

The Impact of Ethnic Based Political Parties on the National Consensus in Ethiopia

¹Seid Mendis* and ²Dr. K.C. Smitha

¹ Political Science, Jain University, Bangalore, India

²Centre for Research in Social Sciences & Education (CeRSSE)
School of Humanities and Social Sciences,
Jain (Deemed-to-be-University)
Bangalore, India

Abstract: National consensus is a fundamental component of national integration and unity in any country, especially in multi-cultural countries. In the Ethiopian context, the contemporary political system is dominated by ethnically based political parties (EBPPs) and polarised politics. The EBPPs are divided on fundamental national issues such as the constitution, federalism and its structural arrangement, past history, national symbols, language, and many others. All these issues need national consensus among all concerned actors for the country's political stability. The objective of this study is to examine the impact of EBPPs on the national consensus in Ethiopia. Descriptive and exploratory research designs were used with both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. Primary and secondary data sources were employed. Surveys were used to collect primary data from ordinary citizens, as well as key informant interviews with party leaders, government officials, and academics. Secondary data were gathered from published and unpublished documents. The researcher used purposive sampling for the selection of study areas and snowball techniques for survey respondents. For this study, quantitative data was analysed using descriptive analysis while qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis. The findings of this study revealed that EBPPs have negative impacts on national consensus in terms of provoking antagonistic agendas, focusing on group interests rather than common values, and polarising stances on fundamental national issues. Therefore, all interested parties and elites will reach a national consensus on the fundamental agendas of the country to save it from disintegrating and to ensure sustainable peace and political stability.

Index Terms: Ethnic-based political parties, Impact, National consensus, Ethiopia

1. INTRODUCTION

Ethiopia's political change process is not based on dialogue and agreement between claimants, but by force. It was based on civil annihilation in winning and losing. This historic political change process will inevitably have a negative impact on Ethiopia's political culture. It is believed that deep-rooted anti-democracy, mistreatment of diversity and attempts to force uniformity in the past systems are the reasons for the establishment of political parties (national or ethnic-based). For this reason, the Ethiopian student movement played a significant role during the monarchy period in the 1960s and 1970s. After the overthrow of Emperor Haile Selassie's monarchy by force in 1975, the authoritarian Dergue government came to power not through dialogue and agreement, but through force. This regime was overthrown by force in 1991 after a 17-year harsh war with the political parties organised as guerrilla fighters in the forest, especially the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (later Amhara National Democratic Movement), the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), etc.

Since the fall of the totalitarian administration in 1991 and the implementation of the EPRDF's ethnic federalism system, Ethiopia has officially operated under a multi-party system, allowing the ethnic-based party system to have an impact on Ethiopian politics. Without considering party politics and a fundamental national issue that cannot be had to achieve the function of national consensus.

The main issues that are currently raised on the main agenda are the history of the state/nation building process; national symbols (flags, heroes, etc.); the constitution and structure of federalism; electoral act; the question of region; the capital city (Addis Ababa) administration border; administrative and identity questions; and others that are social, economic, and political agendas. These entire national issues need consensus through inclusive dialogue that ensures sustainable peace and political stability, and the role of political parties is vital to achieving these objectives. However, ethnic-based political parties dominate Ethiopian politics, and they have antagonistic ethnic agendas rather than common national issues [1]. Therefore, the objectives of this study are to investigate the role of ethnic-based political parties (EBPPs) in national consensus and their impact on the national consensus in Ethiopia.

1.1. Research Objectives

The general objective of this study is to describe and explore the impacts of ethnic based political parties on the national consensus in Ethiopia, the specific objectives are:

- i. To describe the role of ethnic based political parties in the national consensus.
- ii. To investigate the impacts of ethnic based political parties on national consensus.

1.2. Research Question

- i. Do ethnically based political parties have a role in the national consensus?
- ii. How do ethnic-based political parties impact on national consensus?

1.3. National Consensus context in Ethiopia

National consensus is a fundamental component of national integration and unity in any country, but especially in multi-cultural countries like Ethiopia. In the Ethiopian context, the contemporary political system is dominated by ethnically based political parties and polarised politics. Ethnic-based political parties and elites do not agree on fundamental national issues such as the constitution, federalism and its structural arrangement, past history, national symbols, language, and many others. All these issues need national consensus among all concerned actors for the country's political stability. However, historically or currently, ethnic parties have a tendency to emphasise ethnic group divisions and cleavages above social similarities and shared values, and some ethnic parties even seek to secede from the nation. For instance, when the TPLF prepared its manifesto in 1976, it said that Tigray should be an independent republic. However, when they eventually gained power, they changed this to an autonomous province inside Ethiopia [2]. Formalized identity politics in Ethiopia altered conflicts' characters, origins, and goals. The ethnic federal system and ethnic rights to self-determination up to secession have neither resulted in ethnic political autonomy nor put an end to separatist hostilities in Ethiopia [3]. These antagonistic interests and attitudes hinder the national consensus in the country.

Ethiopian nationalists' quest for national cohesion is centered on integration strategies; however, these strategies would conflict with other political groups' claims for self-determination. According to the most recent results in the comparative politics of split societies, balancing strategies for accommodation and integration are necessary to address the country's conflicting interests [4]. The divergent and polarised stances of ethnically based political parties pose problems for strengthening national unity through national consensus on the fundamental agendas of the country. This study aims to investigate the roles played by ethnically based political parties in national dialogue and their implications for national consensus in Ethiopia.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this part the definition and concepts of national consensus and the role of ethnic based political parties and their implication in national consensus in Ethiopia is discussed.

2.1. Concepts of National consensus

The national consensus is a way to resolve differences and conflicts between different groups and bring them to a new level of communication and rebuild social harmony. A National Dialogue is a nationally led and all-inclusive political process that brings about consensus among key stakeholders on basic national issues like political crises and post-war situations. It is being used in the context of its importance to safeguard national sovereignty and prevent international interference and is considered a viable option for conflict transformation as it focuses on strong national solutions [5].

A national consensus comes into practice through national dialogue. National dialogue is viewed as a problem-solving process to resolve social, political, and economic issues that one or more government institutions are unable to effectively and efficiently address on their own [6]. They added that dialogue is a process of real interaction where human beings listen to and learn from each other. Even though disagreements persist, people try to take others' concerns into themselves and try to understand the real facts rather than blaming others. It differs from a debate in that it accepts and accommodates a diversity of ideas and differences of opinion instead of judging and does not impose one's ideas on another.

National Dialogue is a comprehensive process for resolving national-owned political issues, such as political crises, social and economic issues, or past political problems, and building national consensus among stakeholders; it should be all-inclusive in order to bring about a new transformation for a nation's chance [7].

National Dialogue is a process of restoring a broken relationship among the government, political actors, and the people that builds trust among them and gives the government legitimacy. Political parties are the main actors in a national dialogue. National dialogue often involves major political parties, but it is uncommon for each political party to be involved. This is because they are weak and unrecognizable. Political parties, for example, did not participate in the national talks in Afghanistan (both talks), Benin, Somalia (Djibouti), and Somaliland [8].

The National Consensus has the purpose of fixing high political instability; eliminating conflicts and the risk of war; improving the political system; rebuilding the relationship between the government and citizens (a new social contract); and treating historical distorted and fragmented relationships. The major issues such as constitutional, political, economic, and socio-cultural agendas are need to be given priority and addressed through national consensus in Ethiopia [7].

The constitutional or legal issues include no public consultation during the drafting, short of legitimacy, and some specific articles of the constitution that should be addressed through national dialogue and consensus, like Article 39 of the constitution. Political issues such as federalism and its regional arrangement, institutional independence, national flag and national emblem, and unmanageable political competitions between ethnic-nationalists and Ethio-nationalists should be addressed through inclusive national dialogue. Economic model or economic policy, privatization, unemployment, and the issue of equal distribution of resources are major economic issues that need to be addressed through national consensus. Finally, socio-cultural issues such as political culture, tolerance culture, and promoting cultural identity should be prioritised and addressed through national consensus to ensure long-term peace and the success of the current political reform.

In order to fully comprehend the nature of political relations in historic and current Ethiopia, one must first attempt to understand the anatomy of disputes in pre-and post-federal Ethiopia. The political and intellectual agenda of national questions raised by Ethiopian Student Movements (ESM) in the 1960s can be traced as the historical origin of formalised identity politics and ethnic rights to self-determination under an ethnic federal structure [3]. Therefore, there are historical and current reasons that force national consensus to take place in Ethiopia. There are historical reasons/challenges such as: challenging state formation or nation-building narratives; polarized political agendas based on past history; mistrust and hostility between political powers; crisis or legacy caused by anti-democratic regimes; unfair interaction between government and citizens; poverty and unequal resource distribution. The question of identity and ethnicity, the exclusionary political system and the wrong distribution of power, and holding a sense of historical revenge can be mentioned. On the other hand, current reasons/challenges are the proliferation of ethnic and "religious" conflicts; civilian deaths, displacement and loss of property; the trend of "narrowing" the political environment that was improved after the change; conflicts between the federal and state and regional governments; unemployment; high cost of

living; lack of good governance; and the existence of the dominance of nationalistic politics and the existence of polar opposite attitudes and actions on basic national issues such as the constitution, federal structure, flag, national values, etc. In the current situation in Ethiopia, there is a strong public protest in every area. The rise of political instability, a loss of trust among the political elites, a polarising political position, lack of justice, undemocratic practice, people's lack of trust in the government, despair, and other problems are widely observed.

The main issues that are currently raised on the main agenda are the history of the state/nation building process; national symbols (flags, heroes, etc.); the constitution and structure of federalism; electoral act; foreign affairs and national security; the question of region; the capital city (Addis Ababa) administration border; administrative and identity questions; and others that are social, economic, and political agendas.

A National Consensus enables us to achieve lasting peace and stability in Ethiopia; to create trust between political forces; to design Ethiopia's new political road map; to reconcile the complicated issues; to create a new interaction between the government and citizens (a new social contract); to build a democratic system; and to create new political cultures and institutions. It is important to build consensus on constitutional reform and federalism.

One cannot be said that there has been a significant attempt to create a national consensus in the history of Ethiopia. Past governments have governed the country with their own agenda and interests. They did not make any attempt to resolve the disputes that arose at the time through discussion and inclusive dialogue. But the current situation does not allow us to continue in the normal way. Recently, the idea of national consensus has been discussed by various bodies, namely the government; by political parties; by intellectuals and famous personalities; since media institutions, research institutions, foreign governments and international organisations are being raised, the establishment of an independent national consensus commission can be considered as a favourable opportunity.

The role played by political parties, especially ethnically based political parties, will have a significant contribution to these national consensus efforts. The purpose of this study is to examine the role played by ethnically based political parties in national consensus and their impact on national consensus.

2.2. Role of Ethnic-Based Political Parties in national consensus

Political parties are fundamental pillars of democracy, and they bring about lasting political, structural, and social improvements by overcoming barriers to dialogue. In a polarised society, political party dialogue is the best way to resolve identity politics. It also allows political parties to contribute to peace and stability, building democracy and sustainable socio-economic development by reaching a consensus on a common national agenda [7].

Contrary to these positive roles of political parties, the positions of EBPPs have played a negative role in the national consensus by provoking antagonistic agendas on the basic national issue in Ethiopia. Prolonged political crises, as well as communal and ethnic conflicts, have exacerbated inequalities in Ethiopia left over from previous regimes [9]. In Ethiopia, ethnic-based political parties are a collection of many political organisations that are frequently fragmented by multiple internal conflicts, occasionally irresponsible, and poorly directed [10]. This could be done to divert attention away from efforts to reach a national consensus.

The EBPPs are not able to serve as instruments of national unity due to their failure to transcend their ethnic agenda through debates on issues with national consequences [11]. The TPLF had taken control of the unitary state since 1991, and retaining power without ethnic consensus would have resulted in a similar ethnic uprising. It had to reorganise the state in order to stay in power, creating ethnic federalism and ethnic divisions to achieve this purpose [2].

Establishing parties based on ethnicity is jeopardising ethnic conflict and violence and encourages political parties to organise based on their respective ethnic groups that address narrow-minded ethnic issues by ignoring national common agendas in Ethiopia [10]. Ethnic-based political parties are sources of or prone to conflict [12]. The demarcation of administrative boundaries between regional states was not agreed upon by the people, which led to repeated intra-boundary conflicts in Ethiopia. The parties used this situation to inspire their ethnic groups to form an ethnic political party [1]. This demarcation of administrative boundaries with no agreement led to conflict and violence. For example, consider the conflict between the Tigray and Amhara regions over the administrative boundaries of Wolkayt and Raya.

Ethnic groups are the centers of the federal system in Ethiopia. On the type of federalism that Ethiopia should follow, there are two distinct groups of political elites. One is ethnic federalism, and the other is geographical federalism in the current Ethiopian political landscape. Whether it is ethnic based or not, the important thing is to reach a national consensus [7]. He also argued that extensive distrust and division among fragmented political elites has further created confusion and cleavage in society. The two extremes of polarity are ethnicity and Ethiopianness promoters, who have political dominance in the current Ethiopian arena. Ethno-nationalist politicians are narrow-minded and inward-looking and want a new social order in society.

Following ethnic federalism and the dominant ethnic political landscape in Ethiopia resulted in widening differences in the fundamental national agenda between political elites that led to the danger of insuring a strong national unit. EBPPs are not in agreement on basic common national agenda issues such as federalism, regional administrative boundary, type of democracy building, national heroes and symbols, national flag, emblem, and anthem. These are just some of the major national political issues that require all-inclusive dialogue in the country [7].

Abbink [9] argues that in order to reduce and resolve ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia, it is necessary to amend the constitution and re-arrange the existing regional administrative boundaries based not primarily on language and ethnicity but on workable and reasonable building blocks, such as ecology, identity, and psychological ties of ethnic groups [9]. The current political cleavages among political elites as well as ethnic groups are very severe for national unity and for the co-existence of the citizens 'unless; all concerned stakeholders will come to a national consensus through inclusive national dialogue.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to accomplish the goals of the study, the research methodology component of this investigation involves the research design, research techniques, and data analysis. The investigation used a descriptive and exploratory research design. The qualitative

question of how ethnic-based political parties impacted on national consensus was addressed using the exploratory study approach. In order to respond to quantitative data, the descriptive research approach was adopted.

In this study, primary and secondary data sources were used. To obtain the primary source of data, the tools used polls of regular people in five regions (the Oromia, Amhara, South Ethiopia, Tigray, and Somali regions) and Addis Ababa city. Political party leaders, government officials and employees from the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Peace, as well as academics from the political science departments of Addis Ababa and Bahir-Dar universities, were among the key informant interview. Aside from journal articles that had already been published online using Google, other secondary sources of information included documents from the Ethiopian government, political parties, and electoral board of Ethiopia.

Purposive sampling techniques were used to select the sample for this inquiry. Ordinary people from the cities and regions were specifically picked to complete the questionnaire. Five regions are picked, including South Ethiopia, Oromia, and Amhara regions, due to their numerous ethnic groupings, ethnic parties, large populations, and leadership by the coalition party. The Tigray region was chosen because it is administered by an ethnic party and because Addis Ababa is home to numerous national and ethnic parties.

The population of Somalia is higher than that of the other four emerging regions. Additionally, the professional respondents were specifically chosen from the political science departments at the universities of Addis Ababa and Bahir-Dar due to the presence of political science academicians at the institutions. The leaders of the political parties and government officials were carefully chosen for the key informant interviews, in addition to giving them a better understanding of the study's topic.

The study's overall sample, which consists of 500 respondents who filled out questionnaires and 65 participants in in-depth interviews, totals 565 participants. 500 ordinary residents were recruited from five regions and one municipal government to engage in surveys, while 65 key informants took part in interviews throughout the project. The interview questions were answered by 21 political party leaders, 18 government representatives from the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Peace, and 26 academics from Addis Ababa and Bahir-Dar universities.

A mixed-methods approach to research was used in the study. A mixed-methods approach to research uses both qualitative and quantitative research questions. The study will explore, analyze, and compute the justification for applying a quantitative research strategy using mean, frequency, percentage, graphs, and charts. Through closed-ended surveys from cities and regions, the study gathered numerical data. To gather primary data, key informant interviews and qualitative techniques were employed. The qualitative research approach was employed to carry out the objectives of the study, with interviews serving as the main source of narrative descriptions and justifications for the semi-structured questionnaire.

In this study, a mixed-method analysis was carried out. Excel and the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16 software are used for descriptive analysis and the collection of quantitative data using closed-ended questionnaires. Comparatively, key informant interviews and open-ended surveys are used to collect qualitative data. After being transcribed, coded, and categorised, the data is then analysed using theme or exploratory analysis. This is because integrating two approaches at the interpretation stage leads in triangulating, contrasting, relating, and complementing both findings with reference to the results evaluated and discussed.

4. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Key finding and results from survey and key informants' interview respondents on the roles and impacts of ethnic based political parties on the national consensus is included in the finding and discussion part.

4.1. National Consensus

Respondents were asked to rate whether they were impacted positively or negatively by EBPPs in order to better understand the impact of EBPPs on national consensus in the country. And the calculated means were compared to the expected mean value (3.00). The results of the analysis of 500 respondents' (M = 336; F = 164) in terms of the two means showed that the total respondents' mean on a five-point scale (5 = Strongly Agree to 1 = Strongly Disagree) has measured 2.80, which is below the expected average (3.0). This clearly tells us that the contribution of EBPPs to national consensus was found to be very low. As can be seen in Table 3, the response of 500 citizens on average was found to be 2.80. The results of the descriptive statistics have been presented in the following table.

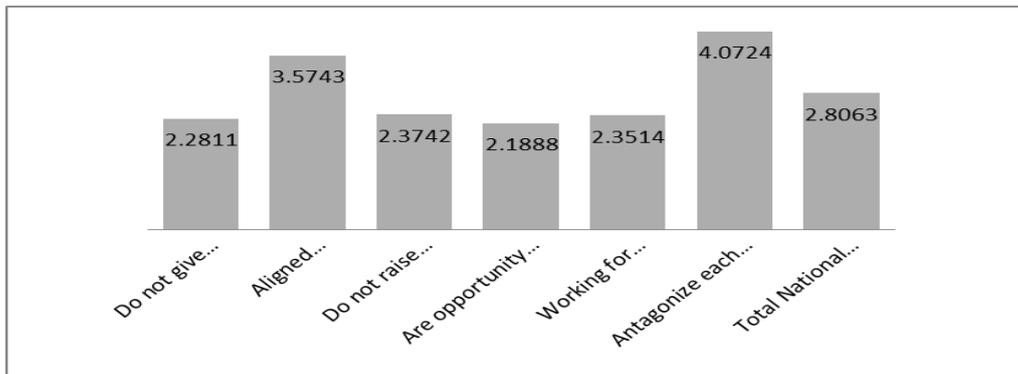
Table 4.1: The Impacts of EBPP on the National Consensus

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Total National Consensus	498	1.00	5.00	2.8063	.82128
Valid N (list wise)	498				

Source: computed from the survey (2021)

Even if the result of the average mean (2.80) is below the expected value (3.00), as we can see clearly in Chart 2 below, the negative items (3.57% and 4.07%) have a higher contribution to the cumulative mean value becoming 2.80 than the positive items to the impacts of EBPP for national consensus. All positive items' mean is below the expected value (3.00), which is similar to the cumulative mean.

Chart 4.1: The Impact of EBPP on National Consensus



Source: computed from the survey (2021)

Although the average response of the respondents regarding the national consensus was below the expected average value, when we are analysing the impact of EBPPs on the national consensus in terms of each attribute, there was no similar result obtained across all the responses. Both positive and negative questionnaires were asked in the survey regarding the impact of EBPP on the national consensus.

As can be seen in Table 4.2, the majority of respondents for the positive attributes responded that they strongly disagree and disagree. EBPPs do not give attention to dividing agendas but to unifying ones (34.6% and 38.0%), do not raise extremely divergent political agendas that are a contribution to national consensus (31.8% and 34.8%), are an opportunity for societal integration and cohesion since their political activities are full of magnifying common interests (36.6% and 38.0%), and work for national consensus by supporting common political agendas, shared national identities, and shared interests (35.2% and 32.0%). In contrast, the vast majority of respondents with negative characteristics stated that they strongly agree or agree. EBPPs align themselves with particular socio-cultural identity groups (27.2% and 38.6%) and antagonize each other by having extremely irreconcilable agendas and others (45.2% and 34.8%). The survey results show that the EBPPs have negative impacts on the national consensus and that they do not have an opportunity to strengthen national unity in Ethiopia.

Table 4.2: The Impacts of EBPP on National Consensus frequency Results (500)

Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
Do not give attention for dividing agendas but for unifying ones	34.6	38.0	4.2	10.0	12.8
Aligned themselves with particular socio-cultural identity groups	11.6	12.6	9.6	38.6	27.2
Do not raise extremely divergent political agendas that are contribution for national consensus	31.8	34.8	8.4	12.6	11.8
Are opportunity for societal integration and cohesion, since their political activities are in full of magnifying common interest?	36.6	38.0	5.0	9.6	10.4
Working for national consensus supporting common political agendas, shared national identities and shared interests.	35.2	32.0	6.6	13.8	12.0
Antagonize each other having extremely irreconcilable agendas and other	5.4	7.8	6.2	34.8	45.2

Source: computed from the survey (2021)

Similarly, the majority of respondents in the interview showed that EPPPs have negatively affected the national consensus. The interviewees further justified why EBPPs are negatively affected by national consensus by mentioning the following major reasons just to mention a few. In Ethiopia, there are many basic national issues that need consensus. However, there is no national consensus on this issue among EBPPs. Among such national issues are history, the constitution, federalism and its arrangements, the flag, language, our national heroes, national symbols, our songs, the implementation of democracy, identity questions, administrative boundaries, and the like. EBPPs surprisingly wouldn't agree even on the construction of the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) or to call the country by the name of Ethiopia.

EBPPs are negatively affected by the national consensus by the distorted narration of past history. Regarding this, EBPPs are not the opportunity for national consensus due to misinterpreting and misunderstanding of the benefit of past history; denial of the existence of real history; the existence of false narrations and prejudice; snatching apart history; doing what is good for themselves and bad for others; and there is a competition in history by saying "my history" is greater than others.

EBPPs are a threat to national unity because they are obstacles to national consensus. There is a problem with the lack of a culture of dialogue. They are standing at two opposite extremes based on their agenda. They do not give a chance to dialogue because they are trying to assert themselves and try to impose their interests on others since their vision is centered on their ethnic group, not national issues. They don't also have a platform for national consensus. They are the ones who promote their own ethnic group. They move in the opposite direction and in an antagonistic manner.

There is also a low level of problem-solving culture through discussion. Hence, they believe in the culture of debate rather than dialogue due to the constraints of the narrow space of democracy in problem-solving in the country. National consensus is a process, not an outcome. In this respect, EBPPs couldn't be taken as an opportunity for national consensus. The current practice is not about

how inclusive and participatory the national dialogue process is, but about focusing on national consensus outcomes for the sake of reporting and media consumption. This has resulted in decreasing the role of national dialogue in creating mutual understanding or widening the gap on the basic national agenda.

EBPPs ignored common issues and the big agendas of the country. They are not giving much emphasis to the effect of one's agenda on others. In fact, EBPPs try to tell their ethnic groups that "you were discriminated against by others" and that they are not even living together with them. Dialogue on a mutual agenda is unthinkable to them, and it is not their concern. If there is a common issue, they are destroying something in common. They do not take into account common problems to get solutions. Rather, they express their hatred through action, in the form of the destruction of religious institutions, the demolition of monuments, the destruction of values, the confrontation of common history, and so forth. Generally, EBPPs affect national consensus negatively due to a lack of national vision and because they claim to be anything for their ethnic group. Moreover, very few respondents, 7.7% (n = 5 of 65 respondents), argue that EBPPs are an opportunity for national consensus. There is a problem of polarization by both national and ethnic-based parties in the national consensus. Although EBPPs did not play much of a positive role in national affairs, they did have a constructive role in some common agendas, such as the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, as they took it as a common project, as well as the Adwa victory, and the federal system, although they fought over the regional structural arrangement and past history.

There is something that has started now; political parties (including EBPPs) are forming a joint council that will discuss each other on different national issues because there is a need to be included in their culture and language at the national level to be a common value. The results of the interview revealed that EBPPs do not show much concern for national issues as their results negatively affect national consciences. This result implies that EBPPs have negatively impacted national unity because they didn't have an opportunity for national consensus in Ethiopia.

4.2. Discussion

In the analysis of both the survey and the interview, respondents showed that the EBPPs have negative impacts on the national consensus and they are no opportunity for the strengthening of national unity in Ethiopia by virtue of their major points: lack of consensus on fundamental national agendas in terms of constitutional framework, flag, language, our national heroes, and so forth. This is similar to [7] findings that there is a lack of consensus on basic national issues among political parties in general and ethnically based political parties in particular in the country.

The distorted narration of past history by EBPPs for the purpose of politicising ethnicity and ethnic consciousness is an obstacle to common understanding about the past. From this point of view, the researcher [10] stated that EBPPs are obstacles to national consensus because they have narrow-minded ethnic issues and ignore national common agendas in Ethiopia. Lack of a culture of dialogue and they focused on the debate that aims for a win-loss solution on the issues. EBPPs ignore the common agenda except promoting their own ethnic groups; and the absence of an open mutual agenda by destroying something in common.

Few respondents, on the other hand, agreed that the presence of ethnic-based political parties facilitates national consensus on development agendas such as the construction of the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam and historical events such as the Adwa victory. Additionally, currently, they have a positive role in forming a joint council that discusses each other on different national issues.

All in all, the results showed that ethnic-based political parties do not give much concern about national issues and that would have a negative influence on national consensus. This, in turn, has a negative impact on Ethiopian national unity. Although literature by [8] expressed that national dialogue is a process of restoring a broken relationship among the government, political actors, and the people, that builds trust among them and gives the government legitimacy.

However, the findings of this study couldn't show as these authors mentioned. Ethnic-based political parties are not an opportunity and have negatively impacted national consensus. This finding is similar to [11], [9], [2], and others who suggested that prolonged political crises and communal and ethnic conflicts have escalated in Ethiopia, exacerbating the inequalities inherited from previous regimes and, as Horowitz (1985), ethnically based political parties are sources or prone to conflict. In a similar vein, [7] highlighted that following ethnic federalism and the dominant ethnic political landscape in Ethiopia resulted in widening differences in the fundamental national agenda between political elites.

As a result, ethnic-based political parties have a greater negative impact on national consensus by playing a destructive role, such as dividing societies, distorting shared values that bind us together, focusing on ethnic interests rather than aggregating interests, being sources of ethnic conflict, affect the quality of democracy and exclude others, and mobilising their ethnic groups using false narratives about past history, such as telling their ethnic groups that one ethnic group was the oppressor and others oppressed pseudo-histories.

5. CONCLUSION

A National Consensus enables us to achieve long-term peace and stability in Ethiopia; build trust between political forces; design Ethiopia's new political road map; resolve the complex issues; create a new social contract between the government and the people (a democratic system); and create new political cultures and institutions. Constructing consensus on constitutional change and federalism is crucial.

Although political parties are the primary pillars of democracy and they break down communication obstacles to achieve long-lasting political, institutional, and social advancements, political party discourse is the best method for resolving identity politics in a divided society. Contrary to this, ethnic-based political parties have had detrimental impacts on the national consensus by igniting a conflicting agenda on Ethiopia's fundamental issues. EBPPs pose a threat to national unity since they stand in the way of create widespread disagreement. The absence of a dialogue-based culture is a challenge. Based on their agendas, they are taking positions at two opposite extremes. Since their focus is on their ethnic group rather than national issues, they do not give the opportunity for conversation because they are seeking to express themselves and impose their interests on others.

The EBPPs have negative impacts on the national consensus and they are no opportunity for the strengthening of national unity in Ethiopia by raising antagonistic positions on the fundamental national agendas such as ethnic federalism, constitutional framework, flag, language, our national heroes, even if they are the name of Ethiopia, and so forth by the distorted narration of past history; deficiency of a culture of dialogue and focusing on the culture of debate for win-loss solution; and absence of open mutual agenda by destroying something in common. This is jeopardy to national consensus and has negatively impacted on national unity in the country.

For national unity and for the coexistence of society, the existing political divisions among political elites and ethnic groupings are quite serious. This very dangerous political problem should be resolved through an inclusive national conversation. All interested parties and elites will reach a national consensus on the fundamental agendas of the country to save it from disintegrating and to ensure sustainable peace and political stability.

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