

Inclusion or Exclusion of Exogenous Political Communities at Local Level in Ethiopia

Melese Chekol*

Civics and Ethical Studies, College of Social Sciences and Humanities, Mizan-Tepi University, Ethiopia

*For Correspondence: Melese Chekol, Civics and Ethical Studies, College of Social Sciences and Humanities, Mizan-Tepi University, Ethiopia, Tel: +251918086302; E-mail: melese.checkol@gmail.com

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Review

ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to assess the accommodation of exogenous communities at local level where they are in a majority as well as the role of local governments in this respect. A qualitative approach with purposive sampling techniques was employed during data collection. Interview, Focus group discussions and field observation was employed during data collection. The introduction of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia aimed at accommodating endogenous communities whereas excludes millions of exogenous communities in the host region. Among exogenous communities in such constitutional quandary are those who moves to the areas now make parts such regions as Benishangul-Gumuz and SNNP of Pawe and Gura-Ferda woredas as part of the resettlement programs of the imperial and Derg eras, respectively. These communities are mostly found in clearly demarcated territorial areas which are equal or larger than a woreda in terms of territorial and population size. However, they are treated differently. In Pawe woreda, where members of the exogenous community constitute over 99 percent of the population, they are allowed to have full control over the political and administrative institutions of the woreda. They are represented in the regional government and, compared to members of the exogenous communities living in other parts of Benishangul-Gumuz region, are least harassed by members of the endogenous communities. The situation is starkly different in Gura-Ferda. There, despite them being in majority, members of exogenous communities are excluded from the political institutions of the woredas. And they suffer from actual or threat of eviction.

Keywords: Ethnic federalism, Endogenous communities, Exogenous communities, Gura-Ferda, Pawe

INTRODUCTION

There has been a multi-directional population movement in Ethiopia since time immemorial. People have been moving from place to places both individually or as a group. For instance the Oromo movement of 16th Century was one of the greatest population movements in the history of the country. People move in search of farming and grazing land, after their lands become barren due to frequent soil erosion, environmental degradation, and the like. People also have been moving from place to place for trade, to conduct war, in search for better life and better job for centuries.

The historical population movements were hardly initiated or sanctioned by government. An officially sanctioned population movement began with the Southward expansion of the Ethiopian Empire during Emperor Menelik's era (1889-1913). People moved from the north to the south as administrator, priests, soldiers and the like. The southward population movement was mainly to forcefully incorporated areas of the present-day Oromia and South Nation Nationalities and Peoples Regional state [1].

The population movement also continued during Haile Selassie's regime. Around this time both 'spontaneous' and 'planned' resettlements took place [2]. In the 1940s and 1970s a large number of people moved from the over populated and degraded highlands of Northern Ethiopia to less intensively used and less densely populated areas of the South [2]. The resettlement processes became formalised in the process of villagization programs during the Derg. The Derg implemented villagization and resettlement programmes with the view to reducing the effects of famine in Northern

Ethiopia [3,4]. Hence settlers selected from Wello, Tigray and North Shewa were taken to different resettlement sites in Southern and South Western part of the country, often against their will.

Planned resettlement in Gura-Ferda woreda started in 1980s by transferring drought affected rural households from Northern parts of Ethiopia. The first settlers faced many challenges since the area was inaccessible and far from basic services.

Those who were settled in this area were brought from parts of the country which were affected by drought and those having chronic farmland shortage. Those who were brought to this settlement sites included those from the Amhara, Oromo, Tigre, Kambata, and Hadya communities. According to the 2007 Central Statistical Agency report, the Amhara constitute 79.71% of the population of the woreda while those from Kambaata, the Hadiya, Agaw-Awi, the Oromo, and Somalis make up 8%, 4.5%, 3.05%, 2.22%, and 1.92% of the population of the woreda, respectively [5]. Those from other ethnic groups make up 0.6% of the population.

Statement of the Problem

Following the ouster of the Derg from power and the coming to power of EPRDF in May 1991, the territorial and political structure of the country was revised. The country became a de facto federation with the adoption of the Transitional Period Charter in 1991 which recognised the right to self-government of every ethnic community of the country [6]. Proclamation No 7/1992 was issued by the Transitional Period Government (TPG) recognized 63 communities as 'Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' capable of exercising self-government. Along the settlement pattern of ethnic communities, the proclamation created 12 regions. Addis Ababa and Harar, the 13th and 14th regions were created based on different principle. Forty-six of the 63 communities were given the right to self-government at woreda level or above. The remaining 17 ethnic groups were considered as "minority nationalities" and their right to adequate representation in woreda councils was recognized [7]. In 1995 this arrangement was constitutionally entrenched with little change.

The Ethiopian federal system aims to accommodate Nation, Nationalities and Peoples which are assumed to be endogenous to specific areas. The endogenous communities are allowed to establish self-government at regional or sub-regional levels, including at Nationality zone and special woreda levels¹. The federal principle is silent concerning communities who, as described above, moved or were forced to move, to parts of the country where, as a result of the federal dispensation, they are viewed as exogenous. As per some of the regional constitutions they are now referred to as 'other people', 'non-founder', 'non-indigenous', or 'non-natives'.

Argument

The article, based on the two case studies, argues, there are two approaches in terms of politically accommodating exogenous communities. The Pawe case shows a generous approach towards exogenous communities by establishing a woreda in the area where they are found territorially concentrated by allowing them to be in charge of the political and administrative institutions of the woreda. The Gura-ferda case is the opposite. In this woreda the exogenous communities are excluded from the political and administrative institutions of the woreda. However, there is a perception that those who are not from endogenous communities are not entitled to political inclusion. Even the establishment of the Pawe woreda and the inclusion of the members of the exogenous communities are viewed as a grant from the regional state rather than a result of the constitutional right of those from the exogenous communities.

In the course of this argument, the paper first identified the place of exogenous communities in Ethiopian federal arrangement. Then it shows the position of these communities at regional level in the constitution of each regional state. The paper then compares and contrasts the two local governments where the exogenous communities live in a majority. In this section, the ethnic composition, the political inclusion or exclusion of these communities and the subsequent conflict and eviction in the host regions are dealt in brief.

¹ For instance, the Benshangul-Gumuz constitution identified five endogenous ethnic communities with the power to administer them as Gumuz, Berta and Shinasha with nationality zones status and Komo and Mao as a single special woreda. The Amhara regional constitution also identifies Agew-Awi, Agew-Hemra and Oromo as indogenous communities of the region and establishes a nationality zone as well as one special woreda for these communities. The SNNP is territorially divided along ethnic lines with almost all of the sub-regional territorial and political units being ethnic based nationality zones and special woredas. The only exception is the recently established and controversial 'Segen zone' which is simply an administrative zone.

ETHIOPIAN ETHNIC FEDERALISM: ORIGIN AND STRUCTURE

The accommodation of exogenous communities in the Ethiopian regions is at issue because the Ethiopian federal system is designed to accommodate the ethnic diversity of the Ethiopian people. The federal system seek to accommodate the various ethnic communities by establishing self-government in the territorial area they are found. The idea is for each ethnic community to be a master of its 'home'. Yet amidst the ethnic communities with their own regions and local units are exogenous communities. The right of the exogenous communities is directly or indirectly impacted on by the decisions and actions of the political organs of the regions and ethnic local governments within which the exogenous ethnic communities are found. In order to fully understand this dynamic, it is necessary to have a good understanding of the origin of the Ethiopian federal system how it is structured and how it operates.

Ethiopia and Ethnicity: Pre-1991

Leaving aside the debate on whether Ethiopia has history of millennia, there is an agreement among historians that 'Modern' Ethiopia was conceived by Emperor Tewodros II and realised by Emperor Menilik II. The political discord along ethnic lines is also linked to the manner that Modern Ethiopia was realised by Menilik.

Menilik created the Ethiopia we know through territorial expansion to the southern part which was undertaken both diplomatically and through brutal force. The expansion was followed by population movement from the northern parts of Ethiopia to the south. It also involved confiscation of the land from the endogenous communities and transferring same to the settlers, the imposition of Amharic as the sole language with state recognition and the introduction of Orthodox Christianity as the only state sanctioned religion. The inter-ethnic discord in Ethiopian emanates from these. The settlement in large number of exogenous communities in Southern Ethiopia also began around this time.

Emperor Haileselesie, who came to power in 1931, undertook several reforms to centralise and consolidate the control of the centre on the southern regions. He promulgated the 1931 Constitution in which he abolished the privileges of regional and local rulers. He also undertook several legislative measures to the same effect.

The expansion and centralisation process that is described above led to the marginalisation of the various ethnic communities in Southern Ethiopia. The accommodation of these communities, along with other economic matters, hence became a political issue beginning from the 1950s. The Ethiopian Students movements specially made the 'nationality question' a central political issue.

The political turmoil of the 1970s that involved ethnic, economic, social issues led to the 1974 popular revolution that resulted in the demise of the imperial regime. The Revolution was however 'hijacked' by the military Derg, installed itself as the provisional since a committee of soldiers, known as the provisional government of the country. The Derg not only failed to address 'the nationality question' but some of the political and economic measures it took intensified the problem, including villagization programme in which communities were uprooted and transferred to other parts of the country. Concerning to this, Abute puts his idea as Derg established the largest resettlement sites in Africa ^[4].

Derg, after controlling the state power in 1974, faced two major social challenges in the rural Ethiopia. These challenges were severe drought and famine in Northern Ethiopia and shortage of farmland in Southern Ethiopia. To alleviate these challenges, the military junta used resettlement program as the only solution to the people. Besides the above two chronic problems, the program was part of its plan for rapid rural transformation and greater control over peasant farmers ^[8].

According to Tadesse, Mengistu's government aimed at to settle people throughout the country except Eritrea and Tigray ^[8]. Unlike the previous population movement conducted both during Menelik and Haileselesie's era, the Derg's resettlement was multi-directional in nature. The resettlement program had the core objective of systematic land use and recovery program through collective and coordinated efforts ^[4]. To achieve these objectives, people from Wollo, Shewa, Oromo from Shewa and Wollo, Gojjam and Gonder from the North and Kambata, Hadya, GuragheWolaitaetc from the south settled to the West, south west and North West of the country.

The inability of Derg to respond the nationality question resulted the outset of the regime from power. The total collapse of the regime came in to being in 1991 and a new regime with a new ideology and state structure is realized.

Ethnicity in Post-1991 Ethiopia

The visible challenge of a new regime in Ethiopia was the restoration of state effectiveness, legitimacy and trust among different cultural groups. To do this EPRDF planned to address the past unjust relations based on ethnicity ^[9]. EPRDF coordinated and facilitated the establishment of Transitional government followed by national peace and democracy conference in July 1991.

With little discussion and debate on the preparation and adoption of TGE charter on the restructuring of new regions, it established the boundary commission composed of ten member from six political parties^[10]. The commission based on the data of Institute of the Study on Ethiopian Nationality (ISEN) which established in 1983 and own observation, submitted the proposal to council of representatives (CoR). Based on the proposal, the CoR debated and issued proclamation No 7/1992 that established 14 new regions mainly on language^[10]. This proclamation ensures the de facto federal structure in the state. Due to deep division and diversification, not all ethnic groups can enjoy a region status and several ethnic groups with similar language and culture merge together to form a bigger region^[11]. The restructuring of regions and the incorporation of some territorial domains were not free from claims and counter claims among political parties.

The 1995 FDRE constitution ensured the de jure federal structure that promotes self- rule and shared-rule for endogenous ethnic communities at different tiers of government. The restructuring of regional states, nationality zones and special woredes under ethnic lines made the country as a federation of ethnic groups in which more than 80 Nations, Nationalities and Peoples join². On the other hand, with the absence of 50+ numbers among ethnic groups made the country as a 'nation of minorities'. The regions were restructured and demarcated based on settlement patterns, language, identify, and consent of the people concerned³ but the core arrangements of the federal structure is ethnicity⁴.

Although ethnicity has a core value for restructuring the regional and local governments, but other criteria's are in line with ethnicity. For the creation of states and establishment of local governments, uniform criteria were not applied and two programmatic approaches came in to implementation⁵.

For instance, states with a majority of ethnic groups such as Amhara, Tigray, Afar, Oromia and Somali established based on ethnicity whereas states with a non-dominant group such as SNNPRS, BGNRS and GNRS established based on the consideration of politics, economic, settlement pattern, culture and language⁶. With the absence of majority ethnic group in the federal Ethiopia, the country consists of endogenous minorities, exogenous minorities and double minorities.

The Ethiopian federal system crates tensions between the balance of self-rule for various endogenous ethnic groups and the need to promote free movement of labor and capital to the exogenous ethnic groups⁷. The post 1991 experience of the country shows that the evictions of exogenous communities by the national and regional minorities are evident as they gain self-rule from their home⁸.

Ethnic federalism institutionalizes self-determination of endogenous groups with in their territory. Nevertheless, it does not institutionalize the accommodation of exogenous minorities out of their mother region. Institutionalizing self-rule for endogenous minorities does not mean that evicts and excludes exogenous communities in any case.

Eviction and Exclusion of exogenous ethnic groups are prevalent in Oromia, SNNPRS, Gambela, Bensihargul, Amhara etc., which threaten the statehood and unity that lasted before 1991. For instance, the Amhara ethnic groups evicted from Gura-Ferda publically by the order of the Regional government in 2012, Benishangul-Gumuz region also evict the following year.

The Position of Exogenous Minorities at Local Level In Ethiopia

The Ethiopian federal system is designed for empowering territorially concentrated ethnic minorities without considering exogenous minorities. After the introduction of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia, two types of minorities came in to being. The first groups of minorities exist in the five endogenous dominated ethnic groups of Oromia, Amahara, Tigray, Afar and Somali where the region designed to the respective ethnic groups^[12]. From these regions, Oromia slightly excludes the recognition of non-Oromos in its constitution⁹. On the contrary, the Amhara regional state recognized the non-Amharas by providing self-rule at nationality zones and special woredas^[10]. For instance, the regional state recognized the five non-Amharas like AgewAwi, AgewHemra, Oromo, Kimant and Argoba¹⁰. The three non-Amharas of

2 Supra note 50, p. 120.

3 FDRE constitution Art 46 (2).

4 Supra note 117: 49.

5 Id 50.

6 Ibid.

7 Id 33.

8 Ibid.

9 Revised 2002 of Oromia constitution.

10 Agew Awi, Agew Hemra, and Oromo's have self-administrative status at nationality zone level where as the Argobas have a special woreda status in the region. The grant of Kimant special woreda was the result of conflict rose between Amharas and the the Kimant themselves.

AgewAwi, AgewHemra and Oromos organized at nationality level where as Kimant and Argoba deserve for special woreda status. In the case of Afar and Tigray, though they recognized the existence and self-rule for Argoba and Irob endogenous minorities, the recognition of minorities in these regional states does not mean that they recognize the existence of exogenous minorities.

The second groups of minorities exist in SNNRS, BGNRS and GNRS. In these regional states, endogenous and exogenous minorities exist with different manifestations. In SNNPRS, 56 endogenous minorities are reorganized under 14 Nationality Zones and 4 special woredas, these minorities are reorganized under the constitutional base of Art 39(3) of FDRE constitution. On the other hand, the 2007 census indicated that more than half million exogenous peoples out of 56 NNP live in the regional state. In this case, the regional constitution is silent on the representation and recognition of these exogenous minorities at local level. Exogenous minorities in this region are the result of the North South population movement sine the south March. For instance, exogenous minorities are dominantly existed in Kaffa, Bench Maji, Sheka, Konta, Dawuro and other Nationality Zones and Special woredas.

The two regional states of Benishangul-Gumuz and Gambela, were marginalized as compared to other regional states in the past regimes^[12]. To compensate the marginalization of the respective ethnic groups, the regions were organized to empower the dominant endogenous ethnic groups. Due to historical phenomenon, these regions consist of 'sizable' exogenous communities. For instance, the BGNRS consists of 43% of these communities. The regional state constitution recognized the existence of these groups without representation. Significant number of exogenous communities exists at Metkel, kamash and Assosa zone. These communities settled in this area due to the 1980s Derg resettlement and villegization program. For this reason, power is totally under the administration of exogenous groups.

Accommodation of ethnic minorities helps groups to stay within the federation by letting them to decide by their own way. This accommodation of minorities by itself provides to major challenges to the federation. First, the self-governing unit may demand secession which latter creates little independent stats that threaten the unity of the state. The constitution ensured the clause of 'secession' without any pre request for the principle of 'open the door and wall, let's move freely^[10]'. Second, inefficient administration for territorially organized ethnic groups will emerge. Lack of skilled man-power to rule the politics of each self-rule unit will retard development and growth.

On the other hand, there is no territorial management for exogenous communities, which live in different regional states. Due to historical phenomena of multi-directional population movement, many exogenous communities live in each regional state. However, some states exclude the existence and recognition of these communities, others recognizer without representation. Yet, in some regional states, exogenous communities found territorially concentrated like Gura-Ferda and Pawe wordas. Thus, absence of recognition and representation of these groups, make the development partial, a threat for peace and security and create hatred and suspicious between the two groups^[13,14].

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