

# The Politics of Dyadic Community: The Case of Djibouti

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**Abstract:** Ethnicity as a major springboard of identity politics has significantly affected the Republic of Djibouti since 1960s as Colonial rule, the Cold War and regional politics contributed to widen the rift of ethnic cleavage between Afar and Issa. The mobilization of Afars, the minority one, in the early 1990s faced with a heavy handed repression of the Issa dominated government which makes even the power sharing peace negotiation of 1993 less satisfactory. The power sharing scheme of the government was considered as a political contrivance of coopting Afar political figures for dumping the just claim of Afars which is so deep, and the conflict went on. This had exerted pressure on the government to make constitutional concessions of recognizing the plurality of Djibouti. However, from the perspective of accommodation an ethnic demand which has sustained for long, the constitutional and political adjustments are less adequate. The republican principles of the constitution which pushes aside group rights for ethnic groups leaves the plurality reading of the constitution limited to recognition. The constitution have not provide for structures of home-rule for the Afar ethnic group as the inadequacy of power sharing made before provide a reasonable expectation to move on the direction of territorial autonomy. Decentralization as a usual convenient model of meeting ethno-territorial self-rule while retaining the territorial integrity of a state has gotten a limited application in the Djiboutian Constitution. Nevertheless, the possible pathologies of a dyadic form of federal system needs to be assessed as to its workability in the case in point since it may render a bipolarized state with characterized with a deadlock political system. Moreover, the issue of democratic credibility has also exacerbated the mutual suspension between Afars and Issas. The successive electoral boycotts of opposition parties look more sensitive to the politics of accommodation is a typical example of how competitive politics helps to forge political coalescence among ethnic groups, and even dilution the ethnic divide which otherwise works against the interest of minorities. Therefore, the purpose of this study has been to assess the politics of dyadic communities in Djibouti.

**Index Terms:** Politics, Dyadic Community and Djibouti.

## 1. Introduction

The politics of recognition seems to have a very important means for attributing states of multiple varieties across the globe. It affects states: well-off and worse off, tiny and large states, populous and least populous, highly diverse and less diverse, religious and secular; and recently formed and ancient. The role of the culture, religion, ethnicity, language, or their combination has been so significant in coloring political discourses that identity is taking the floor in attaching a social meaning for political ideals such as equality, freedom, justice and democracy. Such level of relevance identity has as a “high social profile” with multiple consequences help it finding routes to socio-political frontlines, especially with the receding of ideological gulfs following the end of the Cold War and the fragmentation in Balkans and former Soviet Union. This is not to say that the policy of identity is consigned only in specific states but, rather, it has also put its claim to be addressed in the articulations of political establishments found in democratic states though less destructive it may be. Canada since the so called “quite revolution” of 1960, the well-known United Kingdom’s issue with Northern Ireland, and Scotland, Belgian linguistic based tensions since 1960s are just a few examples worthy of mentioning.

The responses chosen or achieved in dealing with the quest for group identities by the states have two different approaches: liberal and group based recognition. The first subsumes those institutional and political designs made to work on the principles of individual rights and left the issue of group identity to be embraced by individual citizens based on their free exercise of freedom. This is the

dominant approach in some states like U.S, France, U.K and Australia. The usual criticism made against this approach is its weakness in protecting less prevalent, particularly of the culture of minorities, cultural identities from assimilation to the dominant one. This is based on the assumption that cultural hierarchy has strong on generating and reinforcing socio-economic inequality and a fixed-like disparity among individuals of different culture in functioning in the wider society.

The other one, secondly, is the political institutionalization of cultural diversity and individual identity in contrary to the effort of neutralizing the cultural make-up of the states as argued by the first-liberals. This makes an explicit recognition and a far reaching concession for cultural groups in designing the political landscape provide for mechanisms of flourishing the political economy aspirations of these groups. Federalization and consociational arrangements the ones which constitute this kind of casting group identity of purportedly significant in to the very structural edifices of the state. Thus, constitutional recognition, institutional design, decentralization and the sharing of the state apparatus are the main impetuses of this approach.

Apart from the above forms, in some states the response of the state machinery or the dominant cultural group at large is characterized more of by suppressing and marginalizing the interest and denigrating the cultural realms of, including religion and language, groups. This nature of cultural non-recognition and rending minorities to the lowest position of the society has degenerated in to conflicts as vividly seen from the post-colonial African experience. The case at point, Djibouti, is one of them.

Therefore, the main issue of the study is to discuss and explain achievements, feasibilities and drawbacks of some measures taken by Djibouti to address the ethnic based conflicts between Afar and Issa since 1990s from the perspective of diversity accommodation and creating a legitimate governance in the eyes of these ethnic groups .It is with the conviction that the intensity of ethnic conflict, either structural or physical sort, suggests its own means of dealing with, given the deep-seated ethnic conflicts between Afars and Issas since 15<sup>th</sup> century with the upward expansion of Issas in to where the Afars had controlled and aggravated, latter, during the French colonial rule.

To do so, the following questions are of much worth answering: what are the sources of tensions between Afar and Issa? And how have these sources evolved through times? Are there unique features that characterize the Djiboutian case? What sets of institutions and political processes been crafted in accommodation ethnic contestations in Djibouti? And how are they going to keep working in the near future?

With regard to methodology, secondary sources of comprising documents of both theoretical and empirical analysis used extensively. This means it is based on reviewing literatures ranging from organizational policy documents to comparative political studies which facilitates in sharpening the characteristics of ethnic conflicts together with pointing out the iniquitousness of ethnicity in the Republic of Djibouti.

## **2. Tracing the Historical Background of Ethnicity in Djibouti**

The Republic of Djibouti is located at the junction of the Gulf of Eden and the Red Sea bordering with Eritrea, Ethiopia and the current Somaliland. It has territorial size of 23,200km<sup>2</sup> and of this only 10% is suitable for pasture with lower amount of rainfall, 127-250ML.<sup>1</sup>In terms of demographic composition of the 0.8 million population, the majority are the Issas (i.e. one of Somali's clan) and Afars, 60% and 30%, respectively. The dominant religious group being Muslim (94%) and the remaining goes to Christians and other minorities.

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<sup>1</sup>Cultural Grams, 2009. *World Edition, Africa, the Republic of Djibouti. P.1.*

Long before the coming of the French colonial powers, the expansion of Islam since 9<sup>th</sup> century had enabled Afars to establish their own political unit known as *Sultanate of Adal* that had had a toehold at the port of *Zeila*, presently the northeastern coast of Somaliland or the southern tip of the Red Sea. Latter, the massive influx of Somalis in to the area lent the *Sultanate* to collapse in 1543 and to formation of different and crumbled tribal administrations until the French colonist steeped into there<sup>2</sup>.

### **From 1882 to 1960**

Like that of most African Experience before the Berlin Conference (1884-'85), the French had to make financial negotiations with the local leaders to seize economic and militarily strategic spots along the coastal areas. The French Businessman had already secured Obock, the northern part of the current Djibouti, from an Afar chief, Ahmed Abu Bakar, in 1862.<sup>3</sup>As seen latter, this had political meaning by the other ethnic groups in the decolonization process; provided that Afars had an amicable attitude towards the French engagement through deferent forms and which was considered by the Issa ethnic groups as a major stumbling block to attaining dependency form colonialism. The further expansion of the French colonists purred by the discovery of a port which is more closer to raw material producing areas of the neighboring countries. This newly found port, then became, the pooling center for Arabs, Greeks and Armenians long distance traders of the time that gave the port to be the conglomerates of different individuals of purely economic interests. Though not a well-established fact, the name Djibouti believed to be derived from the Afars to mean "pot" to express their impression on the diversity of individuals who were residing in the flourishing city of sea.<sup>4</sup>Following this, the France proceeded to merge of Obock, Djibouti and Tajourah to form French Somaliland in 1896.

As a matter of the economic rationality of colonialism, to which Djibouti is not an exception, the development of Djibouti in its colonial era was characterized by its unevenness across the territory. This left the legacy of unbalanced development among the Issa and Afar groups. Kadamy puts,

*The colonial power was interested in the territory from a strategic point of view, and did not develop its infrastructure to any great extent except for the town of Djibouti, its port and airport, and the railway line to Addis Ababa. Nor did France seek to integrate the various ethnic groups. On the contrary, the succession of names given to the territory reflects a colonial policy of manipulation of those groups.*<sup>5</sup>

After the continuation of the colonial power over seventy years, the French wanted to prove the consent of the people of Djiboutians as to the sustainment of the its colonial administration. This was, for Shehim and Searing, due to the crisis France had faced in its colonies since the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962).<sup>6</sup>The only available option was to conduct referendum and election, even with contested credibility, since the immediate need was to make ersatz of popular will for the continuation of it colonial relation with Djibouti. To this end, France organized and manipulated both the referendum and election that 74 percentage of the vote casted preferred the French administration to dissociation, given the fact that France warned to cut any assistance, even aid, otherwise. This

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<sup>2</sup>IBID, p.1.

<sup>3</sup>Thompson, Virginia and Richard Adloff (1968).*Djibouti and the Horn of Africa* (Stanfor:Stanford University Presss), p. 3-22., cited in in Shehim, Kassim and James Searing 'Djibouti and the Question of Afar Nationalism,' *African Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 315 (Apr., 1980), pp. 209-226. Oxford University Press., p.211.

<sup>4</sup> Shehim, 210.

<sup>5</sup> Kadamy, Mohamed 'Djibouti: Between War and Peace', *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 23, No. 70 (Dec., 1996), pp. 511-521, Taylor & Francis, Ltd.,P. 511.

<sup>6</sup>Shehim, p.212.

was escorted by the installation of the Territorial Assembly as the “representatives” of the Djiboutians and to enforcing colonial rule since the practice of direct rule with which France had been identified with was becoming less defensible. In showing how the relation between the local ethnic groups and colonial powers could be fluctuant, the Issa group secured the majority of the seats in the Assembly until 1963 when the Somali irredentism in the Horn of Africa beginning to show momentum and the Afars inclined to forge an alliance with French rule.<sup>7</sup>

### **From 1960 to early 1990s**

The decolonization of the British and Italian Somalilands gave birth to Somalia in 1960 as a post-colonial state that attracted the Issas of Djibouti, as Somali clan, to join in. This was evidenced by the establishment of the Somalia government sponsored Party for Popular Movement (PPM) that penetrated deep in to Djibouti and championed the support of Issas they were one of the target of the Pan-Somali nationalism.<sup>8</sup> This was also reciprocally facilitated by the French suspicion that the Issas would annex Djibouti to Somalia or dominate Djibouti itself if independence achieved from the French colonial administration was to form a counter-alliance with Afars. This gave a rise to mutually supportive needs of the Afars to use the France as the bulwark against the more likely approaching of the Issa domination and for the France to keep its colonial territory to endure. The good illuminator for this was the reorganization of the districts of election for the Territorial Assembly in 1963 in such a way that the Issa would be less represented.

Nevertheless, Thompson<sup>9</sup> sees the positive aspect of France-Afar alliance in empowering previously neglected and rendered to periphery to develop political influence that further would serve to assert their interests as seen after the independence. However, the problem of this view relies on the degree of rectifying past injustice that political misdeeds could be mitigated by stratagem since the current irresponsibility cannot be redeemed by victimhood in the past. The commonly meaningful and purposeful endeavors are the most difficult to achieve but the most enduring one unless what Nozick<sup>10</sup> says the *diminishing return of future* is still valid in collective matters of political. Shilling underscores that,

*The previously underprivileged Afar were favored when the French strengthened the rural representation in relation to urban representation in a way that guaranteed the Afar a majority in the assembly. Djibouti, with its Somali majority, had its representation decreased from eighteen to fourteen deputies and at the same time the number of rural Afar deputies was increased from five to eleven. The overall effect was to give the Afar a majority in the Assembly.*<sup>11</sup>

Following from the independence day of Somalia and the French reaction to it, as mentioned above, the competition between Afar and Issas transformed from rivalry to opponent as fueled by the compounded resentment of the latter. To make things worse, the 1967 referendum like its counterpart of the 1958 dominated by French and Afar and the appointment of an Afar governor, Ali Arife, with the newly modified name of the colony as the “French Territory of Afar and Issa” simmered the contradiction of the two.

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<sup>7</sup>Shehim, p.211.

<sup>8</sup>Drysdale, John, 'The Problem of French Somaliland', *Africa Report*, November 1966, p. 14-16

<sup>9</sup>Thompson, Virginia and Richard, Adloff (1968). *Djibouti and the Horn of Africa*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, p.30.

<sup>10</sup>Nozick, Robert (1993) *The Nature of Rationality*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

<sup>11</sup>See Nancy A. Shilling, 'Problems of Political Development in a Ministate: the French Territory of the Afars and the Issas, *Journal of Developing Areas*, v. 7 (July 1973), p. 613-34.

Surprisingly enough, with the eminency the decolonization enterprise the France alliance shifted from Afar to that of Issa. Thus, the position of the Issa ethnic group as the major contender in the bid for independence enabled it to have a detrimental role in negotiating the decolonization of the Territory with French to the extent that representatives from Afar group boycotted from the negotiation for the reason that the French had shown an interest to meet the interest of Issas to dominate them.<sup>12</sup> The reasons made by authors<sup>13</sup> for such accelerated and radical shift of alliance were two. Firstly, the need of France to sustain its influence in the area by supporting the inevitable domination of Issas after independence. Secondly, the logic of Cold War compelled France to favor the regional interest of Western-backed Somalia's Government against the interests of the Soviet-Bloc's Ethiopia that had an interest in the Afars because of the motive to ensure the safety of Port Assab and Secessionist War in Eritrea. Therefore, the geo-politics of the cold war and the reluctance of the French to disown Djibouti are the main factors for the adversity between Afars and Issas to take roots.

Just within a year following its *de jure* independence in 1977, the political system of Isaas' domination render Djibouti to its *de facto* partitions in to Afar and Issa areas.<sup>14</sup> The dissatisfaction of the Afar was looming enough to create sporadic outburst of violence of armed nature with the formation of FRUD (Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy) in 1992 and frequent electoral violence then after. The presidential election in 1993, won by Aptidon, was notably plagued by widespread opposition boycotts and reports of fraud.<sup>15</sup>

Ethnic claims and counter-claims by a very limited number of ethnic groups- Afar and Issa; and at the same time these groups are unequal in their size are two characteristics of ethnic conflict in Djibouti. These characteristics are so helpful that they can contribute to appraise how conflicts regulation has proceeded and institutions arranged to entrench the regulatory efforts.

The ambition of the majority ethnic group, Issa, has faced with FRUD in the second half of the 1990s and the government responded by mounting offensive strikes on civilian Afars.<sup>16</sup> This, in turn, helped the front to generate support from Afars and other external actors with geo-political interests. The duality of political alignments between Issa and Afar remains to be the permanent obstacle working against each other. This portrays that the limitedness of the conflicts between only the two ethnic groups has made impossible to find out acceptable and legitimate ways of resolving their conflicts through bringing other actors in to the scene to be able to reach horse-trading compromises on multiple points of interests. The absence, reluctance or lack of transparency from other actors, including neighboring states, unfortunately leaves the two groups in a permanent obsession to equality between them in every aspect. It seems for this reason that FRUD makes the dominative move of Issa elites, as it claim, since 1977 as the sole reasons for its establishment.<sup>17</sup> To indicate the problem, once the FRUD information bulletin, *Aysseno*, in 1993 reads as follows:

*Political ostracism, the increase in inequality, and the slide towards a military and police state which have characterized the fifteen years of Gouled's 'reign of calm', bear witness to the fact that rebellion was in the end the only means of conquering the redoubt of democratic.*<sup>18</sup>

### **3. Conceptualizing Dyadic Ethnic Conflicts and Modes of Regulation**

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<sup>12</sup> Shehim, p.218.

<sup>13</sup> Drysdale John, 'Problem of French Somaliland', p. 11-14. and *Le Monde*, 28 June 1977. Both mentioned in **in** Shehim, p.227.

<sup>14</sup> *Le Monde*, 25 February 1978, cited in **in** Shehim, p.226.

<sup>15</sup> Shehim, 209.

<sup>16</sup> Kadamy, Mohamed 'Djibouti: Between War and Peace', *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 23, No. 70 (Dec., 1996), p. 511-521, Taylor & Francis, Ltd., p. 515.

<sup>17</sup> **IBID**, p.511.

<sup>18</sup> Cited in **IBID**, p. 516.

The above argument puts the discussion in the direction of figure out the inherent features of ethnic conflicts than involve only two competing groups and to explore areas of difficulties that pose dilemmas in achieving compromises. This helps to see whether the Djiboutian political and institutional platform is suitable for securing consent from Afars and Issas and, in long run, repairing their tense relation.

### 3.1. Dyadic Ethnic Conflicts

The dynamics of ethnic conflicts usually implies that ethnic groups are to be primary actors which with a compelling social pressure drive individuals to participate directly in the conflict or may be considered so by others from other ethnic groups. For such conflicts of highly exclusive the situation of dyadic ethnic conflicts is more deadly due to the inability of making power balance among groups. The two groups are in an inextricable deadlock. Major genocides like the Rwandan, Palestine-Israel, Croats and Albanians in Kosovo reinforce the terminal fatality of ethnic conflicts that involves dichotomous groups of two.

The common cause which is hard to make a satisfactory correction for bi-cephalic ethnic conflicts is the circumstantial and material inequalities between the two groups in conflict. The relevant theories here, for Ostby<sup>19</sup>, are the theory of relative deprivation and horizontal inequality. The former is predicated on the feasibility of making comparison as to the distribution of wealth and assets between two ethnic groups. It is a non-absolute way of weighing the socio-economic positions of an individual, group, community, a state and so on from by comparing one to another. Hence, it is for the simple reason that comparing two ethnic groups is easier than three or above. This even leads Ostby<sup>20</sup> to make a contradictory relation between the growths of GDP and conflicts for the reason that the more GDP grows the more likely ethnic conflicts to erupt due to the inherent unevenness of growth.

The theory of horizontal inequality, on the other hand, focuses solely on how resources are distributed between groups by excluding an individual level of comparing. Which means the conventional class based inequality between poor and rich could not be a triggering factor for ethnic conflict unless it coincided extensively with ethnic markers to which individuals are identified with. Hence, Inequalities that coincide with ethnic cleavages may enhance grievances, group cohesion and, then, which facilitates mobilization for the very reason that ethnic violence are group conflicts – not confrontations between individuals randomly fighting each other.<sup>21</sup>

As a corollary of the above discussion, it is safer to make a point that the degree of conflicts in those bi-communal states of like the case in point, Djibouti, is more to the peaceful co-existence of Afar and Issa. The formation and existence of a slight gap between Afar and Issa, as a group, with regard to social, economic and political privilege easily tarnishes their relation and which, in turn, makes the opportunity cost paid in violence and waging warfare feeble though, in actual sense, much more devastating. Collier & Hoeffler<sup>22</sup> concur with this idea that;

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<sup>19</sup>See Ostby, Gudrun ‘ Polarization, Horizontal Inequality and Violent Civil conflict ‘, *Journal of Peace Research*, 2008, Vol.45, No.2, 143-162.

<sup>20</sup>IBID, P.156.

<sup>21</sup>Duclos, Jean-Yves; Joan Esteban & Debraj Ray ‘Polarization: Concepts, Measurement, Estimation’, *Econometrica* 72(6): 1737–1772, 2004, See Gurr, Ted Robert, 2000. *Peoples Versus States: Minorities at Risk in the New Century*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press; Murshed, S. Mansoob & Scott Gates, 2005. ‘Spatial-Horizontal Inequality and the Maoist Insurgency in Nepal’, *Review of Development Economics* 9(1): 121–134; and Stewart, Frances, 2000. ‘Crisis Prevention: Tackling Horizontal Inequalities’, *Oxford Development Studies* 28(3): 245–262 all mentioned in Ostby, Gudrun ‘ Polarization, Horizontal Inequality and Violent Civil conflict ‘, *Journal of Peace Research*, 2008, Vol.45, No.2, 143-162, p.144. cited in Ostby, Gudrun ‘ Polarization, Horizontal Inequality and Violent Civil conflict ‘, *Journal of Peace Research*, 2008, Vol.45, No.2, 143-162. P.156.

<sup>22</sup>Collier, Paul & Anke, Hoeffler, 2004. ‘Greed and Grievance in Civil War’, *Oxford Economic Papers* 56(4): 563–595.

*The recruits of the rebel groups must be paid, and their cost for joining the rebel organization is likely to decrease the lower their alternative income is. In short, mobilizing the relatively deprived identity groups is cheaper, and, hence, violent conflict should be more likely in countries with sharp inequalities between identity groups.*

### **3.2. Designing Regulatory Framework**

Under this topic, the main emphasis is to highlight the main tools of approaching dyadic ethnic contentions. It includes issues ranging from territorial autonomy to deepening the state neutrality for ensuring a mutually advantageous mode of cooperation and institutional design between ethnic groups.

#### *3.2.1. Number of ethnic groups and regionalism*

The common trend in dealing with possible forms of institutional design to accommodate ethnic demands is according decentralization commensurate with the degree of cords and discords among the ethnic groups. To reiterate, the decentralization process has to be helpful for the addressing ethnic demands. Nevertheless, it has to be in mind that regionalism may further exacerbate the already tense relation between groups. This means according ethnic groups regional autonomy could lead to regionalism where the mutual reinforcement of various identities markers operates with the regional autonomy. "Where several of... identities like language, religion, social structure and cultural traditions have operated simultaneously to reinforce each other the internal cleavages have been accentuated in Pakistan, USSR and Yugoslavia"<sup>23</sup>This puts forward the idea that, if regional autonomies are organized by taking unique identities that are not shared, the relation among ethnic groups may show loose integration and disintegrative regionalism.

Horowitz came up with structural technique of reducing or taming ethnic conflict through regional autonomy.<sup>24</sup>Organizing regions with the intention to encompass various ethnic groups would make possible reducing the level of conflict from state level to the regional one since expectedly ideological disagreements and securing regional power would replace ethnic agendas for mobilization. Horowitz<sup>25</sup> supports this proposition by showing the recession of ethnic conflicts in the Nigerian Federation with the increasing number of regional states from three in between 1966 and 1969 to the thirty-six in 1999. This has a special relevance for states that have two and, often, competing ethnic groups that the formation of regional units may ends up by establishing two centers of power with different interests and political inclinations.

*The experience of bipolar or dyadic is not encouraging. Pakistan prior to the secession of East Pakistan in 1971, Czechoslovakia prior to its segregation in two in 1992 and Serbia and Montenegro Prior to its splitting in 2006 have provided the example of the difficulty that arise in bipolar federation. This happened because every "little" conflict, which arises between units will, threatened the endurance of the federation as a viable body politic. There is no probability for forming alliance and counter alliance by units.<sup>26</sup>*

In addition, witnessing asymmetry will boom the potential as well as real conflict between the two ethnic units. This was the case in Czechoslovakia, Pakistan, Serbia-Montenegro and Sudan, in loose sense of North-South. The failure or weakness of one unit usually

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<sup>23</sup>Brancati, Daw' Decentralization: fueling or Dampening the Flame of Ethnic conflict and secession? *International Organization*.2006, P.148.

<sup>24</sup>See Horowitz, Donald L. (1985). *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*.(California: university of California press).

<sup>25</sup>IBID

<sup>26</sup>Horowitz, Donald L. (1985). *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*.(California: University of California press).p.186

explained in term of the other unit. The larger unit may develop a sense of grievance over the alleged constraints imposed by the other unit. Blaming and counter-blaming might result in the dissolution of the state altogether. The other cases that need further investigation are that of Cyprus, and St. Kitts and Nevis, which persist in having more or less two equally competing ethnic groups in a seemingly accommodative manner.

*i. The State Neutrality vis-à-vis Ethnic Groups*

The working capacity of an overarching political identity to shift the relation among between ethnic groups from competitive to cooperative has a logical relation with the nature of the state for which they may have different experiences or perception as to its impartiality. “The maintenance of the idea of an overall citizenship is dependent on the existence of the state perceived to be neutral.”<sup>27</sup> Substantially speaking, if the state is or, believed to be, allied with a certain ethnic group/s; the other groups are less likely to trust the state. The healthy and stability of a modern democracy depends not only on the justice of its institutions but also on the qualities and attitude of its citizens.<sup>28</sup>

The perception of the state neutrality would empower the state to take the strong and legitimate position in the process of adjudicating ethnic based conflicts. Therefore, it is crucial that the state should promote an overall identity that can include the whole variety of ethnic groups within its borders and to prove that its practice is non –discriminatory and not capture by the interest of one or a few of them, or by the whim of their elites.

*The former Eastern Pakistan (i.e. Bangladesh) separated from Pakistan due to the insignificant role of its elites had and Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Nigeria had weak or no overarching identities to begin with, and no democratic mechanisms for developing them.*<sup>29</sup>

*ii. The Theory of ‘Staatsvolk’ for Democracy*

The institutional viability of liberal democracy could no longer offset a highly polarized ethnic claim for its counterpoising of the identity politics in less realistic way. “Genuine cultural pluralism ceases to be viable under the current conditions of nationalism,”<sup>30</sup> and that is why O’Leary claims that arbitration, federalism and consociation are the means of pulling back the potency of centrifugalism to the detriment of majoritarian democracy for the simple reasons that state could no longer be culturally blind for its legitimacy.

Democracy, for this theory, to work in its majoritarian conception the precondition being the existence of a numerically dominant ethnic or national groups what O’Leary called the *staatsvolk*. It implies that a multinational or ethnic state without this a dominant ethnic or nation group has the possibility of satisfying centrifugal forces and tendencies. The other option, continues O’Leary, for democracy to work in the form of uncovering the common interest of ethnic groups who have already mobilized is that of consociational democracy. With this form of democracy, as opposed to the majoritarian, deliberation and consensus driven decision-making attached to reach a legitimate political system. Thus, political deliberation and decision making based on equally concurring power of ethnic group has potential to bring about a win-win determination.

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<sup>27</sup> Aalen Lovis(2002) ‘Ethnic Federalism in a Dominant party state: The Ethiopian Experience 1991-2000’, (Bergenichr. Michelsea. (IDSH), P. 246

<sup>28</sup> See kymlicka, Will(1995) *Multicultural Citizenship*. Oxford:Clarendon Press. P. 285

<sup>29</sup>Brancati, Daw (2006) ‘Decentralization: fueling or Dampening the Flame of Ethnic conflict and secession? *International organization*.,P. 14.

<sup>30</sup>O’Leary, Brendan (2001) ‘An Iron law of Nationalism and Federations? A (Neo-Diceyan) Theory of the Necessity of a Federal Staatsvolk, and of Consociational Rescue,’ *Nations and Nationalism*, 7(3) p.273-296. P. 275.

#### 4. Assessing the Design and Practice of the Republic of Djibouti *Vis-à-vis* Accommodating Ethnic Based Claims

In part of the study, a fuller emphasis is given to probe the basic institutional set-ups and political realms of the Republic of Djibouti in handling the ethnic related claims of the Afars who resides there for a longer period even. This goes back to the introduction of Islam in the region and the resultant foundation of the *Sultanate of Adal* amid of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Centuries.<sup>31</sup> This yields a historical foundation for the Afars to mobilize as a process of reclaiming their achievements and nativity. However, to complicate matters, currently the Issas are dominant majority ethnic group in Djibouti.

##### 4.1. Efforts to negotiating power-sharing schemes

Early 1990s were the time when the Afar mobilization reached a climax in pressing the Aptidon-led Government of Djibouti to make some concessions to FRUD (Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy) in 1993. The term of the deal was to give certain ministerial positions to the main figures of the front in exchange for abolishing the front and join the national military. This was not without the cost of engendering splinter in the front who opposed disbanding the army for the sake of powers sharing. FRUD-*Arme* established with in the same year-1994.

Lack of credibility for the negotiation made between the government and FRUD in 1993 lent it to appear as co-opting the key opposition figures that are difficult to get rid of since the promised power sharing were not politically meaningful to offset even elementary demands of Afars. Two or three ministerial positions were not satisfactory for the Afar elites, let alone the general public who were attracted by achievement of Eritrean struggle for liberation from Ethiopia.<sup>32</sup> Thus, it appears that the peace process seen flawed by members of FRUD for it was preoccupied with changing the attitude of a few political figures rather than affecting positive changes to the root causes of the conflict.

Again, after the death of Aptidon in 1999 and the secession of his nephew, Ismail Omar Guelleh, the peace process was conducted and concluded in Paris peace Agreement (2000-2001) between the radical splinters of FRUD-*Arme* and the Government. This has shaped both the political process and the constitutional amendment in 2003 which is more effective than 1993 peace deal. The Agreement has created democratic opening for the visibility of different interests in the society. Article 86 of the Constitution that declares both the integrity and plurality of the state in its “Amendment Title XI,”

*No amendment procedure may be undertaken if it calls in question the existence of the State or jeopardizes the integrity of the territory, the republican form of government or the pluralist character of Djiboutian democracy.*

##### 4.2. Constitutional design vis-à-vis Afar-Issa

The concern how far the demands of Afar accommodated can be approached through looking in to the Constitution of 1992. As a basic premise, two factors were important for the making and adoption of the current constitution in 1992.<sup>33</sup> The first one is the domestic mobilization and widespread protests against the government of Aptidon, especially from the Afars. The second that believed to trigger the first one was that Djibouti as part of the Sub-Saharan liberalization wave, or the global *third wave of*

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<sup>31</sup>See Cultural Grams, 2009. *World Edition, Africa, the Republic of Djibouti.*

<sup>32</sup>Bollee, Amedee ‘Djibouti: From French Outpost to US Base,’ *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 30, No. 97, the Horn of Conflict (Sep., 2003), pp. 481-484, Taylor & Francis, Ltd, p.480.

<sup>33</sup>See Brouk, Mesfin ‘Election, Politics and external Involvement in Djibouti’, *Situation Report*. Institute for Security Studies, 14 April 2011.

*democratization*,<sup>34</sup> the government had to revise its constitution. Therefore, the constitution was the result of both domestic and international phenomenon which together ascends of Afars' struggle as part and parcel of a democratic movement.

#### **4.2.1. Civic republicanism and de-emphasizing social cleavages**

The constitution, like its counterparts, has features fashioned with the liberal principle of sidelining ethnic and communal interests as the extension of individual spheres of rights. The constitution declares the indivisibility of the Republic of Djibouti and added that the principles of the government shall follow the principle of "government for, by and to the people"<sup>35</sup>, equality of citizens, and competitive elections.<sup>36</sup>

Moreover, what is more relevant to the case at hand is the proscription of political parties along language, ethnicity and religion. This shows to what level the constitution accords to the recognition and emphasis of the social reality of Djibouti that has been messed with the inter-ethnic conflicts between Issas and Afars. Here the constitution as a basic document with capacity of projecting the people to wards certain goals is expected to embrace some guiding principles and values that are well suited to the current circumstances. It is may be sound to argue that the wiser decision in legislation, instituting or implementing issues of higher importance the preferable mechanism is a systematic integration of them with the dominant situation in such a way that in the long run the dominant situation itself would be approaching to the desired ends. This principle yields the possibility of not facing societal resistance in the manner similar to that of elitist impositions. In the case of Djibouti, ethnic diversity is not only the reality but also the catalyst of conflicts for long, at least, since the time of French colonialism. This suggests that the constitution has to deal with it both as an expression of the social fact of life and the as at tool for conflicts resolution as long as, from the benefit of hindsight, ethnic conflicts did show even submergence the adoption of the constitution.

Moreover, the official language of the state becomes of both Arabic and French<sup>37</sup>. The aim of this seems emanated from the need of constitutional design for neutralizing the government from Afar-Issa politics and the resultant identification, as had it been. This de-emphasis of Afar and Issa languages could not avoid the perception of public to associate the ethnic calculations from the governance, given the well-accustomed prime ministerial position of to an Afar figures since 1978.

#### **4.2.2 Electoral and party system**

The fuller functioning of multiparty system was restricted by the constitution of the 1992 only to four parties. However, after the Paris Peace Agreement (PPA) In September 2002 this constitutional provision on number of political parties; and additionally, the composition of the Electoral Commission were repealed. The composition of the commission changed in such a way that its members

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<sup>34</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. (1991) *The Third Wave: Democratization in the late Twentieth century*. (Norman: Oklahoma University Press). In explaining the third wave, Huntington utilized a set of transition points towards the procedural aspects of democracy: competitive political processes and inclusive participation that could be dictated from three corners: external intervention, the mass and the political elite.

<sup>35</sup> Abraham Lincoln's s Gettysburg Address for the dedication of the national cemetery on the site of the Battle of Gettysburg in 1962 (Encarta, Encarta Encyclopedia, 2007 ).

<sup>36</sup> Articles from 1, 3, 4 and 5.

<sup>37</sup> Article 2.

should be representatives from government institutions (including members of the National Assembly), civil society, and political parties; and that they should be appointed on the basis of professional competence, integrity and patriotism (Articles 2, 3 and 7).<sup>38</sup>

This was a breakthrough for Djibouti, which had never had the experience of competitive political process due to the monopoly of power by the Issa affiliated PPP (People's party for Progress) party. Following this, multi-party election conducted in 2003 whereby PPA received 62.5% of the vote casted and secured all the 65 seats of the National Assembly due to the electoral system is the first – past-the-post. The opposition challenged the result before the court though it approved.<sup>39</sup> Consequently, The Union for the Democratic Alternative (UAD), which is headed by Ismail Guedi Hared, has boycotted four elections since 2005, including the 2005 presidential elections, the 2006 regional elections, the 2008 parliamentary elections and the April 2011 presidential elections.<sup>40</sup>

As that shows, the main bottleneck for the inclusion of parties strongly identified with the demand of Afars has been the lack of commitment to implement the terms negotiated upon. In Previous times the predicaments for the projection of competitive and inclusive participation had been the lack of political willingness to make peace deals but currently their effectivity, save some legal roadblocks like that of the electoral system-first past-the-post.

Proportional representation would be worthy of to make recourse when demand of the minority is so intense that it is less likely to swing votes form one ethnic party to the other. There is no evidence that shown Afars *were* capable of securing Issas vote. The cursory look at on the electoral result reveals the fact that the percentage share of ethnic groups to the total population been translated to the parties' share from the voters' turnout. It makes the Afars to be in the position of permanent minority that belies benefit of democracy, that minorities have the capacity to be majority through dialogue and polit. In addition, nevertheless, the defections and division into rival factions, leaving most of the strong cards in Guelleh's hands, paralyze them.<sup>41</sup> O'Leary's necessary link between *staatsvolk* and majoritarian democracy would be challenged in such case of dyadic interaction between intense ethnic groups. In short, the minority, Afars, have proved its level of resistance and the government had experienced the cost of neglecting them whatever how fair majoritarian democracy ensured. The nature of the minorities determines the legitimacy of majoritarian democracy.

#### 4.2.3 Territorial decentralization

With regard to the possibilities of decentralization for which *Afars are* interested<sup>42</sup> in exercising autonomy, the Constitution at Article 85 and 86 recognizes the establishment of five Regions, or in French *Cercles*, and the City Administration of Djibouti. This *Cercles* further divided in to eleven Districts. From a superficial point of view, the number of Regions would have the merit to offset the possible pathologies of the dyadic competition of between Afars and Issas. They could de-concentrate the dichotomous, polarized and splinted confrontation in the form of regionalism.

However, the problem lies on the autonomy accorded to these sub-national orders of government. That is too vivid that they run by the delegates of the central government from the city of Djibouti as per the constitution, to begin with. Under the same constitutional stipulations, there is no any allocation of powers made to them except requesting delegates to be responsible to the national interest,

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<sup>38</sup> Brouk, Mesfin 'Election, Politics and external Involvement in Djibouti', Situation Report. Institute for Security Studies, 14 April 2011, p.2.

<sup>39</sup> Bollee, Amedee 'Djibouti: From French Outpost to US Base,' *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 30, No. 97, the Horn of Conflict (Sep., 2003), pp. 481-484, Taylor & Francis, Ltd, p.482.

<sup>40</sup> Brouk, Mesfin p.4.

<sup>41</sup> Brouk, Mesfin p.4-5.

<sup>42</sup> This was one of the themes (free election, power sharing and decentralization) for the peace negotiation in Paris in 2000.

administrative supervision and legal order. Thus, it is incapable of creating territorial autonomy for both Afars and Issasin contravening the reality of ethnic mobilization in Djibouti.

## 5. Recent Developments

Three of mutually inter-penetrated problems have recently trapped the situation of the Republic of Djibouti. The first is the emergence of new corners of oppositions beyond the traditional the Afar-Issa. Individuals from the non-Issa clans of Somali like Issak, Gardabursi and Darod; Yemenites, and other have been showing their dissatisfaction with the current political system. This is due to its sole orientation and the limited sensitivity of the government to the relation between Afars and Isaas. In line with this, Kadamy asserted that an intra-clan would be the problem in the future if the tension between afar and Issa coming flattening.<sup>43</sup> Here, the collapse of Somalia and the ensued instability is one of the factors for the influx of individuals with different background.

The second related with the increasing significance of Djibouti as an offshore spot fighting terrorism and piracy by the Western powers and already became the umbilical cord of Ethiopia's foreign trade. All these have supplied the national income of the country. Nevertheless, as usually expected from the situations of unemployment and inflation that have been reported, the issue of redistribution has the potential to trigger ethnic based conflicts. As seen in the theoretical part, the discrepancy among ethnic groups in sharing the means of livelihood yields horizontal inequality among them. That is why some scholars like Ostby<sup>44</sup> observe in some developing countries the positive relation between the growth of national economy in terms of GDP and that of ethnicization of poverty and misfortunes that is informed by the relative deprivation.

The other, the last, is the public protests the government has faced with the decision of president Guelleh to amend the Constitution in April 2010 for extending the presidential tenure from six years to five years and the term form two to three. The approval of this amendment enabled Guelleh to be elected without competitors for the third time in 2011 as expected from the total boycott of oppositions. This was done in the time of Arab Uprising that invited the people of Djibouti, regardless of ethnic background, to take to the street in disenchanting the government for its undemocratic nature and the rising of the living cost. This has to be seen from the perspective of possibly reviving ethnic based conflicts that had been thought receding, given the intensity of the government's response to the protest. It seems for this reason Kadamy argues that ethnic balance can be restored in the contest of democracy.<sup>45</sup>

## 6. Conclusion

The major problem that lies in politics of Djibouti since the colonial time has been the mismatch between the social realities and the formal institutions. In those times until the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, the bedrock of conflicts between Afars and Issas was the continuation of the colonial problem in having the state captured by certain part of the society alternatively. This bound like syndrome emanates from not recognizing the mutual guarantee between legitimacy and the social ingredient of power.<sup>46</sup> A system that supposed to be enshrined with collectively advantageous rule of game needs to work on building trust among the members of the society, which is more of demanding for Djibouti that has the long history of fractured relation between Issas and Afars.

The first-past-the-post is one of these pitfalls in the constitutional design for the desired interests to come true.

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<sup>43</sup>Kadamy, Mohamed p. 518.

<sup>44</sup>See Ostby, Gudrun

<sup>45</sup>Kadamy, Mohamed p. 517.

<sup>46</sup>Burgess, Michael (2006) *Comparative Federalism: Theory and Practice*. (New York, NY 10016).

The constitutional design in terms of addressing ethnic based claims has drawbacks associated with its foundation. The republican orientation of the constitution can be seen as ignoring the prevailing challenges since it may be very difficult to neglect the reality than manipulating it. The ramification of this had been seen from the lack of significant constitutional framework to make negotiations between FRUD and the Government of Djibouti in 1994 and 2001. The frameworks of negotiations were self-constructed which equivalent to constitutional amendment like the embarking of unrestricted multi-party system. This, in turn, resulted in to left the results of the negotiations to be overlooked by the political forces as seen in the consecutive boycotting of the opposition parties form since 2005.

As a theoretical remark, the relevance of some tiny and dyadic federal systems to the Djiboutian is worthy of researching, given their appealingly inherent limitation of entrenched deadlock. For instance, the case of Cyprus has number of similarities with Djibouti. Both have two main ethnic groups (Afar and Issa for Djibouti, Turkish and Greece for Cyprus), and these ethnic groups have co-ethnic groups in the neighboring states.

As seen from the recently emerging problems, the opening of political space has its own imperatives for accommodating of diverging views, be that of ethnic sort by Issas or Afars. The 2011 massive protests should not be seen separately from the long established ones. The monopoly of power based on ethnic calculation challenged by lack democratic credentials unlike the ethnic bases resistance before it. This shows that democracy can be exploited for guaranteeing the voices of various ethnic groups to be heard and accommodated. It empowers ethnic groups to garner supports beyond their members as witnessed in the inter-ethnic joint protest against the government in the wake of the Arab-uprising.