

Underlying Causes of Conflict in Ethiopia: Historical, Political, and Institutional?

Berihu Asgele Siyum

Department of Public Administration Science, University of Public Service, Budapest, Hungary

Research Center for Public Sector Reform, Ethiopian Civil Service University, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the underlying causes of conflict in Ethiopia and mitigation strategies. After political reforms in 2018 in Ethiopia, persistent conflicts, riots, violations, and political tensions, which remained beyond the control of the government, bring about this study. The finding showed that the conflict dynamics in Ethiopia are complicated and it is increasing from time to time. Since the political reforms in 2018, conflicts have dramatically upsurging, and the government was failed to resolve them peacefully. As a result, the country has entered into a devastative war i.e. Tigray war which is not only affecting the country but also remained the regional crisis in East Africa. Hooliganism, vandalism, mob justice, human rights violation, political instability, and crimes become now the hallmarks of the country. The major causes of recurrent conflicts in Ethiopia are historical narrations, power struggles, land ownership, tribal difference, political interest, and weak institutions. The major actors of conflict in Ethiopia are political entrepreneurs, informal groups such as 'Fano' in Amhara and 'Qeerroo' in Oromia, regional and state Media, social media activists like tweeps and facebookers, and external forces like Egypt, Eritrea, and Sudan. The neighboring countries are fueling conflicts in Ethiopia to secure their national interest. Because of recurrent conflicts and the current Tigray war, the country is on the verge of disintegration. Therefore, bringing all political parties for fruitful and genuine national political dialogue is a must done to resolve the national problem.

Keywords: Causes of Conflict; Actors; War; Tigray, Ethiopia

1. Introduction

Africa is a conflict-prone continent with a history of having the highest rate of civil wars and instabilities of any other part of the world (Geda, 2004). Violent conflict in the Horn of Africa is more the norm than the exception (Mengistu, 2015). However, conflicts may be violent or uncheckable, dominant or recessive, resolvable or insolvable (Aremu, 2010). In many developing countries, internal security threats are a big challenge (Etefa, 2019). Governments, nationalist parties, religious groups, and culture or identity groups all play a role in conflict, with external powers providing substantial support (Mengistu, 2015). Conflict studies is a burgeoning area of academic study that reflects the postmodern world's persistence of communal conflicts and violent confrontations (Abbink, 2006).

Conflict in Africa as well as Ethiopia becomes a tradition. Transition or government change in one country is not always smooth and build without upheaval. The transitional process is accompanied with political instabilities and chaos, then, develops a sense of insecurity among citizens. Within Africa, some countries are more conflict prone than the others. Ethiopia, by

all standards, is a conflict-prone region. In reality, it would not be an exaggeration to suggest that Ethiopia's history is a history of wars and conflicts (Geda, 2004). Ethiopia is one of the poorest countries in Africa and known for its frequent droughts, famine and occasional civil wars though it is the oldest independent nation in the continent (Taye, 2017).

Conflict has a wide range of costs, from the loss of human and physical capital to the disruption of economic activities and social disorder (Geda, 2004). Hundreds of thousands of people suffer victims from conflicts as one ethnic group seeks to eliminate the other and last generation can have the consequences (Tepfenhart, 2013). Conflicts and their violent resolution seem to be a permanent feature of the Ethiopian political community. Recently, peace periods have been short; new regimes have not learned their predecessors' lessons (Geda, 2004).

The new Ethiopian government has established ministry of peace by FDRE proclamation number 1097/2018 for building peace, preventing and resolving conflict, establishing contact between the federal and regional states to coordinate and supporting developing regions. Besides, it has the purpose to establish a government structure that can guarantee the rule of law and promote peace. The ministry works in partnership with relevant government bodies, cultural and religious institutions and others to promote peace and respect among peoples of different religions and nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia. In contrast, violence, internal displacement, insecurity etc. are increased in the last two years.

A government change has been occurred in Ethiopia in 2018 with new leadership and different reforms. The incumbent government has made political and institutional reforms by changing the dominant political party structurally. Some institutions have been merged, others split, and other new institutions were established in the last two years. Among newly established institutions, peace minister, which was not seen in the previous regimes in Ethiopia as well as uncommon in many other countries was established by consisting many agencies under its jurisdiction. The purpose of establishing peace minister was to maintain peace and security in Ethiopia. It works on; Peace Building, Conflict Prevention and Resolution, Inter Governmental Relations (IGR), and Realization of Equitable Development in Emerging Regions.

However, the security problem in Ethiopia in the last two years was escalated into ethnic conflicts and the internally displaced people are up surged. Despite of endeavors exerted by the ministry of peace through facilitating workshops for peace in the last two years, for example, peace conference among the people of Amhara and Tigray, people of Oromo and Somali etc., sustainable peace is not guaranteed all over the country. According to Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (iDMC) (2020) on Global Report on Internal Displacement, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Syria accounted for more than half of the global figure of IDPs in 2019. The main causes of the IDPs in Ethiopia are unprecedented conflict and violence in the country. Ethiopia has been ranked in the top three countries with high number of new displacements in two subsequent years i.e. 3.2 million displaced people in 2018; of these 2.9 million are displaced because of conflict and became the 1st country in the world; 1.8 million displaced people in 2019; of these more than 1.4 million are displaced because of conflict and ranked the 3rd in the world.

According to Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (iDMC)(2019) Ethiopia had the highest number of new internal displacements associated with conflict worldwide in 2018. The country's crises have been deepening steadily since 2016, but conflict and inter communal violence escalated significantly and spread to new areas last year, triggering

almost 2.9 million new displacements, four times the figure for 2017. Conflict and displacement were recorded along three of the Oromia region's borders, with the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' (SNNP) region in the south-west, the Benishangul-Gumuz region in the north-west and the Somali region in the east.

According to GLOBAL PEACE INDEX (2020) Ethiopia has been ranked amongst less peaceful in 2020 than 2019 and ranked 133 from 163 countries. Thus, Ethiopia is among the least peaceful on the Global Peace Index and has low levels of Positive Peace. In Africa, Ethiopia is ranked 34 out of 44 surveyed countries only better than 10 countries. So, the country is categorized in the peace deterioration category. GPI finding indicates that the deterioration in peacefulness was mainly due to deterioration in the Safety and Security domain. Political instability deteriorated as did other associated indicators, such as violent demonstrations.

According to (Geda, 2004) Conflict is the main and key reason for Ethiopia's poverty and backwardness. Conflicts has devastating effect including life loss and infrastructural destruction as well as adverse effects on growth and development (Geda & Degefe, 2005). As a result, maintaining peace needs to put a stronger focus on identifying and reinforcing what is already working, not only what is broken and needs to be fixed (Mahmoud & Makoond, 2017).

Over the past two decades, Ethiopia has been relatively stable as the ruling party and its powerful government at the center has used their party channel to manage conflicts (Mengie, 2015). However, in the last two years Ethiopia has seen both rapid political liberalization and a rise in violent conflicts (Yusuf, 2019). The north-eastern, north-western, and western parts of Amhara Region; many woredas in the Benishangul-Gumuz Region; western, southern, and central Oromia; bordering areas between Oromia and Somalia Region; and eastern and north-eastern sections of the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region have been major hotspot regions in the country for the past two years (Yusuf, 2019). Furthermore, the tension between the federal government and Tigray regional state government is now escalated into civil war. Thus, research on the causes of conflict in Ethiopia is now demanding.

2. Objective of the Study

The general objective of this study is to examine the major causes of conflict in Ethiopia. More specifically, the objectives of this study are:

- 1 Evaluate the current dynamisms of conflict in Ethiopia
- 2 Identify the root causes of recurrent conflicts in Ethiopia
- 3 Find out the key actors involved in the recurrent conflicts in the country

3. Methodology

The study used pure qualitative research methods to identify the causes of conflict in the country. Therefore, this study employed an exploratory research design. The study employed secondary data sources. Documents that have been filed and documented by the Ministry of peace were used as a major source. More specifically, manuals, reports, plans, and strategies of the ministry on conflict were thoroughly reviewed. Especially, the reports of peace forum between the peoples of Tigray and Amhara, peoples of Somalia-Ethiopia and Oromo, and peoples of Amhara and Oromo organized by the Ministry of Peace were analyzed. The ideas

and suggestions forwarded by the scholars and elders during the discussion were analyzed carefully. Besides, archives from institute and security studies, especially, reports on the causes of conflict in Ethiopia for the past three years have been reviewed. Moreover, the hagiographies of Ewostathians were analyzed to identify the historical conflicts between Tigreans and Amharas, especially, in religious matters starting in the 13th century. Finally, the report of the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) in 2021 was used to see the extent of conflicts in Ethiopia for the last ten years and it was presented in the form of a graph.

4. Results and Discussions

Data were analyzed based on the core elements of conflict analysis such as the context, actors, causes, and dynamics of the conflict.

4.1. Context and Dynamism of Conflict in Ethiopia

Conflict is common not only in the developing world but also in the developed state but the level, redundancy, and causes of conflict are different among countries. Ethiopia is amongst the few countries which have been experiencing recurrent conflicts in recent past years. Of course, recurrent conflicts were common in the past different regimes in the country. It is a fact that since April 2018, ethnic and religious-based conflicts have erupted in numerous parts of Ethiopia resulting in the death and displacement of a large number of people (Belay et al., 2020). Ethiopia has witnessed a surge in violent conflicts for much of the past two years. The country has seen large-scale displacements, killings, and property destruction despite the new government's remarkable achievement in the area of political liberalization (Yusuf, 2019). According to the Global Report of Internal Displacement in 2019, Ethiopia was ranked amongst the three leading countries in the world in Internal Displacement because of conflict subsequently for two years.

Beyond conflicts, the government remained weak to control crimes and illegal movements in the country. Hooliganism was pervasive throughout the country including the capital city Addis Ababa. Figurative individuals were assassinated in the daytime and justice is denied. The CEO of GERD Engineer Simegnew was found shot dead in Meskel square and still did not get justice. Besides, the Ethiopian military chief of staff General Seare Mokenen was assassinated by his guard at his home on 22nd June 2019. The Amhara regional government cabinet including the president was killed during the meeting. Yet, the trial process is not clear and still, no verdict is given. Furthermore, the young pronoun Oromo artist Haccalu Hundesa was assassinated in June 2020. The government is failed to stop all the killings and vandalism in the country. The state judicial system continued ill-functioning and injustice become the hallmark of the government as well as the country.

The conflicts within and between different ethnic groups are now common in Ethiopia. To mention some, the conflict between Oromos and Amhara, Afar and Somalia, Amhara and Tigrai, Amhara and Gumuz, Wolaita and Sidama, Oromo and Somali, Qimant and Amhara, Gedeo and Guji. Finally, the Amhara and Tigrai mobilization turned into a devastating war on November 4, 2021. The Prime minister directly declared war on the Tigrai region on November 4, 2021, using the state media by alleging TPLF had attacked the Northern command military division. The federal government conspired with the Eritrean government and the Amhara regional government to invade Tigrai. Finally, the federal government

commenced full-scale war on Tigrai in cooperation with the Eritrean government, Somalia government, Amhara militias, Amhara special police, and para-militias with the assistance of UAE war drones.

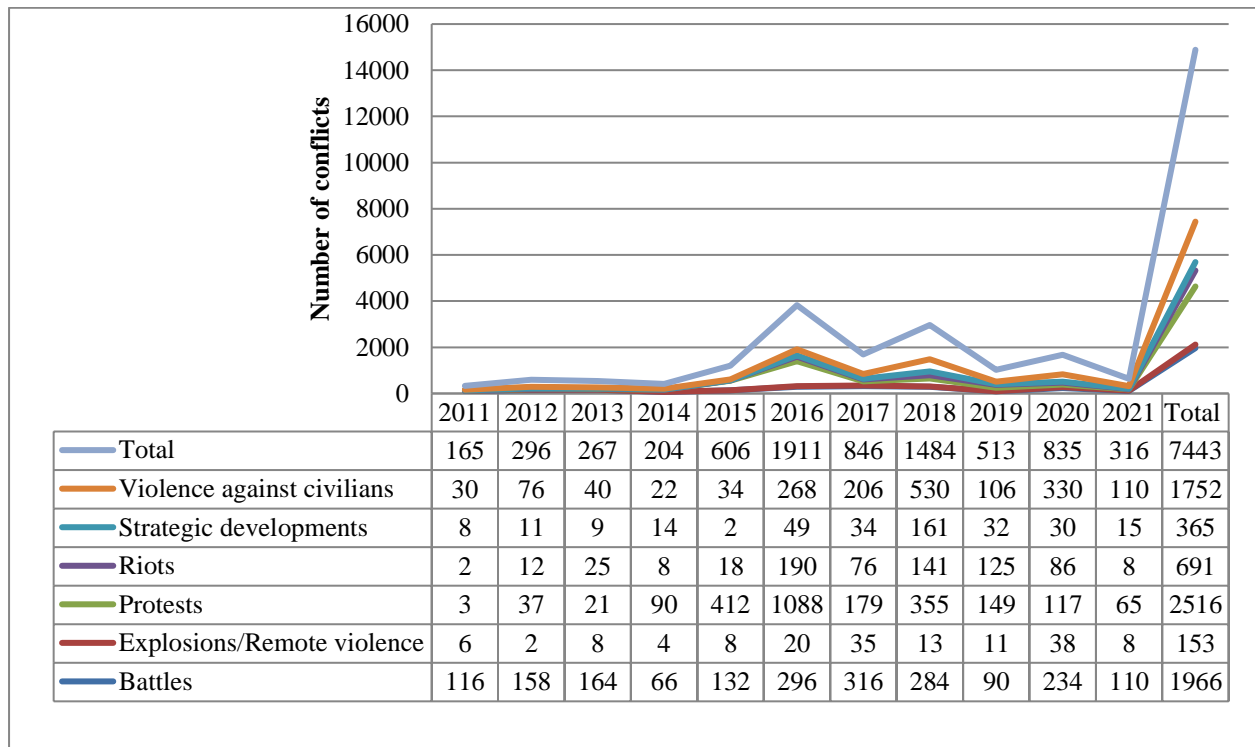
In the 2nd Special Meeting of the 6th Year of the House of Peoples' Representatives held on November 30, the prime minister briefed that 313 conflicts have occurred in the last two and half years in the country excluding the devastating war declared on Tigrai. According to him, of the conflicts that occurred in the country; 37 of them were in Oromia, 23 of them were in Amhara, 15 of them were in Benishangul Gumuz, 14 of them were in Addis Ababa, 07 of them were in Gambela, 3 of them were in Afar, 3 of them were in Dire Dawa, 2 of them were in Sidama and other unmentioned numbers were in Southern nations, nationalities and peoples region. After the briefing to the parliament, recurrent conflicts with high death toll and atrocities have occurred in Wolega, Oromia and Metekel, Benishangul Gumuz regions. Sadly, the war between the federal government and the Tigrai government is continuing. This war is not only accompanied by horrific atrocities on civilians but also subjected the country to external invasion i.e. neighboring countries Sudan in the North West and Eritrea in the North have controlled the country's territory and the federal government keeps quiet even denied the Eritrean invasion which has never been seen in the history of the country. The federal government remains weak to curb all the recurrent conflicts occurring all over the country

“The growing deterioration of security has been fueled/ facilitated by the apparent weakness of the ruling party and rising ethno-nationalist sentiments that are weakening state and party structures. Despite the merger, the ruling party is highly fractured and divided as manifested by the bickering over state power (competition to control the central government), administrative border disputes, as well as controversy over the merger itself. Given the party's deep entrenchment in all tiers of state structures, its volatility fuels ongoing ethnic violence by emboldening radical elements and further dividing the already polarized elite/ ethnic communities” (Belay et al., 2020).

The situation in Ethiopia is now going from bad to worst. On one hand, the country is at war internally between the federal government and the Tigrai government which resulted in high atrocities and economic crisis. Besides, the OLF freedom fighters are fighting against the federal government in Wolega, Oromia. The crimes in Metekel, Benishangul Gumuz are also a hot spot of war-torn in the country. Therefore, the war-torn in Tigrai, occupying and expansion of OLF in the Welega, Oromia region, and unrest of Metekel are now the headaches of the government. Especially, the Tigrai war becomes a regional and international problem and may set the country on the verge of disintegration. On the other hand, the country is in border tension with neighboring countries Sudan and Eritrea (though denied by the federal government). The tension on the Alfashiqa triangle has remained the hot spot between Ethiopia and Sudan.

The report of The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) (2021) ranked Ethiopia the 1st in the world in the ten conflicts to worry about in 2021. Besides, the International Crisis Group (2021) ranked Ethiopia the second in the ten conflicts to watch in 2021. Thus, the conflict situation in Ethiopia is not only going from bad to worst but also places the country on the brink of fragmentation.

Figure 1: Extent of conflict in the last ten years in Ethiopia



Source of Data: ACLED¹, 2021

The data for 2021 is not complete and we are at the beginning of the year. However, the country experiences 316 conflicts as of March 2021. The pick in 2016 indicated that the highest violence and riots were taking place in that year. Riots against the government led by the youths and violence especially, in Amhara and Oromia regions were very high which finally resulted in the resignation of Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn in 2018. The last three years were also accompanied by a high number of conflicts in the country.

4.2. Causes of Conflict in Ethiopia

Fortunately, or unfortunately, rather later Ethiopia is a home of people with different ethnic backgrounds, cultures, historical narration, and psychological makeup. Political, economic, administrative and social interest of the people of Ethiopia is the polar opposite. Thus, the causes of conflict in Ethiopia are diverse.

Historical memories: The historical conflicts in the country are persisting and remained as the prerequisite causes of the recurrent conflict. For the past 2000 years, Ethiopia’s political and cultural history was dominated by the north (Geda, 2004). The Aksumite kingdom dominated the political power of the then kingdom till the 10th century. After the collapse of the Aksumite kingdom, the Zagwe dynasty ruled the country till the 13th century with all the

¹ The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) is a disaggregated data collection, analysis, and crisis mapping project. ACLED collects the dates, actors, locations, and types of all reported political violence and protest events across Africa, the Middle East, Latin America & the Caribbean, East Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia & the Caucasus, Europe, and the United States of America. The ACLED team conducts analysis to describe, explore, and test conflict scenarios, and makes both data and analysis open for free use by the public. <https://acleddata.com/data-export-tool/>

cultures and traditions of the preceded kingdom. The king of the Zagwe dynasty was defeated by Yukuno Amlak in the 13th century and the Solomonic dynasty was created and continued till 1974. During all this long time different political and social interests were developed. These varied interests brought the country into divided de facto regions with no significant power from the central government from mid-18th to the mid-19th century. This time was called Zemene Mesafint literally “Era of the Princes”. The elites of Tigray and Amhara were interchangeably controlling the politics of the north throughout these years. Even after the end of Zemene Mesafint, these elites continue to rule the country using the monarchy system by explaining they are the descendants of King Solomon. Throughout the two millennia, the Tigrayans and Amharas were in a power struggle. So, almost all the internal conflicts of the country were conducted in the north. The conflicts between the Tigray and Amhara lords were accompanied by horrific human rights violations, atrocities, and mass killings. The Tigray elites accused Amhara lords of the betrayal of Tegarau and vice versa. For example, Amharas believed that Emperor Yohannes (Tigray) betrayed Emperor Tedros (Amhara) and Tegarau believed that Emperor Menelik (Amhara) betrayed Emperor Yohannes (Tigray).

The religious philosophy of Ewostatiwos (እዕጢፋኖስ) was among the main religious difference between Tigray and Amhara in the 13th century. Ewostatiwos (Ge’ez እዕጢፋኖስ Estifanos) was born in 1273 and raised in Tigray. His preach and taught on the observation of Sabbath polarized the Tewahedo Orthodox in Ethiopia. His philosophy on Sabbath became dominant and happened to expand widely by his followers known as Ewostathians (Ge’ez: ደቂቅ እዕጢፋኖስ) all over the country. Ewostatiwos adamantly argued and persuaded his followers that the Sabbath should be observed on both Saturday and Sunday. After his death, his students (majority Tegarau) continued to advocate his religious philosophy. However, Ewostathians faced a challenge when Emperor Zara Yaqob reigned in 1434. Emperor Zara Yaqob and his priests (from Amhara) taught and preached in contrast to Ewostathians. Zara Yaqob forced the Ewostathians to stop preaching the Ewostatiwos religious philosophy rather to taught Sabbath should be observed only on Sunday. Nevertheless, Ewostathians continued preaching the observation of Sabbath should be in both days to their followers. Consequently, Ewostathians were tortured and faced inhuman punishment.

The hagiography (Ge’ez: ገድሊ, Gedli) of survivor Ewostathians indicated that monks were stoned to death, thrown to lions to be eaten, thrown to bluff to death, nuns were raped, hot irons were inserted to their genital and nose, their breast was cut. These are the scars left on the Tegarau side especially those who intensively researched and read on the religious issue. The Tegarau believed that they belong to Ewostathians' religious philosophy while Amharas believed that they belong to the philosophy of Zara Yaqob and his priests. Such kind of differences within the Tewahedo Orthodox between Tigray and Amhara was persisting and created a crack. Therefore, elites from the Tigray side argue that there is still not only political but also the religious difference with Amhara. Tegarau and Amharas remained antagonists politically and economically.

Furthermore, Tegarau believed that Emperor Menelik deliberately divided the Tigrinya speakers (Tigray and current Eritrea) to strengthen his power. Besides, still, Tegarau believes that Menelik killed men, rape women, slaughter cattle, set fire to homes and grains to bow Tigreans head, and humiliate the People. In the 19th century, Emperor Menelik allowed Italy to colonize Eritrea and abandoned the state from Ethiopia. Tegarau believed that this was the political conspiracy of Minilik to weaken Tigreans. The problem was continued even in the Haileselassie, Dergue, and EPRDF regimes. The anger of Tegarau is that Amhara

administrators were using all means to humiliate as well as to vanish the people of Tigray. In contrast, Amhara accused Tigray administrators especially, TPLF who led EPRDF in ethnic cleansing against them. Despite cultural and political domination by the north, the political antagonism of Tigray and Amhara is still livening. These historic political and social antagonisms are causes of recurrent conflicts in the north in particular and in the country in general.

Furthermore, the southern part of the country has also historical complaints on the north. They believe that the country is dominated by the political and social principles of the north. They believe cultures of the south were assimilated for one nation and one culture. Especially, the Oromo ethnic group adamantly believed that Emperor Menelik had committed barbaric punishment against them. Oromos argue that Menelik snatches their land, destroys their wealth, killed their men, and cuts the breast of their women. To magnify the inhuman punishment of Menelik, a statue of a hand holding a breast symbolizes the suffering of women called Aanolee memorial monument was erected as a tribute in Arsi, Oromia. Oromos argue that the memorial monument explains the agony of their people in the then time. Therefore, the historic political and cultural antagonism of the north and the south part of the country is also a source of recurrent conflicts in the country. Because of these historical differences and narrations, Amhara and Oromia, Amhara and Tigray do not reach on political consensus.

Many authors and scholars believe that the recurrent source of conflict in Ethiopia is ethnic federalism. However, conflict is not a current phenomenon in Ethiopia; rather it was there for thousands of years even before the implementation of ethnic federalism. For the last millennium, Ethiopia was in instability and political chaos. The conflict became the identity of the country. Historically, no Ethiopian ruler has voluntarily resigned from office, and only a few have died while in office (Geda, 2004). The persistent conflict since ancient times let the country remain among the poor states.

Political entrepreneurs: Ethiopia's history has primarily been one of conflict between various groups motivated by ideologies of religion, region, nationality, or a combination of these, all aimed at gaining power and controlling resources (Geda, 2004). Of course, the recurrent conflicts in the country are ethnic conflicts but the causes are not ethnic diversification rather it is the hidden interest of political entrepreneur individuals. In Ethiopia, political instability is caused by the politicization of ethnic identity by self-serving political leaders (Taye, 2017). The historical path of the country created diverse political interests. The political interest of ethnic groups in the country is not common. All political leaders interpreted and implemented the political interest of their groups when they get power to administer the country. Therefore, political elites in the country have not common issues which enable them to work together. The complicated historical pathway of the country led to growing diverse political interests among different ethnic groups is making elites not reach any national consensus. Ethiopian elites have not consensus on a number of fundamental issues, including the national flag, language (one vs. numerous national languages), ownership of the capital city, and, most importantly, the federal structure itself (Belay et al., 2020).

In Ethiopia, ordinary people lack political awareness and it is easy for politicians to tug them. Citizens are vulnerable to the conspiracy of political entrepreneurs because they are not supporting or opposing political leadership based on knowledge and researched results instead they run after the political elites. Therefore, the destiny of political strength and unity

of the country is left in the hand of political leaders. The political issue of Ethiopia is twisted by the Tigray, Amhara, and Oromo elites. Unfortunately, these elites do not have common historical ground, political ideology, and social structure. Especially, the elites of Amhara have an opposite political interest of Tegraru and Oromos. Simply, the Amhara critically demands the current national flag and constitution to be amended, if not suspended whereas Tegraru and Oromos want to persist the constitution and national flag without any change instead demanded to implement the constitution effectively. The elites of Amhara strongly condemn ethnic federalism and want to change it while the elites of Oromo and Tigray strongly support the ethnic federalism system. The disagreement of these ethnic groups results from political instability and conflict in the country. Ipso facto, the fate of the country whether to flourish peace and stability or to see chaos and political instability has relied on these three dominant ethnic groups. When these ethnic groups reach political consensus, obviously peaceful political transition and exercise will have happened. If these three ethnic groups remain rivals in political ideology and state structure, the conflict would persist.

Now a day, the political environment of the country is dominated by political entrepreneurs. The incumbent government, regional political parties as well as opposition political parties are doing it for their political benefit. Political entrepreneurs, including the Prime Minister, manipulate the government media to incite ethnic hatred against specific ethnic groups. For example, the Prime Minister instigated hatred through the accusation of a specific ethnic group for crimes that were not investigated, used offensive terms, belittle, gave taboo nicknames, and flattered against a specific ethnic group. Following the hate speech of the Prime Minister using national media, elites, and ordinary citizens echoed the terms in their daily activities to blench specific ethnic groups. Elites inflamed the hatred using media especially social media by belittling one another.

The political entrepreneurs created one common enemy i.e. TPLF. Insulting and slandering TPLF became a fashion and praiseworthy activity. This is led by the Prime Minister and his government. The Prime Minister uses disgusting words recklessly in every briefing, which aggravates hatred against specific ethnic groups more redundantly against Tigray ethnic groups. He over-manipulated the TPLF issue and then, blames and defames TPLF for all wrongdoings of the last 27 years peruse the emotion of the youth and his supporters to gain political benefit. The ruling party is wasting its time defaming TPLF instead of resolving its internal problem and the national challenges. Elites have escalated the conflicts for opportunistic motives, citing the state's and ruling party's perceived fragility (Yusuf, 2019).

The political entrepreneurs exclude even their ethnic members who do not follow their way or ideology. The moderate politicians who do not follow their extremist way are also excluded or exposed to insult and blench. The political entrepreneurs do not only create a fraction with other political parties or ethnic groups but also with their political party members and ethnic groups. For example, the incumbent party i.e. prosperity party has no consensus among its members. Sometimes, the Amhara Prosperity Party (PP) released a memorandum against Oromo Prosperity Party and vice versa; another time the Benishangul-Gumuz Prosperity Party released a memorandum against Amhara Prosperity Party; other time Somali Prosperity Party released a memorandum against Afar Prosperity Party and vice versa. Furthermore, the Amhara PP blames the Oromo PP for supporting OLF and the death of innocent Amhara descendants in Oromia. The Oromo PP accuses the Amhara PP of the death of innocent Oromo people in Kemissie special Oromia zone of the Amhara region. In

another way, the Amhara PP accused the Benishangul Gumuz PP of the death of innocent Amhara in Metekel and vice versa.

Therefore, the political interest of politicians and their competition to power is destabilizing the country. The current politicians especially, members of the ruling party are working towards their political benefit, and peoples are forgotten. As a result, regional branches of the ruling party are disputing and blaming each other. Individuals within one party are insulting each other and it is hard to say there is trustworthiness among them. These differences are fueling and flaming conflicts in the country. Therefore, political entrepreneurs are the major cause of conflict in Ethiopia.

Institutional/political system: Historically, Ethiopia has never had strong and independent institutions, which could manage conflicts independently. The country had experienced a monarchical and dictatorial government system which is unimaginable to have strong and independent institutions. Of course, EPRDF has tried to exercise a multiparty system though in practice it was the dominant party system. Regardless of democratic exercises in some areas, independent institutions were not established. After the incumbent Prime Minister come to power, the people were expecting to see independent institutions as of his promise but in reality, the institutions got weaker than their earlier status.

“Institutions such as the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE), the Human Rights Commission, and the judicial system that is supposed to be accountable to the parliament were ineffective and perceived by the public as highly partisan” (Yusuf, 2019). The Prime Minister established the ministry of peace to promote peace in the country. However, the rate of conflicts was dramatically increased, which the country had never experienced numerous conflicts like the present time in its modern history. The institutions supposed to be independent are now government partisan. In such a situation, they could not carry out their responsibility impartially and they are not trusted at all by the people.

The lack of effective and responsive state institutions, as well as a lack of transparency and accountability in the management of public affairs, created an environment ripe for corruption (Belay et al., 2020). Thus, conflict is further exacerbated by poor governance and corruption. Finally, the weak institutional arrangements are aggravating conflict in the country. Now a day Ethiopia is not only on the crossroad but also on the verge of ruination.

4.3. Actors of Conflict in Ethiopia

Even though there are many covert and overt actors in the recurrent conflicts in Ethiopia, the political entrepreneurs can take the lion's share. Belay et al. (2020) categorized political party actors into two. These are centripetal forces and ethno-national-based centrifugal forces. The centripetal forces are the prosperity party and Ethiopian citizens for social justice and the ethno national-based centrifugal forces are the Oromo Federalist Party, the national movement of Amhara, the Ogaden national liberation front, TPLF, and OLF. The major actors of conflict are political parties in Ethiopia. The parties are exacerbating conflicts to gain their political benefits via provoking citizens. Legally registered political parties in the national election board and non-registered parties are participants of conflict in the country.

In the last three years, informal groups have become the major conflict actors in Ethiopia. Hooliganism was widely exercised in the country on the justice and administration system. The government was failed to manage the informal movements and maintain peace and order in the country. The group of youth in Amhara that called itself ‘Fano’ and Amhara Para-

militias were disturbing the peace and order of the regions. In some areas, the informal group was starting collecting taxes from residents. Besides, the informal group leaders were asking for governmental positions especially, in the Gondar zone. There was a dispute between the regional government and the informal groups regarding power-sharing. The regional government was unable to control the informal group. The informal groups have support from some high officials of the regional government. Thus, these informal groups (Fano and Para-militias) have remained a threat to the regional government.

The informal group of youth in Oromia that called itself “Qeerroo” is also a big challenge for the regional as well as the federal government. This informal group was killing people which are not belonging to its ethnic group through mob justice. The government neither brought the group to justice nor curbs the violation in the region. Thus, the group committed many crimes irresponsibly all over the regions as well as the capital city Addis Ababa.

The digital fighters are also the major actors in the conflict. The majority of conflicts in the last three years were aggravated through social medial like Facebook and Twitter. Face Bookers and tweeps magnify and provoke conflicts by posting photos and videos. Even some of the videos and photos are not based on truth rather fabricated. The digital fighters have contributed to expanding and exacerbating conflicts in the country since the birth of social media. Therefore, social media activists are also actors of conflict in Ethiopia. Moreover, the Media are the dangerous instruments for triggering conflict in Ethiopia. Media are not neutral in Ethiopia. They broadcast news that favors their ethnic group and the party they supported. State Medias supported the federal government and the regional government Media supports their regional government. Media were engaged 24 hours in broadcasting hatred speeches and magnifying conflicts.

Unfortunately, Ethiopia has surrounded by strategic enemies like Eritrea and Egypt. The country has natural resource issues and border issues with its neighbors. Ethiopia has a Nile issue with Egypt and Sudan and a border issue with Sudan and Eritrea. Of course, currently, Ethiopia has a good relationship with Eritrea but taking the character of Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki who wants to see destabilized Ethiopia for years, it is hard to believe him. So, he is long-handed to create chaos in east Africa and major actor of conflict in the region in general and in Ethiopia in particular. In another way, Sudan and Egypt especially, the latter wants to see destabilized Ethiopia for their national interest. They were supporting all opposition parties of Ethiopia both materially and financially. Thus, in one or another way, they are taking part in conflicts in Ethiopia. Therefore, there are many internal and external actors involved in the recurrent conflicts of Ethiopia.

5. Conclusions

The recurrent conflicts in Ethiopia do not remain as simple conflicts rather it has grown up into civil war. The conflicts were drastically increased in the last three years. Everyday news becomes conflict, death, hatred, and violence. These recurrent conflicts were changed to devastating war and the country is now on no capacity to control. The ongoing war on Tigray is the worst scenario that harmed the country politically, socially, and economically. Following the Tigray war, east Africa's politics was changed into turmoil. Following the Tigray war, the Eritrean government enters crossing the border of Ethiopia, and committed genocide on Tigrayan people and Sudan occupy Ethiopian land up to 40KM in the northwestern part of the country. Therefore, the country is facing challenges because of the

recurrent conflicts and now it is out of government control

There numerous causes for the recurrent conflicts in Ethiopia. First and foremost, perverse historical narrations and historical polarization are affecting the current conflicts in the country. The historic power antagonism of Tigray and Amhara, as well as Amhara and Oromia, is persisting. The historic power struggle of these three ethnic groups has remained uncontrolled and unmanageable even in current Ethiopia. Moreover, political entrepreneurs are the major causes of the recurrent conflict in Ethiopia. The diverse interest politician is contributing to the conflicts at a regional and national level. In Ethiopia, let alone different parties with different political ideologies, the ruling party itself has no agreement among its members. The political difference, power struggle, language dominance struggle, and territory struggle of political entrepreneurs is going down to the people and grown to conflict. Therefore, the lack of common political background and national political consensus in the country is leading to conflict and destabilization. The weakness of national institutions to manage conflict is also contributing to pervasive conflict in the country. Institutions and institutionalization are not strong in Ethiopia rather they are government partisans. The institutions established to resolve conflicts are unable to stop hooliganism and vandalism, violations, mob justice, and disturbances in the country. As a result, the number of conflicts in the country is increasing and some of them have been developed to war and remained uncontrollable. Furthermore, territorial issues, ethnic differences, and resources are contributing to the conflicts in the country.

There are formal and informal and internal and external actors in the recurrent conflicts in Ethiopia. There are formal groups like political parties and informal groups like hooligans and social media warriors which provoke and aggravate conflicts. Political parties like TPLF, PP, OLF, National Movement of Amhara, Oromo Federalist Party, and Ogaden national liberation front. Furthermore, a collection of youth groups like Fano and Para Militias in Amhara and Qeerroo in Oromia are the informal actors of conflict in Ethiopia. These groups have triggered conflicts either through influencing the government or directly taking violating actions by themselves. Social media activists are also aggravating conflicts in the country. The major conflict enablers in Ethiopia are Media. Media inflame small conflicts and broadcast hatred speech of extremist individuals as well as government officials. Finally, external actors are also actors of conflict in Ethiopia. The neighboring countries of Ethiopia have their national interests. Therefore, Eritrea, Egypt, and Sudan have directly or indirectly been involved in the recurrent conflicts in Ethiopia.

Declaration of Interest

I have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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