflict between the Anywaa and the Nuer in Gambella.

The founding principle of Afar society is blood kinship, and the building block of its social structure is the patrilineal descent group, or clan to some degree similar to that of both the Anywaa and the Nuer ethnic groups of Gambella. However, the difference lies on the territoriability of the Anywaa and the communality of the Afar. It is estimated that there are more than a hundred clan-families among the Afar (Markakis, 2011:47 – 48); clan system is the strongest social bond among the Afar as reflected in the following sayings: 'As one does not hesitate to ask help of his shoes, so one should not hesitate to make use of his clan' (ibid).

Economically, the Afar relies on the produce of livestock, supplemented with grain grown in the Delta and the surrounding Oromo region like the Nuer of Gambella (Dereje 2011:53 – 70). Dependence on grain has increased
significantly in recent times, as the livestock economy has weakened due to the intrusion of commercial cultivation and adverse climatic trends. Violent conflict within the Afar and with the Somali pastoralists is mainly related to natural resource, grazing land, water wells, and access to these resources (ibid). Except for water wells, the uneven distribution of resources that frequently leads to violent conflict between Anywaa and Nuer are similar to that between the Afar and Somali.

6.2.3 Somali

The Somali killil of Ethiopia occupies a diverse terrain partly similar to that of the Gambella landscape in terms of diversity, with five distinct sections. The bulk of it is a sloping plain that stretches south-eastwards from the southern plateau towards the proper Somalia and the Indian Ocean (Markakis, 2011:52). By contrast, the eastern triangle of the region, known as the Haud, is flat and featureless comparable to the Nuer zone of Gambella. The northern part of the killil (Shinile Zone) lies in the Great Rift Valley, and is naked to the plain through a narrow, elevated land corridor (Jigjiga Zone) on the eastern edge of the plateau (see Markakis, 2011: 53). With an elevation reaching up to 1600m, Jigjiga Zone is the northern summit of the plain that falls gently to around 500m as it reaches the border with Somalia which is similar to the Anywaa zone of Itang special woreda and the Majang zone of Godere in terms of elevation and its sharp contrast with the surrounding areas.

At 4.5 million in 2007, the Somali population of Ethiopia represents roughly one-third of the widely dispersed Somali nation in the Horn, and equals half the estimated population of the proper Somalia itself. The territory inhabited by them in Ethiopia (279,252km²) is nearly half as large as the territory of the Somali Republic (638,000km²) (see Markakis, 2011: 53). They are the third
largest nationality in Ethiopia (6.2% of tile total), outnumbering the Tigray, and the Somali killil is the second largest in area (after Oromia), covering about one-quarter of Ethiopia's 1.2 million km². The Somali killil lists 67 towns, of which less than half had a population of more than 5,000 inhabitants. With some 125,000, inhabitants, Jigjiga was by far the largest town, followed by Gode with about 45,000. The population is quite homogeneous and solidly Muslim like its Afar neighbour. Typical of pastoralist societies, females account for 44.4% of the total, compared with 49.5% for the country as a whole (see Markakis, 2011: 55). In terms of area as well as population size Gambella is far too small when compared with both Somali and Afar.

Like in their Afar neighbours, clanship (tol) is the foundation of Somali society, which is quite different from territoriality, the pillar and distinguishing mark of identity of the Anywaa of Gambella and most highlanders settled in Somali. This difference is strongly reflected in the culture and authority systems of the two groups (of the Somali and the highlanders settled there), and is often the cause of misunderstanding and tension in their relationship. More significantly, it greatly complicates the interaction of an egalitarian Somali society with a state rooted in the authoritarian political system (see Markakis, 2011: 55). As the proverb ordains: 'to protect yourself from your son, rely on your brother; for protection from your brother, rely on your son' (Mohammed Abdi, 1997: 854) as quoted in Markakis (2011: 55).

What is striking here is the absence of the discourse of a state or mengist for protection as well as provision in the Somali killil; the highlanders and centrists would immediately think of it as next only to God. A commonly-held belief of central as well as highland Ethiopians is that 'as God rules the world, we are ruled by the government'. Hence, for job, food, health or physical security provision, mengist or state is the first word, which has continued to date in central and highland Ethiopia in general. In pragmatic
terms, this idea of *mengist* is visible in the Anywaa discourse as well, particularly in terms of controlling the border with South Sudan to stop the influx of the Nuer refugees from coming to Gambella. The Nuer use the discourse of *mengist*, when talking about land ownership stating that ‘land belongs to *mengist*, not to a specific ethnic group such as Anywaa’. Anywaa would say, ‘any *mengist* must protect its border from foreigners such as the Nuer refugees flowing from South Sudan’. In short, the discourse of *mengist* makes Gambella distinctly different from Somali *kilil* (see also Dereje, 2011:xi).

### 6.2.4 Boranaland

The Borana comprise a vast, compact territory at the centre of the lowland periphery, stretching from the southern flanks of the plateau to the Tana River in northern Kenya, some 600kms south of the Ethiopia-Kenya border, and from the Genale River in the east to the Great Rift in the west (Markakis, 2011:67). The Borana Zone of the Oromia *kilil* represents the core of this territory - from the Dawa River in the east to the Segen River in the west, and from the Kenyan border in the south to the border with Guji Zone - encompassing 69,373km². With a population in 2007 that includes Guji, Gabbra and some Somali, approaching one million in number, it is the largest zone in Oromia *kilil* (see Markakis, 2011: 66).

Similar to Gambella *kilil*, in comparison to neighbouring lowland regions, Boranaland is privileged in terms of water and pasture availability. Clusters of man-made, deep, permanent wells (*elaa*) found throughout the region are the main sources of water. Another permanent source of water is provided by the Dawa and Segen rivers at opposite ends of the zone. These wells are also signposts of Borana territory and the object of contention and violent conflict with intruding neighbours. Unlike Gambella and other lowland
peripheries, Borana land is not an object of large scale agricultural investment, neither is it flooded by the influx of refugees from neighbouring counties; its main threat originates from the neighbouring Somali pastoralists seeking for water and pasture (see Markakis, 2011:59).

6.2.5 South Omo

The Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples killil, or Debub (‘South’), with a population at the last count (2007) exceeding 15 million, is a grand mosaic of some fifty ethnic groups. A dozen of them live in the South Omo Zone in a highly variegated and continuously changing physical setting that provides life sustaining niches for communities of modest size. The north-central portion of the zone forms the tail end of the northern plateau with an elevation of 1000m-1500m, and a tropical climate with precipitation rates that reach 1200mm. Elevation drops sharply south-westwards to less than 500m in the Omo River Valley, where precipitation falls below 600mm.

Like in the Nuer zone of Gambella, the climate in the south and west, where evaporation exceeds precipitation, is arid, yet tempered to some extent by the abundance of surface water drained from the plateau by many rivers, among which the Omo and Mago are the mightiest. Of late, this area has been the centre of violent conflict over land mainly because of government development projects as is the case in the Anywaa zone of Gambella (see further details in Markakis, 2011: 71).
6.2.6 Benishangul Gumuz

Home for the Great Renaissance Dam of Ethiopia (Abbay Dam or Millennium Dam), with half a million population occupying an area of 80,000 km$^2$ in western Ethiopia, Benishangul Gumuz follows traditional subsistence patterns and indigenous modes of livelihood according to Markakis (2011:42-44). The landscape features spectacular mountain and hilly terrain, with elevations reaching 2,700m in the east and descending to 550m in the west. All three climatic zones are found here, from torrid qolla (lowland), woinadega (tropical), to frigid dega (temperate). The precipitation pattern changes accordingly, from a height of 1,500mm on the highland to 600mm on the plain, which makes it similar to the neighbouring Gambella.

As is the case in Gambella, over half of the region is covered with forest, including bamboo, eucalyptus, rubber, incense and gum and other indigenous tree species. The region is dissected by many rivers that drain the plateau and cut wide, deep gorges in the process. The mightiest of them, the Abbay (Blue Nile) River, dissects the region with a huge gorge, and is flanked by the Didesa, Dabus and Angir rivers to the south, and the Dinder and Beles rivers to the north. Unlike the Baro river of Gambella, the un-navigable and turbulent, great obstacles to transport, communication and group interaction, these rivers have much to do with the ethnographic diversity of the region (Markakis, 2011: 43–44). As in Gambella, migration of highlanders to the lowlands changed the ethnographic profile of Benishangul Gumuz. Like in Gambella, the region was the hunting ground for slaves from both sides, whose raids tore at the fabric of indigenous communities, fragmenting and dispersing the people to find refuge in inaccessible malaria ridden depressions and mountaintops, from where they emerged only recently to confront a perplexing world (ibid). Violent conflicts are common in both regions related to the government land use policy, and the rights of indigenous and settlers over the land as is the case in Gambella.
6.3 Uniqueness of Gambella

Four major features make Gambella unique, among other things, when compared to the rest of the lowland peripheries in Ethiopia. First, unlike most lowland peripheries, Gambella has an average annual rainfall of 900mm, which is sufficient for many crops as discussed already. In contrast to much of the lowland belt around the Ethiopian massif, Gambella has an abundant and well distributed surface water system conducive for agricultural activities. Moreover, the flood regime provides irrigation and dry season livestock pasture as detailed in Markakis (2011: 78). Consequently, Gambella has been the centre of attraction for refugees from South Sudan, highlanders from the rest of Ethiopia preferred for agricultural settlement and villagisation during the imperial and the military regimes as discussed in Chapters Eight through Ten. In the post-1991 political dispensation, Gambella has been an epicentre of large-scale agricultural investment including Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and concomitant violent conflicts. 15 large scale land transfers were made in Gambella alone as compared to the national level partial list of 27 transfers (See Appendixes K and L; Dessalegn, 2011: 29 – 30). As the following table depicts, the Gambella killil has vast fertile land for foreign and domestic agricultural investment in the country, under the Federal Land Bank, even compared with other lowland peripheries.

Table 6.3. Investment Land under Federal Land Bank

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lowland peripheries</th>
<th>Agricultural Land in Hectares</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afar</td>
<td>409,678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benishangul Gumuz</td>
<td>691,984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boranaland</td>
<td>No reported land under Federal Land Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambella</td>
<td>829,199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNNP (mainly South Omo)</td>
<td>180,625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somali</td>
<td>No reported land under Federal Land Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,111,486</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Dessalegn (2011:11)
Second, Gambella is a peripheral region, situated along Ethiopia’s long international border with the Sudan. Yet, it is one of Ethiopia’s poorest regions in terms of infrastructure and social services. Because of its location along the border with the Sudan, Gambella is susceptible to wider geopolitical processes (Dereje 2011:1; Markakis, 2011:77–78). In fact, Gambella’s uniqueness also lies on the identification processes of ethnic groups in it which are intimately related to the civil wars in southern Sudan with devastating and existential threatening effects on the Anywaa livelihood as will be seen in detail in Chapters Seven and Eleven.

Third, in early twentieth century, Gambella was an important trading post in the foreign trade-route of Ethiopia, ranking third after Djibouti and Eritrea respectively, which was conceived as an effective means of drawing Western Ethiopia into the economic orbit of British ruled Sudan (Bahru, 2008: 149). The assumption was that economic penetration would pave the way for political influence. As a result, malaria-infested and inhospitable Gambella became a significant location for Ethiopia's initiation into the world capitalist market in early 20th century. The establishment of the Gambella trading post in 1904 was meant to be a British countermove to avert the virtual commercial hegemony in Ethiopia that the Djibouti-Addis Ababa Railway seemed to promise the French (Bahru, 2008:147). Such a possibility had been envisaged by the Dutch traveller, Juan Maria Schuver, in the early 1880s as quoted in Bahru, (2008:150).

If we compare these frontier lands [of Western Ethiopia, mainly Gambella] with the Sudan proper, I do not think it would be too much to say that there is more hope of prosperity and trade development immediately outside the Sudan than in it.

Fourth, Gambella is of a strategic significance in the Horn of Africa, where several political alliances and processes have taken and are still taking place. To begin with, the Sudanese government was backing the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) politically and militarily during emperor Haile-Selassie’s regime, which finally led to secession of Eritrea from Ethiopia (Dereje, 2011:196; Markakis, 2011:109). The ELF launched an armed
struggle in 1961 against the regime of the emperor from bases in western Eritrea and eastern Sudan after he abrogated international agreements protecting Eritrean autonomy as discussed in Chapter Four. The ELF, largely recruited from the Muslim populations of Eritrea, framed the liberation movement in religious terms and claimed Arab identity. This earned the ELF political and military support from the Arab world, particularly the Sudan. The Ethiopian government responded by befriending the Anyanya movement, which was fighting the Sudanese government. General Lemma, the imperial governor of Gambella in the 1960s, coordinated the logistic support to the Anyanya (ibid). The ELF enlisted the support of the Arab world via the Sudan, and the Ethiopian state turned to Israel for support, which it readily gave. Israel also gave support to the Anyanya through Gambella (Ethiopia) which made Gambella one of the regions where the Arab-Israeli conflict played out through proxy wars (see Dereje, 2011:196; Markakis, 2011:109). This makes Gambella unique from all other lowland peripheries in Ethiopia.

Another related factor was that of the 1980s complex pattern of alliances among the various political actors operating along the Ethiopian-Sudanese border. The Sudanese government and the Derg were at odds on the Eritrean question, the former supporting the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front (EPLF), a splinter group from the ELF. The Sudanese government also supported the Tigrean Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF), which in 1989 was transformed into the Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). The Derg retaliated by helping to organize the SPLA. Sudan responded by facilitating circumstances for the creation of the Gambella Liberation Front (GLF), which later became the nucleus for the Gambella Peoples Liberation Movement (GPLM), and continued to benefit from the Sudanese connections that increased its military power and political standing (see Dereje, 2011:199). In fact, the GPLM was part of the coalition of armed opposition forces (EPLF, EPRDF and OLF) that launched a coordinated military offensive against the Derg from their base in the Sudan in the late 1980s (ibid).
Similarly, the political alliance between the current Ethiopian government (EPRDF) and the government of the Sudan (National Islamic Front) changed when the latter tried to export political Islam into neighbouring countries, particularly Ethiopia and Eritrea through Gambella and Benishangul Gumuz. The tension reached crisis level when, in June 1995, Sudanese-based terrorists attempted to assassinate Egyptian President Husni Mubarak in Addis Ababa (Markakis, 2011:349). Following this, the EPRDF began giving large-scale support to Sudanese armed opposition groups, including the SPLA in Gambella. Ethiopia joined the anti-Sudanese alliance forged by the US, which was composed of Eritrea and Uganda. In order to contain the Islamic fundamentalism of the NIF regime of the Sudan, the US provided the 'frontline states' with twenty million dollars in military equipment (see Dereje, 2011: 209). In this pattern of regional alliance, Riek Machar was allied to the government of the Sudan, with an important political implication for the Nuer in Gambella (ibid).

Last and most important, since the Independence of South Sudan on 9 July 2011, the Nuer presidency in Gambella on 16 April 2013, and the December 2013 coup attempt in South Sudan with the resultant influx of the Nuer refugees to Gambella, the political weight of the Nuer changed posing existential threat to the Anywaa of the killil. This dynamism and across border alliance changes, which have been taking place mainly through Gambella, have made the killil stand out among all other peripheral lowlands rendering it a distinct landscape for conflict complexity in Ethiopia.

### 6.4 Summary

This chapter has demonstrated, by comparing and contrasting Gambella with other lowland peripheries, why the killil has been the centre of attraction for conflict complexity in Ethiopia so uniquely. Moreover, it delineated ethnic configuration of the killil and discussed the interaction and interdependence
of ethnic groups in different economic, administrative and other social activities.

On this basis, Chapter Seven will investigate ethnic identity related factors in conflict complexity so as to answer the *third subsidiary research question*, which focuses on what roles ethnic identity factors played in conflict complexity in Gambella as viewed by the local/indigenous peoples, as well as regional and federal governments. It will show how the present research is different from the previous studies pinpointing, three major areas: while the previous research (Dereje, 2011) served as a stepping stone for the current one, the previous research is limited by framing conflicts in Gambella as ‘ethnic conflict’ (Dereje 2011: 214 – 216), whereas the present one argues that conflict in the *killil* is complex; second, the Chapter will analyse the discourse of the federal and the regional governments on the complexity of conflict for the last over twenty years in Gambella, which are so essential but not accorded equal significance in the previous research. Finally, the Chapter will reveal how the Anywaa have been threatened from inside as well outside because of the recent political processes in Gambella and in South Sudan, the points which were not considered in the previous research. It is to these points we now turn to.
PART III

Part II consisted of three chapters, two of which critically examined political factors of conflict complexity in Ethiopia under imperial, military and ethnic political systems as the major part of literature relating to Ethiopia. While Chapter Four interrogated how the pre-1991 political system impacted on the post 1991 conflict complexity, Chapter Five investigated continuity of the old systems and the change in the new regime to explore whether the incumbent has done any better in managing complexity of conflict in Ethiopia. As a major part of the Gambella literature, Chapter Six set the scene for the case study landscape by comparing and contrasting the killil with other lowland peripheries to explain why Gambella is uniquely suited for violent conflicts.

Deriving from the theoretical framework depicted in Chapter Three, Part III builds on Part II by focusing on three structural factors whose dynamics and interaction contributed to conflict complexity in the killil: first, the role of ethnic identity factors in conflict complexity in Gambella, is dealt with in Chapter Seven. In the same Chapter, the major differences and similarities between the present work and others such as Dereje (2011) have been demonstrated, which is part of the Gambella literature with field data. Chapter Eight describes and analyses the second theme, economic factors, which is expressed in terms of the land use policies of the imperial and military regimes in violent conflicts in the country in general and in Gambella in particular. Chapters Nine and Ten continue the critical analysis and discussions of economic factors, focusing on the EPRDF’s land use policy and violent conflicts in Gambella in terms of large-scale agricultural investment and villagisation schemes respectively. Chapter Eleven is devoted to the analysis of external factors by paying closer attention to the independence of South Sudan, which created a new phenomenon affecting the conflict situation in Gambella. The Chapter argues that the independence
of South Sudan and the recent violence there have become a game-changer in the Anywaa-Nuer power-relations in Gambella. Visibility of the Nuer increased on both sides of the border; the Anywaa presidency has been replaced with a Nuer candidate for the first time under the EPRDF regime in the killil. Moreover, the influx of Nuer refugees fleeing civil war in South Sudan since 2013 has posed an existential threat to the Anywaa, making them minority in ‘their own’ land.
Chapter Seven

Ethnic Identity Factors in Conflict Complexity in Gambella

The EPRDF provided each ethnic group with autonomous rights to use their languages, develop their cultures and build their capacity with full right up to and including secession from Ethiopia. The present violent conflict is (a) the continuation of the previous injustices, and undemocratic culture prevailed in the country; and (b) the killil leader’s failure to implement the principles of ethnic federalism on the basis of revolutionary democracy. Moreover, the existence of the remnants of the past regimes in the region, distorted the peoples’ attitudes towards exercising ethnic federalism in Gambella (IDI with the former President of the killil, 3 October 2012, Gambella).

Both federal and regional parties established ethnic federalism as a political system in Gambella. The political process led to inter-ethnic tensions and opened old wounds experienced by the indigenous peoples in the previous regimes. The tension was expressed by violent conflict involving: all three major ethnic groups of Gambella; mixed communities living in Gambella; the new administration formed by the EPRDF; and the SPLA across the Sudanese border (Chair of the Elders, 6 October 2012, Gambella).

7.1 Introduction

Three points frame this Chapter. First, it discusses the major differences and similarities between the present and previous works based on Playing Different Games: The Paradox of Anywaa and Nuer Identification Strategies in the Gambella Region, Ethiopia by Dereje Feyissa (2011). Second, to extend the work and fill identified gaps in it, the Chapter presents field data from the killil on ethnic identity factors and analyses them critically focusing on: (a) violent conflicts in Gambella from 1991 – 1995 and from 1996 – 2002; (b) the 2003 massacre, and (c) narratives of the local peoples, as well as the regional and federal governments about the causes of violent
conflicts in the killil. Finally, it summarises the analyses and discussions presented in the Chapter. By so doing the Chapter contributes to answering the third sub-research questions: **What roles have ethnic identity factors played in conflict complexity in Gambella? How do local peoples, as well as regional and federal governments conceive and explain what constituted conflict complexity in Gambella?**

To begin with, the main argument of this ethnographically researched seminal work by Dereje (2011) is that Gambella is one of conflict-ridden regions of Ethiopia and Anywaa-Nuer relations is characterised by *ethnic conflict*. He further contends that resources as well as political factors can be exacerbated by ethnic identity factors. He arrived at this conclusion on the basis of two major questions. The first pertains to the definition of ethnicity, i.e. ethnic identification processes and language games Anywaa and Nuer play…; and the second concerns the causes of ethnic conflict. (Dereje, 2011: 211). The essence of the overall argument of the book is that it is *ethnic conflict* which prevails in Gambella, thus:

> The most protracted conflict in contemporary Gambella is between the Anywaa and the Nuer, who are caught in a deadly struggle to determine their political futures. Although there have been elements of reciprocity and complementary socio-economic exchanges, *the dominant pattern of inter-ethnic relations is conflict* (Dereje, 2011:xii). (Emphasis is mine).

I concur with Dereje (2011) that ethnic conflicts are related to political as well as the resource ones. However, I argue that violent conflicts in Gambella were not always between the Anywaa and Nuer ethnic groups, e.g. the 2003 massacre of Gambella was not between the two, as will be seen later in this Chapter, neither are the two ethnic groups always in conflict. Evidently, the 2004 Enquiry Commission of the Ethiopian Parliament on the 2003 Gambella massacre reports that:

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27 I should acknowledge that this material is one of the key references for my study.
Dereje tends to frame all conflicts in Gambella as ‘ethnic conflict’ and labels Anywaa and Nuer perceptions of each other as static and permanently antagonistic:

...being an Anywaa or a Nuer implies being a particular kind of person in the eyes of the other. Thus the Nuer are principally defined as born aggressors’ by the Anywaa, while the Anywaa have become ‘murderous people’ to the Nuer (Dereje 2011:111). (My emphasis).

This position is inaccurate and the assumption is comparable to that taken by the Ethiopian opposition forces such as Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)²⁸ as well as Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) when it was in opposition or a liberation movement and its affiliates which later formed the EPRDF²⁹. Their prevalent view was that all conflicts in Ethiopia were and still are ‘ethnic conflicts’ and the ethnic identity has always been the medium of actualizing group goals in the country. To this end, as discussed in Chapter Five, these opposition groups construed Ethiopia as a colonial power and from this standpoint all ethnic groups should be liberated from Ethiopia (see Leenco 1999: 156; Asafa, 2005: 72) cited in Markakis (2011: 98). When the EPRDF together with OLF in 1991 took control of the country, they entrenched ethnic politics as a panacea to resolve all conflicts in the country. On the contrary, instead of being the panacea, as a vast number of studies show, ethnic-identity related conflicts in Ethiopia have proliferated and been widespread since 1991, as stated in Chapter One.

What is more, the tendency to attribute all internal conflicts in Gambella or in Ethiopia to ethnicity, calls for a critical reappraisal. Methodological issues i.e.

²⁸ It is at present labelled by the incumbent as a terrorist group.
²⁹ The Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) is the government in power at present in Ethiopia.
the actual nature of ethnicity and ethnic conflicts in terms of whether identities are ‘constructed/acquired’ in the case of Nuer (op. cit., 59), and ‘natural/born’ in the case of Anywa (op. cit., 35), ignores the structural nature of conflict causes. Conflicts in Gambella that are termed ‘ethnic’ are often masks for underlying historical injustices, political marginalisation, economic and external factors. Such interpretations of conflicts in ethnic terms, characterize the approach to apprehending the Hutu/Tutsi crisis in Rwanda (see Mordi, 2015:77). In terms of reconciliation, conflict transformation and peace-building, labelling communal conflict in Gambella as primordial and antagonistic is counterproductive. In Ethiopian socio-cultural context and in the interest of building a democratic developmental state, it is misleading to interpret or seek solutions to the problem of nation building in ethnic terms, as it has gradually been recognised by the EPRDF leadership after 24 years in its 10th Congress in Mekele, Tegray, as reported in Ethiopian Reporter, 5 September 2015.

The 10th congress of the EPRDF … agreed that though there is a focus on tackling religious extremism in the country, ethnic radicalism … is manifested in narrow-mindedness and chauvinism attitudes … (emphasis mine).

Dereje (2011:20) did go beyond monocausality to see the importance of ‘explaining the conflict between the Anywa and the Nuer with reference to three interacting variables: identity, resources and power’. He also considered the roles played by the Ethiopian state (op. cit., 167, 190) and civil wars in Sudan (op. cit., 193) in the formation and exacerbation of ethnic conflict in the killil. However, he did not consider the narratives of the Ethiopian state at different levele as well as the role of civil war in South Sudan after its independence as major explaining variables in Anywa-Nuer ethnic conflict.

I want to extend Dereje’s work by adding three more factors and framing the conflict in Gambella as complex, not simply an ‘ethnic conflict’, but it is the interaction and dynamism of different factors including ethnic identity factors, which constitute violent conflicts there. The most dynamic factor that my study adds to this interesting work is the role of civil war in South Sudan after its independence as external factors, which is, as significant as the three variables listed in Dereje (2011:20).

Other most essential gaps in his work, which my research fills, are: the regional and the federal governments’ narratives on conflict complexity in Gambella. These are essential factors since the role of mengist or ‘state’ is sine qua non, be it at kebele, woreda, killil or federal levels, in the Ethiopian socio-political and cultural context, for it can form as well as transform conflicts (see Chapter Six for how mengist is regarded as by the peoples of Gambella, central or highland Ethiopians as opposed to the clan based Somali society).

Finally, Dereje (2011:148) argues that Anywaa political dominance found expression in their hold on the office of the presidency and their presence in upper echelons of power in the regional council. He maintains that the Anywaa have interpreted the seizure of power by the GPLM and the placement of one of their own in the office of the president as a symbolic confirmation of their ownership rights over Gambella and thus a validation of their claim to indigenous status. In his views, ‘the Nuer were excluded from the regional power structures because, unlike the Anywaa, they did not participate in the armed struggle’ against the Derg31 (op. cit., 148 – 149). The

31A GPLM veteran stated that Gambella was recognized as a regional state because of their contribution to the armed struggle that toppled the Derg. As a result, (1) the GPLM was the representative party of the Gambella peoples during the transitional period; (2) the movement’s chairman became the first regional president of Gambella. This was the same in other regions in which previous ethnic-based liberation movements were leaders of their respective ethnic groups or regions. Hence, the contemporary Gambella regional state is an outcome of the struggle and ultimate sacrifices paid by the indigenous communities of the Gambella region (see Ojot, 2013:124).
resulting pattern of power distribution has remained unchanged; so he states: ‘an Anywaa president, a Nuer vice-president and a Majangir\textsuperscript{32} secretary’. Reserving the upper echelons of power for the Anywaa further dramatized the subordinate political status of the Nuer in regional politics.

One of the most significant contributions my study makes is correcting the factual errors in Dereje’s work regarding the political power pattern in Gambella today. As the Anywaa contributed to the fight against the Derg for which they were awarded regional presidency, so did the Nuer in their turn fight bravely in Ethiopia – Eritrea war of 1998 – 2000:

One of the heroes of Ethiopian-Eritrean [of 1998 – 2000] war was Bil Puk … a Nuer from Jikaw district. Bil was credited with killing many Eritrean soldiers in one of the critical military engagements in the first phase of the war and subsequently decorated for his contribution to the victory… The Nuer were hailed for their heroic performance in the ‘restoration’ of sovereignty… (Dereje, 2011:185).

Following the customary practice of the EPRDF in political power sharing, since 16 April 2013, the pattern in Gambella has shifted to: a Nuer president, an Anywaa vice-president, and a Majang secretary, with far-reaching implications for conflict complexity in the region. Hence, the Anywaa are no more a political majority; they have become the minority in terms of political power as well as demography as discussed in Chapters Five and Six. The Nuer are no more the subordinate; to the contrary, they are the dominant and visible figures in both South Sudan and Gambella at present. It is these glaring gaps my research is seeking to fill on the basis of empirical data collected from Gambella, which are analysed and discussed below.

Before delving into the analysis it is worthwhile to highlight the processes of analysis, identification of the context and the techniques I have employed. The analysis demonstrates the dynamism and interaction of major internal conflict elements that constitute conflict complexity in the case study area.

\textsuperscript{32}Majangir is a derogatory term as my field data (April, 2013 Gambella) shows. The preferred term, now accepted nationwide is Majang.
Needless to say, the process of qualitative data analysis does not follow a linear sequence as they are recursive and spiral in their very nature (see Chapter Two for research methodology adopted in this study).

Accordingly, I have quoted most representative and salient texts from the field data transcribed for the analysis by providing the context: (a) whether it was in Addis Ababa or Gambella that I collected the data from; (b) what specific technique I employed to elicit the data, i.e. whether it was focus group discussions (FGD) or in-depth interviews (IDI) or document; (c) the time i.e. the date/month/year of data collection; and (d) who uttered the text I quoted, in the case of FGD, mostly one or two persons spoke and the remaining participants nodded their agreements; occasionally, some members voiced their disagreements, in which case they presented their version of the story. I reflected these differences in my analysis.

In the case of the IDI, I focused on one individual informant at a time that was selected on the basis of the depth of their knowledge of the killil, which entails how long they have lived there and recognition for their knowledge and wisdom by the community, as it was indicated in Chapter Two. Similarly, five to seven informants took part in the FGD at a given time (see Appendix B). I did not mix different ethnic groups (e.g. Anywaa with Nuer, or Highlanders with Anywaa, or Anywaa with Majang, etc.) during the FGD as the key informants cum contact persons who were from Gambella cautioned me during preliminary studies in Addis Ababa, July 2012. These context identifications and quotations from the transcripts were followed by my comments and references to the previous literature if there was any.

In the following section I will analyse ethnic identity-based conflicts on the basis of the data collected in three rounds from Gambella killil and Addis Ababa (July 2012 to April 2013) using documents, in-depth interviews (IDI),

33 I later learned that not mixing different ethnic groups helped me to avoid any inconvenience to the participants.
and focus group discussions (FGD). They have been divided into: violent conflicts which occurred during transitional period, i.e. from 1991 to 1995, 1996 to 2002, and the December 2003 massacre.

7.2 Ethnic-Identity Conflicts during the Transitional Period

In the analysis, I have presented the government’s narratives first on what led to violent conflict in the killil from 1991 – 1995. To this end, I have used the official Policy Handbook for federal government’s view, whereas I made use of IDI for the regional government’s narratives. I have then presented the local peoples’ narratives which were collected by means of IDI and FGD. The narratives of both governments and the local peoples were substantiated with relevant previous works.

The Ethiopian government at federal and local levels link violent conflicts in Gambella from 1991 – 1995 to two major elements. First, both federal and regional states underline that failure to implement the EPRDF ideology cum policy of ethnic federalism, known also as, ‘revolutionary democracy’\(^\text{34}\), was the fundamental factor to explain the violence. They emphasised that a lack of understanding of revolutionary democracy by the regional leaders resulted in the lack of development and good governance which in turn led to violence in Gambella. Second, the government’s position at the federal level was that there were sympathisers with the defunct Derg regime who opposed ethnic politics for ideological reasons. The FDRE official Policy Handbook describes how the past regime was a genesis of violence in the country (2005:122):

> Under Mengistu’s [the leader of the Derg government of Ethiopia, 1974 – 1991] regime the Ethiopian army and air force killed thousands of civilians. The

\(^{34}\) Since 2010, it has been rebranded as ‘developmental state’, ‘developmental political economy’ or, ‘developmental democracy’ and used interchangeably by the Ethiopian officials and in the public media.
notorious urban “Red Terror” of 1977 where thousands died was matched by indiscriminate violence against the rural population. War crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity and torture were rampant all over the country (underlining is mine).

The residuals of these forces, according to the narratives of the official line, had been the key stumbling blocks that prevented the full realisation of ethnic politics, and therefore to peace and development in Gambella. Similarly, the regional state’s story was that these conflicts were instigated by the propaganda of the former Derg officials’ who still live in Gambella. As the former regional president underlined, ‘it was a conflict between the fading old and the emerging new visions in the killil’ that led to violent conflict from 1991 to 1995 in Gambella (IDI, H.E. Ato Omod Obang35, 3 October 2012, Gambella).

The official line further argues that ethnic politics is a new departure from the old thinking of the supporters of the military government and imperial regime. To this end, the regional government, Parliament Select Committee and Federal Affairs Ministry made this point in the public media in 2002 and the subsequent years (IDI with the regional president of Gambella killil, 3 October 2012). These narratives were further reinforced in the in-depth interviews with the administrator36 of Itang Special Woreda (IDI, Ato Akane, 5 October 2012, Gambella/Itang); he pinpointed specific steps taken by the current government to entrench ethnic political system in the killil.

In response to the violent conflicts, the EPRDF made the Gambella regional government form a political party on the basis of ethnic federalism from 1991 to 1995 and then from 1996 to 2002. Hence, the Gambella Peoples’ Democratic Movement (GPDM) was formed from the three ethnic political parties to rule the region. Accordingly, the Anywaa ethnic representative became president, the

35 H.E. Ato Omod Obang, was the President at the time of this interview and by his kind permission I have made mention of his name in the participants’ list in appendix B

36 Ato Akane was the woreda administrator at the time; by his kind permission I have included his name in the list in appendix B.
To discover the locals’ narratives of the violent conflicts in Gambella, I held semi-structured, in-depth face to face interviews (see Appendix A for the guiding questions) with the Chair of the Elders in the Regional Council. I have translated and paraphrased his testimonies. The Chair articulated his views as follows:

After fierce fighting against the Derg and SPLA, which was based in Gambella, the EPRDF and Gambella Peoples’ Liberation Movement (GPLM) had occupied Gambella town by the end of May 1991. Both federal and regional parties established ethnic federalism as a new political system in Ethiopia which remained a fundamental principle of political organisation in the ensuing years. This political process led to inter-ethnic tensions and opened old wounds experienced by the indigenous peoples in the previous regimes. The tension was expressed by violent conflict involving: all three major ethnic groups of Gambella; mixed communities living in Gambella; the new administration formed by the EPRDF; and the SPLA across the Sudanese border (Chair of the Elders, 6 October 2012, Gambella).

In FGD with the Anywaa participants in Gambella in October 2012 and April 2013, it was revealed that the political change which occurred in the killil was a violent one. Both EPRDF and GPLM were not liked or respected as political leaders by many ordinary peoples of Gambella as one of the participants in the FGD described and others nodded their agreement:

When the TPLF led EPRDF and GPLM victors walked into Gambella, civil servants, urban dwellers and other ordinary citizens, did not show sign of respect to the GPLM forces (Okath, FGD, 6 October, 2012).

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37 This trend of Anywaa-Nuer-Majang political arrangement in the killil was to be reversed in April 2013 after the introduction of ‘developmental political economy’.

38 Ato Omod Ugera, Chair, the Regional Council of Elders; his main duty is to advise the regional leaders, particularly the President and the Vice President on the regional issues. The Council serves as an alternative mechanism of dispute resolution by implementing customary practices based on indigenous knowledge/wisdom.

39 This story was alluded to by Dereje (2006) and Mecklburg (2008) without going into the details.
According to the participants’ stories in the FGD, this situation created tension between the ‘new’ political thinking and the ‘old’ ideology. There was resentment amongst the newcomers who were imbued with the principle of ‘winner takes all’. Hence, the GPLM took charge of the region in 1991, with the blessing of the EPRDF, albeit with resistance, and installed an all-Anywaa administration headed by H.E. Ato Agwua Alemu. One of the Anywaa members in the FGD related the story about the president:

Agwua Alemu was educated in Cuba under the Derg regime. He served as administrator of Jikaw Woreda on his return until he was arrested and tortured in May 1987. Upon his release, he crossed the border and joined GPLM. He was killed in his office by the GPLM fighters in Gambella town, for reasons which were not made public to this day (Deng, FGD, April, 2013).^40

All four participants agreed that the story was widespread in Gambella. This was confirmed by other studies (see Regassa, 2010:56). In addition, focus group discussions suggested that one of transition period violent conflicts was an Anywaa attack on highlander settlers in July 1991 as was related by one of the Anywaa participants in the same group and approved by the remaining participants:

There was violent conflict in the village of Ukuna with the mixed population of some 3,500 settlers and 800 Anywaa. It was triggered by the killing of an Anywaa peasant kebele Chair by the Nuer Derg soldiers. In retaliation, the Anywaa villagers attacked the settlers, burning houses and killing the inhabitants. As many as 100 Highlanders lost their lives, and the rest sought refuge in Gambella town where the EPRDF and GPLM forces had assumed control (Oman, Gambella, 3 April 2013).

The data collected from the participants (Dor, Kwolwo, Ogalle K., Ogalle, O. and Opio in FGD, 1 April 2013, Gambella), may be summarised as that after

^40 As was mentioned in Chapter Six, this story was cited by previous authors (see Kurimoto, 2002). Most participants knew it by heart with some details.
the fall of the *Derg*, the Nuer *Derg* officials and militiamen fled Gambella town, followed by the entire refugee community from the camp in Itang and Pingyudo. According to the rest of the FGD members, who agreed that in the ensuing few years, the Anywaa held a monopoly of power in Gambella, and used it to reverse Nuer advances into their territories. The members reiterated that in May 1991 the GPLM forces attacked the Nuer civilians in Gambella town and Itang woreda, with the loss of officially unspecified number of Nuer lives and burning of their villages. According to the story, sustained fighting took place in Itang in June 1991, putting the Anywaa and GPLM on one side and the Nuer and SPLA on the other destroying Itang and Jor districts in the fighting. This particular story was repeated by the Itang woreda administrator which he knew by heart (5 October 2012, Itang, Gambella) regarding the process of violent conflict from 1991 to 1995. It was also mentioned in Tewodrs (2007:50) and made reference to in Markakis (2011:75).

According to the FGD with Nuer participants (Biel, Buel, Rotch, Thankiy, and Yang in-service teacher trainees in different colleges in Addis Ababa, 15 July 2012) in July 1991 fresh fighting started in Itang sparked by the activities of a Nuer prophet called Wutnyang Gatkek\(^{41}\). In the words of Biel, (FGD, 15 July 2012, Addis Ababa):

> The prophet’s vision was to forge unity among the ‘blacks’ on both sides of the border against the Arabs and the ‘reds’\(^{42}\). When a Nuer-Anywaa reconciliation process failed, Wutnyang’s followers attacked highlander traders in Itang, looted their shops and killed about 100 of them. The prophet’s forces also killed about 60 EPRDF military forces stationed in Itang. The next day, Wutnyang led his forces

\(^{41}\) Prophet in the local sense refers to a kind of spiritual leader who has more social authority than power (political or military). He is revered for his influence in the society and as an elder and can command more respect than others.

\(^{42}\) The word ‘reds’ refers to Ethiopians/highlanders or non-indigenes.
towards the Gambella town, but they were intercepted by the EPRDF army and were destroyed; however, the prophet himself escaped to Sudan.

This was corroborated in other empirical studies (see Dereje, 2011: 206; Hoth, 2013: 25; Regassa, 2010:90). And all participants from the Nuer ethnic group appeared to have learnt the story off by heart. Except on the number of casualties, where two participants said that the number of death toll of highlanders and the EPRDF army was underestimated, all of them agreed that the story was right. Further, as it surfaced in the discussion, the Nuer rebels regrouped themselves across the Ethiopia-Sudan border under the leadership of the former *Derg* officials and the Nuer-based splinter group from the SPLA.

According to a Nuer participant (FGD, 4 April 2013, Gambella), in January 1992, a two-pronged invasion by large and well-armed Nuer rebels crossed the border from Sudan. As he said, they burned 19 Anywaa villages in Itang district, 9 villages in Jor, and looted foodstuffs and crops from the fields. However, he added that the Anywaa fought back and finally repulsed the Nuer insurgents from the Anywaa villagers. As the FGD members stated, the violence demolished the rural economy, brought farming, trade and civil services to a standstill.

In the same vein, on 15 July 2012, I held FGD with some Nuer participants who were in-service teacher training programme in Addis Ababa as stated above. From the FGD it became clear that, the Nuer students in Addis Ababa formed a political organization known as the Gambella Peoples’ Democratic Unity Party (GPDUP) in March 1992. Buel, one of the FGD participants said the following about the new Nuer political party:
The party was recognized by the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) in 1992 as a legal political party which genuinely represents the Nuer. The Party had to organize and assert itself against the Anywaa GPLM opposition. But under the auspices of the EPRDF, the GPLM controlled the regional administration and used its power to obstruct its rival which it accused of representing the Nuer who were allegedly Sudanese and had no legitimacy to represent Ethiopia and Ethiopians. After a series of violent confrontations between the two ethnic groups, the GPDUP and the GPLM finally agreed to a peaceful settlement of the conflict. A peace ceremony was held and customary rituals of conflict resolution were observed only to be ruined by yet another violent conflict.

It was further revealed in the IDI with the Chair of the Elders that amidst this political drama, the EPRDF attempted to give the political process a democratic facade in Gambella. So, it held the first election in May 1992, in which three representatives were chosen from each of four Anywaa woredas. However, elections were not held in the three Nuer woredas: Itang, Jikaw, and Akobo for security reasons. As he pointed out, the twelve members who formed the regional council comprised 7 Anywaa, 3 Majang, 1 Komo and 1 Amhara. He witnessed that a 19 member cabinet with only one Nuer in it was elected for the Regional Council. ‘Okello Oman, former prisoner of the Derg regime, became president with another Anywaa as vice-president, and a highlander, secretary’ (IDI with the Chair of the Elders, Gambella, 6 October 2012).

What became clear from the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions is that, while the GPLM and EPRDF claimed joint control of Gambella, a rivalry developed between them and their relationship deteriorated to an unprecedented level. Consequently, the EPRDF forced the GPLM to base its armed forces outside Gambella town and demanded its demobilization. As it transpired in the IDI with the Chair of the Elders, in August 1992 the two ‘friends’ fought an intense battle inside Gambella town, which left several government soldiers and many more civilians dead.
triggered by the outcome of the 1992 election. The GPLM then crossed the border to Pochalla, Sudan (now South Sudan), and was persuaded to come back by elders\textsuperscript{43} of the region after some months, only to find that its fighters were integrated into the national army and sent to other regions of Ethiopia by the EPRDF. The organization changed its name to the Gambella Peoples Liberation Party (GPLP) in 1995. This was the beginning of the end of the Anywaa political party and the EPRDF ‘honeymoon’, which opened space for the Nuer to make a successful comeback to make a high political visibility in Gambella (IDI and FGD in October 2012).

In the FGD with the Anywaa participants (Ojiok, Ojulu, Okath, Ulok, Urag) following the violence of 1995, the administrative structure of the region was redrawn and divided into two zones:

Zone 1 consisted of four woredas along the Openo and the Akobo rivers – Gambella\textsuperscript{44}, Itang, Jikaw, and Akobo- with Itang town as its centre. Zone 2 consisted of the remaining woreda Abobo, Gog, Jor- with its administrative centre at Pignyudo. This arrangement made the Anywaa a political majority\textsuperscript{45} in the region, because they claimed four of the seven woredas. After the restructuring of the region, the Anywaa managed to annex the district of Dimma from the neighbouring SNNPRS, thus making the number of woredas claimed by the Anywaa five out of eight. Demands by the Nuer to create new woredas in their zone were frustrated by the Anywaa controlled administration (Urag, FGD, 6 October, 2012, Gambella).

\textsuperscript{43} The Chair was the leader of the delegation of the elders who mediated the EPRDF and the GPLM in 1992 by going to Pochala and persuading the GPLM members in Sudan (current South Sudan), even though his efforts did not bear fruit.

\textsuperscript{44} The term ‘Gambella’ is used here to mean the woreda that is close to the regional capital.

\textsuperscript{45} The Anywaa became political minority after the April 2013 regional presidency handover to the Nuer.
What happened in reaction to the restructuring of the region was stated by in-service teachers (Ujune – a female participant, FGD, Addis Ababa, 12 August, 2012):

In 1992 there were five ethnic groups in this region which were not in terms with each other; each established its own political party inspired by the TPLF/EPRDF ethnic politics with view to self-administering including secession from the rest of Gambella or Ethiopia.

It follows from the responses elicited that the restructuring of the region ethnicized politics and politicised ethnicity as discussed in Chapter Five, widening the gap between the ethnic groups. Each ethnic group was competing for political power in Gambella. Each ethnic group claimed to represent the peoples of their own constituency; each demanded resources; each was affiliated with their next to kin outside Ethiopia, particularly in South Sudan. What happened during transition period (1991 – 1995) was that the idea of ethnic federalism fuelled the conflict in Gambella reducing all social relations to ethnic mentality.


Five prominent and deadly conflicts occurred in Gambella between 1996 and 2002 following the transitional period: violent conflicts within the Anywaa ethnic group; between the Anywaa and the Nuer; within the Nuer; between the Anywaa and the Majang; and, between the indigenes and the ‘outsiders’ (see Kurimoto, 2002:20; Dereje, 2006:51; Regassa, 2010:58). Regarding underlying factors that constituted these conflicts, the narratives of the Ethiopian government represented at different levels were that it was mistakes made in the previous imperial and Derg regimes; it was these mistakes which were ‘the sources of conflict and disintegration’. The federal
government’s discourse may be gleaned from an official Policy Handbook of FDRE concerning ‘basic policies and strategies for building a democratic system in Ethiopia’ (2005:51 – 52):

The prevalence of democracy and good governance creates a suitable environment for peace by eliminating potential sources of conflict and disintegration… The FDRE Constitution provides that democracy should ensure direct public participation and enshrine the sovereignty of the peoples… Although Ethiopia is a country of numerous nations and nationalities, in the past relations between the various nations and nationalities, and among peoples were undemocratic. Today only democracy that is based on the principle of self-determination guaranteeing members of the various nations, nationalities and religions in Ethiopia to live in an atmosphere of tolerance can raise the relations among them to a higher level. As there is no alternative to ensuring the realisation of democratisation, the peoples of the country should be guaranteed their rights to use and develop their own languages and cultures.

In in-depth interviews with different officials at regional and woreda as well as kebele levels (Ato Okello O. of the Abobo, Ato Ogudu U., of Pugndo, and Ato Opio B. of Tegni kebele, Gambella, 2 April 2013) reflects what the federal government narratives maintain in the above quote. The major points of their narratives are summarised as follows: the previous governments denied the indigenous peoples the right to use their own languages in education, arts, cultures, courts and in other public services. These regimes oppressed particularly the peripheral peoples. Consequently, the indigenous peoples lived in constant fear of the regime’s brutal suppression, killings and human rights atrocities. This situation led some of the peripheral community members to armed struggle against the imperial and that of the Derg regimes. Moreover, lack of accommodative, accountable, and participatory leadership induced violent conflict among ethnic groups of the killil. Hence, it is only the EPRDF government that provided the constitutional rights guaranteeing group and individual rights to these peoples in order to resolve age-old problems of ethno-linguistic and
political tensions between ethnic groups. Furthermore, the former president of the killil in the in-depth interview stated the following in response to the question what constituted violent conflicts in Gambella between 1996 and 2002:

The EPRDF government provided each ethnic group with autonomous rights to use their languages, develop their cultures and build their capacity with full right up to and including secession peacefully from Ethiopia as and when needed. The present violent conflict is simply (a) the continuation of the previous injustices, and undemocratic culture prevailed in the country; and (b) the killil leader’s failure to implement the principles of ethnic federalism on the basis of revolutionary democracy at present. Added to this is the existence of the remnants of the past regimes in the region, along with their defunct ideology, which sows the seed of violence in our killil and distorting the peoples’ attitudes towards exercising ethnic federalism in Gambella (IDI with the former President of the killil, 3 October 2012, Gambella).

The narratives of the locals on violent conflicts in the killil from 1996 to 2002 have been organised thematically and presented in the following format. First, brief background information about each ethnic group is provided on the basis of the previous works. Second, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, which elicited various responses from the local peoples regarding what constituted the violent conflicts during the time period mentioned. The field data representing the locals’ views, accompanied by evidence from relevant previous studies in the region are in order.

7.3.1 Violent Conflict within the Anywaa

It surfaced from the FGD with the Anywaa participants that the struggle for political power within the Anywaa had often been framed in the discourse of its two competing clans: Lul against Openo. According to Utow (FGD, 3
April 2013, Gambella) one of the Anywaa participants (Luke, Mark, Ojaga, Oman, Ugula, Umed and Utow) described the two clans:

The Openo tribe live partly in Gambella and partly along the Sobat River in Southern Sudan and its tributary, taking its name from the Openo River. The Lul are inhabitants of the forest region within the Anywaa land which lies between the Openo and the Gilo Rivers. The two represented the contrast between customary political structures of the Anywaa: the kwaari (headman, relatively lower rank) and nyieya (noble or king, higher rank) respectively. Lul was the region of the nyieya while Openo had many villages headed by the kwaari. In short, it was the type of leadership, i.e. whether an Anywaa tribe was led by the kwaari or nyeya which constituted the root of conflicts among the Anywaa ethnic group in the past.

It may be inferred that it was power-struggle, i.e. who should rule all the Anywaa ethnic group in and outside Gambella, which used to lead to violence among the Anywaa in the past. These descriptions are similar to the ones authored by Tewodros (2007:80) and Dereje (2011:40). As it was further revealed in the FGD with the above group, a rivalry between the two Anywaa clans developed early in the twentieth century when the Lul allegedly cooperated with the intruding highlanders while the Openo forged alliances with the Nuer. In the interview and FGD, however, it was further revealed that such conflicts were extant at the early 20th century during which time the Anywaa ethnic group had been made to be a party to the Ethiopian polity. Since then, the conflict within Anywaa has not been as significant and acute as between the Anywaa and the Nuer or conflict within the Nuer (FGD, September, 2012).

However the focus group discussion with in-service teachers at Addis Ababa with the Anywaa participants brought out more details about the two Anywaa clans. The participants maintained that in the 1970s and 1980s, a
different dimension occurred when the Lul emerged dominant within the first generation of educated Anywaa elites in the administration of Gambella.

The bulk of GPLM soldiers and leadership were composed of Openo Anywaa to fight the Derg; subsequently, they remained influential in the new EPRDF regime when the Derg fell. Hence, a renewed tension emerged among the Anywaa power elites in the regional administration and within the newly constituted Anywaa party. Briefly it was dominated by the Lul, and then replaced with the Openo upon the defection of the regional president (who was Lul) after 13 December 2003 violent conflict among the Anywaa and the highlanders or ‘outsiders’ or ‘mette’ (Omot, FGD, 12 August 2012).

This claim was corroborated by empirical literature (see Regassa, 2010:43) on intra-Anywaa conflict. The most serious and fatal one, however, is the Anywaa-Nuer conflict, which is discussed below.

### 7.3.2 Violent Conflict between the Anywaa and the Nuer

The previous literature and various discussions with FGD members brought to light that the Anywaa-Nuer conflict has been the most prominent one in the killil, but it is not the only one. Its genesis dates back to the second half of the 19th century when a section of the Nuer (Jikany) migrated from South Sudan to Gambella (see Chapter Six for the background story). Their motive was territorial expansion, access to land and control over natural resources, e.g. water points, forest areas and land rich with gold and other minerals. The Nuer’s livelihood has depended on livestock production with an increasing trend towards becoming settled pastoralists (Dereje, 2011: 58 – 60; Hoth 2013: 78 - 80).
By contrast, lower in population densities and predominantly cultivators, the Anywaa were settled along the banks of the rivers on lands endowed with rich natural resources (Bayleyegn, 2000:120; Dereje, 2011:80 – 84; Kurimoto, 2002:16). This settled livelihood of the Anywaa ethnic group led some authors to label the Anywaa ethnic identity as primordial (see Dereje, 2011:15). In his views, the Anywaa are based on territoriality and purity of blood, whereas the Nuer ethnic identity as constructionist for the fact that they are transhumant, they intermarry and assimilate with other ethnic groups Dereje (2011:15) states thus:

Being Anywaa is defined with reference to exclusive criteria: descent from an apical ancestor, having Anywaa parents, belonging to a specific territory, sharing a particularistic reproductive regime (regulated by scarce bridewealth beads) and valorizing social order, especially in the form of territorialized ethnicity. Anywaaness is something which one is born into. The same is not true for the Nuer: Nuer identity can be acquired, even if one comes from a different ethnic background.

The field data from Gambella showed a slight difference from the above one; it was emphasised that the Anywaa community has changed over time, they are no more static, through social interaction with other ethnic groups in the region and outside Gambella (FGD, 6 October 2012):

In the past, the Anywaa were more conservative, capitalising on maintaining the purity of blood; but since the fall of the Derg regime, this has changed. The change was due mainly to economic relations, political activities, migration, and social interaction at local and global levels. Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, Presbyterian Church, and to some extent the Catholic Church before and since the fall of the Derg have all encouraged such intermixing with different ethnic groups (Ojiok, K., FGD, 6 October 2012, Gambella).

The justifications given by the FGD members were supported by ECSA, (2007:19), that more than 70 % of the Anywaa population practise
Protestant Christianity. This has contributed to their being intermarried and socially interactive with other community members. Some of my informants mentioned Anywaa men who even married European women. They insisted that categorising Anywaa as primordial and change-resistant is unacceptable. The young Anywaa teachers, students and civil servants who were involved in this project are comfortable with cross-ethnic marriage\textsuperscript{46}.

There are still some older peoples, who look down on the off-springs of a mixed marriage; on balance, the Anywaa society is changing. Online radio stations, booming diaspora support and a relentless struggle for indigenous and minority rights contribute to this dynamism (Ujune, FGD, 12 August 2012 Addis Ababa).

In the final analysis, conflict between the Anywaa and the Nuer goes well beyond one being \textit{primordial} and the other \textit{constructivist}. The key point revolves around post-cold war Ethiopia’s political system that may explain the complexity of conflict between the two ethnic groups. Hence, three major Anywaa-Nuer ethnic-based conflicts were identified on the basis of the FGD, IDI and the previous studies. The first one is the 1991 violence when the militant section of the Anywaa committed an atrocity against civilian Nuer as already mentioned in the preceding section. In retaliation, armed Nuer from Sudan mounted a counter offensive which resulted in the destruction of many Anywaa villages along the Openo River (Tewdors, 2007:15). The second one occurred in 1998 when the Nuer contested the political dominance of Anywaa in \textit{Itang special woreda} (Markakis, 2011:343). The third and a more deadly conflict occurred in 2002 on the issues related to succession to the office of the regional vice president (Regassa, 2010:150). In these conflicts many lives were lost, villages were razed, and thousands of peoples were displaced.

\textsuperscript{46} This finding is original contribution of the present project; most, if not all, previous works label the Anywaa as ‘\textit{primordial}’.
It transpired in the FGD that the EPRDF intervened to impose a solution with which it had already experimented in other regions such as Afar, Somali, Benishangul, and in some parts of Oromiya, which was to force the competing political factions into a merger without dissolving them (see Markakis, 2011:344). Accordingly, the GPLP and the GPDUP were merged into one party; hence, the Gambella Peoples’ Democratic Front (GPDF) was created.

In a similar vein, in the focus group discussion with Anywaa participants (Ogud, 5 October, 2012 Gambella) it was revealed that largely Anywaa-based political party was formed in 1998, known as the Gambella Peoples’ Democratic Congress (GPDC), representing a more radical version of the Anywaa ethnic groups to rival the GPLP. It campaigned for regional autonomy and proper budget utilization and gained considerable popularity in Anywaa areas. It won only 13 seats in the elections of 2000; its supporters claimed fraud and intimidation. Afterwards many of its members joined the GPLM, and one of its leaders, Okello Akway Ochalla, became president of the region in 2002 (ibid). It further surfaced in the FGD that another round of election was held in 2000 and the GPDF won the elections easily. The Nuer increased their representation in the regional council to 19 as compared to 1995. Nevertheless they got only 29 seats for the Anywaa-Nuer merger which angered them and ultimately led to the dissolution of the GPDF in June 2002. As one of the Anywaa participants (Ulok, FGD, 6 October, 2012, Gambella) pointed out:

Yet another political rearrangement took place in the wake of the violence. The GPDF was dissolved by the EPRDF and replaced with a new coalition, the Gambella Peoples Unity Democratic Movement (GPUDM) comprising three ethnic based parties: the Anywaa Democratic Party (ADP), the Nuer Union Democratic Party (NUDP) and the Majang Peoples’ Democratic Party (MPDP).
As may be deduced from the above analysis, the political engineering of the EPRDF might help to defuse Anywaa-Nuer violent conflict only temporarily, but intra-Nuer conflict remains tense as has been discussed in the following section.

### 7.3.3 Violent Conflict within the Nuer

Unlike within the Anywaa, conflict within the Nuer was fierce and an existential threat during the same period (1996 – 2002). As discussed in Chapter Six, the Nuer are Nilotic peoples who live in the Sobat River Basin, form the second largest group in neighbouring South Sudan, after Dinka ethnic group (Regassa, 2010:39). They are of mobile modes of livelihood and have followed the Anywaa into the well watered and green pastures of Gambella. As it transpired in in-depth interviews, conflict among the Nuer was chronic with a debilitating impact on their society. One of the main causal factors had been the long civil war in southern Sudan from where factional strife and violence regularly spills over to the border into Ethiopia.

The Sudanese civil war pushed successive waves of Nuer pastoralists across the border into Gambella, putting increasing pressure on local resources, and generating violent conflicts irrespective of customary conflict resolution mechanisms which are mainly based on compensation. Conflict parties in the intra-Nuer conflict were (1) the Nuer who recently arrived and (2) the Nuer who had settled earlier in the riverine in the main (Ato Thomas47, 3 April, 2013, Gambella).

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47 Ato Thomas represents the Nuer constituency in the Regional Council of Gambella. He is Chief of the President’s Office and Aide to the President of the killil. By his kind permission I cited his name.
It is further inferred from the literature and the in-depth interviews that the process of violent conflict among the Nuer transcends the Ethiopia-Sudan border involving the Lou and Jikany sections. These two have been fighting as the Lou migrated from Sudan into land settled earlier by the Jikany in Gambella. According to the literature (Regassa, 2010:41), war between them broke out in 1992 and lasted until 1994, when both groups sought the support of governments in Sudan and Ethiopia and various rebel groups in Southern Sudan. Numerically larger and militarily superior, the Lou Nuer defeated the Jikany Nuer, who survived with support from other Jikany sections in Sudan and the timely intervention of the Ethiopian army. In 2001 the hostilities broke out again, and this time the Jikany appealed to the federal government directly and the government intervened (see Regassa, 2010:42 – 43).

The above sources further disclosed that frequent conflict continued among sub-ethnic groups of Nuer: the Jikany and Gaajak group; between the Thiang and the other four sections-Reng, Waw, Nyejani, and Cany. The Thiang occupy the best part of the rangeland between Itang and Jikaw districts, and are more sedentary than the other Gaajak sections (Ato Thomas, IDI, 3 April, Gambella). In the past, the mobile Thiang tended to lead and others followed in its mobility from one place to another in search of better land and grazing space. This strategy was pursued as long as the Nuer were not in competition among themselves over natural resources (ibid). Furthermore, as pastoral population pressure on the land increased, more and more Nuer groups have shifted to agro-pastoralism. Unlike the Anywaa ethnic group, the Nuer have limited grazing and farmland. In the IDI it was further revealed that the Nuer have now entered into competition for the same ecological niches as their farming neighbours of Anywaa, Opo and possibly with the Majang which have constantly been in violent conflict for the last several years with Anywaa as has been discussed below (see for further discussions Dereje, 2011:54 – 57; Hoth, 2013: 78 – 80).
7.3.4 Violent Conflicts between the Anywaa and the Majang

The regional government’s discourse regarding the conflict between the Majang and Anywaa peoples are based on misperceptions. The Majang peoples are said to perceive the Anywaa as colonisers, and hence any attack on Anywaa is justified as revenge (H.E. Ato Ahene\textsuperscript{48}). As was pointed out in the IDI, the Anywaa and Majang inter-ethnic relation has been expressed in violent conflict since 1995:

Major violent conflict started when the Majang were divided between three regional states following ethnic federal arrangement principle, i.e. Gambella, Oromiyaa and SNNPR. In all three regional states they are a minority. Violent conflict broke out in 2001, triggered by the brutal killing of a Majang woman allegedly by an Anywaa man in Abobo district, where Majang live dispersed among the Anywaa (IDI, H.E. Ato Ahene Astin, 4 April 2013, Gambella).

On the basis of the Policy Handbook, the federal government’s discourse is that any violent conflict in Gambella is related to the regional leaders’ failure to implement the EPRDF political philosophy, i.e. the principles of revolutionary democracy properly in the killil. However, the Anywaa version of the story was quite different. As one of the Anywaa participants stated: ‘the conflict was instigated either by the Nuer to weaken the Anywaa’s political standing in the local politics or by the EPRDF for ‘its divide and rule scheme’ (Deng, FGD, 1 April 2013, Gambella). As it was underscored in the in-depth interviews (IDI, 1 April, 2013, Gambella), the Majang on their part concluded that the Anywaa triggered by killing their woman.

As the field data and the previous literature (Regassa, 2010:112) show the story might be interpreted as that the Majang retaliated by killing their

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\textsuperscript{48} H.E. Ato Ahene Astin, former Speaker of the Regional Council and current Chief of the Political Party office of the killil, represents the constituency of the Majang. I have used his name by his Excellency’s kind permission.
Anywaa neighbours, which was followed by a spate of revenge killings from both sides. It was also worth noting from the literature (ibid) and the data that more educated, numerically larger and politically more active than Majang ethnic groups, the Anywaa have held administrative positions in the Majang zone and occupied the Majang’s forestlands rich with wild honey and suitable for bee-hives and commercial crops.

On their part, the Majang have been resisting this structural imbalance and asymmetrical inter-ethnic relations since 1992, aspiring to create a wider political and administrative unit by pooling together all the Majang ethnic members from three regional states mentioned above. It can be inferred from the above analysis that what started as an interpersonal conflict became a major clash between the two ethnic groups in Abobo and Godere resulting in an estimated death of about 200 people the same year. In other words, the long embedded asymmetrical relations between the two ethnic groups, the Anywaa and the Majang, was triggered by simple interpersonal affair bringing to light the dynamic and interactive nature of conflict complexity in Gambella. Related to this is conflict between highlanders (‘outsiders’) and indigenes, which is a major factor in the complexity of violent conflicts as discussed in the following section.

7.3.5 Violent Conflict between ‘Indigenes’ and ‘Outsiders’

Both regional and federal governments’ explanations are that the major causes of conflict between the indigenes and outsiders are the failure to appreciate and rightly implement the ethnic federalism principles in Gambella. This was underlined in the interviews with H.E Ato Kassa Tekle-Berhan49 (January 2012) of the House of Federation. ‘There were also

49 H.E Ato Kassa Tekleberhan is former Speaker of the House of Federation and current Minister of Federal and Pastoralist Affairs. By his kind permission I have used his name.
remnants of the former regimes and sympathisers with the rebels’ ideas, especially in the regional leadership’ as the former President of the Gambella killil (September 2012) H.E Omod Obang stated.

As the summary of the locals’ narratives demonstrates, the majority of the highlanders or mette50 came to Gambella en masse from the highlands of Ethiopia in 1980s as part of a resettlement scheme. In fact this has a long history dating from the time of the incorporation of Gambella into the Ethiopian empire and the arrival of the first highlanders to the area, particularly, of soldiers, traders and Ethiopian Orthodox Christian leaders all representing the highland way of life embodied in the central Ethiopian state structure and function as discussed in Chapter Four. The trend of flowing from the highland to the lowland areas of Gambella reappeared during the Derg and the EPRDF regimes which started during the Menlik’s regime as underlined in Chapter Four. The points reflected in the focus group discussions have also been discussed by Brüno, (1990:78).

As can be deduced from the literature, FGD and IDI with participants selected from highlanders (FGD, September 2012), since 1991 the position of the highlanders who comprise the second largest population group in Gambella has become quite aberrant. Moges and Meskerem from the group, who took part in the FGD summarised the rationale for highlanders to be settled in Gambella at present:

A step taken for economic growth by the EPRDF government created more opportunities for engagement in the private sector, particularly trade, while the expansion of the state sector created the need for educated and skilled labour

50 mette is an Amharic derogatory term to describe an outsider who intruded into the settled community as a new comer. In this case, all highlanders who came to settle in Gambella are given this name by most Amharic speaking indigenous peoples. The highlanders are known also as buni and gala or peoples of ‘red face’ in the indigenous languages of the Anywaa and Nuer respectively.
provided mostly by highlanders working under the supervision of indigenous officials. Additional employment opportunities for this group opened in the NGO sector. Thus, the size and economic power of the highlanders increased significantly after 1991 (Moges and Meskerem, FGD, 15 September, 2012, Gambella).

In the FGD it was also indicated that the political position of this group was seriously eroded by ethnic federalism, under which the highlanders were excluded from participation in the political process in Gambella until the 2010 and 2015 elections in which the EPRDF won 99.6% and 100% respectively as discussed in Chapter Five. The 1995 constitution requires candidates for state office to speak one of the indigenous languages of the region. Geberehiwot, (15 September 2012, Gambella) one of the highlander participants in the FGD pointed out the situation as follows:

Although the official language of the killil is Amharic, the law is interpreted in the Anywaa and the Nuer languages so we, the highlanders, were excluded from political office. Thus, although the highlanders constitute around a quarter of the region’s population, we have not been recognized as a political constituency in our own right and were not represented in the regional council until the election of 2010.

It was further discovered in the FGD that political entitlement and resource access have been prominent and most fundamental issues of conflict between the ‘indigenes’ (Anywaa, Nuer, and Majang, Opo, and Komo) and ‘outsiders’. As already mentioned in Chapter Five, the 1995 constitution stipulates that sovereignty resides in the indigenous ethnic groups. This situation created the question of ownership rights of ‘the region’, i.e. it apparently induced resentment between the highlanders and the indigenes. The IDI with the Itang special woreda administrator brings the points to surface (IDI, 5 October 2012, Itang/Gambella):
There were intermittent conflicts between the ‘indigenes’ and ‘outsiders’ in the 1980s but the conflict has escalated since 1991. For instance, in 1991 more than 200 resettled highlanders were killed in Ukuna village by the armed Anywaa groups (Ato Akane, IDI 5 October 2012, Itang/Gambella).

On the whole, the above analysis of ethnic identity-based violent conflicts from 1996 to 2002 highlighted the complexity of conflict in the *killil*. The magnitude of the violent conflict increased even further in the *killil* as the following section demonstrates.

### 7.4 The 2003 Violent Conflict in Gambella

It follows from the above analysis that Gambella had been replete with violent conflicts of various degrees of intensity; however, the magnitude of violence came to a peak in 2003 which is arguably unparalleled with violent conflicts occurred in the *killil* to date. It has left a scar on the conscience of many dwellers of the region as it has been revealed in the previous works and the field data as will be discussed in detail below. It also signalled a marked difference between the federal and regional governments in handling of and responding to the conflict.

To make sense of the violent conflict, first, I have summarised the 2003 violence in the Gambella *killil* as it was perceived across the board, i.e. by the local peoples, as well as *killil* and federal governments. Second, I have presented the *killil* and federal governments’ narratives on the conflict on the basis of the in-depth interviews with the *killil* president, speaker of the *killil* Council, and Itang special *woreda* administrator. I then summarised very
briefly the official documents\textsuperscript{51} from the Ethiopian House of Representatives, commonly known as the Federal Parliament. The documents contain reports of an Enquiry Commission set up for this purpose, and of the Parliament Select Committees’ draft resolution of March 2004 and July of the same year. Finally, I have presented the local peoples’ narratives thematically with supporting evidence from previous relevant studies on the subject.

\subsection*{7.4.1 Actors, Processes and Consequences of the 2003 Violence}

I held FGD with participants who were selected from the Anywaa, Nuer, Majang and the highlanders separately (see table 2.1 in Chapter Two for the profile of the participants). However, their identities have been held confidential for ethical consideration and in most cases I used the phrase: ‘one of the participants’ followed by a changed name. Only the identities of officials from the \textit{killil} and federal states were mentioned in accordance with permission they granted me to use their names and duly acknowledge.

The FGD I conducted in Gambella town in October 2012 and April 2013 with the above mentioned groups generated a lot of information on the 2003 conflict context and process. After several reviews of the transcripts, I found that there was striking similarity in their description of the context and process of the conflict. The descriptions also matched the previous literature on the 2003 violent conflict in the \textit{killil}. To minimise the repetition of same points articulated by different participants in the above FGD, I have summarised the conflict stories in the following section.

\textsuperscript{51} This document is an original and fresh data for the 2003 Gambella massacre, not mentioned in any other previous works related to Gambella; hence, the original contribution of the present study.
On 17 November 2003, five private contractors of SATKOM Pvt.Lt. working on a road rehabilitation project outside of Abobo (40 kilometres south of Gambella town) were ambushed and killed. All of them were highlanders. In Gambella and Addis Ababa the attack was widely blamed on the Anywaa bandits or ‘shifta’ in Amharic; no one was arrested or tried for the crimes. Nearly a month after this brutal killing, yet another killing followed. On 13 December 2003, a group of eight employees of the Administration of Refugees and Returnees’ Affairs (ARRA), a state agency working with the UNHCR in the killil, went to investigate the death of the innocent civilians on 17 November 2003. They were highlanders except for their Anywaa driver. About 40km outside Gambella town they were ambushed and all of them were killed.

As it was emphasised in the FGD, several earlier attacks on the highlanders raised tension in the town. To make matters worse, the mutilated bodies were paraded through the town in an open truck attracting a large mob of enraged highlanders in the Gambella town and suburban areas. Horrified by what they saw, the highlanders proceeded to the regional administration office to confront the president of the killil. Unable to control the mob, he took refuge in his office. They then turned on the Anywaa bystanders killing indiscriminately and went on a rampage through the Anywaa neighbourhoods burning houses and massacring the inhabitants. It was also indicated that the highlanders were armed with guns and machetes. Previous studies corroborate what the participants articulated (see Dereje, 2011:22; Vaughan, 2006:230 Mecklenburg, 2008:34).

7.4.2 Narratives of the Killil and Federal Governments

The killil government’s narratives (in-depth interviews with the former president in Gambella, 3 October 2012) are that:
The 2003 violence was agitated by some highlanders in order to retaliate the killing of some highlanders in 1991, i.e. in the conflict between the Anywaa and the highlanders during the transitional period (1991 – 1995). In addition, there were anti-peace elements trained and sponsored by the Eritrean government to destabilise Ethiopia. These forces include the leaders of Gambella in the transition period, e.g. GPLM until after the party fell out of the favour of the EPRDF. When the conflict went out of control, we the killil leaders, requested the federal government to intervene militarily. Had it not been for these interventions, there could have been more deaths and destructions.

Written in Amharic, Ethiopia’s working language, the federal government’s narratives are contained in a 58 page document divided into 3 volumes. The first volume of 43 pages is dated 16 March 2004, titled ‘A Report of the Ministry of Federal Affairs on the 2003 Violence in Gambella Peoples’ National Regional State Presented to the House of Peoples’ Representatives of the FDRE’. The second volume of 8 pages is dated March 2004 (the same year) titled, ‘A Report of Enquiry Commission on Involvement of Federal Defence Force in the 2003 Violence in Gambella Peoples’ National Regional State Presented to the House of Peoples’ Representatives of the FDRE’. The third volume is of 7 pages and is dated 6 July 2004, titled ‘Opinions of the Enquiry Commission for the Resolution of the 2003 Violence in Gambella’. I have presented a short summary of each document in the following sections (The first pages of each original volume is attached in appendix G).

The first volume was presented to the Ethiopian Parliament by the then Minister of Federal Affairs, which was transmitted on the Ethiopian Television to the public. The narratives detailed the security situation of the killil; major problems of the killil; violent conflict process; public opinions; causes of violent conflict; and steps taken by the federal government on the request made by the killil government in accordance with the Constitutional procedures. It identified the major problems as: cliquish party politics and power competition amongst the leaders of the killil; lack of good governance;
marginalisation of the locals from the development dividends; and widespread anti-peoples propaganda in Gambella. The key problem, among all these factors, according to the document, was the lack of good governance, i.e. failure to implement ethnic federalism in the killil by the political leaders of Gambella. Steps the federal government took were also spelt out: (a) intervening in the conflict to stop the massacre, defuse the tension, and placate the situation on the request of the killil; (b) bring criminals to justice; (c) scrutinise the role of the Ethiopian defence forces in the violence; and (d) rehabilitate and help the victims to recuperate.

The second volume of the federal government’s narratives focuses on the result of the Enquiry Commission which was established following the statutory process of Ethiopia Proclamation Number 398/1996. Its major objectives were to: (a) investigate the causes and escalators of the violence; (b) identify responsible bodies and individuals; (c) assess the consequences of the violence; and (d) find out whether the defence force of FDRE was involved in the violent conflict siding with any conflict parties.

The third volume lists item by item the major factors that led to the violence. Among these factors which led to the massacre of the 2003 in Gambella were: (1) power struggle between the Anywaa and the Nuer political representatives; (2) the Anywaa’s perceptions of Gambella as solely their property; (3) involvement of some officials of the killil in the violence; (4) sense of retribution by some highlanders whose 1991 grievances had not been addressed; (5) widespread presence of small arms and light weapons in the killil; and (6) lack of conflict early warning system and pre-emptive actions by the killil authorities. There are a number of findings listed in these Federal government documents.

To start with, I quote from the document (volume 1) regarding the Anywaa victims’ perceptions of the violence and the response of the community at grassroots level in Gambella:
There were signs of problems looming. The federal as well as the killil did not take any pre-emptive action to prevent clear and present danger. While the highlanders’ feelings were mounting high, no steps were taken by the killil officials. Some of the highlanders were already armed. In response, it was the Nuer families who hid the Anywaa community members in their houses to save lives; there were some highlanders who kept the Anywaa old and young peoples in their bedrooms and kitchens to save the Anywaa from being massacred by other Anywaas and highlanders (Volume I: 12).

As a consequence of the violence, the reports suggest, 65 peoples were killed, 75 wounded, 482 houses burnt, and 266 houses were plundered. The loss of property was estimated to be 3.1 million birr (£100,000.00 at 2012 rate). The narratives also point out that some policemen and defence members were implicated in the violence. There were groups and individuals who were illegally armed and not controlled by the killil administration. Furthermore, the Enquiry Commission identified 9 persons involved, including 2 members of the defence force and 1 policeman from the killil. The federal and regional governments organised peace conference, where ‘gimgama’- Amharic equivalent of ‘evaluation’ – was conducted to identify the weaknesses and strengths of the leadership in the killil. The federal government promised conflict early warning systems and to entrench good governance.

Finally, it is inferred from the above narratives that there are significant differences between the killil government’s narratives and that of the federal government regarding the 2003 conflict actors and the way the conflict was handled. Whereas the federal government underlined that there were killil political leaders who were involved in the conflict itself, the killil government externalised the conflict actors blaming the Eritrean government which backed the GPLM. The federal narratives further pointed out that the killil administration failed to prevent the looming conflict before it occurred. The
government remained silent about the involvement of its leaders in the violent conflict of 2003. More variations are observed about the complexity of the 2003 violent conflict when seen from the locals’ point of view.

### 7.4.3 Narratives of the Local/Indigenous Peoples

As stated in the previous section, participants of various backgrounds took part in the FGD in October 2012, Gambella. Their perceptions have been summarised in this section. There are direct quotes where I perceived some difference from the rest of the group. In addition, I have used IDI with the Chair of the Elders in the Regional Council and consulted other related works.

The Anywaa participants of FGD (12 August 2012 Addis Ababa) state that several Anywaa were jailed on suspicion of involvement in the crime, prompting the regional president to flee abroad, leaving his Nuer deputy as acting president. They also articulated that many Anywaa fled their villages to join their kinsmen in Pochalla and Otalo in South Sudan and others went to Kenya. Most of those who went to South Sudan were still there, and some 7,000 remain in Nairobi. In the in-depth interview, the Chair of the Elders further reiterated:

> As a peace counsellor of the region, I went up to Pochala in South Sudan and brought some of them. There number ranges from 5,000 to 7,000. They were then rehabilitated by the regional government (Chair of the Elders, 6 October 2012, Gambella).

Regarding the process of and response to the 2003 violence by the local community at grassroots level, participants in FGD and IDIs agree with the federal government’s narratives. They witnessed that the Nuer as well as the
Anywaa elders were grateful to some highlanders and the Nuer community that took risks to hide some of the Anywaa population into their homes to save their lives from massacre. The protection provided by the community indicates, according to the locals’ narratives that established amicable social norms and values still persist, which transcend party politics or temporary feelings and grievance in Gambella. One of the participants in the FGD underlined that the 2003 violence created complicated situations in the killil. He identified the triggering and underlying factors in the following manner:

One of the triggers for the massacre was that political elites failed to agree among themselves and different political parties mushroomed - emulating the ethnic politics of the federal government's political ideology. In the heart of the matter [underlying factors] is the federal government’s uncompromising commitment to the implementation of ethnic federalism and mustering loyalties of the leaders of the killil to the EPRDF ideology more than developing professional leadership capacity to deliver development and good governance in Gambella (Luke, 3 April 2013, Gambella).

Moreover, according the narratives of the local peoples, the Anywaa’s grievance over the highlanders and the ethnic political system in Gambella were not addressed properly, especially the earlier killing of highlanders in the transition period allegedly by the Anywaa; and the 17 November 2003 killing by the Anywaa ‘freedom fighters’ which was still left unaddressed. Moreover, the issue of political power in the region and the lack of genuine representation of the Anywaa in Gambella were at the heart of the conflict. Many Anywaa perceived that they were marginalised and that the president of the killil, even though he was from the Anywaa ethnic group, served the federal government, not the interest of the Anywaa constituency. One of the respondents (he came back from Kenya after nine years) summarised the Anywaa’s feelings in the following terms:

52 On 16 April 2013 he was substituted with a Nuer, former vice President. This is the first time a Nuer has headed the killil since EPRDF controlled Ethiopia.
We (the Anywaa) feel emotional, helpless, hopeless, insecure, traumatised...
The federal government and its development policy are the major problems. Our land was sold to the foreigners... I went to my birth place to see the graveyards of my ancestors; it was burned and ploughed for commercial farms by the foreigners. Our memories, identities and history have been burned and Anywaa has been targeted as security threat to the killil as well as federal government (Ugala, FGD, 3 April 2013).

It is inferred from the FGD that historical factors such as shifting allegiances of the Anywaa and the Nuer ethnic groups to the changing regimes in Addis Ababa were one of the underlying factors for the atrocities against the Anywaa. In the FGD it was further revealed what the situation looked like during the Emperor Haile-Selassie’s regime (1933 – 1974) as mentioned in Chapter Four. One of the members, Mark Ujulu made reference to history and articulated it as follows:

Gambella was under the province known of Ilubabor during the regime of Emperor Haile Selassie, when it was fully incorporated into the Ethiopian central government. The population of the Anywaa ethnic group was a majority with a Nuer minority of smaller tribes. The natives of the province had no political role and the administration was entirely in the highlanders’ hands by then. During the first Sudanese civil war (1956-1972) Emperor Haile Selassie used the Anywaa to support the anti-Khartoum southern rebellion (Christian elements in the south fighting the Islamic government in the north for they support Eritrean and Oromo insurgents), which meant that the Anywaa acquired a degree of military experience and strength (Mark, FGD, 3 April 2013).

This story was available in Molla, (2004) and Tewodros (2007). In the same vein, the participants reiterated that the Derg government did not trust the Anywaa either. As Umed in the FGD stated:

The military government suspected the Anywaa ethnic group of being supporters of ‘reactionary monarchy’ and sympathisers with ‘the old feudal regime’ of the Emperor. Although these accusations were baseless, they encouraged the military government to empower the Nuer as a local
counterweight to the Anywaa. After the 1976 zemecha\textsuperscript{53} the regime created a completely artificial Nuer-led local administration in Gambella (Umed, FGD, 3 April 2013 Gambella).

In the in-depth interviews with the Chair of the Elders, it surfaced that the behaviour of the military government in Addis Ababa compelled a number of young Anywaa to look for outside support, such as going to Eritrea. This story was well supported and nuanced by Regassa, (2010: 16 - 21). He stated that it was in Eritrea that the EPLF put Anywaa youth in touch with the TPLF. Thus later (1989-1990), when the TPLF created its multi-ethnic political cluster known as the EPRDF, Anywaa were the natural choice for the future Gambella administration (ibid). As was already discussed, at the end of May 1991, the old Derg-supported Nuer administration fled the region and was replaced with the new EPRDF-supported Anywaa, led by the GPLM. The GPLM were relatively unknown within their own community but soon acquired significant political weight due to the support they enjoyed from the new government. Ironically, these were the men who, according to the IDI, Chair of the Elders (6 October 2012, Gambella), and previous literature cited above, ten years later were allegedly behind the insurgency and killing of SATKON construction workers and the UN investigating team on 17 November 2003 which led to the 13 December 2003 massacre as pointed out in the previous sections.

In short, differences of narratives about the December 2003 violence in the killi\textsubscript{il} can be seen at three levels: first, there was distinctive difference between the narratives of the killi\textsubscript{il} and federal governments regarding

\textsuperscript{53} Amharic for "campaign" the Derg's project of Development through Cooperation Campaign of 1974 where hundreds of thousands of university and high school students were deployed to the rural Ethiopia to teach how to read and write Ethiopian peasants so that they could learn Marxist-Leninist ideology, modern farming and organise themselves in peasant associations.
conflict actors as set out above, response to and prevention of the conflict; second, there were differences between the two levels of governments’ narratives and the local peoples’ narratives about the conflict issues, actors, and consequences; and finally, there were differences of narratives among the local population about the number of victims of the violent conflict of 2003.

In the in-depth interview with the Chair of the Elders, it came to light that violence spread to other districts from Gambella town particularly to Abobo, Itang, Fugnudo and Dimma, taking the lives of many Anywaa and highlanders. He put the number of deaths at 400 whereas others stated that the death toll well exceeded 600 while both killili and federal governments claimed the death toll to be 65. Participants in the FGD stated that to date no one had been held accountable for the massacre; whereas the federal and regional governments’ narratives show that 9 persons were held responsible for the massacre, as stated already.

It follows from the above analysis that tensions had grown between the Anywaa and the local administration in that they were seen as an ally to the EPRDF during the transition period (1991-1995). This tension further developed and could probably be explained in terms of ‘outsiders’/highlanders versus the Anywaa factors which occurred during the Derg era (see Chapter Four) and reappeared at present. It is to be recalled that in 1984-1986 the Derg government had transferred thousands of Highland peasants to various lowland locations in its villagisation programme in the hope of fighting the food shortage under the scheme of

54 In 2004 it was expected that the present government would re-start the process. The government produced plans to displace 2.2 million peoples, including a number of them into the Gambella region. Preliminary studies indicated by then the probability of a failure at least as serious as that of the Derg regime (Dessalegn Rahmato, 2004).
resettlement and villagisation. Although famine victims themselves, these settlers were seen by the local Anywaa population as invaders and in 1991 many were killed by the Anywaa when the regime changed as it was alluded to in the previous sections and in Chapter Six. Villagisation and resettlement programmes of the Derg regime were catalysts which factored into the 2003 massacre in Gambella (see Chapter Ten for villagisation/resettlement and violent conflict nexus during the current regime).

7.4 Summary

This Chapter has focused on two major points: first, comparing and contrasting the present work with previous contributions, particularly Dereje (2011). The main gaps in Dereje: (a) ‘framing all conflicts in Gambella as ‘ethnic conflict’ ignoring its ‘complexity’, dynamism and structural nature of conflict causes is misleading when seen particularly from conflict prevention and transformation angle; (b) the change of political power pattern in Gambella since 16 April 2013 with far-reaching implication for conflict complexity was another gap; and (c) the regional as well as the federal governments’ discourse in Gambella were missing, yet they are essential elements for managing and transforming violent conflicts.

Second, three diverse, dynamic and interactive factors may be taken as a lynchpin of the ethnic-identity factors in conflict complexity in Gambella since 1991. The first had to do with the transitional nature of the ‘new Ethiopian’ state formation where the new political ideology and the old one had to fight for their influence in the Gambella Peoples’ National Regional State. The second is ethnic interaction in the region. The third, which is the most prominent of all violent conflicts in Gambella thus far, was the 2003 violence that was analysed in terms of its context, issues, actors, process and consequences. Failure to address the past violent actions led to further
violence triggered largely by political elites; that inaction created further bitter resentment in the highlander victims’ family and community. Over 400 peoples lost their lives in the same context by allegedly the same actors and process on 13 December 2003.

This unprecedented and a historic massacre of Anywaa in Gambella in 2003 was NOT the work of the Nuer ethnic group as evidence reveals; it was rather ascribed to governance issues, evidencing that framing all conflicts in Gambella as only Anywaa-Nuer ethnic conflict is misconstrued and misleading. Moreover, different narratives persist about this violence. The federal government held the view that lack of development and good governance was to blame. It also blamed the killil administration for failing to prevent the violence. The killil government, on the other hand, ascribed the conflict to highlanders in Gambella and rebels from outside the country. On the whole, the narratives of the government at different levels emphasised that violent conflicts in this killil had been caused, in the main, by the remnants of the previous regimes and by conscious and calculated acts of political elites of the killil signifying conflict complexity in Gambella.

The local peoples’ narratives, on the other hand, emphasised that the principle and practice of ethnic politics is the main source of violent conflicts in Gambella; it ethnicized social relations in Gambella and thus propelled further violence rather than solving it. Violent conflicts within and between ethnic groups may be explained in terms of external factors, past injustices, power politics, identity issues and resource competition, but not by a single label such as Anywaa-Nuer ethnic conflict. Lack of political stability, suspicious ethnic relations and federal government involvement in every issue of the regional administration is another set of factors that intensified violence in the region as articulated by the local peoples revealing complexity of conflict there.
Conflict in Gambella is evidently complex; hence, ‘ethnic conflict’ alone is insufficient to explain what constituted violent conflicts in the killil, even though it contributed significantly as one of the elements in the complexity. It is imperative that the following Chapter focus on economic factors, articulated as the land and land-related resource use policies of the imperial and the military regimes, which parallel the political factors analysed in Chapters Four and Five. It was the examination of the pre-1991 political factors that shed some light on the continuities and change in the post-1991 politics of Ethiopia. Likewise, critically discussing and understanding the current government’s land use policies and their relations to violent conflicts in Gambella, necessitates comprehending the imperial and military regimes’ land and land-related resource use policies. It is to this topic that we now turn to.
Chapter Eight

Economic Factors: Land Policies of the Imperial and Derg Regimes

The politics of land in Ethiopian history has disadvantaged Gambella’s pastoralists, subsistence farmers and hunter-gatherers in the context of systematic land appropriation resulting in long-term marginalization and exclusion during Emperor Menelik’s regime. Committed to modernise Ethiopia, Emperor Haile-Selassie commercialised agriculture and allocated the lands of pastoralists e.g. Nuer, and sedentary farmers e.g. Anywaa of Gambella for agricultural development. More than 60,000 peasants from the northern and southern Ethiopia highlands were forcibly resettled in Gambella during the Derg regime under the scheme of resettlement and villagisation in Gambella without consulting the local peoples. These behaviours and actions of the three regimes in the past impacted on conflict complexity in Gambella at present (Taken from the analysis below).

8.1 Introduction

Chapter Seven detailed the dynamic and interactive roles of ethnic identity issues in conflict complexity in Gambella as perceived by the local peoples and that of the governments at different levels. The complex nature of conflict in Gambella leads to examining other dynamic and interacting variables with ethnic factors. Hence, Chapter Eight briefly discusses economic factors articulated as land use policies of imperial and military regimes and assesses their impact on conflict complexity in Gambella today. Critically appraising the imperial and military regimes land use policies, I believe, will pave the way for comprehending the current government’s land use policies and their relations to violent conflicts in Gambella presented in Chapters Nine and Ten.
Land use policy has been the essence of the economic policy of Ethiopia and an underlying factor for most internal conflicts in this country. For Collier and Hoffman (2005) economic factors – greed – is more effective predictor of social conflict than political factor – grievance, while for Harff and Gurr (2004) and Sen (2006), the latter is more salient. In the Ethiopian context, however, both have serious implications for internal conflicts over the years (see Bahru, 2002; Berhanu, 2007; Clapham, 1969, 2000, 2002, 2009, 2013; Dessalegn, 2010, Assefa 2012; Neguse, 2013). As an agrarian society, economic factors in Ethiopia mainly refer to the land use policies; the fact is that the livelihood of 85 per cent of about 94 million of Ethiopia’s population depends on agriculture as ECSA (2007) depicts. In this Chapter, the role of land and land-related natural resource use policies in conflict complexities in three consecutive regimes has been outlined to answer the subsidiary research question: **What roles have economic factors in terms of land use policies of the previous regimes played in the current conflict complexity in Gambella?**

Land and land related natural resource issues have prominently contributed to the manifestation of violent conflicts in Gambella as can be seen in Chapters Nine and Ten. Not surprisingly, nearly all social revolutions, regime changes and insurgent movements in Ethiopia since its coming into being as a modern state, have been linked, one way or another, with land use policies (see Merera 2011; Assefa, 2012; Negussie, 2013; Ojo, 2013). Hence, examining land use policies of the previous regimes is vital for three major reasons: land issues are constitutive element of group identity; land is reservoir of natural resource; and land policy is an indicator of governance type.

First, as economic, symbolic and emotional aspects are at stake, land is at the core of internal violent conflict in most parts of Ethiopia (Dessalegn, 2011; Merera, 2011). It is fundamental and prior since it delimits the actual physical boundaries of the population: it is their birth and burial place; it is
mountains, rivers, forests, lakes, etc. which shape their group identity (ibid). Sometimes, there is a direct connection between ‘a people’s’ myth of origin and the physical landmarks of the land they inhabit’ (Chabal, 2009:28 Havnevik, 2011: 90). Oral histories often explain in some detail why it is that the group is, or has come to be, in the actual physical location it now occupies (ibid). ‘The story as it is told usually provides an explanation of why there is an intimate relation between what the group is and the site that defines its geographical identity’ (Chabal, 2009:28). The power of the land issue to invoke emotional responses and political action spills over into questions of ownership, identity, development practices, and resource management as seen in Chapter Seven in the case of the Anywaa of Gambella. The lingering disputes emerging from the land question has almost always triggered extended protests and violence, disrupting vital production in most parts of Ethiopia (Gebru, 2009:59).

Moreover, as a valuable and immovable resource of limited quantity, land is not only essential to the livelihoods of most Ethiopians, but also represents a precious reservoir of natural resources. Land is a core element in the complex social relations of production and reproduction. At the same time, ancestral land impacts on the ways peoples are bound to the land and relate to their natural surroundings, as well as to fundamental feelings of ‘connectedness’ with the social and cultural environment in its entirety (Pankhurst, 1990:128).

Finally, land use policy is an index of land and land related resource governance. It was the real source of power in imperial Ethiopia; and it remains at the centre of a controversial policy debate at present (Dessalegn, 2011; Human Rights Watch, 2012; The Oakland Institute, 2013). The current rush for commercial land, commonly known as ‘land grabbing’ in most parts of Africa, including Ethiopia, by private and sovereign investors for the production and export of food crops as well as bio-fuels, benefit the investors at the expense of host countries and their populations (see World Bank, 2010; Dessalegn, 2011; Matondi, et al., 2011;
‘Land grabbing’ has spread quite rapidly in Ethiopia, especially in Gambella following the international food crisis of the second half of the 2000s which was accompanied by exceptionally high commodity prices and severe supply shortages in the world market. The crisis aggravated vulnerabilities in Gambella (Dessalegn, 2011:39). Hence, exploring the land use policies of the preceding regimes of Ethiopia may shed some light to clearly understanding the current government’s land use policy which remains to be the heart of violent conflicts in Gambella.

8.2 Land Use Policies of Emperor Menelik II

As in other lowland peripheries, since its annexation by Emperor Menelik in early twentieth century, Gambella’s pastoralists, subsistence farmers and hunter-gatherers have been disadvantaged in the context of systematic land appropriation resulting in long-term marginalization and exclusion as well as severe limitations of mobility as underscored in Chapter Six. The immediate consequences of subjugation of the people and the land for the pastoralist Nuer, hunter-gatherer Majang, and subsistence farming Anywaa were awesome: a traveller who visited the area in 1899-1901 found them in dire straits, ‘pillaged by the Galla [sic] and Abyssinians’ (Austin 1902: 14) quoted in Markakis (2011:105) the problem they sustained to this day which was a bedrock of violent conflict in Gambella today. Apart from consolidating his power, Menelik pursued economic interests in the south western frontiers, particularly in Gambella and Benishangul Gumuz, exploiting minerals as well as agricultural products as discussed in Chapters Four and Five in some detail. Hence, the peoples literally became “serfs on their fathers’ lands” (Pausewang 1983: 16), the phenomenon which served as genesis of structural causes of violent conflicts.
The land use policy of Emperor Menelik was built on horizontal and vertical inequality and land alienation; as the conqueror, he was entitled to own all land of Ethiopia (Donham, 1986; Assefa, 2012). As a result, he was in a position to grant land to local chiefs, local administrators, soldiers and rulers, known locally as *neftegna* – ‘someone who carries a gun’ as pointed out in Chapter Four. Thus the centre built a system of a ruling elite based on loyalty, order and tax collection (ibid). Landowners were given the right to exact tribute from the peasants who lived on land granted by the king. The system had its manifestation through different forms of land tenure which constituted the essential structural aspect of traditional Ethiopian polity (Markakis, 1974:131) that continued to this day and entrenched structural conflicts in Gambella and other lowland peripheries.

### 8.3 Land Use Policies of Emperor Haile-Selassie

As outlined in Chapter Four, motivated by the idea of modernisation, Emperor Haile-Selassie introduced commercialization of agriculture to promote economic growth and increase state revenue. He enlisted the help of foreign capital and technical assistance after Italian occupation (Pausewang, 1990:44 – 46). In addition, Ethiopians with the financial ability and the technical know-how were also encouraged to pursue agricultural ventures, many of which were established on the lands of the Afar, Gambella, Somalis, and the Oromo of south-eastern Ethiopia. Because these pastoralists such as the Nuer and sedentary farmers e.g. Anywaa of Gambella (Illibabor province – by then) and other peoples of lowland peripheries could not establish titles based on imperial grant, or show proof that they had paid land taxes, the regime felt free to allocate their pastures for agricultural development, even though their cattle had been grazing there for centuries (ibid).
One can draw a parallel between the practice of the imperial regime and the current practice, whereas all land belonged to the emperor in the former case, all ancestral and unoccupied land is assumed to be terra nullius – ‘the land of no one’ under the latter; hence, the latter leased the terra nullius to large scale agricultural investment in Gambella. The previous practice laid foundation for the present conflict in the killil, which marginalised and created sense of deprivation, grievance and resentment in the local peoples – recipes for violent conflicts in the lowland peripheries mainly in Gambella.

Moreover, as a means of gaining political supremacy, the Emperor used land policies to bring about structural changes which affected the livelihood of the peasantry in the periphery (Donham, 1986; Alemayehu, 1990). A structural relationship where peasant communities were in the possession of the land they till, but their production was controlled by outside rulers who appropriated portions of peasant surplus by exacting a tribute. The tributary mode of production was feudal (Brüne, 1990) when the land itself was appropriated by the rulers and the peasants were reduced to tenants, each peasant family becoming directly subordinated to a landowner (ibid) which induced grievance in the rural poor.

Added to this was the drought and famine that occurred in Ethiopia almost every five years or so (Hashim, 1985). The situation was greatly worsened in overpopulated and over-farmed northern regions of Ethiopia: Shewa, Welo, and Tigray. The peasants had exhausted their reserves, sold off their goods to purchase food, and even eaten seed grain (Dessalegn, 1990). Desperate and starving, hundreds of thousands left their homesteads and made for the towns, where they hoped the government would provide relief. The regime’s inaction, became an international scandal that strongly aroused the dissidents and stimulated others, especially among the intellectuals in Addis Ababa and other towns, to become engaged in the on-going social change actively (ibid). The very land and land-related resources
use policy of the Emperor exacerbated the latent conflict which led to the edge of chaos when the student movement of *meret larashu* or 'land to the tiller' echoed across the nation and stimulated millions of Ethiopians to bring about social revolution, only to be hijacked by the military junta or the *Derg* (Dessalegn, 1980; Pausewang, 1990; Crummey, 2000; Assefa, 2012; Bahru, 2014).

8.4 Land Use Policies of the *Derg*

In the wake of the Ethiopian famine of 1984 and 1985, the *Derg* organized a controversial resettlement and villagisation scheme and planned to relocate more than a million people into so-called land-abundant areas, particularly in western Ethiopia, Gambella and Benishangul Gumuz. As part of this programme more than 60,000 peasants from the northern and southern Ethiopia highlands were forcibly resettled in Gambella, thus increasing the population of the region by about at least one third - previously, the total population of the region had been between 100,000 and 150,000 (Kurimoto 2005: 338), of whom, according to the 1984 census, about 28,000 were Anywaa. Specific resettlement sites, designed exclusively for highlanders, and an integrated resettlement scheme were launched along the Baro and Gilo Rivers and around Abobo, *without first securing consent from the Anywaa* (Kurimoto 2005: 339). As will be seen in Chapter Ten similar practice, i.e. resettling and villagising the Anywaa *without their consent* continued during the EPRDF regime as evidenced by the field data. This practice of the government induced resentment, grievance and bitter sentiment among the Anywaa, which was the building block of violent conflict in Gambella today.

As stated above, both resettlement and villagisation programmes, despite earlier experiments dating back in some cases to the imperial regime, were essentially a product of the period after the great famine of 1984 and 1985, when the *Derg*’s most intensive efforts at social engineering were launched
The activities involved the long distance movement of peoples from ‘overpopulated’ areas into planned ‘modern’ villages elsewhere (Pankhurst, 1990:122). The movement was largely from the north eastern famine zone (Tigray, Wello, and northern Shewa), but also from areas in southern Ethiopia affected by a disease of enset plant, into so-called under-populated regions in the west and south-west (primarily in Benishangul and Gambella). ‘Some 600,000 people were moved in this way’ (Pankhurst, 1990:91), sometimes by force, or by the arbitrary designation of peasants for the resettlement by peasant association leaders who wanted to get rid of these peoples. And it was unpopular in the receiving areas because the settlers were mainly feared to bring about stress on the natural environment leading to competition over meagre resources in the respective areas which has been one of the major factors of violent conflict in the Horn of Africa (Markakis, 1994:220 – 224).

Very sadly, the resettlement programme took a social toll on the Anywaa; weakening their social fabric, spreading alcoholism in the villages, and corrupting both the work ethic as well as productivity (see Dereje, 2011:139). Social stability in the villages was further undermined by an increase in theft and by migration to the towns, which depopulated the villages and left them more vulnerable to land encroachment by the Nuer. Educated Anywaa elites refer to this social decline as the ‘four Ks’: kac (hunger), kwac (begging), kap (prostitution) and ku (theft). Dereje (2011:139) quoting Kurimoto (2001: 267) further notes that the ‘four Ks’ are attributed to the arrival and expansion of the Ethiopian state, identified with and represented by the highlanders.

It follows from the above discussions that the political aim behind the land policy of the military government was not different from the preceding regimes in content as well as process. It was intended to maintain the legacy of control and extraction (Crummey, 2000; Bahru, 2002; Berhanu, 2007; Assefa, 2012). On 20 December 1974, it issued the Declaration of
Socialism, which foresaw a one-party state, public ownership of the main sectors of the economy, and collective agriculture. The document called for national unity and equal opportunity for all ethnic, cultural, and religious groups (ibid). The new year (January 1975) saw the nationalization of private financial institutions and, in February 1975, most of Ethiopia’s industries, including all of the foreign-owned companies, were confiscated (Marcus, 2002). On 26 July 1975, the government issued Proclamation No. 27, which nationalized urban land but allowed individuals the ownership of one house and the use of as many as five hundred square meters for residential purposes (ibid). Additional dwellings were confiscated, and rents were sharply reduced, especially for low-income families. The proclamation also provided for the establishment of neighbourhood organizations, or kebeles, the urban equivalent of the rural peasant associations. The kebeles collected all rents on small homes and used the proceeds to finance social services for its members. The latter included all adult persons who lived within the precincts of the kebeles, and they elected a policy committee responsible for the organization’s functions. Almost from the outset, the government tried to manipulate election results in order to control the urban centres (ibid).

On the whole, the land policy of the military government was intended to subdue its ideological rivals, control peasants and dispossess the few landowners who had some private access during Haile-Selassie, and ‘dry the pond to kill the fish’ in rebel incubating niche as pointed out in Chapter Three. It is worth noting, however, that in the beginning of February 1975 the land policy was hailed as responding to the age-old questions of what to do about the Ethiopian peasants (Assefa, 2012:78). Many Ethiopians thought that the 1975 proclamation of land was a response to the popular slogan of ‘meret larahu’ – ‘land to the tiller’ (Pausewang, 1990:47). That paved the way for more violence, discontent, and grievance which led to the edge of chaos in Ethiopia replacing the Derg regime with ethnic political system of the Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Democratic Front.
entrenching more violent conflicts in the country including Gambella as will be analysed in Chapters Nine and Ten.

8.5 Summary

This Chapter outlined how the politics of land in Ethiopian history has impacted in lowland peripheries such as Gambella: first, Gambella’s pastoralists, subsistence farmers and hunter-gatherers have been disadvantaged in the context of systematic land appropriation resulting in long-term marginalization and exclusion as well as severe limitations of mobility during Menelik’s regime. Second, with strong commitment to modernise Ethiopia, emperor Haile-Selassie commercialised agriculture by allocating the lands of pastoralists e.g. Nuer and sedentary farmers, e.g. Anywaa of Gambella, for agricultural development. Finally, more than 60,000 peasants from the northern and southern Ethiopia highlands were forcibly resettled in Gambella during the regime of the Derg under the scheme of resettlement and villagisation in Gambella without consent from the local peoples. These actions of the three regimes laid foundations in Gambella by rendering it uniquely fit for manifestation of violent conflict at present.

What is common for the three consecutive governments is that: complete control of all economic sectors by the regimes despite ideological variation across the time and personalities in the leadership. Under all three regimes land remained the central point of economic sector. Land and the subjects on it belonged to the emperor during Menelik II. The same was true during Haile-Selassie’s reign, except for the tendency of the regime for large state and private farming activities albeit little with economic development resulting. Land belonged to the government and the public during the military regime.
In general, these policies constituted partly the underlying factors for violent conflicts in Ethiopia in general and Gambella in particular as field data and previous literature revealed. The land use policy of the EPRDF regime and its role in violent conflict in Gambella has been analysed in two separate Chapters as it is the focus of the present research. While Chapter Nine highlights large-scale agricultural investment-violent conflict nexus, Chapter Ten details the link between villagisation and violent conflict in Gambella. These are critically analysed and assessed turn by turn below.
Chapter Nine

Economic Factors: Large-Scale\textsuperscript{55} Agricultural Investment in Conflict Complexity in Gambella

As Ethiopian citizens, we demand to be protected from investors such as Karuturi. We think that the company doesn’t have a right to evict us and grab our ancestral lands. We demand our government to stand for its citizens’ rights. We do not trust Karuturi; they have destroyed our forest, the essence of our life, for their own profit (Ogalle O, FGD, 1 April 2013, Elia, Gambella).

‘There is no such thing as land-grabbing in Ethiopia; the investors came to Ethiopia to invest on large-scale agricultural land, not to grab lands, but to develop the land’, told the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, H.E Ato Teferra Deribew to the House of Representatives\textsuperscript{56}. Likewise, his deputy, H.E. Ato Wondyirad Mandefro underlined that ‘there was no one Ethiopian citizen dislocated from their ancestral land for the sake of investment; investment took place only on un-used public and state land.’

9.1 Introduction

Economic factors i.e. land policies of the imperial and military regimes in conflict complexity in Ethiopia in general and in Gambella in particular were the focus of Chapter Eight. Drawing on it, Chapter Nine strengthens the argument by critically examining economic factors under ethnic federal system\textsuperscript{57}. To this end, it first compares and contrasts the present study with the work, \textit{Large-scale Land Acquisitions and Minority/Indigenous Communities’ Rights under Ethnic Federalism in Ethiopia: A Case Study of...}

\textsuperscript{55} Large-scale agricultural land refers to 5000 ha and above, according to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MoARD) of FDRE.
\textsuperscript{56} \url{http://www.ethiopianreporter.com/index.php/news/item/4884}. 14 January 2014
\textsuperscript{57} The continuity of the land policies of the Military regime became visible in the EPRDF land policies i.e. land belongs to the state and the public under both regimes.
Gambella Regional State, by Ojot Miru Ojulu (2013). It then examines the narratives of the local peoples and the regional as well as federal governments on the role of economic factors expressed in terms of large-scale agricultural investment in conflict complexity in the killil.

The main focus of Ojot's research is to explore how large-scale land acquisitions are redefining indigenous communities' rights to land and the implications of this redefinition for the ethnic federal system under which those rights are articulated (Ojot, 2013:10). The key research question which guided his study was: 'Is the contemporary phenomenon of large-scale land acquisitions in Ethiopia redefining indigenous communities’ right to land and what are the implications of this redefinition for the ethnic federal system?' (Ojot, 2013: 10 – 12).

The key research question of my study, on the other hand, is: ‘What caused conflict complexity in Gambella since 1991?'; and it focuses on the dynamism and interaction of political, economic, ethnic and external factors played in genesis and manifestation of violent conflicts in the killil. I consider large-scale land acquisition as 'economic factors', which is one of essential elements in conflict complexity in Gambella. The main difference between Ojot's study and Chapter Nine of the present research lies on the focus: while, the former dwells on indigenous communities’ right to land (Ojot, 2013:140), I consider it as only one of several interacting and dynamic elements in the internal conflicts in the killil. More precisely, he discussed the implementation of right to self-determination in Gambella against three categories: socio-cultural self-determination, political self-determination, and economic self-determination (op. cit., 140). Hence, the third point – economic self-determination – is my focus in this Chapter.

Moreover, regarding economic self-determination, i.e. land policy, my argument supports Ojot’s conclusion that (1) the recentralization of land administration by the federal government challenges the principle of division of powers; (2) that this recentralization challenges the principle of
constitutionalism and legitimacy; (3) that not consulting the local communities while leasing out land violates the federal principle of representation and participation; and (4) that it marginalises the indigenous communities in Ethiopia (Ojot, 2013:327).

However, my study differs from Ojot’s in that his thesis does not demonstrate how the behaviours and actions of the Federal Government contribute to internal conflict complexity in Gambella. Moreover, it does not provide the discourse of the regional, as well as the federal governments on these issues. My research underlines the importance of the role of the government in Ethiopia, as highlighted in Chapters Five, Six and Seven, where I have argued that it is too vital to side-line in any discussion of socio-economic and political issues. Hence, the narratives of both federal and regional governments are crucially important in conflict complexity in the killil which are not such a key focus of Ojot’s research.

Further, I concur with Ojot to a degree that with regard to political self-determination, ‘the new system only offered symbolic representation to the indigenous communities of Gambella and not real power’. Hence, ‘as far as political self-determination… is concerned, the Gambella experience so far seems to exemplify failure’ (Ojot, 2013: 332).

There is evidence on the ground in Gambella which makes the conclusion in the preceding paragraph difficult to fully accept. Courts, administration bureaux, police stations, and most administrative activities are run by the indigenous peoples in spite of invisible hands from Addis Ababa. I acknowledge, however, that ‘The elite in the centre continue to rule; the elite in the periphery continue to administer’ (Markakis, 2011: 282) as argued in Chapter Four. In short, it is contentious to state that ‘political self-determination in Gambella exemplifies failure’ altogether if we seriously and genuinely consider at least the administrative aspect. As discussed in Chapter Five, under the current regime the previously unheard voices are now heard, unseen faces are seen, which was unthinkable during the
imperial regime, where all government offices were occupied and remote controlled by highlanders and the central government respectively (see Tessema and Triulzi, 2010:230; Regassa, 2010:150). Important contributions of the incumbent include the expansion of schools, clinics, health centres, celebrating the indigenous cultures, the use of vernacular languages in parallel with Amharic, the federal working language, unimaginable some twenty-four years back in Ethiopia (see Abbink, 2011:602).

Finally, Ojot (2013: 322) argues that since all other regions restricted internal migration to their regional states, Gambella and Benishangul-Gumuz (and to certain extent Afar and Somali too) became the only ones with open doors to immigrants from other regions. Hence, internal migration is already affecting the political demography in minority regions and thereby challenging the viability of self-determination for the indigenous communities of those regions. In his views, internal migrations are key determining factors for the violations of indigenous rights.

In sharp contrast to Ojot’s conclusion, I argue that external factors, and a governance system that ethnicised politics and politicised ethnicity, are key factors in Gambella today – to a much greater extent than internal migration. Of course, I admit that the 2003 Gambella massacre is related to the highland settlers who were internal migrants, if not the underlying causes of it; however, internal conflicts are dynamic, and conflict-causing factors change over time, which is one of the central theoretical assumptions of my study. Evidently, since the independence of South Sudan, 9 July 2011, a political power shift from Anywaa to Nuer, 16 April 2013, and civil war in South Sudan, 15 December 2013, political landscape has changed in Gambella. The obvious fact in contemporary Gambella is that the Nuer, who now are more visible both in the killil and South Sudan, came recently and are still coming from South Sudan to Gambella as studies show (see Freedom House Report on Ethiopia, 2014; Davison, 2016). As the data (26 November 2015, Gambella) reveal, 267,750 refugees from South Sudan settled in the Anywaa zone currently: Jewi, Dimma/Okugo, Pinyudo I and
Pinyudo II, Itang special woreda, Kule and Tierkidi. Most refugees are the Nuer ethnic group with serious security threats to the indigenous communities, the environment and to the Horn of Africa presenting tangible evidence that external factors (which are discussed in detail in Chapter Eleven) are more significant in internal conflicts in the killil than internal migration. It is these gaps the present study has identified and is seeking to constructively contribute to fill them with empirical evidence from Gambella and elsewhere.

The field data and other previous literature (Dessalegn, 2011; Makki, 2012; The Oakland Institute, 2013; Freedom House Report on Ethiopia, 2014) reveal that there is a link between large-scale agricultural investment and violent conflict in Gambella. By analysing and demonstrating the link, the Chapter attempts to answer the subsidiary research question: what roles have economic factors in terms of large-scale agricultural land investment played in conflict complexity in Gambella? How do the local as well as the regional and federal governments explain the role of large-scale agricultural investment in conflict complexity in the killil?

To answer these questions, the Chapter focuses on selected large-scale agricultural investment projects; the role of investment in generating violent conflicts; and the discourse of the peoples at grassroots level and that of the official lines in accounting for the large-scale agricultural investment – violent conflicts nexus in Gambella.

In its land use policy documents the EPRDF laid out that in order to bring about accelerated and equitable development, unoccupied land should be leased to insure food security, guarantee employment, and implement the policy of agricultural-development led industry. The indigenous or local peoples of Gambella, mainly the Anywaa, who claim to occupy vast and fertile landscape, are settled in a scattered manner. The land the Anywaa claim to be their ancestral land is regarded as 'unused' agricultural land, therefore, suitable for investment by the federal government and that of the killil. With a strong commitment to implement its policy, the federal
government together with the killil leased about 500,000 hectares of land to 354 domestic\textsuperscript{58} and 10 foreign\textsuperscript{59} investors between 1993 and 2013\textsuperscript{60} (Gambella Investment Bureau, 4 April 2013).

9.2 Large-Scale Agricultural Investment in Gambella

In line with the land policy of the current government, nine out of ten foreign investors were leased land in the locus of the Anywaa indigenous peoples. As will be seen in detail later, in response, customary communal ownership rights of the Anywaa indigenous peoples to land, and land-related natural resources, emerged as survival and fundamental human rights issues. The practice of large-scale agricultural investment in the killil brought to the surface at least four issues and their implications to conflict complexity in the region: investor-indigenous peoples’ relations; responses of the indigenous peoples to the investment; investment and conflict nexus; and federal-regional power relations in terms of land and land-related resource governance. These are discussed below.

9.2.1 Investor-Indigenes Relations

Of 364 domestic and foreign investors in 7 woredas of the killil (see table 9.1), one domestic (Saudi Star Agricultural Development Plc. owned by an Ethiopian Saudi born tycoon), and two international companies (Karuturi

\textsuperscript{58}‘domestic investor’ refers, according to Investment Proclamation 769/2012, Article 5, to ‘an Ethiopian national or a foreign national treated as a domestic investor as per the relevant law, and includes the government, public enterprises as well as cooperative societies established as per the relevant law’;

\textsuperscript{59}‘foreign investor’ means, according to Investment Proclamation 769/2012, Article 6, ‘a foreigner or an enterprise wholly owned by foreign nationals, having invested foreign capital in Ethiopia or a foreigner or an Ethiopian incorporated enterprise owned by foreign nationals jointly investing with a domestic investor, and includes an Ethiopian permanently residing abroad and preferring treatment as a foreign investor’;

\textsuperscript{60}1993 is the time the land policy of the EPRDF government started to be implemented in Gambella Peoples’ National Regional Government, according to the Investment Office of the killil (4 April, 2013).
Agro Products PLC and Ruchi Agri PLC) were considered for the case study on the basis of the scale of the land they invest in (see appendices E, E1 and E2). As already stated, most large-scale agricultural investment areas are concentrated in the Anywaa indigenous peoples' zone whose settlement patterns are relatively independent villages and scattered as the map of the region depicts in Chapter Six (map figure 6.1).

Table 9.1 List of Investors Issued Lease Certificates in Gambella 1993 – 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Woreda</th>
<th>Domestic investors</th>
<th>Land in ha.</th>
<th>Foreign investors</th>
<th>Land in ha</th>
<th>Total land size in ha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Gambella Zuria</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>55,295.6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>55,296.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Itang</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>44,750</td>
<td>2 (*K.T, &amp; BHO)</td>
<td>127,000</td>
<td>171,750.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Larie</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5,900</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5,900.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Abobo</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>54,890</td>
<td>2 (*G.V., &amp; SSAD)</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>69,890.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Gog</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>35,100</td>
<td>2 (TORREN &amp; RUCHI)</td>
<td>31,000</td>
<td>66,100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Godere</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10,260.48</td>
<td>1 (*V.H.)</td>
<td>3,012</td>
<td>13,272.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Dima</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28,900</td>
<td>3 (Hunan, D.S, &amp; Sever.)</td>
<td>60,000</td>
<td>88,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>235,096.08</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>236,012</td>
<td>471,108.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Regional Investment Bureau, Gambella, April, 2013

As the field data reveal (IDIs, FDGs with the Anywaa participants March 31, Gambella), following the large-scale agricultural investment, there has been tension between local ownership and agricultural investment in the region. As interview with Ministry of Rural and Agricultural Development (February

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61 *K.T = Karuturi Agro Products PLC.; *G.V. = Green Valley; *SSAD = Saudi Star Agricultural Development Plc; *V.H. = Verdata Harvest; *D.S. = Dafegyuam Sannati; *RUCHI = Ruchi Agri PLC
2013, Addis Ababa) at federal level and (Engineer Alero\textsuperscript{62}, Bureau of Rural and Agricultural Development, Gambella, April 2013) at killil level show that food security, creation of skilled labour, enhancement of work culture, and transfer of technology\textsuperscript{63} are the expected outcomes of investment on agriculture. In accordance with the objective of the killil and the federal governments, Karuturi Agri. PLC was leased 100,000 ha of land in Gambella (see appendix E1). The project manager of the company outlined in the interview what it was doing to create job opportunities, transferring of technology and insuring food security in the killil:

We employed 328 workers [but at the time of the interview] only 200 remained for the turnover was very high. Most management and administration activities were run by Ethiopian employees and several indigenous workers were working as drivers and operators of tractors, loaders, graders, and bulldozers after they had been given training by the company. However, we were reassured that land is owned by the federal government and the locals have no control over it. It is the federal government of Ethiopia that had chosen the land for us, which we had not seen\textsuperscript{64} because we were in India. The company currently owns 100,000ha with possible additional 200,000ha over the following two years according to the agreement. We have the machinery worth over 50,000,000 USD (fifty million US Dollars) with the aim of producing cash crops: maize, rice, sorghum, sunflower and so on (Mr. Rajan, IDI, 31 March 2013, Gambella).

Despite the agreement, the company was already using more than what had been leased to it. It cleared natural forest in the National Park of Gambella, ancestral graves, and ritual places of the indigenous peoples,

\textsuperscript{62} H.E. Engineer Alero, current Vice President (2014) of the killil, and former (2012/13) Chief of the Bureau of Agricultural Development, Gambella, permitted me to cite his name; accordingly I have used his name here.

\textsuperscript{63} ‘transfer of technology’ means, according to Investment Proclamation 769/2012, Article 10, ‘the transfer of systematic knowledge … for the application or improvement of a process or for the rendering of a service, including management and technical know-how as well as marketing technologies, but may not extend to transactions involving the mere sale or lease of goods;’

\textsuperscript{64} See the video clips referred to in Chapter Seven about the land lease processes.
which we saw in our field visit (Unstructured Field Observation 31 March 2013, Gambella). This was also reported in the FGD with elders in Elia, Gambella, 1 April 2013. However, the project manager, (Karuturi company, IDI, in their compound, Elia kebele, Gambella, 31 March 2013) states:

Productivity of land increased with the capacity of producing 45 quintals per ha since it started in 2010. The company has maintained amicable relationship with the community and benefited them in a number of ways: it provided job security, set up a generator for electric light and power for evening class education for adults, enhanced technical skills such as maintaining and driving tractors, ploughed farmlands for the kebele, and did many other productive activities as part of the efforts of transferring technology to the locals.

In contrast to the narratives of the company, from the interviews with selected community members of Elia kebele, where the company is situated, two themes emerged that epitomised the company-indigenes relations in the context of large-scale agricultural investment in Gambella: there was a lack of respect to the indigenous peoples and their social integrity; and the company adversely affected the ecological balance of the natural environment of the indigenes.

*Investment and Social integrity of the indigenous peoples*

In the focus group discussions held with the Elia community (31 March 2013, Elia, Gambella) it was reported that the community gained only negligible benefits from Karuturi Agri. PLC. Only few daily labourers got temporary jobs; and a very old generator (which did not work reliably) for an evening school programme. It transpired in the interviews with one of the elders at grassroots level:
The company is threatening us; it says it was leased the land by the federal government and the land does not belong to us; we have no ownership rights of the land. We expressed to our leaders at government institutions; but they are more concerned about the safety and security of the company than about us (Ujulu, IDI, Elia, 31 March 2013, Gambella).

This was acknowledged in various interviews with regional officials who emphasised that there was more attention given to the investors believing that they could transform the backward way of living of the local population (Ato Omot, delegated by the former president of the killil, IDI, 1 April 2013). In the interviews with in-service teachers (Anywaa participants) of the killil in Addis Ababa on 12 August 2012, underlined that the regional leaders from the killil up to the kebele level gave more importance to investors than to that of the indigenous population. One of them (Omod, FGD, 12 August, 2012 Addis Ababa) added that ‘this tendency caused resentment in the local peoples creating tension between investors and the locals’. It was further revealed that locals were not employed as drivers, loaders, operators as the company’s project manager had stated. Most locals, according to the participants, were employed as daily manual labourers. In the focus group discussions in Elia, Ato Opio one of the farmers stated the following:

There were problems related with payment for those few locals who were employed as daily labourers. They were not paid on time and were paid less than others who came from outside the killil. Moreover, we were accused of stealing crops by the company. For instance, the company’s project manager said that it succeeded in harvesting maize in 2011/12 production year, of which, as the manager said, 40% was looted by us. Yet, our children and ourselves helped the company harvest its crops. (Opio, FGD, Elia/Gambella, 1 April 2013).

According to in-depth interviews with the elders, (Omod, IDI, 31 March 2013, Elia/Gambella) ‘there was prior agreement between the company and the community that the community collect the leftover crops on the field’.
However, instead of leaving the leftover crops for the community, ‘the company burned all the leftover crops and, chased the community members firing live munitions to disperse them’. It may be inferred from the interviews and focus group discussions that by doing this, the company had tarnished the indigenous peoples’ human dignity. From the IDIs and FGDs it follows that the land and land-related resource use policy of the current government tends to favour the investors’ profit more than the local peoples and their human dignity.

**Ecological consequence of investment on the local community**

One of the most serious aftermaths of large-scale agricultural investment by the Karuturi Agri Products PLC is the chemical waste as was revealed in FGD (31 March 2013) and the in-depth interviews (IDI, 1 April 2013). It is one of the most serious problems, which has been destructive to the community and the environment. According to one of the FGD participants:

some plants and grass were damaged; a number of cattle died; water in the rivers was contaminated, some fish in the water died; a number of trees were severely affected and stunted – all were caused by the chemical waste spread by the company to get rid of insects. On top of that, the company diverted the course of some of the Openo river water for irrigation and it flooded a number of community agricultural sites in the Fighno, Fuldon, Elia kebeles in the villagisation centre. It closed the drainage lines in Abobo, and other woredas and villages were adversely affected as a result. The woreda administrators did not respond to the community’s questions about these issues, thus exacerbating the growing tension between the Karuturi Company and the Elia community of Abobo woreda,( Kwowo, FGD, 1 April 2013, Gambella).

One of the elders from the Anywaa community, (Ojiok K., IDI, 30 March 2013, Elia, Gambella) expressed his discontent with the woreda
administration that ‘the institution supposed to serve the community lacks accountability to the local peoples’. Furthermore, in FGD (Ulok, 06 October 2012, Itang, Gambella) one of the Anywaa participants stated that the ‘woreda administration was asked for compensation for the dead cattle and for peoples who lost their relatives’, but at the time of writing no response was given from woreda or killil officials.

It surfaced in the focus group discussions that all infrastructure including roads, schools and health posts were built by the regional and federal governments before the company came to the present location. Paradoxically, the community face an acute shortage of medical services because of the Karuturi’s employees who were using the facilities of the clinic, which was meant for the community of Elia. In addition, the company destroyed historical sites of the community by burning the forest to cultivate palm-trees. However, the company has not produced any palm plantation during our field visit (Field Observation, 31 March 2013, Gambella, Elia) and its failure angered the community:

As Ethiopian citizens, we demand to be protected from investors such as Karuturi. We think the company doesn’t have a right to evict us to grab our ancestral lands. We demand our government to stand for its citizens’ rights. We do not trust Karuturi; they have destroyed our forest, the essence of our life, for their own profit (Ogalle O, FGD, 1 April 2013, Elia, Gambella).

Yet another Indian large scale agricultural investment company, Ruchi Agri. PLC, had been leased 25,000 ha of land to produce mainly soya bean as it was revealed in in-depth interviews with the project manager and his assistant (IDI, Rajiv and Venkat, 29 March 2013, Gambella). It was expected to pay tax every year to the local government, which it refused to do, according to the leaders of the woreda, zone and Investment Bureau of the killil. The agreement was made between the Ruchi Agri PLC and the
federal government; hence, the company was not accountable to the woreda or the locals or to the killil (29 March 2013, Abobo wereda office). It was further disclosed in the in-depth interviews with the woreda administrator, Ato Okello that the Ruchi Company has been a source of a number of problems to-date in that specific area:

It had not made any environmental impact assessment; it had been damaging the ecology by slashing/burning the forest, clearing most valued and medically important trees like wodo [in the Anywaa language] the endemic plant found only in Gambella. Ruchi Agri Plc. did not provide job opportunities except for few daily labourers; no local community member was involved in the management or technical works; some of the managers were imported from India and Addis Ababa. It did not follow any transparent procedures in appointing staff (Ato Okello, IDI, Abobo, Gambella, 29 March 2013).

Notwithstanding the above negative picture of the large-scale agricultural investment in the killil, some companies like Saudi Star Agricultural Development (SSAD) were perceived positively by some of the community members who were interviewed. What was self-evident was some of the works done by the company as transpired in the in-depth interviews:

The Company carried out environmental and social impact assessment [see appendix H for the cover pages of the report of Environmental and Social Impact Assessment] before undertaking the investment activities65; it orientated the community on water use for different purposes in developing agricultural productivity. Furthermore, the company trained the locals on how to operate various vehicles (which we observed on-job training while the locals were operating a big truck, on our way to visit the company’s vast rice field, 31 March 2013). The Company pays 400,000 birr every year in tax to the woreda without any default. In addition, it planned to employ 4000 workers for 2013/14

65 Documents are available which indicate that SSAD conducted environmental and social impact assessment; the first two pages of executive summary are in appendix H.
production year (Ato Sahlu, the Project Manager of SSAD Company, IDI, 31 March 2013, Gambella).

However, it came to light during the in-depth interviews with the Project Manager that there was serious concern about the demographic imbalance as a result of job opportunities being created:

If the number of incomers exceeds the locals, then that may be a cause for concern. It is also to be recalled that in April 2012 there was a violent conflict which left six people dead including one Pakistani working for the company. It may also be recalled that five of the people killed in April 2012 were the employees of SSAD (Ato Sahlu, Project Manager, IDI 31 March 2013, Gambella).

In general, lack of environmental impact assessment and failure of the government to consult the locals before the land was leased to investors was one of the significant factors that fuelled the violent conflicts as it was surfaced during our interviews and field observation in the region.

**Investment and Violent Conflict Nexus**

In-depth interviews with the government officials at federal, *killil*, zone, *woreda* and *kebele* levels revealed that there were different narratives on whether there was a connection between investment and violent conflicts in Gambella. All officials mentioned deny that there was any link between investment and violent conflicts in the *killil* at all. They reason that it was false propaganda manufactured by the anti-peace elements and those that had some connections with the former Gambella Peoples’ Liberation
Movement (GPLM) members and their diaspora allies who spread false news in the killil.

Moreover, they underlined that the idea of commercialisation of ancestral land had been propaganda from government's ideological enemies. They asserted that only 1.2 million hectares of land was being invested whereas there were 3.2 million hectares of land not yet tapped, which made Gambella uniquely suited for conflict as argued in Chapter Six, for the use of the community in Gambella (in-depth interviews with the former President of the killil, October 2012). They emphasised that the government of Ethiopia at all levels was working for the emancipation of the peoples from aid dependency and food shortage, through large-scale agricultural investment.

Nevertheless, there is a link between investment and violent conflicts. What the data revealed is that, recent violent conflicts are some of the consequences of grievance from the Anywaa ethnic groups about large scale agricultural investment on their ancestral lands without their consent, which interacts with other conflict elements and constituted conflict complexity in Gambella.

### 9.2.2 The Anywaa Peoples and Investment

The largest tract of land of Gambella is in the Anywaa zone (See map of the killil in Figure 6.1 in Chapter Six). A sizable portion of that land was leased to the investors without the consent of the Anywaa ethnic group as was revealed in the IDI and FGD with participants (see also Table 9.1 above). This action of leasing the land without consulting the indigenes was justified by the government quoting article 46 sub-article 1 of the 1995 Constitution of FDRE which states that ‘...Land is a common property of the Nations,
Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia…’. As a result, rights groups and civil society have been making clear and loud voices regarding the Anywaa’s rights to ancestral land (See Human Rights Watch, 2012; The Oakland Institute, 2013; Freedom House Report on Ethiopia, 2014). The Anywaa’s responses have been (1) that they lack meaningful political representation in the regional and federal governments, and (2) using violent means by the Anywaa rebels/shifta as discussed in Chapter Ten. The Anywaa have expressed their relations with the land and resentment of the agricultural investment in that their land is their identity and to lose their land is to lose their identity as the following quote illuminates:

The bones and spirits of our ancestors are being dug and ploughed by the foreigners. Land is identity; hence, to lose it is to lose identity. If my land has been taken away (grabbed) by the investors, so has been my identity. When we were born, according to our culture, parts of our umbilical cords were buried here, so were of our parents’, and of grand parents’ and of great, great, grandparents. (Dor Ujulu66, one of the Anywaa participants in focus group discussion, FGD, Gambella, 1 April, 2013).

**Political Representation of the Anywaa**

In the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, the informants from the Anywaa ethnic group expressed their grievance about ‘their land’ being ‘sold’ out to the investors because their representation in the regional council has been simply nominal, i.e. it was not meaningful political participation. They describe the Regional Council representation of the Anywaa ethnic group from 1992 – 2010 elections, (see table 9.3), as a ‘political window dressing’. In their views, statistics indicated in the table or the nominal presidency position held by the former Anywaa president did not address the fundamental historical and current questions of land rights.

66 For ethical consideration the identity of the participant has been kept confidential.
Table 9.2 Ethnic Representations in the Gambella Regional Council, 1992 – 2015 Elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anywaa</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuer</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majang</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opo</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Komo</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlanders</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>38</strong></td>
<td><strong>42</strong></td>
<td><strong>55</strong></td>
<td><strong>82</strong></td>
<td><strong>156</strong></td>
<td><strong>155</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gambella Regional Council tabulated by the author

One of the Anywaa participants stated that the former president served the political interest of the ruling party rather than the constituency he was supposed to stand for:

> He was silent while the Anywaa land had been grabbed by the Nuer and by the so-called investors. We feel that the Anywaa have always been excluded and marginalised by both the federal and regional governments because of the lack of active and meaningful participation in the regional as well as federal politics. There was no single university or agro-industrial factory that could improve the quality of the Anywaa's life and that of the region where the investment was scrambling Gambella into pieces (Ogalle O., FGD, 1 April 2013, Gambella).

It was further reiterated in the focus group discussions that large-scale agricultural investment is in the interest of the government; the local peoples were not consulted. The Anywaa informants express that the community resent being dispossessed of their ancestral land. They feel that the federal government failed to implement the United Nations Declaration on the
Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Article 32 sub-articles 1 and 2 which state that:

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources. 2. States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free and informed consent prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands or territories and other resources, particularly in connection with the development, utilization or exploitation of mineral, water or other resources.67.

**The Anywaa’s Response to Investment**

The Anywaa community in the past had access to abundant water for fishing. They also relied on the forest as source of food and medicines before the investment scheme started on their ancestral land. One of the informants in the FGD suggested that resentment about this change was what had caused the Anywaa rebels to reorganise themselves and fight against the regional and federal governments. His idea was supported by others. The participants further emphasised that the sporadic killings which intensified since the beginning of investment in the killil are related to the grievance the Anywaa peoples felt about dispossession of their ancestral lands, and clearing of their forests as one of the participants in FGD underscored.

The rebels have three agenda items: (1) establishing an independent Anywaa territory; (2) uniting the Anywaa with South Sudan; or (3) obtaining more autonomous rights in Ethiopia where their human rights and their rights to their ancestral land are respected (Ugud, FGD, 12 August 2012, Addis Ababa).

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Some regional officials argued otherwise stating that the Anywaa rebels do not have any political or social aim at all. In the in-depth interviews with the aide of the president of the killil, the following emerged:

The so called rebels are engaged in killing innocent people mainly because they lacked jobs in the region as the structural reform process in Gambella made some of them redundant, and they keep on doing this to express their grievance. They relate any violent conflict in the killil to the December 2003 violence. Moreover, the Anywaa diaspora is making propaganda use of those events (IDI, Ato Thomas, Chief of the President’s office of the killil and special aide, 3 April 2013).

An identical statement was made by the president’s delegate (Ato Omot, IDI, 1 April 2013, Gambella) on the same issue. Hence, these officials emphasised that the recent killings are not related to land ‘grabbing’ or agricultural investment in the region. In the same vein, the federal government’s line of story according to the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, H.E Ato Teferra Deribew stated to the House of Representatives that ‘There is no such thing as land-grabbing in Ethiopia; the investors came to Ethiopia to invest on large-scale agricultural land, not to grab lands, but to develop the land.’ Likewise, his deputy, H.E. Ato Wondyirad Mandefero underlined that ‘there was no one Ethiopian citizen dislocated from their ancestral land for the sake of investment; investment took place only on un-used public and state land.’

As will be seen later, the rebels are not aimless. They have a clear political agenda as the charge of High Court in Addis Ababa shows regarding one of

the accused rebel leaders, who was the former President of the killil (Ethiopian Reporter, 2014). Detailed discussions about the rebels’ leader will be provided in Chapter Twelve. In short, the above data reveals that there are dimensionally opposite narratives on the investment-violent conflict link in the killil.

9.3 Land and Land Related Resource Governance in Gambella

This study has discovered that most investors in Gambella were leased vast land which was not effectively administered by the local political leaders. In addition, there was hardly any involvement of indigenous peoples in the large-scale agricultural investment in the killil; and there were incoherent and unequal power relationships between the federal and regional governments concerning land and land related resource governance (for detailed discussions see Ojot, 2013).

9.3.1 Local Political Leaders and Governance of Agricultural Land in the killil

It transpired in in-depth interview with the Chief of Investment Bureau of the killil that most investors, who got agricultural land on a lease basis in Gambella, live in Addis Ababa or somewhere else outside Gambella. He pinpointed the problems succinctly:

Many left the land waste and did not use it for agricultural production at all. Instead, they obtained loans for different purposes from the bank by showing the documents of the land lease agreement as a form of collateral. Moreover, vast forest areas were cleared, with much of it burnt and a huge number of trees felled, but the land was not put to agricultural use in Itang, as well as Abobo, and Pugnudo. For instance, there were about 68 investors who were leased the land five years ago but only 23 of them started the work in Abobo wereda [at the
Moreover, regional, zone and woreda administrators were not involved in the decision making process of land and land-related resource governance in their respective community to follow up the performance of the investors as it was revealed in the in-depth interviews. As surfaced in the interviews with the woreda administrators and the head of Investment Bureau of the killil, the main function of the killil leadership including the zone as well as the woreda was to implement what had been issued by the federal government. So, even at a political level, local actors had very little say regarding how the land projects had been managed.

9.3.2 Indigenes’ Roles in Large-Scale Agricultural Investment

Through my research I was able to identify only one person from the indigenous peoples, another one was preparing to get involved in the investment activity. Ojot (2013:245) found two from the indigenes. Two interrelated explanations were given by the participants for this. First, the indigenous population lack entrepreneurship skills; and, second, they have no access to bank loans to take part in in large-scale agricultural development. Hence, very few indigenous persons were involved in large-scale agricultural investment in Gambella. Most investment land was in the hands of the peoples who came from outside the killil (see Ojot, 2013:245 for more discussions). It follows from the data that such a lack of participation of the indigenous population in the development of their own region probably has led to resentment contributing to violent conflicts in the killil.

It was also noted in the in-depth interviews with the participants that most domestic investors in Gambella were related in one way or the other with
members of the ruling political party or, they themselves were party members; hence, had access to the bank loans and/or to the decision making officials. The problem became more visible when the land was laid waste and indigenous peoples were excluded from engaging in development activities. These diverse, interactive and dynamic elements feed violent conflicts in Gambella.

9.3.3 Federal-Killil Power Relations

I have summarised the narratives of the higher officials of the House of Federation and the Ministry of Federal Affairs of the federal government (IDI January/February 2013, Addis Ababa) on federal and regional governments’ power relations regarding land and land related natural resource governance in the killil. According to the Speaker of the House of Federation of the FDRE (Honourable Ato Kassa Tekle-Berhan69 15 January 2013):

Some emerging peripheral regions of Ethiopia like Gambella lack the capacity to construct infrastructure such as roads, to provide the population with piped water, to build dams, electricity, airports, and transport systems on their own. They need special support and close cooperation with the federal and other neighbouring regional national states of Ethiopia.

In his views, the principle of the constitution is that there should be no weak federal or regional government; balance should be maintained in terms of power relations. Regional governments are not instruments for implementation of what the federal government tells them to do. By contrast, in in-depth interviews with regional leaders at killil, zone and woreda levels revealed that the role of the regional government is perceived to be to

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69 By kind permission and consent of Honourable Speaker of the House of Federation, I have used his official title and full name.
accept the instructions issued by the federal government and implement them accordingly. What the participants in the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions said reflects what Clapham (2009:187) stated:

Just as with the honeymoon period that immediately followed the Derg’s land reform … the EPRDF’s programme of ethnic federalism necessarily provided less than it promised, and came up against the contradiction between local autonomy and central power that was inherent in both projects. At one level, this was the same contradiction as that involved in the TPLF’s own transformation from regional insurgency to central government…It soon became clear that regional autonomy was, just as in the Stalinist model that the EPRDF adopted, subordinated to a monolithic party-state…Insofar as the idea of federalism necessarily involves the recognition of alternative foci of power and authority, and the development of mechanisms through which to resolve the inevitable differences that arise from diversity, the EPRDF was never at heart a federal regime at all.

The ‘contradiction between local autonomy and central power’ can be further illustrated by looking closely at what the woreda and the zone leaders, as well as the Regional Bureau of Investment, reported in in-depth interviews and FGDs: that they were not involved in the process of dealing with the investors (Chief, Investment Bureau of the killil, IDI, 4 April, 2013, Gambella) ‘… if investors fail to pay tax, the duty and responsibilities of the Investment Bureau of the killil is to report to the federal government only; the Regional Bureau of Investment has no role of tax enforcement’.

It appears from the above analysis that the peoples of the killil and their representatives are no more the owners and leaders of their own killil in sharp contrast to what has been stated in the FDRE Constitution of 1995, and power relation between the federal and the killil government is similar to a unitary military state of the Derg regime as implied in Chapter Five. The regional government’s task has been merely to implement what it was told by the federal government (see Mesfin, 2011 for similar conclusion in
Benishagul Gumuz and ICG, 2012; Ojot, 2013) regarding governance of land and land-related resources.

In short, the EPRDF land and land-related natural resource use policy does not seem to have succeeded in addressing the customary practice of communal land ownership issues. In contrast, the field data indicates in the direction of an asymmetrical power relationship between local autonomy and central control denying the indigenous peoples’ land ownership rights. These factors have in fact impacted on conflict. As has already been stated above, the government’s policy failure forced a number of Anywaa ethnic groups to leave their ancestral land to become refugees and rebels, creating yet another layer of external dynamics in the internal conflict complexity.

9.4 Summary

In this Chapter I have focused on two major issues. First, I have compared and contrasted the present study with the previous work (Ojot, 2013) in this Chapter and established that there are four major differences. (1) Whereas indigenous communities’ right to land is the prism of the whole study of Ojot’s work, it is only one element in conflict complexity in my analysis. (2) While political self-determination is a ‘failure’ in Gambella for Ojot, I maintain that the political self-determination of the EPRDF regime has contributed tremendously to the self-expression and identity realisation of the indigenous population, even though it is nominal, with major limitations and heavy handed control by elites from the centre. (3) The present study concludes that there is compelling evidence from currently changed situations in Gambella and South Sudan that external factors are more decisive than internal migration in conflict complexity in Gambella today. Finally, (4) the present study argues that the role of governments’ discourse at various levels in relation to causes of violent conflicts is essential and decisive mainly because they can form as well as transform violent conflicts in the killil.
Secondly, the Chapter analysed and evaluated four issues related to investment: large-scale agricultural investment; the role of investment in generating violent conflict; the response of the indigenous peoples to the investment; and the discourse of the peoples at grassroots level and that of the official lines in accounting for the large-scale agricultural investment and violent conflict nexus in Gambella. The link between large-scale agricultural investment and violent conflict in Gambella was articulated in terms of investors-indigenes relations where it was asymmetrical and the locals felt alien on their own land. As the field data demonstrate the locals’ dignity was undermined by the foreign investors for they were given more salience over the indigenous peoples by the political and administrative institutions. Moreover, ecological balance was affected as a result of chemical use by the investors who were more interested in growing biofuels for international markets for profit than caring for the natural environment, which sustains the lives of the indigenes.

The Anywaas’ nominal political representation in Gambella and their violent response to investment from time to time through rebel movement fuelled the fire of conflict in the killil. Lack of ownership of ancestral land by the local population and genuine political representation at the Regional Council through political leaders together with asymmetrical power relation between the federal and regional governments appear to have positive feedback on the violent conflict in the killil for the last over twenty years. Added to these are dimensionally opposed views about the conflict constituting elements in Gambella held by the locals and the officials at different levels, which have played essential roles in conflict complexity in Gambella.

Chapter Ten extends the preceding debate by sharply focusing on villagisation as ‘economic factors’ expressed in terms of the incumbent’s economic policy. It focuses on the narratives of the federal and regional governments regarding villagisation. It will then critically examine the nexus
between villagisation and violent conflict in Gambella under the current government to which we now turn to.
Chapter Ten

Economic Factors: Villagisation in Conflict Complexity in Gambella

(Song On villagisation)
If land was distributed, I could bear it
If debts were plenty, I could bear that too
If I have to go to the war front, I can bear this also
Asking me to tear down my own house
Is definitely the puzzle of puzzles.
(Fekede Azeze 2002: 166).

10.1 Introduction

Chapter Nine demonstrated the link between large-scale agricultural investment and violent conflict in Gambella. The focus of this Chapter is to critically examine the nexus between villagisation and violent conflict in the killil. The current government developed a five year scheme known as the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP\textsuperscript{70}) to bring about speedy economic growth in the country. The villagisation programme in Gambella is considered the key strategy to implement the GTP. The GPNRS\textsuperscript{71} Report (2012:7) defines villagisation as ‘a process of moving the beneficiaries within the same locality and settling them in a community centre’. Hence, the peoples will shift from a vulnerable area to the new nearby area with no farther than 5 km radius from their original abode. It is intended as a clustering of peoples in a place that will provide them with development.

\textsuperscript{70} GTP (Growth and Transformation Plan) in this study refers to GTP I, which was intended for 2010 – 2015.

\textsuperscript{71} Gambella Peoples’ National Regional State (GPNRS): Report on Villagisation Program Strategies, Objectives and Targets and Outcomes, January 2012
services to bring about tangible and radical change to the lives of the rural community in line with the GTP (Document of Villagisation, 2010:30 – 45). This Chapter deals with three interconnected points regarding villagisation and violent conflicts: the federal and killil governments’ narratives on villagisation; narratives of the local peoples; and the link between villagisation and violent conflicts in Gambella. By so doing, it attempts to answer the sub-research question: **How have economic factors in terms of villagisation impacted on conflict complexity in Gambella as viewed by the local peoples and the regional as well as federal governments?**

### 10.2 Federal and Killil Governments’ Narratives on Villagisation

The stated government rationale behind villagisation in Gambella may be seen from three angles as stated in the villagisation scheme document of the killil (*GPNRS Report, 2012: 8-10*). First, the region is ‘endowed with expansive land and abundant water resources’, but has failed to be food self-reliant. Second, ‘the majority of the regional population (74.6%) lives in rural areas and their livelihood is based on primitive agricultural practices’. For instance, clear and cut shifting cultivation practices which are not environmentally sound, and river-side settlement which is prone to flood hazard, are all possible causes of a lack of food self-sufficiency in the killil. Finally, scattered settlements are not conducive to provide infrastructure development and good governance; they make such efforts inefficient, insufficient, uneconomical and generally inaccessible. Moreover, as stated in the document scattered settlement is not conducive for:

(1) Community cohesion; (2) government intervention in community development; (3) easy and improved technology transfer; and (4) provision of good governance. Hence, villagisation programme is an essential mechanism to deliver effective socio-economic services and speedy development of the most tangible way to implement the GTP in the region. (*GPNRS Report, 2012:16*).
To this end, the Gambella *killil* in collaboration with the federal government and Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples’ Regional State (SNNPRS) designed a villagisation development programme to be carried out in three years (H.E. Ato Ahine, IDI, 4 October, 2012, Gambella). The following scheme was set up to villagise 45,000 households (HHs), out of the planned 60,000 HHs of the entire region\(^2\) (see appendix I for the details over three years as reported in Amharic and the following is the summary of it in English):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Unit of Measurement</th>
<th>Implementation Year 2010/11</th>
<th>Implementation Year 2011/12</th>
<th>Implementation Year 2012/13</th>
<th>Total 2010-12/13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Villagised HHs</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>45,000HH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Arable Land</td>
<td>Hectare</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>60,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>135,009ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Pasture land</td>
<td>Hectare</td>
<td>25,581</td>
<td>51,162</td>
<td>25,581</td>
<td>102,324ha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gambella Bureau of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Office of Villagisation Plan, (April, 2013)

N.B: It has been calculated that a household will be provided with three hectares (ha) of arable land together with a hectare of pasture land on the assumption that a hectare of pasture land is enough to accommodate 3 livestock units per year.

The sample *woreda*, i.e., Itang special *woreda* administrator underlined the *killil* government’s views at *woreda* level about villagisation and recent conflicts. He provided the overall structure of the villagisation scheme which is depicted in the following sketch of villagisation programme blueprint in the *killil*.

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\(^2\) See appendix I for the implementation of two years of the scheme in all Gambella *killil*. (The text was written in Amharic as 2003 and 2004, which meant 2010/11 to 2011/2012.)
The woreda administrator explained the mechanism of villagisation process in the woreda he was in charge of. According to the administrator, the special woreda administration brought peoples to the villagisation centre voluntarily.

No one was forced to go to the villagisation centre. They would go back any time to their former location. It was not meant to free the land for investors or commercial land as it was propagated by our ideological enemies and anti-peace elements (Ato Akane, IDI, 5 October 2012, Itang, Gambella).

He pointed out that the special woreda administration provided the community that clustered in the villagisation centre with health services, schools, all weather roads and 4 hectare of land for each household. Four hectares of land were allocated: 2 hectares near irrigation area; 2 near ancestral land. The table below summarises the allocation of the land in Itang special woreda:

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Figure 10.1 A sketch of villagisation plan/clustering of the peoples in a mender (village).
Source: Gambella National Regional State, Villagisation Affairs Office, 4 April, 2013. (See Appendix J for the enlarged scheme of villagisation as sketched by the killil experts of the Villagisation centre).
Table 10. 2 Villagisation process in Itang Woreda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of villagisation</th>
<th>Number of household (HH)</th>
<th>Number of centres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2,307</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>1,001</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,958</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: tabulated by the author based on data from interviews, (5 October 2012, Itang, Gambella)

On the contrary, in focus group discussions with the community in Itang woreda of Gambella (Oduro, 06 October 2012), it became clear that when the Anywaa peoples wanted to go back to the river banks where they came originally from, they were refused by the cadres. Similarly, in Tegni where villagisation was relatively successful, some people were interviewed as to whether they were allowed to go back to their original places; and they responded negatively: they ‘cannot go’ because they ‘are not allowed to’. Consequently, many of them fled to other countries such as South Sudan, South Africa, Kenya, the USA, the Middle East or Europe (FGD, 3 April 2013, Gambella). Nevertheless, these participants were not able to give the exact number of the Anywaa who fled the region. However, as it was discussed in Chapter Six (see table 6.1) the number of the Anywaa ethnic group had been decreasing ever since the large-scale agricultural investment started in Gambella as the table indicates.

10.3 The Local Peoples’ Narratives on Villagisation in Gambella

The indigenous peoples’ narratives significantly differ from both the killil and federal governments’ regarding villagisation in Gambella. 20 out of 26 Anywaa participants at grassroots level (not leaders at different levels) in the FGD and IDI agreed that the principle of villagisation is not a bad idea in
itself. A settled way of living, with access to schools, clinics, hospitals, service centres, modern agricultural system, improved seeds and fertilisers and improved infrastructure are all welcome. They acknowledged that the programme was meant for helping the population to maintain food security, and that such a plan had the potential to transform the life of the rural poor in Gambella. It also had the potential to reduce resource-based violent conflicts.

The main problem, according to the participants, is that the federal government started to settle the Anywaa in a village away from their ancestral lands. The government went ahead with its villagisation scheme despite opposition and dissent from the community members. One of the participants put it this way:

There was no consultation with the peoples about where they should go. We thought the killil was autonomous, but the leaders of the killil are under close scrutiny of the cadres of the federal government. The political leaders in Gambella are more accountable to their political party in the region and to the federal government in Addis Ababa than to their constituencies (Ugud, FGD, 12 August 2012, Addis Ababa).

Furthermore, the Anywaa participants in FGD see the villagisation programme as ‘land grab’73 mainly because the project of villagisation moves them from their ‘rightful’ ancestral land. They further claim that they have been settled near Openo River for many generations where they depended on fish and fruits from the irrigated farm in an indigenous way. Once the Anywaa have been displaced from their natural abode, they don’t have any access to these sources of food (ibid). One of them related an incident when the Anywaa were asked by the government officials to leave their ancestral land and live in a settled and modern way where they would

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73 Some participants used the phrase ‘land grabbing’ as synonymous with the term ‘villagisation’ focusing on the consequence of both. They thought that both of them meant freeing the land to be leased to investors where the investors ‘grab’ and own the lands, while the locals ‘villagise’ themselves being dispossessed of their lands (FGD, July 2012).
have piped water, schools, hospitals and other social services; one of the participants re-narrated what the Anywaa farmer responded to the killil government officials:

Pipe can give us water, can it give us fish? Pipe can give us water, not papaya or mango or banana; we give our children for breakfast, lunch or dinner these fruits; if we leave our ancestral land we will be deprived of what we have inherited from our ancestors. (Ojulu, FGD, 15 July 2012, Addis Ababa).

As it was revealed in the FGD, the Anywaa were forced to leave their original place and were made to settle in the village. Nevertheless, the Anywaa in protest burned the village ‘abol’ or hut, which was constructed for them by the government, and went back to their ancestral land. As the participants stated, for their action, some of them were imprisoned, some disappeared and of some the whereabouts remains unaccounted for. The participants underlined that centralised arrangement might be good to provide services like clinic, school, etc. but villagisation is not the will of the local peoples.

We visited five households in the villagisation centre, who were villagised over three years in the Itang special woreda. Except for one woman who said she came to the centre voluntarily, all participants’ responses were diametrically opposite to what was stated by the president of the killil, the woreda administrator and what was recorded in the villagisation plan documents; the settled peoples clearly stated that they were forced to move there. They expressed their concern that there were schools but no teachers or school materials; there were clinics but no nurses or physicians; they were given small plot of land not 3 or 4 hectares as promised. They had been there in the village centre for 3 years; life was more miserable than it had been on the river side where they could get fish. They used to grow fruits and vegetables for at least two seasons a year because of water availability. Here in the village centre they have almost nothing; they were not allowed to go back to their original place, either. A woman with her husband and three
children told us the same story. They had been there for about three years and they survived by selling firewood in the Itang town about 7 km away from the village centre.

We can't farm our land and we were told to be here. We can't go back to the river side where we can get more water to irrigate in a customary way. We used to grow mangoes, papaya, and get fish for free from the river. We were forced to come by the government officials. No facilities such as piped water, or electricity or hospital have been provided as was promised (Ahole [female farmer], Gambella, 6 October 2012).

This account is similar to that presented by the Human Rights Watch (HRW, 2012:30):

The government brought us here... to die... right here.... We want the world to hear that government brought the Anywaa peoples here [village centre or mender] to die. They brought us no food; they gave away our land to the foreigners so we can't even move back. On all sides the land is given away, so we will die here in one place.

In contrast to the government narratives, it follows from the FGD and IDI that the villagisation programme in practice frees land up for investors. In the views of the participants, the investment did not guarantee the local peoples basic food security. Forests and wildlife which serve the locals as coping strategies for sustaining life are being destroyed and cleared by investors as discussed in Chapter Nine. The ancestral land has been transferred to others (FGD 12 August 2012 Addis Ababa) without any regard to the value system and culture of the indigenes.

It was further revealed in the FGD that in the culture of the Anywaa, the chief of the village gives blessings to any Anywaa that goes hunting in the forest or fishing in the rivers. The elders bless the land, the water, the forest so that the peoples, the water as well as the land become fertile and bear fruits. According to the participants in the FGD, clearing forests is regarded
as a criminal offence to gods; anyone who clears or destroys them without the knowledge of the chiefs is cursed by the chiefs and excommunicated by the community. They believe that it is because of this cultural practice the forest has remained unimpaired for over a very long time keeping the ecological balance. If there is a need to clear some portions of the forest, e.g. for farming or constructing a house, it is done in consultation with the community and chiefs. As the participants underlined, together with the chief the community members decide what to do about the wildlife which sustains life in time of hunger.

Likewise, land and forests on the land are seen as identity of the Anywaa – it belongs to the Anywaa clan, not of a state or of an individual property (ibid). In a stark contrast to the Anywaa’s perceptions, an established customary practice and their social-psychological makeup, the legal framework for rural land administration related to acquisition, transfer, redistribution and removal of a holding right is defined under the FDRE Constitution and Proclamation No. 456/2005. These documents stipulate that the right to ownership of rural and urban land, as well as of all natural resources, is exclusively vested in the State and in the peoples of Ethiopia. ‘Land is a common property of the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia…’ (See the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, article 46 sub-article 1). In the same vein, the Proclamation states that rural land will be given free of charge and for an indefinite period to peasants, pastoralists and semi-pastoralists who are or wish to be engaged in agriculture.

This, as was disclosed in the above cited FGD, runs contrary to the belief systems of the Anywaa. As the participants underlined, as a result of villagisation programme, the foundation of the Anywaa livelihood system and coping mechanisms have been wrecked, and the core of their livelihood has been crippled, leaving them in despair. The Anywaa customary leadership both in the past and now believe that their land belongs to all

Anywaa, i.e. the dead, the living and the unborn. As it was repeatedly stated in the FGDs, now they are dispossessed of their property. And this constitutes, in the participants’ views, the essence of intractable conflict in Gambella particularly in the Anywaa vis-a-vis the federal as well as the regional governments. It is these perceptions that have contributed to a number of violent conflicts in the region as the participants underlined. They reiterated that it is only during the EPRDF regime that their land was confiscated and villagisation took place accompanied by the military force (ibid). Some people refused to settle but they were forced by the kebele, regional, zone, and woreda leaders, according to the participants.

Locals’ narratives further elaborate that small huts were made by the killil government to settle the indigenes; however, the people refused to be in them and burned them, and some of the huts collapsed because they were weak\(^{75}\). Of the freed ancestral land, the fertile, vast and virgin land of 100,000ha was leased to Karuturi Agro-industrial plc. for 50 years in the cheapest price or ‘the deal of the century’ as the Guardian journalist put it in the documentary, of which 10,000ha was under cultivation in the time of field visit, March-April 2013. They cleared the forests, affecting the natural environment that has been source of sustenance and coping mechanism of the Anywaa population. Consequently, the perception of the Anywaa as aired out by one of the participants is that:

\[75\)http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/mar/21/ethiopia-centre-global-farmland-rush a documentary which demonstrates the ‘land grab’ in Gambella.\]  

The EPRDF government targeted the Anywaa and it is working hard to get rid of the whole ethnic group so that it can have fertile land for its parastatal and foreign investors who produce crops for bio-fuel for international markets. Moreover, rain became scarce, drought is rife, and animals in the forest are dying and leaving the area because the forests have been cleared (Oman, FGD, 3 April 2013 Gambella).
10.4 Villagisation – Violent Conflicts Nexus in Gambella

It is to be recalled that the Derg’s resettlement and villagisation policies (see Pankhurst, 1990:130) against the will of the population in the 1970s and 1980s resulted in the formation of armed opposition and rebel groups such as the Gambella Peoples’ Liberation Movement (GPLM), allied with the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). Similarly, there are many armed opposition groups which were created in response to the collapse of the 1995 GPLM-EPRDF ‘marriage of convenience’, the 2003 Gambella violence, and the climax of the ‘land grab’ in 2010/11 or villagisation programme, thus making an explicit link between these programmes and violent conflict. This conclusion was further supported by other independent studies such as reports of civil societies and international human rights groups (see Dessalegn, 2011; Human Rights Watch, 2012, The Oakland Institute, 2013). They maintain that there is a strong link between villagisation and violent conflicts stating that both investment and villagisation have occurred between the ranges of time i.e., 1993-2013 coming to the pick in 2010/11.

Furthermore a number of opposition groups mushroomed in response to villagisation; one of the armed groups acknowledged by the government is the Gambella Nilotes United Movement/Army (GNUM/A). It was created alongside other three parties, viz. the Gambella Peoples’ Liberation Movement/Force (GPLM/F); the Gambella Peoples’ United Democratic Front (GPUDF); and the Southwest Ethiopia Nilo-Saharan Peoples Independent Movement (SENPIM). All of them claim to be fully supported

76 SENPIM (The Southwestern Ethiopia Nilotic-Omotic Peoples Independent Movement) is a liberation movement that identifies the over 4 million peoples drawn mainly from 27 indigenous tribes of the Southwestern region. These tribes include; Anywaa, Arebore, Berta, Bodi, Bena, Bale, Brile, Bacha, Dasenach, Gumuz, Hamer, Kwegu, Kara, Komo, Majenger, Mursi, Minit, Murle, Male, Mao, Nuer, Nyangatom, Opo, Suri, Sheko-Majenger, Tsmayeko and Tirma. The movement is an independent political organization formed by the merger of three political parties i.e GNUM (Gambella Nilotes United Movement) of the Gambella region, SNOPM (Southern Nilotic-Omotic Peoples Movement) of Lower Omo Valley in SNNPR region and BNPM (Beneshangul/Gumuz Nilotic Peoples Movement) of Beneshangul/Gumuz region (see www.culturalsurvival.org/.../senpim_press_release_final_sept_2012).
by a number of Gambella communities and their representatives from different parts of the world. The opposition movements also allegedly cooperate with Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia (SMNE\textsuperscript{77}), human rights organisation operating outside Ethiopia with special focus on the Anywaa of Gambella.

According to the armed groups’ press release\textsuperscript{78}, successive Ethiopian regimes since Menilik II have continued to deny the rights and the freedoms of the Gambella indigenous peoples and the recent climax of cruelty and brutality in the country has been felt in extreme marginalization, ‘genocidal’ mass killings, imprisonment, tortures, poisonings, and evictions of Gambella peoples from their ancestral land. They further claim that the Ethiopian divide and rule ‘colonial’ system and policies persist and the violation of human rights against the Gambella peoples continue. It is through this realization, they believe, that ‘the Gambella peoples chose to pursue armed and diplomatic struggle to resist the Ethiopian colonial policies and human rights violations for self-determination’ (ibid).

The groups maintain that the recent land lease deal signed between the Ethiopian government and the commercial companies led to forced displacement without free, prior and informed consent of the indigenous communities, which has raised great concern among the indigenous peoples of Gambella and southwest Ethiopia as a whole. They maintain that this is the darkest period of history because of: the clearing of large forests for agriculture without respect for the existing ecosystem, the subsequent

\textsuperscript{77} The SMNE is based on the belief that ‘the future well-being of our global society rests in the hands of those among us who can put “humanity before ethnicity,” or any other distinctions that divide and dehumanize other human beings from ourselves; inspiring us to care about these “others;” not only because of the intrinsic God given value of each life, but also because “none of us will be free until all are free.” These are the underlying principles of the Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia (SMNE). The SMNE is a non-violent, non-political, grassroots social justice movement of diverse Ethiopians; committed to bringing truth, justice, freedom, equality, reconciliation, accountability and respect for human and civil rights to the peoples of Ethiopia and beyond. The SMNE has branches in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Norway, Sweden, Australia, Japan and chapters in various cities and countries throughout the world, including within Ethiopia. You can find them through website at: www.solidaritymovement.org\textsuperscript{80} http://www.quatero.net/archives/19926.
settlement of incoming large highlanders, particularly from the north, as labourers, which outnumber the indigenous populations, compounded with the racist actions of the Government, and lack of interest to bring sound development to improve the lives of the indigenes. The press release underscores that:

The discrimination and marginalization against our race, colour and cultures as indigenous populations (Nilotic) are deepening and worsening. Despite our very rich resources in the whole southwest regions our peoples (Nilotes) continue to be poor. The depletion of resources including the clearing of huge forest following the arrival of the settlers from highlands of Ethiopia and the great number of refugees from across Sudan in the past decades, and the current land grab and the increasing cutting of the dense forests have resulted in deforestation, migration of wildlife to the neighbouring countries, loss of communal land rights and the reduction in the level of water in the major rivers throughout the region, with profound advert [sic] effect to our livelihood and cultural heritage (ibid).

One of the strong rebel movements which claims to represent the peoples of Gambella is GNUM/A. In its press release it underscored that GNUM/A has the fundamental objective of bringing freedom to the indigenous peoples of Gambella and the neighbouring Southwest Nilotic Ethiopians from all forms of political, economic and social discrimination and oppression. In the press release it pledged to maintain the pursuit of the political vision of GPLM (which fought the Derg government alongside the EPRDF from 1975 – 1991 only to be disbanded in 1995 by the EPRDF itself as discussed in Chapter Seven).

When interviewed about this political group, the Chair of the ruling political party and EPRDF-affiliated Gambella Peoples Unity Democratic Movement and the Vice President of the Gambella killil, H.E. Ato 79 Gatluak Tut said the

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79 He was vice president at the time of interview, March 2012; on 16 April 2013 he was made president of the killil, the first Nuer President in the EPRDF regime. The presidency quota has been to the Anywaa
The above interview is roughly rendered in English as follows:

GNUM/A is not a legal organisation. It has no legal recognition as a political party in Gambella region or in Ethiopia… it killed 20 innocent people on 4 March 2012… Their aim is to establish a state of black peoples separate from Ethiopia\(^80\). Their hollow hope is to make Gambella secede from the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Their idea does not represent the peoples we represent. The group have their own constitution whose essence is to free Gambella from EPRDF. This is basically wrong. We say this because we have our own country. Our country is Ethiopia. We live in Ethiopia. Our religion is the religion of Ethiopia. The peoples live in Ethiopia. Therefore, we don’t see anything that urges us to merge with other country [detaching from Ethiopia]. To be honest, there are Sudanese Nuer, Ethiopian Nuer, Sudanese Anywaa as well as Ethiopian Anywaa. It is similar to Ethiopian Afar or Ethiopian Somali.

\(^{80}\) A brief story of the former president of the killil, the leader of GNUM/A, the Gambella Peoples’ Liberation Movement (GPLM), and the Gambella Democratic Movement (GDM), who was extradited by the South Sudanese government and imprisoned for the trial in Addis Ababa in the time of writing, will be discussed in Chapter Twelve.
Despite being illegal, the GNUM/A allegedly continued to attack property and peoples. The story below is told by a victim\textsuperscript{81} a non-Anywaa who survived the attack by the GNUM/A military wing, already mentioned in the interview quoted above, on the 4 March 2012 on civilian students where 24 of his colleagues died (see the story in the box below).

\begin{boxedtext}
\textbf{Box 10.1 A GNUM/A Survivor Tells a Story}

‘On Sunday, 4 March 2012 we were coming from Gambella Agricultural College, which was situated outside the Gambella town. We were 40 in a bus and left with only about 20 km to reach the town. Suddenly, our bus was stopped by the armed Anywaa men who were carrying AK47. They spoke in the Anywaa language and told the non-Anywaas\textsuperscript{82} in the bus to get off (pointing their fingers to the direction of the bus door).

As soon as we got off, without asking any questions or giving any condition or explanation, they opened fire on us point-blank. Many of our friends fell there and then. I was shot by stomach and fell down. Everything changed into darkness. I thought I was dying. I felt the fresh blood gushing over my body. They dragged me to a ditch on the roadside. They laid my face down and thinking that I was dead, they left.

After about three hours a vehicle came from the city and took us to a nearby hospital. The following day they sent us to the Black Lion Hospital in Addis Ababa. I know that there were many Anywaa students with us – none of them was hurt by the gunmen. Only non-Anywaas were targeted. All together about twenty-four\textsuperscript{83} people died...’
\end{boxedtext}

\textsuperscript{81}I contacted Kebede (his name was changed for ethical considerations) on 3 April 2013 in Gambella when he came to the office of the president of the \textit{killil} to collect his share of token provided by the government to rehabilitate all victims.

\textsuperscript{82}Colour and lines on forehead are distinctive features between Anywaa and non-Anywaa. The Anywaa are extremely dark colour with no-mark on their forehead in contrast to the Nuer. The non-Anywaas are either brown or black with marks on their forehead.

\textsuperscript{83}Government and private media reported that 19 peoples died initially then they reported the death toll as 24 which consolidate the victim’s story.
The victim in the IDI reported that the killers escaped to South Sudan from where some of them were handed over to the Ethiopian government by the Government of South Sudan in line with the agreements the two countries signed in January 2012 as was reported in the public media to the nation. In April 2012, the same group attacked employees that used to work for Saudi Star in Gambella killing four Ethiopians and one Pakistani, which was confirmed by the Ethiopian media and the project manager of the SSAD, Plc. who lost five of his staff as was reported in Chapter Nine. However, on 6 March 2013, the leader of the rebels, Mr Okello Odiel, was killed by the Ethiopian defence force, according to the Ethiopian media, and in-depth interviews with the representative of the President of Gambella killil, (H.E. Ato Gordon84 1April 2013). Mr Okello Odiel was hiding in South Sudan where most rebels hide since its independence, according to in-depth interview with the representative of the president.

10.5 Summary

The villagisation process has raised a number of issues ranging from existential questions of the Anywaa population to concerns about minority and property rights in the region. It follows from the FGD and IDI that villagisation has created fertile ground for further violent conflicts in the region. Different discourses of the officials on the one hand, and that of the local peoples on the other indicate to some degree, a rift and the existing tension between the local population and the political leaders. The lack of accountability of the state institutions at grassroots level to the very local peoples is understood as an element of conflict complexity in the killil. Arguably, the creation of rebels fighting for the right of Gambella and other Nilotic identity groups probably signifies the discontent of the local peoples to express their grievance which they conceived when they were forced to tear down their houses and leave their ancestral abode. Added to this are:

84 By the kind permission of H.E. Ato Gordon, the Chief of the Bureau of the Security and Administration of the killil and representative (delegated at the time) of the president I used his name in the research.
the lack of consultation with and compensation for the local peoples before moving them to villagisation centre, which have apparently caused tension in the killil feeding and fuelling the violent conflicts there. Consequently, it is the dynamics and interaction of villagisation with other factors that appears to have contributed to conflict complexity in Gambella.

Despite differences and contradictions in the narratives regarding villagisation-violent conflicts link, some things are obvious. The Anywaa livelihood is mostly based on mixed farming, hunting and gathering. At the same time, there is the intention of ‘modernising’ the agricultural practice and transforming the living standard of the peoples by both federal and killil governments. It is clear from field observation (October 2012, Gambella) that there are flood-prone and malaria infested areas in Itang where peoples struggle to make ends meet. I argue that it is the responsibility of both the killil and federal governments to resettle these flood affected peoples on the basis of free and prior consented agreement of the very peoples. What is more, Gambella is one of the regional states of Ethiopia which shares international border with South Sudan. Consequently, it has been affected by spill-over effects of contagious conflicts particularly as a result of the refugee flow which contributes to conflict complexity in the killil. This is the subject of Chapter Eleven.
Chapter Eleven

External Factors in Conflict Complexity in Gambella

The present Ethiopian and South Sudanese governments, TPLF/EPRDF, and SPLM/A respectively, were past liberation movements. The movements could be labelled as Opieo and Ochan. The first born baby in a twin birth in the Anywaa culture is named Opieo and the second, Ochan. Both fought existing governments that failed to provide social justice, political freedom and economic development. Both claimed that they fought for survival; hence, both came to political power through bloodbath with a ‘winner take all’ approach. The difference is that the EPRDF (Opieo) overthrew the military government and controlled Addis Ababa in May 1991, whereas the SPLM/A (Ochan) signed a Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005 in Nairobi and seceded accordingly from Sudan on 9 July 2011 (Ato Obong Ugera, IDI, 6 October 2012, Gambella).

11.1 Introduction

Deriving from the theoretical framework laid out in Chapter Three, whereas Chapters Eight to Ten described and analytically examined the role of the pre-1991 and particularly, the post-1991 economic factors such as large-scale agricultural investment and villagisation in conflict complexity in Gambella, the present Chapter critically analyses the role of external factors in conflict complexity in the killil. Four factors have shaped the role of external dynamics in internal conflicts in Gambella killil as argued in this Chapter. First, the role of external factors in internal conflicts has been examined. Second, cross-border movement of the population between Gambella and southern Sudan and their impact on violent conflicts in the killil have been analysed. Furthermore, refugees' roles in the past and present regimes of Ethiopia in violent conflicts in Gambella have been discussed. Finally, the link between the independence of South Sudan and violent conflicts in Gambella has been elaborated. The Chapter analyses
these factors and seeks to identify their dynamism and interaction with other factors in creating conflict complexity in the *killil* for the last over twenty years with a view to answering the following sub-research question: **What roles have external factors played in conflict complexity in Gambella as conceived by local peoples and government leaders at different levels?**

### 11.2 External Factors in Internal Conflicts

Most internal conflicts have international dimensions as Brown (1997:521) argues. This can be evidenced by taking the case of Gambella, Ethiopia over four regimes. During the regime of Menilik II, the western colonial powers’ interests were in competition to establish formal colonies in Africa as discussed in Chapter Four. Their attention was on amassing territories, dividing the same social units into different sovereign states, and plundering resources, among other desires. Hence, the ‘super powers’ of the time – Great Britain and France, which were active in the Horn of Africa, appeared to have approved dominance, injustice, and human rights violations at a massive level in Ethiopia in general and in the lowland peripheries such as Gambella in particular (Crummey, 2000; Marcus, 2002; Kassahun, 2009; Bahru, 2008). Another issue of concern is that the present-day boundary between Ethiopia and Sudan is principally the result of the 1902 Anglo-Ethiopian delimitation treaties which were demarcated during the regimes of Menilik II (see Bahru, 2008). The continuation of colonial legacy created more controversy in Ethiopia beyond Gambella, particularly, after the exposure of the alleged “secret” re-demarcation deal between the current governments of Ethiopia and the Sudan that resulted, according to various media reports, in the ceding of a very large part of the north western part of Ethiopian borderland to Sudan. The Sudan Tribune\(^8\) highlighted the news without mentioning the exact size below:

September 17, 2009 (KHARTOUM) …Engineer Ibrahim Mahmoud Hamid, Minister of the Interior announced the beginning of the demarcation of the border between Sudan and Ethiopia in the ninth of October this year by the joint Committee… During the past years, Sudanese and Ethiopian farmers disputed the landownership and some gunmen pillaged border villages. The two countries also suspected rebel groups of having presence in these areas…Some Ethiopian opposition groups and organizations opposed to the on-going border demarcation between the two countries and accused the government of Meles Zenawi of dislocating Ethiopian farmers from their land to cede it to Sudan….They further say Sudan in return committed its self [sic] to deport Ethiopian opponents and letting the ruling "EPRDF security agents roam" freely in the Sudan to harass and kidnap refugees. Yesterday the Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Party (EPRP) urged Sudan to "withdraw immediately and without condition from the Ethiopian territory that it is occupying in Gondar region."

During the regime of Haile-Selassie, international security interest was more in ‘collective security’ and maintaining sovereignty irrespective of the type of governance prevailed in Ethiopia at the time (Henz, 1998; Marcus, 2002). For example, there are reports that the British Royal Air-force bombed rebels in Tigray on the request of Haile-Selassie’s Government in 1943 in an attempt to silence ethnic identity questions in Tigray (Gebru, 1991; Aaron, 2002). Similarly, when Americans were provided the radar station in the Eritrean region of Ethiopia, by the then Ethiopian government, the American government was silent and cooperative with the Ethiopian government to squash any rebellious movement in Eritrea against the central government in Addis Ababa since early 1960s (ibid). In a surprising move, however, when Eritreans won their independence after more than 30 years of guerrilla fighting, it was the United States Assistant Secretary of State, Mr. Herman Cohen, who facilitated the formation of transitional
government in Ethiopia and Eritrea in 1991 in London, according to the Christian Science Monitor, 1991⁸⁶:

United States Assistant Secretary of State Herman Cohen, who convened the talks that began May 27 in London involving the rebels and the government, called May 28 for a quick end to the hostilities and establishment of a broad-based transitional government leading to "free, democratic, internationally monitored elections within nine to 12 months." … [he] recommended that the rebel Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) enter the capital to avoid further chaos and disorder… When Mr Cohen in London recommended that the EPRDF enter the city, they apparently were quick to take up the idea, though a spokesman said the decision was their own.

During the *Derg* era, at the peak of the Cold War, the international community, particularly the US and the UK preferred silence while nearly a million intellectuals and young people were systematically massacred by the military might of the regime under the scheme of ‘red terror’ (see Gebru, 2009; Assefa, 2012). Apparently, the *Derg* preferred to align behind the former USSR – another international actor and responsible for internal violent conflicts– and the power balance remained more important than good governance or human rights and democracy (ibid). The post-Cold War Ethiopia has seen no difference from the previous regimes in terms of human rights, democracy and good governance. Despite some development and humanitarian aid, the international community paid lip service to human rights atrocities in Ethiopia since 1991 in the interest of fighting global terrorism and maintaining state security at expense of human security in the lowland peripheries of Ethiopia, especially, in Gambella, Benishangul, Ogaden, Oromia and Southern Ethiopia (Aaron, 2002;


After a quarter of a century Mr. Herman Cohen regretted that what he did was a mistake in an interview with the Ethiopian Satellite Television (ESAT TV) in October 2015.
Ethiopia’s relations with its neighbours, mainly with Sudan, Eritrea, and Somalia have affected the internal conflict at different levels (Berhanu, 2007; Mosa, 2013). Sudan and Eritrea hosting Ethiopia’s opposition forces and providing them safe passage through to Ethiopia, and supporting kin and kith of Ethiopians living in the respective countries complicates internal conflict dynamism in Ethiopia as discussed in Chapter Six (Berhanu, 2007; Assefa, 2012). Added to these are cross border movements of the population, which are discussed in the following section.

11.3 Cross Border Movement of the Population

The nature of cross border movements has become far more complex since the civil war in Sudan which started immediately after the independence of the Sudan from Great Britain in 1957 (Molla, 2004; Tewodros, 2007; Regassa, 2010). The issues of cross border movements involved more than transient population shifts, which require national attention and state intervention. Equally important is cross border livestock raiding, a longstanding practice among pastoralists in the lowlands, which seldom invited the attention of the state in the past (ibid). However, in recent years this practice has acquired a commercial dimension, bringing about mass impoverishment of communities necessitating state protection in the killil. As it transpired in the IDI with head of the Investment Bureau of the killil:

Cattle raiding and smuggling, contraband trades in coffee, gold, ivory, goats and sheep are commercial features of cross border activities which frequently result in significant loss of revenue to the state through the porous border of Ethiopia-
South Sudan via Gambella. Small arms and light weapons from DR Congo, South Sudan, Sudan, Eritrea, Libya, Djibouti, Kenya, Uganda and other parts of Ethiopia, such as Oromia, especially Borena, and Somali region of Ethiopia are key items of the illegal trade that exacerbate violent conflicts in Gambella (Ato James 4 April, 2013, Gambella).

Cross border population movements are often related to inter-state disputes over borderland territories and involved national security and sovereignty. Consequently, Ethiopia’s border with South Sudan is a potential trouble spot because of the presence of a large number of Nuer on both sides of the border who move freely between the two states whenever it suits them. It is normal for events in South Sudan to impact on Gambella (IDI, Chair of the Elders, October 2012, Gambella). Evidently, in the past three decades this impact had been violent and destabilizing because of the long war in the Sudan and endless conflict across the border involving mainly the Anywaa and Nuer ethnic groups as stated in Chapter Six. Even worse, the Nuer refugee flooded Gambella after 15 December 2013 when civil war broke out following the coup d’etat in South Sudan bringing about existential threat to the Anywaa ethnic group in the killil.

11.4 Refugees and Violent Conflicts in Gambella

In most literature relating to Gambella, any violent conflicts in the killil is regarded as a continuation of violence in South Sudan (see Regassa, 2010; UNICEF, 2014; Davison, 2016). Conflicts in Sudan in 1956 and 1969 had displaced 20,000 people who lived as refugees in Gambella (ibid). Since the 1960s, Sudanese refugees fleeing civil war settled in Ethiopia’s western region of Gambella (Regassa, 2010; Tessema and Triulzi, 2010; Hoth, 2013; Mosa, 2013). It was halted in 1972 by the Addis Ababa Agreement that granted autonomy to Southern Sudan and many refugees returned home only to be marred with more violent conflicts. Consequently,

Gradually, the number of refugees exceeded the indigenous population intensifying pressure on the natural environment and aggravating the scarcity of resources (Bahru, 2002; Regassa, 2010; Tessema and Triulzi, 2010). The pre-existing indigenous versus refugee tension was exacerbated, sparking Anywaa-Nuer conflicts due to the settlement of the Nuer refugees in the Anywaa areas, such as in Gambella town and Itang woredas reaching climax in November 2015 numbering more than 260,000 over 90 per cent being the Nuer ethnic group (IDI, the United Nations Higher Commission for Refugees (UNHCR\(^87\)) officials, 2015, Gambella).

In the 1980s, Gambella had to host a vast refugee population which outnumbered the local inhabitants by a ratio of 3 to 1 (ibid). The refugees came from southern Sudan and many of them were Nuer, pushed by the unending civil war in that country. However, the conflict resumed with greater intensity in the early 1980s when the Addis Ababa agreement was violated by the Khartoum regime as stated above (see also Regassa, 2010; Tessema and Triulzi, 2010). ‘By 1990, the number of refugees in Gambella rose to 350,000’ (Regassa, 2010:176). Most of them were settled in two huge camps: Itang and Pinyudo (Fugnido), both on the Anywaa land.

Seen positively, these refugee sites became the focal points of a vast aid operation run by UNHCR that stimulated economic activity throughout the region (ibid). Gambella, Itang, Pinyudo and Abobo towns prospered as trade centres and highlander traders flocked there. A road network was built to link the region with the highlanders and an internal road network linked the refugee projects and administration centres (Molla, 2004; Dereje, 2006;

\(^87\) The in-depth interview was conducted in the Gambella town in November 2015.
Regassa, 2010). The UNHCR opened schools in the camps and offered universal education opportunities that benefited mainly Nuer youth producing the first generation of Nuer intelligentsia. Under the UNHCR auspices, the refugees were provided with free food, superior health care and education facilities. Gambella also hosted the ‘rebel’ group of Sudan Peoples’ Liberation Army (SPLA) with which the then Ethiopian regime struck an alliance. Following the deal, the SPLA set up its headquarters at Bilpam near Itang, established a training camp at Bonga and several camps elsewhere in Ethiopia (ibid).

From a more challenging perspective, relations between the Anywaa and the refugees, whom they called ajiwili, were tense from the start. The behaviour of the SPLA guerrilla army, which had Nuer soldiers and commanders, as well as Murle, long-time enemies of the Anywaa, was strongly resented; there were many incidents of looting, raping, and killing of Anywaa, yet appeals to the Derg by the Anywaa were ignored (Regassa, 2010:67). The issues came to a head in Pinyudo refugee camp with the population size exceeding 40,000, (Regassa, 2010:178) that had been set up in 1988 next to an Anywaa village by that name. As Molla (2004) and Regassa (2010) found out in their research that on 9 September 1989, eve of Ethiopian New Year, a dispute occurred over whether the local market should close for the day escalating into violence when local Anywaa militia fired on the refugees. Six days later, 15 September, refugees attacked and wiped out Anywaa militia at Itang and looted a highlander shop in the town killing several shop keepers. The Derg government took no action and nobody was punished for these acts. Instead, the Anywaa militia in Gambella town was disarmed by the Derg and replaced by the Nuer. The political implications of the refugee presence in Gambella and consequent communal violence intensified in the 1990s (ibid). This action of the Derg opened the old wounds and laid new foundation for the antagonistic contradiction between itself and the Anywaa ethnic group, which led them to fully support a rebel group known as Gambella Peoples Liberation
Movement (GPLM) discussed in preceding chapters. The former president of the killil stated the roles of the refugees in violent conflicts formation and process in a nutshell (IDI, 3 October 2012, Gambella) as follows:

The Derg regime had been using Gambella to train the SPLA forces whom it thought would fight the Sudanese government in Khartoum so that the Ethiopian rebels fighting the Derg would be expelled from the Sudan.

The narratives maintain that the Derg miscalculated that by providing arms and munitions to and facilitating a training centre for the SPLA, it would get rid of its opposition forces from the land of the Sudan. On the contrary, according to the narratives, these forces fought the Derg from 1975 to 1990 and toppled it. The following movements were all listed in the narratives as the major actors in the rebel groups that brought down the Derg regime: Afar Revolutionary Democratic Unity Front (ARDUF), Eritrean Peoples’ Liberation Front (EPLF), Gambella Peoples’ Liberation Movement, (GPLM), Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and Tigrean People’s Liberation Front (TPLF).

Both at regional and Federal levels, the official line of the narratives were that the short-sighted strategy of the Derg led to more violence in Gambella as more refugees moved in from Sudan to escape the fight there. The narratives further underlined that the Derg government used these refugees⁸⁸ to attract the international community’s attention for more aid so that it could channel the aid to its soldiers fighting ‘the freedom fighters’ in eastern, northern and western parts of Ethiopia in the in 1970s and 1980s. The former president of the killil summarised by stating the following about

⁸⁸ Note that refugees come to Gambella not only from Sudan but also from a number of other countries including DR Congo, Eritrea, Somalia and Uganda.
the roles of the refugees in the violent conflicts in Gambella (IDI, 3 October 2012):

The role of the refugees in the violent conflicts in the past should be seen from the angle of the misguided policy of the *Derg*, which was responsible for creating incentives for its hideous objective.

Historically, the heavy presence of refugees in 1980 and early 1990s intensified violent conflicts sparking the Anywaa-Nuer conflicts due to the settlement of the Nuer refugees in the Anywaa area of Gambella town and Itang *woreda* as one of the Anywaa participants in FGD who has lived all his life summarised:

There was an arbitrary settlement of refugees with no proper registration. An unknown number of Anywaa and Nuer migrants lived inter-mixed with their respective next to kin in Gambella in a way that made it hard to identify indigenous from migrants. What is more, firearms were obtained by many refugees to protect themselves from attack. As a result, border areas such as Gog-na-Jor, Akobo, and Jikawo had frequently been disturbed and affected by the influence of neighbouring events, to the extent that refugee insurgents have been exercising virtual control over several *kebeles* around the border areas. Hence, unprecedented and random disruption of law and order followed the influx of refugees (Opio, FGD, 1 April 2013, Gambella).

It was further disclosed in the focus group discussion (FGD, 1 April, 2013) that Gambella was the reluctant host of a vast refugee population, which outnumbered the local inhabitants by a ratio of 3 to 1 in the 1980s and early 1990s. This was evidenced in other works such as Molla (2004), Tewodros, (2007), and Regassa, (2010). The long civil war in Sudan was the push factor, which displaced over 20,000 people who lived as refugees in Gambella in 1970s and 1980s. The refugee presence in Gambella and
consequent communal violence intensified in the early 1990s until the EPRDF forces took control of Gambella as it was revealed in the FGD and IDI with participants in the research.

The continued and complex nature of violent conflicts sowed the seed of bitterness and revenge in the two ethnic groups, making their future relations fragile and vulnerable to the slightest triggering factors. Summary of the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions highlighted that, more recently, tension between the Anywaa villagers and the Nuer refugees in Pignyudo mounted when the Anywaa demanded the UNHCR move the refugee camp out of their area. The demand was ignored, and on 2 December 2002 the Anywaa attacked the camp, killing 33 refugees. The UNHCR then decided to move the refugee camp, and chose a site in another village, located at about 265km from Pignyudo near the South Sudan boarder, but still in the Anywaa territory (summary of IDI with of the Chair of the Elders, 4 October 2012, Gambella and FGD with both the Anywaa and Nuer participants).

Literature indicates that the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between SPLA/SPLM and the Sudan government (CPA) in January 2005 ended more than two decades of conflict in Sudan and paved the way for Sudanese refugees to return home (Regassa, 2010; Markakis, 2011). Consequently, since March 2006 the UNHCR and ARRA assisted the voluntary repatriation of over 36,000 refugees from Ethiopia. Three camps were closed as a result and, five years later, by 31 August 2011, the remaining two camps in Fungudo in Gambella and Sherkole in Benishangul-Gumuz hosted nearly 27,000 refugees, were hoping to return home after the independence of South Sudan (ICG, 2014). However, the outbreak of fresh hostilities at the beginning of September 2011 between the Sudanese army and the SPLM displaced over 27,500 further refugees into Ethiopia (ibid).
In 2011 there were an estimated 30,861 Sudanese refugees and asylum seekers in Gambella (IRIN, 2012). Most of the new arrivals from Blue Nile State of South Sudan were staying with the host communities along the border areas. The UNHCR and ARRA continued encouraging them to relocate in safer locations further inland. In October 2011, a total of 1,425 refugees were transferred from Kurmuk, Bamza and Almahal to the new camp at Tongo in Gambella. This brings the total number of refugees relocated to the camps to about 7,000. As conflict continued in South Sudan, and Abiye more refugees were expected to flow to Ethiopia. In 2011, in three centres of Gambella: Pinyudo camp hosted 25,578, Dima 7,000 and Bonga 13,000 (UNHCR Report, 2012:2).

Similarly, the recent flow of refugees in hundreds of thousands to Gambella and Benishangul Gumuz of Ethiopia fleeing fresh fighting in the Blue Nile State of Sudan between the newly independent South Sudan and the northern Sudan makes the internal conflict even more dynamic and complex (IRIN 2012). Yet another fight, the coup in the newest country in the world, on Sunday, 15 December 2013 which continued to date in South Sudan is further complicating internal conflict in Ethiopia. In November 2014, over 180,000 new refugees were in Gambella creating severe tension between the refugees and the indigenes in Gambella city, Dima and Itang. A year later, as mentioned above, in November 2015, the number exceeded 260,000. As can be deduced from the data as well as from the previous history of the refugees in Gambella, this influx of the new spate of refugees has created stress on the environment exacerbating resource scarcity and population pressure. In addition, it keeps on pushing up the size of the Nuer in comparison with other ethnic groups which is feared to escalate violent conflicts in the region.

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89 Telephone conversation, 13 November 2014, with my key informants in Gambella; this was confirmed by the president’s office of the killil over telephone on the same day.
The locals’ perspectives of recent influx of refugees varied: while that of the Anywaa’s, on balance, appears to be fear for further violence and threat for their own survival, the Nuer showed little concern as the following extract from FGD indicates:

The Nuer are Nuer no matter where they come from, therefore, the South Sudanese refugees who are Nuer have no problem with Ethiopian Nuer. That means, Ethiopian Nuer have positive feeling about South Sudanese Nuer refugees wherever they are in Gambella region and they forged solidarity. Normally in Nuer culture, if your fellow Nuer has problem you cannot add your past problem to that person’s problem. That means, even if there were inter-clan conflicts between different clans, the common enemies are Dinka in South Sudan and Anywaa in Ethiopian (FGD, Pastor Philip Pal, the Nuer ethnic group, 26 November 2015 Gambella)

11.5 South Sudan’s Independence and Violent Conflicts in Gambella

Any major violent conflicts occurring in South Sudan affected Gambella either directly or as a spill-over effect. Aware of this, in the killil as well as federal government’s views, the independence of South Sudan is perceived positively. They regard it as an opportunity to create a strategic alliance for the two countries. It is an opportunity because, among a number of common causes, the two countries are upper riparian states of the Nile River and both countries are planning to use the Nile water equitably and in line with the international law, which is strongly opposed by Egypt as it can be inferred from the IDI with the former president of the killil. The independence is also a positive factor for economic ties between the two countries. It could create economic benefits such as markets for Ethiopian commodities, investments, and banking. Still another positive effect is educational opportunity for both countries. For example, ’39 South Sudanese youth graduated from the Gambella Health College in 2012 and many other students from South
It was further revealed in the in-depth interview with the killil president that the negative aspect is that there is no clear policy in South Sudan regarding border issues, refugee influx, and management of small arms and light weapons. According to the president, these may constitute a security threat. The 4 March 2012 case, mentioned in Chapter Ten, may be cited here where the rebel groups commit crimes in Ethiopia and hide in South Sudan. As emphasised above, rebel forces, e.g. OLF, GPLM and others use South Sudan as a route to Eritrea where Ethiopian rebels and armed oppositions take refuge (IDI, with the former president of the killil, 3 October 2012, Gambella).

As mentioned in the opening of this Chapter the local narratives were expressed in in-depth interviews with the Chair of the Elders metaphorically that the TPLF/EPRDF and SPLM/A are Opieo and Ochan, i.e. in the Anywaa culture the first born baby in a twin birth is named as Opieo and the next one is Ochan to indicate that both Ethiopian and South Sudan governments were past guerrilla fighters in the jungle are twins. Both came to political power through bloodshed as winners and with a ‘winner take all’ mentality. It follows from the in-depth interview that as twins the two governments have agreed on various issues to work together. The issues range from security to economic cooperation, border and refugee administration and by denying space to each other’s opposing forces or rebel groups. This is seen as positive development following the independence of South Sudan. The locals’ i.e. of the Anywaa as well as the Nuer views are similar with the president’s in that the negative aspect is the lack of controlling mechanism of the flow of small arms and light weapons from South Sudan to Gambella.

One of the challenges observed in the field was that the Nuer became a major political force in the new state of South Sudan from 9 July 2011 to 15
December 2013, the time when a new conflict erupted. In the same vein, the Nuer held upper hand in Ethiopia, particularly after the Ethiopia-Eritrean war of 1998 to 2000. Added to this is the recent political power shift in Gambella (from Anywaa to Nuer), which brought a Nuer president (16 April 2013) for the first time in the EPRDF regime as already stated. It follows from the above analysis and the field data that the potential of irredentist or separatist demands led by the Anywaa rebels, involving the borderland region, could pose yet another security threat, particularly given the possibility of discovering of oil deposits in Gambella mainly in the Anywaa-land on the one hand, and the political upper-hand of the Nuer in Gambella and South Sudan on the other.

Finally, it was revealed in the in-depth interviews that there had been tension following the independence of South Sudan in Gambella. After the 2003 ‘massacre’ of the Anywaa, most Anywaa fled to Pochala, South Sudan – nearly 75% of the Anywaa went there except the government officials and loyalists to the government and those who were unable to leave the region (IDI with the Chair of the Elders, October 2012, Gambella). As the field data further revealed, a number of Anywaa that fled Gambella became guerrilla fighters, not only with the aim of liberating Nilotic peoples, but also to take revenge for the bloodshed of their compatriots as was discussed in Chapters Seven and Ten. In short, the independence of south Sudan can play both positive and negative roles in the complexity of conflict in the killil.

11.6 Summary

In dealing with internal conflict complexity, it is imperative to consider the role of international dynamics. This Chapter has focused on external dynamics and internal conflict in Gambella killil in terms of the contribution of international factors to violent conflicts in Gambella. As stated in Chapter Three, the division of the same ethnic groups between Ethiopia and Sudan
in line with the colonial principle remains one of underlying factors of violent conflicts in the *killil*. The artificial borders created by the colonial powers of the United Kingdom in 1902 remain the point of heated debate with an explosive potential for further violent conflict in Gambella and elsewhere in Ethiopia today. Equally significant was cross-border movement which involves illegal trade in cattle, minerals and the wide spread availability of small arms and light weapons, which have been one of major factors in the conflict complexity in Gambella.

The role of refugees in the past and present has been of a paramount significance in generating and exacerbating violent conflicts in Gambella. The current flow of refugees from South Sudan is increasing the tension between the indigenes and the refugees. By the same token, the independence of South Sudan has positive as well as negative impact relative to political stability in South Sudan itself. Stable and strong South Sudan could contribute for prosperity and development of Gambella and Ethiopia in general. Because of increased instability in that country, the tension seems to be more likely to intensify in Gambella posing existential threat on the Anywaa ethnic group. Hence, the external dynamics interact with internal elements fuelling conflict complexity in Gambella even further. The following Chapter summarises and concludes the study integrating and synthesising all elements of conflict complexity discussed so far.
Chapter Twelve

Summary and Conclusion

‘…the last places to be liberated … are the liberation movements themselves.’

Paxman (2012:3-4).

12.1 Summary

In this chapter the themes of and narratives on violent conflicts in Gambella identified and analysed in the preceding chapters, on the basis of theoretical framework outlined in Chapter Three, are summarised and concluded. The themes are: political factors, one of the most decisive structural causes of violent conflicts in Ethiopia, as expressed in marginalisation and exclusion of lowland peripheries including Gambella killil in pre- and post-1991 state building processes; ethnic identity factors as manifested in ethnic conflicts in Gambella; economic factors i.e. land and land related natural resource use policies of the past and present governments and their links with violent conflicts in the killil; and the role of external factors in violent conflicts in Gambella including the refugee factors and independence of South Sudan.

The factors, processes and consequences of violence in Gambella are conceived differently by different actors. The first section of the Chapter summarises conflict complexity in Gambella, whereas the second concludes the thesis by demonstrating the links between the themes, their dynamism and interaction as well as highlighting some mechanisms of managing conflicts in this uniquely suited killil of Ethiopia for violent conflict.
12.1.1 Political Factors

The political marginalisation and exclusion of Gambella as a peripheral region, and the Anywaa as an ethnic identity group, in the state building processes of different regimes of Ethiopia are articulated under four sub-themes. First, more significance had been given to resources in Gambella than to the indigenous peoples by the four successive modern polities of Ethiopia as discussed in Chapters Four and Five. Second, the Anywaa ethnic group perceived themselves as being selectively targeted by the central governments, particularly the incumbent one. Third, there were competing assertions of the ‘ownership’ of Gambella between the Anywaa and the Nuer ethnic groups. Finally, the Anywaa and the Nuer ethnic groups shifted allegiances to different regimes in Addis Ababa.

To begin with, it was argued on the basis of the literature and the field data that Gambella had been crucial to the Ethiopian state since the late 19th century, mainly as a source for international slave trade (Pankhurst, 1968); free domestic slave labour (Abdulsamed, 1999); ivory trade, and as a port for trading with the outside world (Bahru, 2008); and land and land-related natural resources (IDI and FGD, August, October 2012 and April, 2013, Gambella). State-building processes during Emperor Menilik II, Emperor Haile Selassie, the Derg, and the new social contract marginalised the killil, as was evidenced from previous literature, documents, interviews and FGD. All the peripheries, including Gambella, Benishangul Gumuz, Afar, Borena and Somali regions of Ethiopia, were commonly labelled as lowlanders or kolegna and pastoralist or zelan by the imperial and military governments (Markakis, 2011). By the current government they are renamed as ‘emerging regions’ (or tadagi killiloch, in Amharic) and their respective political parties are termed as ‘affiliated organisations to the EPRDF’ (or agar derjitoch, in Amharic) (ibid). This seems to indicate that the level of integration of the periphery to the Ethiopian polity is still unclear and loose. As various publications indicate (see Donham, 1986; Asafa 2004; Markakis, 2011; Assefa, 2012), these peripheries were discriminated against and
marginalised from the political and economic centre and given different derogatory terms and stereotypical labels which undermined their identities under all the four regimes.

Secondly, it was further argued, premised on the field data and the literature, that among five major ethnic groups in Gambella, the Anywaa resent that both federal and killil governments have targeted them selectively since 1991. Informants from the Anywaa ethnic group believe that cultural, social and economic ‘genocide’ was being inflicted on their ethnic group by the incumbent. The Anywaa perceive themselves metaphorically as an ‘ostrich’ as one of the informants described it in the focus group discussions (Deng, one of the Anywaa participants in FGD, 1 April 2013, Gambella):

The ostrich is neither bird for it can’t fly, nor like other animals for it lays eggs and has wings and two legs. The Anywaa are being coerced to feel that they are neither Ethiopians nor South Sudanese; they have been marginalised by both governments and seen suspiciously by both.

Striking similarity can be drawn between the Anywaa of Gambella and the Berta of Benishangul: 'Living in a border area is very problematic for our people', acknowledged a Berta elder of Benishangul Gumuz. 'Both governments have suspicions on us and always want to divide and rule us. For the Sudan government we are Ethiopians, for the Ethiopian government we are Sudanese, for the SPLA we are Muslims (see Markakis, 2011: 350).

In the in-depth interviews (IDI, 3 April 2013, Gambella, mentioned in Chapter Six) they made it clear that the Anywaa have been Ethiopians and in Ethiopia since 15th century, despite reincorporation during Emperor Menelik II (see Levine, 2000); and yet, they complain that so far there has never been a minister, or an ambassador from the Anywaa ethnic group to
indicate that the Anywaa are part of the Ethiopian polity. This exclusion and marginalisation of the Anywaa economically and politically from the Ethiopian political economy rendered them powerless and victims of all atrocities by federal as well as killil governments. Further, as the interviews and documents suggest, most Anywaa believe that their future is bleak as they have no access to economic sources or political power. The data further shows that their relation with the federal government remains sour. As the Anywaa informants asserted, the central government in Addis Ababa regards the Anywaa as an opposition force fighting it; the government, the Anywaa participants claimed, dispossessed the Anywaa ethnic group of their ancestral lands in its state building endeavour by marginalising, subduing and victimising them under the scheme of investment and villagisation. They believe that in the past as well as at present, they have been marginalised. This feeling of marginalisation of the Anywaa in the state building processes of Ethiopia has been one of fundamental factors for the continued violence in the killil to date.

Third, some of the Anywaa intellectuals recognise that (as the summary of the FGD, 12 August 2012, Addis Ababa indicates) the framework of ethnic federalism legally provides for group rights but its implementation is very problematic. These Anywaa intellectuals underlined that one of the biggest problems was ethnic relations between the Anywaa and the Nuer. They cited statistical evidence in their narratives that the Nuer ethnic group were less than 10 per cent until 1991. Currently their number is more than double i.e., the Anywaa population is 64,000 whereas that of the Nuer is 143,000 according to the 2007 population and housing census of Ethiopia. They further maintain that the majority of the Nuer have lived in South Sudan for

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90 It should be noted in accordance with the Ethiopian Constitution, an ethnic group with population of 100,000 can have a representative in the House of Representatives; hence, the Anywaa have one representative in the Parliament even though their number is below the number specified in the Constitution, according to the 2007 census (ECSA, 2007). It was verified that there is no minister or state minister or ambassador from the Anywaa ethnic group in the Ethiopian polity at present, as the participants expressed.
most of their lives; conversely, the majority of the Anywaa have been in Ethiopia. In the same vein, they argue (Ojaga, the Anywaa participant, FGD, 3 April 2013, Gambella), as indicated in Chapter Six all river and place names in Gambella bear the Anywaa names making it self-evident to many Anywaa that Gambella ‘belongs to’ the Anywaa ethnic group.

To the contrary, Peter, one of the Nuer participants, (15 July 2012 Addis Ababa), underlined that the very name ‘Gambella’ comes from the Nuer language. The Nuer claim that they have been in Ethiopia since the 16th century; they traded with the highland Ethiopians, despite the majority of the Nuer still being in South Sudan. The story of the Nuer trading with other Ethiopians has been detailed by (Tessema and Triulzi, 2010). This, they argue, indicates that they were the original inhabitants of the place called Gambella at present. Hence, they contend metaphorically that the Nuer are the root and stem of Gambella while Anywaa and others are branches and leaves of the region. So, the Nuer narratives go, they were and still are indigenous to Gambella and deserve to have more economic and political power to run the killil. It appears that such claims to ‘own’ the region, irrespective of being a myth or reality, constitute some of the elements of conflict complexity. This phenomenon was acutely observed by Clapham (2009:187) who states it as follows:

There were …, of course, problems inherent in the project of ethnic federalism itself, notably in the creation of internal frontiers separating peoples of different nationalities, which imposed sharp divisions. In turn, they signified the ‘ownership’ of territory by the nationality to which it was ascribed – in place of the fluid boundaries through which different peoples had historically accommodated themselves to one another, for example, along the ecological interface between pastoralists and agriculturalists. When the new regions were themselves multi-ethnic, most obviously in Gambella with its fraught relations between [Anywaa] and Nuer, the fact that regional government now represented a prize worth winning intensified internal conflicts of a kind that are familiar throughout post-colonial Africa.
Finally, as alluded to in Chapter Four, the state building process during Emperor Menilik II, where Ethiopia and Great Britain in Sudan competed to win the favour of the Anywaa to their side, have reappeared in the 20th and 21st centuries. Each rival state supplied arms to the Anywaa to fight the Nuer so that they could rally the Anywaa behind them. But when the Anywaa were defeated by the Nuer, the competing parties changed their strategies. Similarly, during Emperor Haile-Selassie, the Anywaa were supplied with munitions and arms to fight Islamic Sudan to deter Islamism; this strengthened the Anywaa militarily. But the military government of Ethiopia suspected the Anywaa as collaborators with the feudal system. Instead, it brought the Nuer into political power in 1974, which angered the Anywaa and made them flee Ethiopia to join the opposition parties in Sudan. The Anywaa were determined to fight the Derg under the banner of Gambella Peoples’ Liberation Movement (GPLM) and found a place in Sudan as their headquarters. They joined other Ethiopian opposition groups such as TPLF and OLF in Khartoum (Young, 1999), fought successfully, and brought the military government to its demise.

It is the downfall of the Derg that ushered in the Anywaa to power for they had been comrades of TPLF in their fight against the military government in Ethiopia although their relations were short lived, as discussed in Chapter Seven. Unsurprisingly, in the current political system, all five presidents were from the Anywaa ethnic group until 16 April 2013; namely, Okello Oman, who died after some two and a half years in power; then Okello Gnegilo. Dissatisfied with the way the Anywaa were treated by the federal government, he resigned but still lives in Gambella killil at the time of writing. Yet another Anywaa president, Okello Akuayi 91, left the country discontented with political system of the EPRDF and settled in South Sudan. He was extradited by the South Sudanese government and charged with terrorism acts and imprisoned in Ethiopia with his associates in 2014.


The Ethiopian Reporter, 14 June 2014 reported:
Former Gambella regional government President Okelo Akuayi was charged with terrorism at the Federal Supreme Court 19th Criminal Bench, [Addis Ababa, Ethiopia] … [He] was found to be plotting to take over the Gambella Regional State in an attempt to establish an autonomous state for the Gambella peoples forming a couple of political fronts such as the Gambella Peoples' Liberation Movement (GPLM), and the Gambella Democratic Movement (GDM).

Omod Obang, commonly known as ‘the stooge of the EPRDF/TPLF government’, was replaced by his Nuer deputy. He was more loyal to the party than to the peoples of the Anywaa from whom he came and whom he was supposed to serve in line with ethnic federal framework of Ethiopian politics (see the pictures of all presidents in the first row – the Anywaa, and vice presidents, the second row – the Nuer, of Gambella from 1991 – 2013 below).

![Fig. 12.1 Presidents and Vice Presidents of Gambella killil from 1991 to April 2013](source)

To sum up, various regimes of Ethiopia in their state building attempts gave more significance to the resources of Gambella than to the peoples of the killil. The Anywaa’s perceptions of being targeted by Ethiopian central states, competing claims of ownership of Gambella by the Anywaa and the Nuer, and their shifting allegiances to different regimes at different times made the conflict in Gambella protracted. The ethnic federalism project was entrenched by the EPRDF as a state building process and a mechanism to deal with violent conflicts in Ethiopia. However, the field data in the present
research and most of the previous studies (see Vestal, 1999; Clapham, 2009; Tronvoll, 2011; Assefa, 2012; Asnake, 2013; Ojot, 2013) have revealed that the very ethnic federalism project itself sowed the seeds of more violent conflicts rather than preventing or resolving them.

12.1.2 Ethnic Identity Factors

Ethnic-identity based conflicts have contributed to conflict complexity in the region at least in three ways as the field data demonstrate: first, ethnic-identity based political organisations mushroomed and deepened the division among ethnic groups; political party interest and loyalty to ethnic federalism were given priority over public service; and, ethnic relations in the killil worsened and became antagonistic.

First, on the basis of data obtained through IDIs, FGDs and document analysis, I have argued in Chapters Five and Seven that ideology of ethnic federalism has been one of the major contributing factors of violent conflicts in Gambella since 1991. The qualitative interviews outlined issues in regional leadership. For instance, an Amhara (a highlander) is concerned with the issues of the Amhara (the highlander), an Anywaa with the Anywaa, a Majang with the Majang, and a Nuer with the Nuer ethnic groups when elected to the Gambella Regional Council from their respective constituents. No political leader has appeared to be concerned about any other person or identity group outside their ethnic heritage; and yet, these leaders use public office and public money to address their respective ethnic advantages as surfaced during the IDI and FGD. These political leaders were made to behave this way in order to implement the political philosophy of ethnic federalism. The priority of political philosophy of ethnic federalism has been to capitalise on ethnic difference among the community, prioritise ethnic politics rather than professionalism, and put party ideology before public service. Consequently, different ethnic parties mushroomed by emulating the ethnic party framework of the federal government in Addis Ababa; hence, each of them contributed to conflict complexity in the killil. The federal
government itself acknowledged the role of these political organisations in violent conflicts in Gambella in its report on the factors of the 2003 violence in Gambella as stated in Chapter Seven and in most recent conflicts there i.e. November, 2014 and December 2015 as cited in Chapters One and Three.

Second, it is hardly surprising if each ethnic group is promoting the interest of its respective members. What is happening on the ground in the killil, as the field data reveal, is that the regional leaders are accountable to the federal state that appointed them in contradistinction to the provision of both federal and regional constitutions according to which every ethnic group has to elect their representatives. And the elected ones were in principle expected to be accountable to the peoples that voted for them. In practice, however, decentralisation, according to the field data, works in the interest of the federal/regional party leaders, rather than the local population. This finding resonates with previous publications including the report of International Crisis Group (2012:6):

To preserve its power, the EPRDF abandoned any meaningful implementation of federalism and, behind the façade of devolution, adopted a highly centralised system that has exacerbated identity-based conflicts. Exclusion and disfranchisement have provided fertile ground for ethnic and religious radicalisation, already evident in some lowland regions, where the ruling party exploits resources without local consent. The EPRDF/TPLF’s ethnicisation of politics has neither empowered local societies nor dampened conflict, but rather increased competition among groups that vie over land and natural resources, as well as administrative boundaries and government budgets.

Finally, divisive ethnic politics are being reflected in antagonistic ethnic relations, whose consequences were acknowledged in the 10th EPRDF Congress in Mekele in September 2015 by the incumbent. When the Anywaa participants were interviewed, they blamed the Nuer for their marginalisation and exclusion. They viewed themselves as the only well-educated group of peoples in the region and proud of being Ethiopian,
whereas the Nuer, in the eyes of the Anywaa, were non-Ethiopians. Yet, the Anywaa participants underlined that the Nuer were and still are in control of the region politically, economically and in terms of security for the Nuer are favoured by and sided with the ruling party.

Another Anywaa participant in the same FGD alleged that many Nuer came to Ethiopia from Sudan as part of the SPLA. When the SPLA army left the camps in Gambella to return to South Sudan, the Nuer claimed Ethiopian citizenship. This claim was substantiated by previous studies that the Nuer, who came to Ethiopia as refugees, ended up being Ethiopian citizens. According to the study, the Ethiopian government officials ‘directly instructed’ that this should happen (see Regassa, 2010:129). As discussed in the preceding section, claims and counter claims of ‘ownership’ of Gambella have prevailed between the Anywaa and the Nuer ethnic groups over time, thus increasing the degree of conflict complexity in the region. Moreover, the Anywaa-Nuer relations have most of the time been conflictual some of which were manifested in education, language, and political power questions as was described by a Nuer respondent in the FGD (5 October, 2012, Gambella):

In June 2001 when the Nuer children applied to the school, the Anywaa representative at Educational Bureau of the killil denied access. When seven Teacher Training Institute (TTI) trainees came to Gambella College, the same person refused these candidates, stating that the Nuer were refugees, not Ethiopian citizens. This led to violent conflicts which involved stone throwing and use of machetes by students of the Gambella School and Ras Gobena School. In the incident the Anywaa police shot and killed a Nuer student, which led to further violence in that year in Gambella (Yang, FGD, 15 July 2012, Addis Ababa).

This was confirmed in the in-depth interviews with the Chair of the Elders (6 October 2012). He stated that in response to the situation, the Nuer went from home to home, market to market, office to office looking for an Anywaa to kill with machetes. The whole Anywaa village was taken and controlled by the Nuer in June/July 2001 until the regional government intervened and
brought law and order to the region according to the Chair of the Elders. However, it must be underlined that the pattern of Anywaa-Nuer relation appearing to be dominated by communal conflict does not justify that all conflicts in Gambella are ‘ethnic conflict’.

In short, the ethnic identity-based violent conflicts increased in degree and intensity in the killil since the introduction of ethnic federalism by developing sense of ‘each ethnic group for itself’. By so doing it created antagonistic ethnic relations and eroded trust and weakened social fabric among different identity groups that have lived in the killil for generations peacefully. Likewise, local political leaders made allegiance and loyalty to the regional and federal party officials their top priority. Consequently, the population at grassroots level lacked power to decide their affairs on their own and lost trust in the leadership as well as the political institution. Put simply, ethnic politics, lack of meaningful political representation at grassroots level, and antagonistic relations between the local communities fuelled by ethnic identity factors, arguably served as positive feedback to reinforce conflict complexity in Gambella.

12.1.3 Economic Factors

The land and land related resource use policy of the past as well as the present regimes analysed in Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten revealed different layers of violent conflicts in the killil. As has already been stated, land was and remains to be a defining factor of the identity of the Anywaa. The Anywaa’s perceptions of ownership of land and the provision of the new social contract are mutually exclusive. This incompatibility, one of the underlying factors and manifestations of violent conflicts in Gambella, could be seen at least at two levels: first, large-scale agricultural investment by foreign and parastatal companies on the land the Anywaa claim to be theirs, destroyed their natural environment and dispossessed them of their communal land; and, second, the villagisation programme of local population in the killil dislocated the Anywaa from their age-old abode
undermining their ownership rights of land. The resultant effect has been proliferation of various Anywaa rebel groups inside and outside Ethiopia, leading to violent conflicts in the killil like the one occurred in March and April 2012 cited in Chapter Ten (see Box 10.1).

12.1.4 External Factors

As detailed in Chapters Three and Eleven, the dynamics of external factors in terms of the flow of Nuer refugees to Gambella following the recent violence in South Sudan, cross-border illegal trades, Anywaa rebel movements to and from Gambella as well as widespread availability of small arms light weapons have played significant roles in generating and escalating violent conflicts in the killil.

In sum, the above themes have highlighted structural factors of conflict complexity in Ethiopia as evidenced in Gambella, and demonstrated that the hypothesis put forward in Chapter One was correct. The following section draws overall conclusion and makes some recommendations premised on the analysis and discussions of Chapters One to Eleven and the above summary.

12.2 Conclusion

Contemporary conflicts in Gambella are intractable, protracted and recurring. This is due largely to the past and present processes which were conceived as and framed in single variables such as ‘ethnic conflict’ thereby giving rise to superficiality in their explanations and policy formulations to mitigate them. Conflicts in Gambella are complex and the foregoing chapters have critically examined and explained conflict complexity in the killil based on one overarching research question: What constituted
conflict complexity in Gambella since 1991 as conceived by the local peoples and leaders of the regional and federal governments?

To answer the question, four interlinked themes, i.e. political, ethnic, economic, and external factors were identified. In-depth interviews, focus group discussions, documents, literature and media outlets were used to collect primary and secondary data which captured actors’ imaginations, feelings, perceptions, and stories. The dynamism and interaction of the four interrelated themes, together with the narratives of the local peoples, and national as well as regional leaders, on conflict complexity in the killil, were analysed. Pulling all the threads together, this section concludes the study and outlines some of the policy alternatives about how this uniquely complex killil might be managed, grounded in the research question raised and the themes pinpointed.

The four themes of conflict, which at surface appear unrelated, are organically linked and interwoven with one another. First, political conflict is manifested when ethnic groups are discriminated on the basis of their ethnic identity, alienated from political participation and marginalised from economic activities. In the present instance, political as well as ethnic conflicts become prominent in economic marginalisation when one closely observes the land use policy of the incumbent in Gambella. Both federal and regional constitutions articulate that land belongs to the state and the peoples. Nevertheless, the locals, particularly the Anywaa, are being and becoming not only discriminated, but also dislocated from ancestral land to facilitate for large-scale agricultural investment without consent or compensation. Land is a defining feature of the ethnic identity of the Anywaa – to be an Anywaa means to be a sedentary farmer, fisher, and hunter living in a community of ancestral land. The Anywaa’s perceptions of ownership of land and the provision of the regional as well as national constitutions are incompatible. Consequently, there is a strong view in the
Anywaa community that the new social contract is working against them, i.e. to evict them from their land so that it can have fertile land for its supporters and foreign investors. These bitter feelings of injustice, lack of political representation to fight for their rights, marginalisation from economic activities, and dislocation from ancestral land for the purpose of villagisation and investment have been the sources of violence where, political, economic, and ethnic conflicts converge.

The interaction and dynamism of ethnic, political and economic factors in Gambella was observed at different levels. At one level, most investors coming from outside Gambella had access to bank loans, while the local peoples were denied both the loans and expertise to invest in agriculture in the killil. At another, the interplay between ethnic, political and economic factors is more conspicuous when one seeks to know who owns the land of Gambella under the investment scheme; either political party members or those who are affiliated with the party own it as the field data reveal; this conclusion is in tune with previous studies (see Ojot, 2013:332) as well.

Food insecurity increased over the last two decades, despite the large-scale agricultural investment and villagisation schemes, which were intended to guarantee food security. As previous studies show, villagisation had the worst consequences during the Derg regime, both in Gambella and other parts of Ethiopia (Pankhurst, 1990:130). In the same vein, under the incumbent’s regime, the local forests and indigenous plants are being cleared for investment thus degrading the environment and reducing the level of water in the rivers severely affecting the very survival of the locals. These situations have often led to deadly conflicts caused structurally by political, economic and ethnic factors and triggered usually by sham elections in and political elites of the killil since 1991.
Moreover, the interaction of external factors with economic, political and ethnic factors in the killil illuminates conflict complexity there. Gambella is a frontier state with potential of attracting many external agents through the Nuer refugees, the Anywaa rebels, and cross border illegal trades in small arms and light weapons. Added to these were the independence of South Sudan and bad-neighbourhood with Eritrea, which played a significant role in generating violent conflicts in Gambella. The influx of the Nuer refugees from South Sudan escaping the civil war since December 2013 and their settlement in the Anywaa’s ancestral land has placed the Anywaa ethnic group in a dilemma, making them a minority in ‘their own’ homeland and complicating the domestic political economy. An existential threat for Anywaa has become more serious than the customary Anywaa-Nuer ethnic conflict, as the newly arrived Nuer have forged solidarity with the already settled Nuer in Gambella who have held both political and economic power since April 2013. It has taken the form of a regional security threat as a result of the dynamism and interaction of external, ethnic, political and economic conflicts highlighting conflict complexity in the killil.

On the one hand, the conflict was exacerbated by: the continuity of top-down rule, strong authoritarian political culture, the legacy of being more predatory and brutal than the previous leaders, and extractive cum controlling institutions from the past. On the other hand, the change of political system under EPRDF, i.e. engineering socio-political life in terms of ethnic politics, for all its remarkable economic and socio-cultural achievements, has ethnicised politics and politicised ethnicity, thus worsening violence in the killil on a broader and deeper scale. Most narratives of the incumbent at different levels are diametrically opposite to that of the local peoples. The former stresses that violent conflicts in Gambella are ethnic conflicts, which are the result of the anti-peace elements’ propaganda and failure to implement ethnic politics; whereas the latter emphasise that ethnic politics itself has fuelled the fire of violence. Rather than preventing future conflicts and transforming the existing ones, it is ethnic politics which worsened the
situation by promoting an ethnic consciousness and conflictual attitudes amongst the local peoples, rather than promoting issues-based politics, cooperation and civic nationalism.

Put simply, rather than creating a political space to represent the region as a whole, ethnic politics has resulted in a process of ethnic competition for political as well as economic resources, leading each ethnic group to question: ‘who gets what, where, when, how and who is advantaged and disadvantaged in this process?’ Hence, the apparently disparate forms of conflict all must be taken into account in order to holistically explain conflict complexity in Gambella, including the interlacing of one another through the interaction and dynamism of political, ethnic, economic and external factors and the discourse of the incumbent at different levels as well as that of the local peoples.

Following from the above conclusions, it is possible to sketch out policy alternatives about how this peculiarly complex and sensitive killil might be managed. One such alternative is imaginative and innovative socio-political cum legal re-engineering with a view to engaging the local peoples, depoliticizing ethnicity, and reducing the politics of top-down rule and distrust, as well as the threat and actual use of military force in every single local conflict. There has always been a lack of bottom up feedback; the tendency has been to only pass on what the rulers like to hear, not the reality on the ground. In Gambella as in all other parts of Ethiopia, ‘...there is no space in which different ideas are debated vigorously to forge and sustain a [bigger regional] national vision in all regimes’ transcending ideological issues of a regime in power (see Lefort, 2015:385).

The ideology of the EPRDF, i.e. ethnic federalism, was conceived as a potential means of mitigating conflicts in the region by its leaders both at
national and local levels. On the contrary, however, empirical studies over 20 years (see e.g. Abbink, 2011) have evidenced that the policy intervention of ethnic politics is not working as desired by the authors, and arguably a complete failure. It has rather exacerbated and brought about very different effects by antagonising previously peacefully co-existing and cooperating communities for generations. This holds true to the present research in Gambella; the policy intervention of the incumbent has not been successful to the degree it has claimed, necessitating a re-thinking of policy alternatives.

In particular the incumbent’s key policies to manage conflicts have been limited to implementing ethnic federalism accompanied by a military solution for all conflicts. This use of similar mechanisms of conflict management in Gambella that are applied elsewhere in Ethiopia, without taking account of the context specific facts, such as existing customary practice of mitigation and respect for the cultural norms, has brought about unforeseen negative consequences. On top of that the local cum regional political leaders have been mere implementers of the policy of the federal government, in the wise words of Markakis (2011:282): ‘The elite in the centre continue to rule; the elite in the periphery continue to administer.’ Their roles are restricted by the very power structure which continues the legacy of the past; as in the unitary system of the imperial or Derg era, the flow of the directives and policy instructions have been unidirectional, from the centre to the periphery, and high to low meticulously maintaining the status qua of centre-periphery asymmetrical relations.

Likewise, the local peoples’ coping mechanisms, and amicable relations with their neighbours of different ethnic identity groups, have been eroded by ethnic politics, the very policies intended for managing conflict in the killil. As a result, conflict mitigating interventions were directed to violence. Evidently, the Nuer, who have had the tendency to assimilate with other ethnic groups, are now discouraged by ethnic politics, which made them focus on ethnic difference (see Dereje, 2011:174 – 175). The Anywaa were the hardest hit,
and became victims from different directions, believing that conflict mitigation through customary practices of compensation, discussion, listening to conflicting parties, has no place in the EPRDF political system. Consequently, many Anywaa have ended up being refugees or rebels outside Ethiopia.

Most policy interventions derived from ethnic federalism, such as ‘gimgema’ – evaluation, merging ethnic political parties, and replacing one less loyal individual by another, has exacerbated violent conflicts. It has led to more intensified competition over political power by antagonising relations between individuals and groups, thus creating fertile ground for more conflict than resolving it. One of the major sources of this problem is the way conflict is conceived by the national, as well as regional, political elites. As mentioned above, any internal conflict in Ethiopia in general is conceived by the elites as *ethnic-identity problem*, while in reality it is multidimensional. The official position is that the root cause of post-1991 conflict, in the main, is one and only one – a failure to understand and implement ethnic federalism or revolutionary democracy or democratic developmental state. Thus, the government at federal level continues to seek more loyal individuals to implement its ideology at regional as well as local levels rather than re-examining the foundation of ethnic federalism and rectifying it.

So as to mitigate conflicts in Gambella, there is a need to move beyond single variable explanations since conflict in the *killil* is complex. The very principle of ethnic politics should be reassessed; historical facts, economic inequalities, ethnic relations, political power distribution, and representation should be revisited and re-examined critically with a view to bringing about positive change that is compatible with the cultural practices of the local peoples. Most important, opening the political space for discussion, genuinely listening to, and building trust in, the people, and earning the trust of the people are essential. The present research reveals that leadership
competence is regarded by both regional and federal governments as synonymous with ideological commitment, or party loyalty. This approach needs to be reversed by finding common peace-building strategies, which are compatible with the conceptions of the leaders as well as local peoples.

Five potential peace-building strategies in the region, which are compatible with the conceptions of both indigenous peoples and that of the government officials, have been identified and proposed here. First, continuing the ongoing peace-making efforts of Ethiopia in South Sudan. Currently, Ethiopia’s relentless efforts and engagement in the peace process by bringing the two fighting parties to the negotiating table is internationally and regionally praised as a significant milestone in entrenching peace in the war-torn and conflict-ridden South Sudan. Peace in that country means partly managing refugees that have already made Gambella the crucible of violent conflict in Ethiopia. In the same vein, the Nuer, who constitute well over 40 per cent of the region’s population at the time of writing, (their number keeps swelling because of the flow of the Nuer refugees from South Sudan), were clearly disadvantaged in terms of territory and land resources. Even though the Nuer appear to have been compensated by a political power shift since mid-April 2013, unless their demands for equitable resource allocation are addressed creatively and innovatively by national and local leaders, they remain an imminent security threat for regional stability. It should also be emphasised that as the reasons for conflict are rooted in regional issues cutting across borders, the solution has to be regionally focused and driven.

‘...This is not just for reasons of managing people flows, ensuring regional transport integration and cleaning up illicit trade, but also given that regional projects involving more than one country are often not only more cost-effective but easier to source funds for...’(Mills, 2014:623)
In the same spirit, the scholarship opportunities being provided by the Ethiopian government to South Sudanese youths in Gambella Health College and other parts of Ethiopia contributes to building peace in the region, which should continue in the future as well. Similarly, Ethiopians investing in South Sudan and South Sudanese doing the same in Ethiopia helps as potential peace building efforts in Gambella.

Second, some of the narratives of governments at regional and federal levels, as well as the local people, align in that some of the conflicts were caused by failure of the leaders of the regional government to address previous conflicts. For instance, failure to address the 1991 Anywaa-highlander conflict led to the 17 November 2003 killings; and not acting immediately and pro-actively to the 17 November 2003 conflicts led to the 3 December 2003 massacre. Both the federal and regional governments, as well as local people, seem to agree that there is a need for conflict early warning and response systems to be established in the killil so that latent local conflicts could be prevented before they escalate.

Third, the construction of Gambella University, health centres, health and agricultural colleges, and technical and vocational institutes in the region, the fight against HIV/AIDS, building of roads which connect South Sudan, Gambella and other parts of Ethiopia by the federal and local governments whose expansion should be encouraged, may lay the basis for peace building endeavours.

Fourth, involving the indigenous peoples in agricultural investment, and providing them with entrepreneurial skills through training and education, are common grounds for defusing tension related to investment in agriculture. In the same vein, there are flood-prone, malaria-infested and development-deficient areas in the Anywaa zone which require consulting and
compensating the local peoples, and relocating them in different and better sites that could improve the quality of their livelihood.

Finally, the research and literacy activities started on the indigenous languages and stories, following the constitutional provision of the use of mother tongue, play tremendous potential roles in addressing ethnic identity questions and providing basis for the flourishing of the cultures, folklore, history and literature of the indigenous peoples of Gambella. These, I believe, are some of major common grounds compatible with the peacebuilding conception of indigenous peoples as well as governments at different levels, and could be instrumental in preventing and transforming violent conflicts.

It follows from the analysis of the field data that genuine political representation is crucial. Equally important, however, is that leadership should not simply be based on ethnic loyalty but should primarily be based on merit and experience. In the same vein, the highlanders or ‘mette’ should be accorded equal rights in the region and should feel that Gambella is part of Ethiopia and therefore it is theirs as well, shaking off the idea of ‘one region belongs to one ethnic group only’, which fundamentally contradicts the essence of ‘democratic developmental state’ where all citizens should engage in development activities irrespective of their ethnic or geographical background. The emphasis on ethnic ‘ownership’ of the killil so as to redress historical grievances in the federal and regional constitutions has produced disturbing anomalies in the political representation of highlanders, and provided more fuel for the new fire of grievance and potential conflict.

This anomalous situation of the highlander community in Gambella created hostility by increasing tension and resulted in some of the worst communal violence such as the ones that occurred in 1991, 1996, 2001, 2003, 2006, 2012 and 2014 to cite just a few. Highlanders had been the targets of
violence for some years with the loss of many lives. They retaliated against the Anywaa, whom they perceived as the perpetrators of these attacks. This situation made the highlanders rely heavily on the defence forces of the government for protection, with the backfiring effects of involving the military in communal conflict. Moreover, they were not allowed to stand for election until 2010. The 2010 and 2015 elections have now provided them with 10 and 8 seats which should help correct this. As Acemegolu and James (2012:74-75) argue, it is only an inclusive, rather than an extractive, institution that could make the difference in transforming a society from poverty to prosperity.

Therefore, without new and imaginative thinking, and creative and transformative leadership at the centre that is genuinely prepared to share political power with the lowland peripheries, such as Gambella, preventing future conflicts, transforming the present ones and building better and prosperous Ethiopia remains a distant hope. The December 2015 violent conflict in Gambella, and particularly in Oromia over the extension of Addis Ababa master plan to the Oromia killii is a very clear message about the policy implications of ethnic politics in Ethiopia. This is the right moment to seek to transcend ethnic political loyalty and entrench all inclusive political and economic institutions if the federation is meant to stay as a federation which should be a common home for all its citizens. As Mills (2014: 629 – 630) underscores, while ending conflict is the critical first step to recovery, change requires more than that. Removing the conditions that led to conflict in the first place demands a different and long-term operating system - one that seeks to understand the complexity of conflicts, and aims to invest in people, governance and infrastructure. The development of such systems parallels the change from ethnic identity politics to issues-based politics and

92 Oromia killi belongs to the Oromo ethnic group only according to the regional and federal constitutions; in the violence over 80 lives were lost while demonstrating between mid-November and mid-December 2015, according to Foreign Policy magazine (see https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/12/23/revolt-in-an-african-stasi-state/).
merit-based governance. Hence, the antidote for ethnic politics fundamentally revolves around improving the level of political rights as the present reality in Ethiopia necessitates.

The aim needs to be avoiding a ‘winner take all’ approach to politics, by liberating the minds of leaders from rigidity that ‘they should always be winners’; hence, they should be unfettered from always remembering the past, and encouraged to sometimes imagine the future with alternative ideas to achieve the ideal goal of human dignity, morality, democratic values, human rights, rule of law, and equality of citizens. In the insightful words of Paxman (2012:3-4): ‘the last places to be liberated … are the liberation movements themselves’. The liberated minds do not fear to institutionalise the necessary foundations of an inclusive and innovative politics and economy, property rights, and active civil society, which are to supplement but not to supplant an efficient and effective government if it is committed to transform itself. The path from violent conflict to vibrant economic and socio-political transformation is complex, yet possible. More robust studies are recommended on: transforming ethnic federalism into inclusive civic organisation in Ethiopia; regional security dimension of internal conflicts in Gambella; and regional cooperation for conflict prevention and transformation, focusing on Ethiopia and South Sudan for the future.
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Appendix A: Guiding Focus Group and Interview Questions for All Participants

i. Political factors

a. Could you describe political power structure in Gambella?

b. Do the peoples elect their representatives to regional, zonal, *woreda*, and *kebele* political offices? How?

c. What are your views about the relationships between the peoples and the local leaders?

d. How would you describe the regional and federal government relations?

e. What do you expect and demand from each level of government?

f. Do you feel that the local administrations have adequate power? How?

g. Do you feel that you are represented at the different level of governance structures-federal, regional and local levels? How?

h. Do you consider that all ethnic groups are fairly represented in local, regional and federal structures? How?

ii. Ethnic identity-related questions (Interviews with the local leaders, participants, and regional leaders)

a. What are the benefits or shortcomings of ethnic entitlement?

b. What benefits have you accrued because of ethnic entitlement?

c. How would you describe ethnic relations in Gambella since 1991?

d. How is the relationship between various ethnic groups in Gambella?

e. What are the implications (positive and negative) of redrawing of internal boundaries in linguistic and ethnic lines?
iii. **Internal violent conflict-related questions**

a. What do you think are the main factors for violent conflicts in the Gambella National Regional State from 1991 to 2013?

b. What are the consequences of these violent conflicts?

c. What role has ‘self-rule’ principle or ethnic federalism, introduced by the new Government of EPRDF, played in managing conflicts in Gambella?

d. Can you explain the degree and frequency of violent conflict since the introduction of ethnic federalism to the region?

iv. **Land use policy in Gambella since 1991**

a. Which ethnic groups are the most affected by land and land related natural resource conflict in the regional state? Why?

b. Who are participants in the conflict? Are investment and dislocation of indigenous peoples related?

c. What do you think the political consequence of large scale land-investment in the region?

d. Who are investing on the land? (1) The international? (2) The national? (3) The local/indigenous?

e. Have the indigenous peoples been consulted before they were made to settle in the areas currently they are made to settle? Who should own the land which is considered ‘waste land’ or unoccupied land *terra nullius* in the region?
v. Current status of violent conflict in Gambella

a. Are there armed opposition groups fighting the regional as well as federal governments?

b. What are their objectives? Which ethnic groups are they mainly from? Why?

c. What role do the governmental institutions play in the conflict?

vi. The role of external factors in internal conflict

a. Factors of the independence of and conflict in South Sudan
b. Ethiopia-Eritrea relations and armed Ethiopian opposition forces
c. Refugees factor in changing proximate causes to structural factors
d. Small arms and light weapons,
e. Trans-border trades

VII. Narratives of the local and federal governments on the above themes
Appendix B. Background of Research Participants

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the Anywaa rebel attacks in Gambella on 4 March 2012

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<td>Gambella</td>
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Appendix C Support letter from Addis Ababa University
Appendix D  Support Letter from Gambella National Regional State
Appendix D1 Support Letter from Gambella National Regional Government
Appendix E Land Lease Agreement between Karuturi Agro Producers Plc and the Ethiopian Government

LAND RENT CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT MADE BETWEEN MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND

Karuturi Agro Products Plc

This Land Lease Agreement is made and entered into between Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of FDRE having its principal office at Bole sub city, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, [hereinafter referred to as the "Lessor"].

and

Karuturi Agro Products PLC is a Private limited company incorporated under Ethiopia Law and having its Registered Office at Haq 2112, Kebele 02, Bole sub city, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia [hereinafter referred to as the "lessee", which expression where the context admits shall also mean and include its successors and assigns, including a company to be incorporated for the purpose hereinafter mentioned by the lessee in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

WHEREAS, the lessee, a business organization incorporated to engage in palm plantation, maize and rice farm Development under the relevant laws of Ethiopia; and requires sufficient land in Gambela regional State;

WHEREAS, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Gambela Regional State had agreed investment lands more than 5000 ha to be administered by Ministry, the Gambela Regional State Investment Agency has already transferred all necessary documents of the lessee to the Ministry and because it is found necessary to replace the agreement made between Karuturi Agro Products Plc and Jikao & Itang district administration of Gambela Regional state with a new one, acknowledging the efforts of both parties;

WHEREAS, the Lessor is willing to provide the required land lease basis in accordance with the terms and conditions provided hereunder;

NOW THEREFORE, the parties have executed this land lease agreement on 25th, October 2010 under the terms and conditions indicated herein below.

Article 1
Scope of Agreement

1.1 The scope of this lease Agreement is to establish a long term land lease of rural land for development palm, cereals and pulses farm on the land measuring 100,000 hectares (Itang 42,088 ha and Jikao 57,912 ha), located in Gambela Regional State, Nuer Zone, Jikao District and Itang Special District together with the lease certificate serial No ELA-IP 14584/07 with all rights of easement of amenities, fittings, fixtures, structures, installations, property or other improvements standing thereon, to the company incorporated for the purposes hereinafter mentioned by the lessee in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.
LAND RENT CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT MADE BETWEEN MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

AND

RUCHI AGRI PLC

This Land Lease Agreement is made and entered into and between Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia having its principal office at Kirkos sub city, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, herein after referred to as the "Lessor".

and

Ruchi Agri PLC is a Private limited company incorporated under Ethiopia Law and having its Registered Office at CETU Bld. Kebele 29, Kirkos sub city, Addis Ababa Ethiopia [herein after referred to as "lessee", which expression where the context admits shall also mean and include its successors and assigns, including a company to be incorporated for the purpose here in after mentioned by the lessee in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

WHEREAS, the lessee; a business organisation incorporated to engage in Soyabean farm Development under the relevant laws of Ethiopia; and requires sufficient land in Gambela regional State;

WHEREAS, the Lessor is willing to provide the required land lease basis in accordance with the terms and conditions provided hereunder;

NOW THEREFORE, the parties have executed this land lease agreement on April 05, 2010 under the terms and conditions indicated herein below.

Article 1

Scope of Agreement

1.1 The scope of this lease Agreement is to establish a long term land lease of rural land for soya bean and other crops farming and related activities on the land measuring 25000 hectares, located in Gambela Regional State, Agnawa Zones, Goge District Puchal, Pugnido and Teta kebeles together with the lease certificate serial No -------- with all rights of easement of amenities, fittings, fixtures, structures, installations, property or other improvements standing thereon, to the Ruchi Agri Plc company incorporated for the purposes hereinafter mentioned by the lessee in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

1.2 This Lease Agreement shall be applicable to the full and exclusive use of that parcel of Rural land more particularly described in this lease [herein after referred to as the 'Lease Land'] for cultivation or development of soya bean farm free of any other land rent other than the rent expressed under Article 2 of this agreement.
Appendix E2 Land Lease Agreement between Saudi Star Agricultural Development Plc and the Ethiopian Government

LAND RENT CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT MADE BETWEEN
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE
AND
SAUDI STAR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT Plc

This Land Lease Agreement is made and entered by and between Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of FDRE having its principal office at Bole sub city, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia [herein after referred to as the "Lessor"].

and

Saudi Star Agricultural Development Plc is a Private limited company incorporated under Ethiopia Law and having its Registered Office at House No 634 Kebele 17/18, Woreda - Kirkos, Addis Ababa Ethiopia [herein after referred to as "lessee", which expression where the context admits shall also mean and include its successors and assigns, including a company to be incorporated for the purpose here in after mentioned by the lessee in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

WHEREAS, the lessee, a business organization incorporated to engage in rice farm development under the relevant laws of Ethiopia; and requires sufficient land in Gambela national regional State;

WHEREAS, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Gambela Regional State had agreed investment lands more than 5000 ha to be administered by Ministry, the Gambela Regional State Investment Agency has already transferred all necessary documents of the lessee to the Ministry and because it is found necessary to replace the agreement made between Saudi Star Agricultural Development Plc and Abobo district administration of Gambela Regional state with a new one, acknowledging the efforts of both parties;

WHEREAS, the Lessor is willing to provide the required land in lease basis in accordance with the terms and conditions provided hereunder;

NOW THEREFORE, the parties have executed this land lease agreement on 25/10/2010 under the terms and conditions indicated herein below.

Article 1

Scope of Agreement

1.1 The scope of this lease Agreement is to establish a long term land lease of rural land for rice farming and related activities on the land measuring 10,000 hectares, between Perbengo and Pukedi Kebeles, Abobo District of Agnuwa Zone in Gambela Regional State, together with the lease certificate serial No ----- with all rights of easement of amenities, fittings, fixtures, structures, installations, property or other improvements standing thereon, to the company incorporated for the purposes hereinafter mentioned by the lessee in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.
Appendix F

Total population by each regional state

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<th>Population size</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<td>Tigray</td>
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<td>Addis Ababa*</td>
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*Addis Ababa and Diredawa are directly accountable to the federal government.

Appendix G

Report of Ministry of Federal Affairs on the December 2003 Violent Conflict in Gambella National Regional State
Appendix G1

Appendix G2

Report of the Enquiry Commission on the 2003 Violent Conflict in Gambella National Regional State
Appendix H
Environmental and Social Impact Assessment Report of Saudi SStar Agricultural Development (SSAD)
Detailed Engineering Design of Irrigation/Drainage System Gambella Alwero Rice Project
Environmental and Social Impact Assessment Report
Volume I of III

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction:
The purpose of this study is to prepare an Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (E&SIA) of the 'Detailed Engineering Design of Irrigation/Drainage System: Gambella Alwero Rice Project'. This project is part of the Ethiopian state program for the relocation of the population from the eastern part of the Gambella Valley, promising agro-climatic conditions, and availability of land and water resources.

The project is also a component of the Baro-Akobo Basin Study carried out in 1988 by the Russian Consultants, Selkhozpromexport. The study aimed at the development of the Abobo Dam in the Baro-Akobo Basin to support irrigated agriculture and meet food requirements. Based on the study, various options were considered for the location of the Abobo Reservoir and main canal alignment, and construction began in 1995. The components which were completed by 1997 included the Abobo dam embankment, intake structure for the main canal, and partial construction of the main canal.

In 1995 the Government of Ethiopia initiated the Baro-Akobo River Basin Integrated Master Plan and entrusted it to Tippetts-Abbet-MacCarhthy-Stratton (TAMS) Consultants. Under these studies, an inventory of various potential projects to enhance food production and agriculture extension were made. The projects identified in the Master Plan for the Alwero River Basin were the Abobo Dam Project, Dumbong Dam Project and Chiru Dam project.

In order to obtain the maximum benefits of the proposed Gambella Alwero Rice Project (GARP), the government is taking all positive initiatives to complete the project. In this background, Saudi Star Agricultural Development (SSAD) Pie acquired about 10,000
ha of land in Gambella valley to grow high quality rice. SSAD PLC entrusted National Engineering Services Pakistan (NESPAK) in association with Country Survey and Mapping Survey (CSMS) of Pakistan for the preparation of the Detailed Engineering Design of Irrigation and Drainage System for growing high quality rice. The project proponent is MIDROC International. SSAD PLC is the subsidiary of MIDROC International, which is responsible for the project. Apart from NESPAK-CSMS, Mint Consulting Group (MCG) is responsible for growing and processing rice. SNC-Lavalian and Tropics are the management as well as supervisory consultants for the project.

The identification of the Study Area is an important aspect of the E&SIA study. After the desk studies, review of T sheets, Google imageries, and reconnaissance (15th to 11th January, 2010), the limits of the Study Area were identified. During the reconnaissance, general environmental setting of the Project Area was observed. Based on the experience and proposed project activities, major potential impacts on the local environment were identified. These identified environmental and social impacts were categorized into significant and minor.

The Study Area (Figure 1-3) comprises the main canal, 10,000ha and extends to the north up to the left bank of Alwero River and towards the south up to Nyikani River. On the western boundary, the limits of the Study Area extend up to the confluence of the drainage creeks with Nyikani River. It also includes the reservoir area; however, its investigations are based on secondary information and are limited because the detailed environment assessment has already been conducted by Selkhozpromexport in 1988, and the project is in operational stage. However, general reconnaissance of the reservoir has been carried out during the present EIA studies and it has been verified that the existing ecological situation is the same as reported in Selkhozpromexport (1998). Further, the proposed command area will have no significant environmental impact on the reservoir area.

Administrative Framework, National Policies and Guidelines:

Ethiopia has a comprehensive legal framework regarding the protection, conservation and sustainability of the environment which are enshrined in
articles 43, 44 and 92 of the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FORE). These articles relate to Right of Development, Environmental Rights and Environmental Objectives. The administrative framework for the protection of the environment in Ethiopia at the Federal Levels includes the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MOARD), Ministry of Water Resources (MOWR), and the Federal Environmental Protection Agency. At the Regional Level the Regional Environmental Agencies (REA), Regional Environmental Coordination Committees (RECC) and Gambella National Park (GNP) Office are responsible for the protection of the environment.

According to Ethiopian environmental law, the initiation of the proposed GARP project requires an EIA, as the nature, size and location of the proposed project has a significant impact on the environment. As per the requirements of the Terms of Reference (TOR) and the World Bank Safeguards, an E&SIA study is to be carried out. Therefore an E&SIA is being conducted as part of the proposed project as it will fulfill the purpose of both an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) study and social assessment study.

- The Ethiopian national policies and proclamations relevant to the proposed project are as follows:
  
  - Draft Wildlife Policy, 1996
  - Environmental Policy of Ethiopia (EPE), 1997
  - Ethiopian Water Resources Management Policy, 1999
  - Draft Agricultural Policy
  - Special Decree on Pesticide, 1990
  - Environmental Impact Assessment Proclamation, 2002
  - Pollution Control Proclamation, 2007
  - Forest Conservation Proclamation, 2007
Appendix I

Villagisation in Gambella *killil* for the 2010/11 and 2011/12

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<td>2</td>
<td>759</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>1832</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>15</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>ዓ.ማ</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>847</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>265</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>ለ-ፉ</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>6</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ከ-ወ</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>20,243</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>9,301</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>29,544</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix J

A Sketch of Villagisation Programme (A Sample from Anywaa Zone)
## Appendix K Large-Scale Land Transfers in Gambella*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Investor</th>
<th>Foreign/Domestic</th>
<th>Land Size (in Hectares)</th>
<th>Major Crops</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alehilegn Worku</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>Cotton, sesame</td>
<td>Abobo woreda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bazel</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>Cotton, sesame</td>
<td>Abobo woreda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BHØ**</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>27,000</td>
<td>Rice, sesame</td>
<td>Itang woreda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiker PLC</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>Cotton, sesame</td>
<td>Abobo woreda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hussen Abera</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>Sesame</td>
<td>Abobo woreda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karuturi</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>300,000</td>
<td>Rice, palm oil</td>
<td>Itang &amp; Jikaw woreda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucky Exports</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>Tea</td>
<td>Godere woreda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muluken Azene</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>Cotton, sesame</td>
<td>Abobo woreda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruchi Soya**</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>Soya, palm oil</td>
<td>Goge woreda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sannati Agro</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>Rice, pulses</td>
<td>Dimi woreda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Star</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>139,000</td>
<td>Rice, Soya</td>
<td>Abobo, Goge, Jore woredas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solomon Kebede</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>Cotton, sesame</td>
<td>Abobo woreda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tewodros Abraham</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>Sesame</td>
<td>Gambella Zuria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemane G/Mesk</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>Sesame, maize</td>
<td>Gambella Zuria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yetimgeta Mamo</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>Sesame, maize</td>
<td>Itang woreda</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source Dessalegn (2011:30)*

**NOTE:** *Large-Scale in the above context means 2000 hectares or more. Lease period: ** = 30 years; all others 50 years. Total large-scale land transferred, 535,000 hectares.*
Appendix L Partial List of Large-Scale Land Transfers in Ethiopia (except Gambella)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Investor</th>
<th>Foreign Domesti</th>
<th>Land Size</th>
<th>Crops</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Al Habesh</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>28,000</td>
<td>Sugar estate</td>
<td>Wollega, Oro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambassel</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>Biofuel crops</td>
<td>Metekel, BS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp;D Food</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>18,000</td>
<td>Sugar estate</td>
<td>Awi, Amhara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chadha Agro</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>122,000</td>
<td>Sugar, Biofuel</td>
<td>Oromia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djibouti Gov’t</td>
<td>Djibouti</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>Food crops</td>
<td>Bale, Oromia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dubai World</td>
<td>Dubai</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>Tea</td>
<td>Illubabor, Oro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Africa Agric</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>6,500</td>
<td>Food crops</td>
<td>Pawe, BeniShangul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emami Biotech</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>80,000</td>
<td>Biofuel crops</td>
<td>Oromia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finote Selaam</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>Sesame</td>
<td>Guba, Benishangul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flora EcoPower</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>13,000</td>
<td>Biofuel crops</td>
<td>E. Harage, Oro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fri El Green</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>Biofuel crops</td>
<td>Omo Valley, SNPP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Energy</td>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>Biofuel</td>
<td>Wollaita, SNNP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDC Invest</td>
<td>Danish</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>Biofuel</td>
<td>Assossa, BS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanan D Hills</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>Tea</td>
<td>SNPP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karuturi</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>11,000</td>
<td>Rice, Biofuel</td>
<td>Bako, Oromia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. Morrell</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>Bale, Oromia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. Bank Egypt</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>Food crops</td>
<td>Afar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omo Sheleko</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>5,500</td>
<td>Cotton, palm</td>
<td>SNPP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PetroPalm</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>Biofuel</td>
<td>Rayitu, Bale, Orom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHAMPORJI</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>Biofuel</td>
<td>BeniShangul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spentex</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>Cotton</td>
<td>Beni Shangul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun Biofuels</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>Biofuel</td>
<td>Wollaita, SNNP</td>
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<td>Sun Bio (NBC)</td>
<td>UK</td>
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<td>Biofuel</td>
<td>Metekel, B.S</td>
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<td>Sunrise Indus</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>Oromia</td>
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<td>Tomaisin</td>
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<td>Food crops</td>
<td>Oromia</td>
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<td>Vatic</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>Biofuel</td>
<td>Borena, Oromia</td>
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<tr>
<td>United Farm Bus</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>Food crops</td>
<td>Bako, Oromia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yehudi Hayun</td>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>Biofuel</td>
<td>Oromia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Dessalegn R. (2011:29)
Appendix M – Conflict Trigger Story: Soap Tragedy

**Box 6.1 SOAP TRAGEDY**

On a bright and sunny Sunday morning of January 1998 at about 9.00 a.m., an Anywaa and two Nuer men were bathing in the only navigable river in Ethiopia, Openo or (in its old name) Baro River in Itang special woreda of Gambella.

The Anywaa man was the police commissioner of the Region at the time. He had a bar of soap to wash with, while the others did not. One of the Nuer asked the other Nuer whether he had any soap. The Nuer responded that he did not have any. Seeing that they had no soap, the Anywaa thought it was a good idea to share what he had. Then he stretched his hand with the soap to the Nuer who asked for it.

The other Nuer was watching keenly and observing intently what the Anywaa was doing. He was soon filled with rage and envy. And his face blushed. His emotion was changed into bitter anger and vengeance. Staring furiously at the Anywaa, the Nuer asked:

> What are you doing? Why are you giving your soap to the Nuer? Are you richer than the Nuer? Do you think you are richer than me to have bought soap and distribute to the needy Nuer? Why should you give him in the first place? What is the intention of your action?

No sooner did he finish uttering the final word of the last question than he ran for his loaded machinegun in his tukul not far from the Openo River. The first thing the Nuer did as he appeared from his tukul was to go a shooting spree beginning with the Anywaa congregation, an evangelical church packed with worshippers on the Sunday morning.

That Sunday remains in the minds of all the Anywaa peoples as the bloody Sunday. He killed about 34 of them on the spot and over 32 were wounded and some of them seriously. Altogether, 66 innocent peoples were victims of the soap tragedy which served as a tipping point of conflict complexity in Gambella simmering for ages between the Nuer and the Anywaa ethnic groups.

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93 This story was not documented in any of the literature I have referred to on violent conflict in Gambella; in relation to the conflict in Gambella, the year ‘1998’ was mentioned by Markakis, (2011) and other authors. However, none of them touched upon the exact triggering factors that led to the bloodshed in January 1998. This is an original contribution of the present research.
Appendix N: Current status (November 2015) of refugees in Gambella

1. The current (November 2015) status of refugee from South Sudan

Ethiopia hosts the largest South Sudanese refugee population in the region with 256,000 people, including nearly 194,000 new arrivals registered since 15 December 2013. There are many South Sudanese refugees currently settling in Gambella region as the result of South Sudan civil war which started in December 2013. Currently, there are 267,750 South Sudanese refugees in Gambella, with post and pre December 15, 2013 number 220,128 and 47,622 refugees respectively and then bring the total number of refugees to 267,750 in Gambella region in November 2015. I received the above information from UNHCR, Gambella office.

2. Where are they located at present? Specific location:

The South Sudanese refugees which include Anywaa, Nuer and Murle are currently located in Anywaa zone and Itang special woreda respectively. In Anywaa zone, there are Jewi, Dimma/Okugo, Pinyudo I and Pinyudo II, whereas in Itang special woreda, there are two refugee camps: There are, Kule and Tierkidi. In those specific locations, Jewi, Kule, Pinyudo II and Tierkidi are dominated by Nuers whereas, Dimma/Okugo are dominated by Murle and Anywaa and Pinyudo I is shared by both Anywaa and Nuer refugees. Those are specific present locations currently occupied by South Sudanese refugees in Gambella region the majority of them are the Nuer.

3. What specific threats do they impose on Gambella at present?

The refugee influx and issues associated with that is also affecting not only the government and ethnic politics but also Nuer clan politics besides general security threats by South Sudanese refugees in the region. The following are specific threats imposed by the refugees:

A. Protracted ethnic conflict:

The politics of where to establish the refugee camps, for instance, is fuelling the protracted conflict between Anywaa and Nuer ethnic groups in the region. That is because most of the refugees are Nuer and the Anywaa
expected collaboration between Nuer refugees and Ethiopian Nuers in Gambella. On the other hand, refugees settled in Anywaa zone are exclusively Nuer, which irritating the Anywaa since they consider the settlement as systematic occupation of the Anywaa land by the Nuer bringng about existential threat.

B. Cross-Border conflict:
A different level of conflict in the Gambella region is cross-border incursions. This is related to large-scale cross-border cattle raiding and the associated loss of human lives from the attacks by the Lou Nuer and the Murle from Southern Sudan. The cross-border livestock theft in the border areas has become source of the cross-border conflict between border communities. The Gambella traditional stories revealed cattle theft is long cause of the many problems among Nuer pastoralists. In addition, the Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement/Army In Opposition (SPLM/A-IO) fighting the government in Juba has many supporters in Gambella even with regional government officials mainly Nuers besides refugees. The reason is, Ethiopian Nuers considered South Sudan government as Dinka government while in Nuer recent history, John Garang, the founder of SPLM/A carried systematic killings of Nuers in 1980s. Then the Nuers in Gambella took current civil war in South Sudan as between Nuers and Dinka and see South Sudan government as their enemy. As the result, the Nuers in Gambella considering anyone siding with South Sudan government as Dinka which indeed created tensions between Nuers and Anywaa in Gambella. Therefore, cross border conflict is imminent unless Anywaa are silent and stop debates with Nuers on current South Sudan civil war which started in on 15 December 2013.

C. Natural Resource Scarcity:
More and more new forest lands are being cleared every year. In Gambella, resource-based conflicts such as Anywaa-Nuer, inter-clan conflicts among the Nuer clans and Majang-Highlanders are related to the strategy of coping with scarcity. Therefore, security threats on natural resources are also among other refugee related threats. Deforestation of dense natural forests
in Gambella serves as the source of income generation besides hunting wild animals.

D. **Arms smuggling:**

The proliferation of light weapons and illicit arms trafficking in Gambella region pose a major threat to peace, security and development in the continent. Although they do not in themselves cause the conflicts and criminal activities in which they are used, the wide availability, accumulation and illicit flows of such weapons tend to escalate conflicts; undermine peace agreements; intensify violence and impact on crime; impede economic and social development; and hinder the development of social stability, democracy and good governance. According to police report currently in Gambella, approximately at least 14 AK47 + pistols are apprehending every day either in Gambella town or in its surrounding. And it is confirmed that those guns are from South Sudan as suspected smugglers are from South Sudanese refugees whose relatives are in Gambella. Below is the evidence of ongoing arms smuggling in Gambella, this incident of apprehension occurred on 22 October 2015 in Gambella town. About **12 AK47** + found in this vehicle.
4. The feeling of Anywaa about South Sudanese refugees:

The feeling of Anywaa about South Sudanese refugees settled Gambella region is very negative. According to Anywaa elders I informally managed to interview, the refugees in Gambella are almost all Nuer. Since most of the refugees are Nuer, they will remain in the settlement sites even if their country become peaceful “The refugees are always remained in Gambella since Sudan civil war” Ojulu Oman. According to him, when civil war ended in Sudan, no one refugee left Itang refugee camp which is current Itang special woreda. Besides, refugees who may remain in settlement sites will claim representation in the regional parliament and that will also affect demographic and power balance between Anywaa and Nuer ethnic groups in Gambella.
Further, the current South Sudanese refugees and rebels have been given absolute freedom and power in Gambella to demand areas they want to settle for new refugee camps such as Cholan, Pakong, Jawi, Ochom, Kobon, Karmi, in addition to what have already existed camps in Dimma/Okugo, Pinyudo, Pinyudo II, Tierkidi and Kule, in the lands of Anywaa mostly, Komo and Opo tribes to some extent. The Anywaa think that it is an intentional government plan to accelerate urbanization, systematic occupation and economic empowerment of highlanders in Gambella, through ARRA (Administration for Refugees and Returnees Affairs – the strongest TPLF security organ in Gambella). Based on the above explanation, Anywaa associated the new refugee settlement with current federal and regional government programs and leadership activities in Gambella region.

**Names of respondents:** Gniguo Oman Cham, Abala Omod Agua, Omod Oman Obang, Okony Okelo Obang, and Kijak Oman Ochan all of them were about 60 years old.

5. **How do the Nuer feel about them?**

South Sudanese refugees settled in Gambella region are almost Nuer as already pointed out above. Perhaps, the Nuers who are Ethiopians may have different feeling about South Sudan refugees in Gambella. So far, there is no significant security related incident between refugee Nuers and Ethiopian Nuers. According to Pastor Philip Pal, ‘the Nuers are Nuers no matter where they come from, therefore, the South Sudanese refugees who are Nuers have no problem with Ethiopian Nuers. That means, Ethiopian Nuers have positive feeling about South Sudanese Nuer refugees wherever they are in Gambella region and they forged solidarity. Normally in Nuer culture, if your fellow Nuer has problem you cannot add your past problem to that person’s problem. That means, even if there were inter-clan conflicts between different clans, the common enemy is Dinka in South Sudan and Anywaa in Ethiopian.
The names of respondents: Philip Pal Nhial, Simon Tongyik Bol, Tut Bol Kong, Khan Kun Muon, and Duoth Gatwech Puot all of them are about 60 years old.