Full Length Research

Evaluating the Nature of Peace in the Contemporary Ethiopia's Socio-Political Dynamism: *A Galtung's Peace (Negative and Positive) Perspective*

Girmay Abraha

PhD. Candidate in Addis Ababa University, Institute for Peace and Security Studies. He is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Civics and Ethical Studies, College of Social Sciences and Humanities, Samara University, Semera, Ethiopia. Email:gakl42@yahoo.com

The concept of peace remains notoriously difficult to define and evaluate in contemporary states' socio-political dynamism. Its difficulty is, among other things, related to manifold perspectives it makes for. This article has then selectively pursued Galtung's peace perspective to operationalize the conceptual immensity and come up with viable peace evaluation maneuvers. The prime purpose of the paper is to explain and evaluate the nature and mannerism of negative and positive peace in the contemporary Ethiopia, popularly post 1991. Methodologically, considerable scholarly literature and national documents were explored and discussed through both descriptive and critical discourse approaches. Personal observation was also used as a supplementary tool in the entire appraisals. The finding of the entire reviews recognized that the contemporary Ethiopia has relatively marked a promotable national development and transformation than ever before; however the quest for peace is still overlooked and demanding greater attention, especially the positive version of peace as Galtung prompted to ensure. The findings by far found out that the nature of negative peace, which is popularly manifested by absent of internal destructive conflicts, armed clashes and potential fear of violence, has seemingly analogized with a snake under a glass that meant potentially at risk, actually latent, and not yet fully realized in the contemporary Ethiopia. Furthermore, the conclusion made from the details shown that there have been nascent politico-democratic systems and structures, uneven and multidimensional economic inequalities, social injustices, persistent poverty and perilous environmental changes. All these, without doubt, have mounted structural, cultural and ecological violence that eventually lessened positive peace to its worst platform. In a nutshell reveals, the nature of positive peace in contemporary Ethiopia, more severe than the negative one, seems tacit, insubstantial and insignificantly realized. At the end, hopes for holistic (negative and positive) peace in the country shall therefore rest on the success of the ruling regime itself to properly manage the heating destructive internal conflicts and potential violence, and responsively reassure all-rounded justice (political, social, economic) through enforcing comprehensive socio-political policies, peace frameworks, and pro-poor development strategies.

Keywords: Positive Peace, Negative Peace, Galtung's Peace Perspective, Contemporary Ethiopia, Evaluation.

INTRODUCTION

Peace is the most desired element of humanity. In fact, humanity suffers from lack of peace and stability (Tesfaye, 2010). More surprisingly, many peoples know what peace means, but they define and understand it differently. It remains the most controversial concept, irrespective of scholars' voluminous academic contribution to, diverging assumptions about and conclusions made on peace. Call and Cousens (2008) further state that albeit the state systems of most countries of the world claim peace is valuable, what peace actually is and how it can be realized are issues on which there is no agreement.

Nonetheless, a plethora of peace scholars acknowledge that peace is a condition that encompasses multiple creative and innovative ways of dealing with differences, injustices, inequalities, challenges in relation to multidimensional human aspects such as political, legal, moral, ecological, cultural, developmental, socio-economic and the like matters (Galtung, 1969; Widitama, 2008; Kuwali, 2014).

Instigating Problem, Assumption, Methodology and Purpose

Peace is a context-specific concept. It needs a multi-disciplinary approach to be ensured and measured. The article accordingly used Galtung's conceptual benchmark (or assumption) to reinforce its entire analysis and evaluative maneuvers that would possibly reduce the conceptual complexity of peace. For instance, albeit direct violence was one of the most tenacious problems of humanity for centuries, this article supposed that peace shall not only foci on the absence of war or direct violence, but also on the establishment of positive, life-enhancing human institutions and structures. Assuming this, the contemporary Ethiopia has thereby been evaluated not only in the negative sense of minimizing destructive conflicts, but it was also explored in line with the positive values and manifestations that optimistically optimize people's wellbeing and peaceful coexistence.

Methodologically, the paper used a critical review and analysis of scholarly literatures and institutional documents (national policies) related to peace and the contemporary Ethiopia, technically through both descriptive and critical discourse approaches. In so reviewing, the paper utilized twice ways. First, the country's contemporary maneuvers made on so far were discussed and explained, perhaps evaluated, vis-à-vis Galtung's peace perspective. In other words, its theoretical orientation was dwelled on Galtung's peace typology as well as his model of direct and structural violence as are. Second, the paper hunted a tactic "to know what peace is, *know what peace is not*" as a

pathway to evaluate the presence or absent of negative and positive peace mannerisms.

Significantly, the prime purpose of this maneuver is to explain and evaluate the nature, mannerisms and occurrences of peace (negative and positive) in the contemporary Ethiopia, post 1991. All the human aspects of change, continuity and reforms with regard to the workings of the socio-political systems and practices were discussed in view of attempting to realize peace. In so doing, the paper optimally operationalized a broad perspective of peace in order to recommend a plausible direction to spearhead peace, particularly the most desirable, but marginally surfaced, notion of positive peace.

Background: A Closer Brief

Galtung's Negative and Positive Peace Typology: Key Notes

Absence of war (direct violence) was a concept that most people related to peace for centuries. It was such characterization of peace as a negative phenomenon that prompted Johan Galtung, a Norwegian Peace Researcher, to make his famous distinction between negative and positive peace in his article 'Violence, Peace and Peace Research', 1969. For him, "positive" peace denotes the simultaneous presence of many desirable states of mind and society, such as harmony, justice, equity and so on. "Negative" peace popularly denotes the absence of war and all forms of large-scale violence and destructive conflicts. Moreover, negative peace is considered as the absence of fear of violence and political hostilities. It is a condition in which no active or organized military violence is taking place.

Positive peace is more than the absence of war. It refers to a condition when there is full of political, social, economic, cultural, and religious justices that minimize or eliminate violence and exploitation (Hutton, 2014). It is a condition when human rights protection, ecological and economic wellbeing prevail within a society (Global Peace Index, 2007), and the overcoming of structural and cultural violence too. Additionally, positive peace is not merely limited to the idea of getting rid of something, but also includes the initiative for establishing, fairly arranging, something which is overlooked in the socio-political structures of a given political community (Young, 2010; Kuwali, 2014).

Moreover, Galtung excellently characterized peace with reference to multiple categories of violence. The best known and most used of these categories are direct, structural and cultural violence, which are intimately linked to one another. He recycled the dichotomy

between direct and structural violence, particularly, to support his distinction between negative peace and positive peace taxonomy. For him, peace can only exist, when all forms of violence are alleviated in a society at all structures and institutions. He also put twofold explanations on why peace has to be dealt with structural and cultural violence (Galtung, 1969). First, structural violence can be just as harmful as direct violence. For example, the human suffering resulting from poverty is not less than, in magnitude, the suffering and destruction resulting from destructive conflict or direct violence. Second, direct violence cannot be deterred and prevented, unless the structural violence that engenders it is properly removed.

Ethiopia's Contemporary Reality: A Birds Eye Synopsis

Ethiopia is a multi-lingual and multi-ethnic country. It holds dozens of nations, nationalities and peoples with diverse traditions (Girmay, 2011). Politically speaking, soon after the incumbent party, Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), ventured into a project of recasting, reorienting and reorganizing the Ethiopian political landscape through the principle of federal system of governance based on ethno-linguistic profile (Kassahun, 2010), the pattern of political system has considerably changed, basically post 1991.

Ethiopia's contemporary political history reflects, among other things, the institutional legacy of centuries of internal conflicts and external threats. Internally, religion, ethnicity and nationality have each, at various times and in varying combinations, served as focal points in the contest for power and control over economic resources. Externally, prolong regional animosity with some neighboring states, like Egypt, Somalia and Eritrea, remained a critical threat of internal peace and order for Ethiopia (Alemayehu, 2005). These all conflicts and contests coupled with persistent poverty and socio-economic difficulty are further identified as potent constraints to peace and development in contemporary Ethiopia. This is because both the internal and external tensions notably contributed to undermine the political processes and systems of the country, and mystified the peoples' socio-political fate in multiple ways. Democratically, in the last couple of decades, the ruling party begun to use elections as important instruments of representative politics that could be considered as a positive development in a country whose history was bedeviled by the absence of competitive electoral exercises (Kassahun, 2010). But, the legitimacy of the electoral process in Ethiopia still left with highly contested issues, and keenly criticized for failing to have a genuine, inclusive, and democratic election (Tronvoll, 2000; Tesfaye, 2010; Kidist, 2014).

The contemporary Ethiopia has set out its vision on entrenching a socio-economic justice based on the freewill of the people (Sehen and Tsegaye, 2010). This is meant to contribute to rapid economic growth and socio-political transformation. In practice, the current regime has accomplished considerable economic growth and development (USAID, 2012); however, there have been still a lot of nostalgic issues warning the entire socio-economy and peace of the country such as poverty, drought, hunger, income inequality and degraded environment jointly resulted to, be it direct or indirect, trouble socio-economic injustice, human misery and instable political landscape.

Moreover, the current government of Ethiopia is attempting to renew different social protection programs in ways to realize its national goals and provide social service and opportunity to its poorest and most vulnerable citizens (MoLSA, 2012). But in reality, many Ethiopians are still suffering from repeated bouts of drought and inefficient welfare activities (Tronvoll, 2000). That is why Kurtz and Scarborough (2012) revealed that peace and drought resilience are interconnected challenges in the contemporary Ethiopia where vulnerable communities face cycles of social inequalities, violence, natural calamities, and environmental vulnerability. Similarly, the frequent destructive conflicts in various regional borders of the country are increasingly threatening the socio-economic survival of many Ethiopians from time to time.

Analyzing the Negative and Positive Peace in Contemporary Ethiopia

The world is more peaceful now than in any time in the past (Reychler, 2006). But even now due to some daunting troubles such as poverty, economic discrepancy, social inequalities and politico-democracy delicacy, which are disproportionally humiliating the developing countries, like Ethiopia, peace in its broader essence has narrowly existed (Kurtz and Scarborough, 2012). For instance, it is obvious that in this time Ethiopia is not at war with any of its neighboring countries; however, there are couples of contentious issues and anti-peace experiences within the country's contemporary makeup that makes the nature of peace to be seemingly tacit and infant.

The Nature of Negative Peace: Post 1991

Much literature on Ethiopia's contemporary peace and conflict arenas ensure that there have been internal destructive conflicts and armed clashes rooted on ethnicity, identity, resources and border issues (Tesfaye, 2010; Kurtz and Scarborough, 2012; Kidist, 2014). The

frequency and magnitude of such destructive conflicts essentially in border areas of South Oromiya and Somali region; the Afar-Issa; Borena, Gabra and Gari communities took place over water resources, grazing land, and territorial disagreements have remained dangerous and continual. Parallel to these realities, the ruling party (EPRDF) has been fronting negative peace challenges from various armed insurgent groups such as the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the Ethiopian People's Patriotic Front (EPPF). All these launched low-level attacks in considerable times for various political claims and reasons (Kidist, 2014). This in turn intensified fear of violence and possibly human rights violation of many Ethiopians. As well, it has irrevocably resulted to massive loss of assets, deaths of hundreds of people, and significant displacement of citizens (Vaughan and Tronvoll, 2003; Sehen et al., 2012).

Moreover, despite the fact that ethnic-based federal structure of the country was chosen to respond ethino-national conflicts, it has, in some instances, further added new and horrendous tensions, possibly direct violence, to pre-existing local conflicts (Vaughan and Tronvoll, 2003; Sehen and Tsegaye, 2010). It was for this reason Kurtz and Scarborough (2012) firmly summarized that the openhanded violent conflicts, dominantly ethnic strains, in various parts of Ethiopia have been steadily puzzling the political peace and order of the regime as well as the socio-economic predictability of many peoples. Even the extent of this growing violence is by far deepening ethnic clashes and armed conflicts to be more devastating than ever before; and pessimistically degraded negative peace to its worst scenario across all the constituted regions of the country.

In terms of geo-strategic determination, Ethiopia is found in a region, Horn of Africa, which is notoriously known for protracted and damaging conflict and animosity. Therefore, defining Ethiopia's contemporary peace from regional echo would be helpful to remark the spillover-effect of destructive conflicts being common in its neighboring states, like Somalia, as a challenge of peace and security arenas. In other words, as long as Ethiopia is part of the continuous internal atrocities and confrontations of the Horn region, the spillover effect of these wars and violent conflicts in one way or the other negates Ethiopia to be instable and less peaceful (Tesfaye, 2010). The logic of this regional conflict interdependence of the Horn boosts not only the political instability, but it also spreads out fear of violence and becomes a growing peril of negative peace.

Referring to all the above details and plausible implications, the nature of negative peace in contemporary Ethiopia can apparently be analogized with a snake under a glass, which meant actually latent, potentially at risk and not yet fully realized. Its justification goes to the logic that negative peace exists, per Galtung's perspective, when all forms of direct violence, destructive conflict, armed clashes and potential fear of violence are effectively mitigated. In contrary, the existence and occurrence of substantial fears of violence, destructive conflicts and armed clashes are scholarly evidenced, and not yet alleviated in Ethiopia. This contextual reality also justifies a fragile negative peace mannerism in today's Ethiopia's politico-territorial jurisdiction.

The Nature of Positive Peace: Post 1991

Politico-Democracy Systems and Positive Peace: A Brief Articulation

In present-day Ethiopia, the organizational structures of the ruling party (EPRDF) and the government are overarching and closely intertwined. As a result, incentives for competitive politics, public accountability and legitimate electoral process under a multi-party framework and policy choices are minimal (Kassahun, 2010). This is owing to the fact that boundaries between the state apparatus and the structures of the ruling party are too hazy to exercise political freedoms. Such obscure political structure further creates a sort political upset and awkwardness for many Ethiopians. It might be due to this political pitfalls that Kidist (2014) reaffirmed that the nature of political system in today's Ethiopia can be equated with the mere imposition of hard power and authoritarian rule on the society with ominous aim of perpetuating one party rule under the guise of implementing socio-economic and political policies in order to achieve fast economic development and extricate the poor masses from the scourges of poverty and deprivation. Furthermore, Kassahun (2010) has précised the key features of Ethiopia's contemporary politics signified by the co-existence of patrimonial and legal-rational domination, institutional instability at administrative level and often contradictory patron-client relationships. Moreover, even though tremendous rights and freedoms contented under the federal Constitution with regard to political life, the practice of the ruling party is not encouraging because of considerable tendencies of political exclusion of political organizations from participating in political arenas of the country (Watson, 2010).

Regarding to the politico-administrative dominion, it is true that some administrative reforms are observed; however, as Vaughn and Tronvoll (2003) stated, the nature of public administration in contemporary Ethiopia still faces two core problems. First, the public sector has been crippled by heavy hemorrhaging of professional personnel, as a result of gross disparities in sectorial remunerations and opportunities. Second, many public sectors are affected by culture of inertia, and apparently

fostered the decline of living standards and job security of workers. Additionally, millions of poor peoples who live in different areas have suffered extreme political marginalization because of reduced access to political institutions and participation in decision making (Watson, 2010). The nature of public service delivery in Ethiopia, likely, become inadequate, corruption-ridden and full of bureaucratic bottlenecks, which is currently depressing the socio-political aspiration of many youths, investors and educators.

In addition to the explained political drawbacks, the valuable democratic principles such as gender equality, public transparency, and democratic election are assiduously disregarded in practice and become sources of people's frustrations and disappointments in contemporary political landscape of the country. For instance, many Ethiopian farmers and pastoralists are marginalized in the entire federal political economy developments. Unlikely, pastoral women are doubly marginalized since they experience sever political discrimination and marginalization in remote areas that make their life misunderstood and highly excluded (Watson, 2010). Cognizant of all these political inequalities, institutional incompatibility and structural inaccessibility, it is not wrong to argue that the nature of positive peace, mainly political harmony, is weak and looking for greater attention of the government and its citizens in the contemporary Ethiopia.

Socio-Economic and Ecological Issues Vis-à-vis Positive Peace

Ethiopia has recently enjoyed relative degree of economic development (Tronnvoll, 2000). However, it is not necessarily meant positive peace. Many Ethiopians are suffering a lot of misery and insecurity due to low per-capital income and sever economic challenges (Kidist, 2014). It is for this reason USAID (2012)confirms that Ethiopia is well-known as a country where poverty and famine chronically persisted and still immersed in harmful tradition. Moreover, poverty becomes a ubiquitous reality, and constitutes a lot of injustice in much of Ethiopia; albeit some governmental initiatives are inefficiently introduced to tackle it (MoLSA, 2012). The persistence poverty spearhead coupled with weak infrastructures in many part of Ethiopia signposts that there is limited access to basic socio-economic opportunity such as clean water, banks, electricity, health services and education that inevitably make peoples to feel disappointment, stress and less peace. The existing issues of hunger, drought, income inequality, poor health service, socio-economic insecurity, child malnutrition and unemployment are among the serious socio-economic encounters many Ethiopians face particularly the rural communities. These realities also tell a notice that there

is tenacious inequality and structural injustices play a notable role in weakening positive peace in contemporary Ethiopia.

As MoLSA (2012) clearly documented, there are wide ranges of social protection actions and interventions executed across the country. In actual practice, most of the actions and initiatives made so far are, however, too dysfunctional because of problem in design, implementation, budget allocation and scope. They are hardly protecting the peoples' safety and wellbeing in Ethiopia. For instance, there are many people die from easily treatable diseases like malaria (Jelaludin et al., 2001). Generally, the issue of socio-economic justice is visibly shaded by income inequality, unjust social service supplies, and unfair distribution of opportunity (Watson, 2010). It is morally unfair, socio-politically unwise and economically unsound. More unlikely, those communities in remote areas viz. Afar, Gambella and Somalia face weak accessibility due to uneven distribution of socio-economic opportunity and resource. All these prevailing difficulties also reflect the existence of potent inequality and institutional injustice which often led to structural violence and insubstantial positive peace mannerism.

Environmental changes intensify vulnerabilities to human well-being and undercut opportunities for progress. Ethiopian farmers are likely facing plenty of uncertainty because of unprecedented effect of environmental change manifested by climate change, reduction of soil fertility and lessening agricultural productivity (Girmay, 2011). The popular environmental stresses prevalent in today's Ethiopia include natural calamities, climate variability and reductions in soil fertility are among the critical challenges distress the socio-economic wellbeing and peace. Basically, low productivity leads to considerable displacements of many farmers and triggers new social insecurity, stress, tensions and disorders across all the rural and urban residents. This then exacerbates chronic food insecurity (MoLSA, 2012). All these environment-induced stresses and ecological violence tied with over-depleted natural resources are alarmingly reducing positive peace in every village of the country.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The contemporary Ethiopia demonstrates complex socio-political dynamisms. It is engulfed by plenty of obscuring problems which are gradually impeding peace to exist. The daunting problems that make the nature of peace fragile are numerous and interwoven. Unfulfilled political systems and structures, destructive internal conflicts, fearful regional animosity, socio-economic inequalities and injustices, persistent poverty and insecure environment are some of explained challenges. Given this contextual strain in one hand and Gultung's peace

perspective on the other, it would not be so difficult to conclude and justify the negative and positive peace notes. To begin with, the described destructive conflicts, armed clashes and potential violence are among the major triggering factors overwhelm negative peace in contemporary Ethiopia. Thus, the nature of negative is possibly pronounced as a condition which is not yet ensured. Likewise, the nature of positive peace remains obscure and highly disregarded due to the prevailing troubles of persistent poverty, unfulfilled politico-democracy systems and structures, inequalities and environmental stresses. These troubles systematically stimulate structural injustices and ecological violence which often diminish positive peace to its worst platform. The article thereby onwards that hopes for more negative and positive peace in Ethiopia will possibly rest on the success of the political order itself in managing all the destructive conflicts across internal and regional echelons and reassuring all-inclusive justice (political, social, economic) through realizing comprehensive socio-political policies, peace frameworks and pro-poor development strategies. Optimisms for Galtung's (negative and positive) peace mannerism will remain elusive unless the ruling regime and concerned institutions of the country wake up and make a wide-ranging strategies and innovative policy options that enhance peace.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NP- No (Unknown) Publisher
GPI- Global Peace Index
UNDP- United Nation Development Program
USAID- United States Agency for International Development
MoLSA- Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs
VDM- Verlag Dr. Muller
EPRDF- Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front

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