



**MEKELLE UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE  
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND STRATEGIC STUDIES  
ETHIOPIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY: CHALLENGE AND  
IMPLICATIONS, SINCE 2018**

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**MEKELLE, ETHIOPIA  
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APPROVED BY THE BOARDS OF EXAMINORS

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## II. Abbreviation and Acronyms

AU	African Union
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease 2019.
ELF	Eritrean Liberation Front
ENDF	Ethiopian National Defense Force
ENISS	Ethiopian National Intelligence and Security Service
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
FANSPS	Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy and Strategy
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GCHQ	Government Communications Headquarters
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GERD	Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam
GNP	Gross National Product
ICG	International Crisis Group
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IFJ	International Federation of Journalists

IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPSSAU	Institute of peace and security, Addis Ababa University
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
MEISON	the All-Ethiopia Socialist Movement
MI5	United Kingdom Security Service
MI6	Secret Intelligence Service
NIA	National Intelligence Agency
NICOC	National Intelligence Coordinating Committee
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.
OLA	Oromo Liberation Army
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
SAPS	South African Police Service
SASS	South African Secret Service
TPLF	Tigray People's Liberation Front
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nation Development Program
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
WHO	World Health Organization

### **III. Abstract**

*Security is a fundamental aspect of human life. Ethiopia faces significant internal and external security challenges, resulting in an unpredictable future for the nation. This paper aims to discuss the major national security challenges in Ethiopia and their implications. Using a descriptive and qualitative approach, the research analyzes data gathered from primary and secondary sources. The findings reveal a range of domestic challenges, including ethnic clashes, leadership crises, inadequate political liberalization, poverty, indecent implementation of federalism, religious fundamentalism, unhealthy media practices, and the absence of an advanced democratic political system along with a national consensus on various issues. Externally, challenges arise from geopolitical rivalries, hydro-political tensions, and the involvement of foreign actors. The study explores the implications of these challenges, such as economic decline, diminished state power, regional destabilization, and the potential for state failure. However, it also highlights opportunities for transformation, suggesting that facing these challenges could lead to a deeper understanding of the behaviors and interests of various groups pave the way for genuine national dialogue, and prompt necessary economic, political, and security reforms. Given the severity of these challenges, Ethiopia's future appears precarious. To address these issues, the study recommends collaborative efforts among the government, professionals, opposition parties, citizens, and relevant stakeholders to establish a transitional government, promote good governance and the rule of law, strengthen national dialogue and reconciliation, enhance economic development and poverty alleviation, and foster regional and international cooperation.*

**Key words: Ethiopia, Security, National Security, Challenge and implications**

# CHAPTER ONE

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background of the Study

Ethiopia, a historically significant Horn of Africa nation, has faced profound shifts in its national security landscape since 2018. As a nation endowed with a rich tapestry of cultures, languages, and historical significance, it has faced substantial national security vulnerabilities across various regimes. Consequently, like any other states, Ethiopia has consistently sought to defend itself against diverse threats. As an independent nation, it has worked tirelessly to confront external adversaries and ensure the safety and independence of its citizens. A notable example of this resilience is the Battle of Adwa, where Ethiopia triumphed over Italy in 1896 (Pankhurst, 1993).

Following the downfall of the imperial regime in 1974, a military junta established a socialist government that faced vulnerabilities from both external and internal insurgent groups. Externally, the irredentist movement aiming for a Greater Somalia posed a significant challenge to Mengistu Haile Mariam's regime (Lewis, 2002). Internally, rebel factions such as the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), MEISON, and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF)—which eventually became the ruling party as part of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in 1991—represented substantial threats to the regime (Markakis, 1987). Under the leadership of the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, the security situation in Ethiopia became relatively stable, though the government faced criticism for human rights violations. However, the unexpected death of Meles in 2012 weakened the leadership of the EPRDF and led to increasing insecurity (Abbink, 2017).

Since 2015, Ethiopia's security sector has been endangered by rising insurgent activity, intensifying internal conflict against the government. The introduction of the master plan for Addis Ababa in that same year aimed to expand into the surrounding Oromo lands—Ethiopia's largest regional state—and sparked widespread protests, chiefly among Oromo youths (personal communication, Mathews, December 28, 2021). This movement quickly spread to other regions, notably Amhara. In an effort to maintain peace and legitimacy, the EPRDF faced multiple public uprisings and engaged in confrontations with various groups. The government attempted to quell these uprisings using force, resulting in substantial violence and loss of life (ibid). Despite

declaring a state of emergency to curb the unrest, the government failed to address the protesters' concerns democratically. Consequently, the EPRDF was compelled to revise its leadership, culminating in the appointment of Dr. Abiy Ahmed as Prime Minister, marking a significant change in the country's political landscape.

Abiy Ahmed's appointment in April 2018 heralded a pivotal transition characterized by sweeping reforms. While these reforms earned Abiy international acclaim, including the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize, they also led to unforeseen security vacuums, exposing deep-seated vulnerabilities in Ethiopia's governance structures and sociopolitical fabric (Aalen & Tronvoll, 2020). This period has been defined by escalating internal conflicts, regional instability, and external geopolitical pressures, severely challenging Ethiopia's national security.

The post-2018 political liberalization emboldened ethno nationalist movements, resulting in violent clashes over territorial boundaries, resource allocation, and political representation (Smith, 2023). For instance, the Tigray conflict (2020–2022), rooted in tensions between the federal government and the TPLF, escalated into a devastating civil war, displacing millions and destabilizing the region (ICG, 2021). Furthermore, inter communal violence in regions such as Oromia, Amhara, and Benishangul-Gumuz underscores the fragility of Ethiopia's security architecture (Tadesse, 2021). Economic vulnerabilities, including debt distress and inflation, exacerbated by the impacts of COVID-19, have compounded these security challenges. Conflict-driven displacement and drought have created one of the world's largest humanitarian crises, with over 20 million Ethiopians requiring aid in 2023 (UN OCHA, 2023). This fragility erodes state legitimacy and fuels cycles of violence, as marginalized groups increasingly resort to armed resistance (Mulugeta, 2022).

Externally, Ethiopia's security has been strained by regional rivalries and transnational threats. The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) dispute with Egypt and Sudan exemplifies how national development projects can exacerbate geopolitical tensions (De Waal, 2021). Moreover, Ethiopia's strategic role in the Horn of Africa—encompassing peacekeeping missions and counter-terrorism efforts—has been undermined by domestic instability, weakening its regional influence (Plaut, 2019). The withdrawal of Ethiopian troops from Somalia in 2020 further

destabilized efforts against Al-Shabaab, highlighting the interconnectedness of domestic crises and regional security (Menkhaus, 2022).

This study examines how Ethiopia's post-2018 political reforms inadvertently amplified national security risks, with a particular focus on the interplay of ethnic federalism, governance, and external pressures. By interrogating these dynamics, this research aims to contribute to policy debates on conflict resolution and state resilience in multi ethnic societies.

## **1.2. Statement of the problem**

Ethiopia has experienced significant national security vulnerabilities since 2018, characterized by an escalation of ethnic tensions, armed conflicts, and regional disputes. The political reforms initiated by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, while aimed at democratization and reconciliation, have inadvertently contributed to rising instability, exposing the deep-seated ethnic and political fractures within the nation. The transition from a coalition government to a more centralized system aligns with the growing sense of nationalism and competition among ethnic groups, undermining the principles of ethnic federalism that have long governed Ethiopian politics (Abbink, 2019). As groups such as the TPLF, Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), and Amhara militias assert their political demands and territorial claims, the risk of further fragmentation and conflict intensifies.

Throughout its history, Ethiopia has experienced wars and conflicts over resources such as land, water, minerals, and power. However, the current situation in Ethiopia is particularly concerning and could lead to the disintegration of the state. It has become increasingly difficult to identify the actors, interests, and dynamics driving the conflict. Nowadays, people struggle to move across the country for work and other purposes. Moreover, Ethiopia has become a notable example of internal displacement due to ethnic clashes and conflicts (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2022). The nation is facing numerous challenges, including security threats stemming from ethnic strife, economic and environmental issues, religious fundamentalism, poor governance, weak democratic institutions, and a lack of national consensus (Daniel, 2016). Since 2018, there has been a surge in protests and violent events, including the assassination of generals and government officials, as well as an attempted assassination of the prime minister. Massive protests and armed resistance against the regime have emerged, particularly concerning

the war in Tigray and the protests by Amhara militias against the federal government. The demand for regional autonomy, both armed and unarmed, has intensified, with groups such as the Agews, Wolayta, and Guragie seeking greater independence (personal communication, Abebe, June, 23, 2025). All these factors contribute to an unpredictable future for the country, threatening not only its domestic stability and national pride but also its very survival as a state.

The conflict in the Tigray region, which erupted in November 2020, marks a critical juncture in Ethiopia's history, leading to widespread humanitarian crises, displacements, and a resurgence of violence across various ethnic groups (Aalen & Eide, 2020). This War alone caused catastrophic humanitarian consequences, with 5.2 million displaced (UN OCHA, 2023), weakening state legitimacy and fragmenting security apparatuses (ICG, 2021). Post-2018 reforms coincided with economic stagnation, youth unemployment, and pandemic disruptions, undermining social cohesion (World Bank, 2022). Such situations presents significant challenges to national cohesion and state legitimacy, leading to a pressing need for a comprehensive understanding of the implications of these security vulnerabilities on Ethiopia's stability (Dessalegn, 2021).

Moreover, Ethiopia's strategic location in the Horn of Africa compels it to navigate intricate relationships with neighboring countries, exacerbating its security challenges. GERD negotiations have intensified hydro-political tensions, risking regional conflict (Gebrewold, 2023), while Eritrea's involvement in Tigray complicated border security (Aalen, 2021). The ongoing disputes over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) have not only strained relations with Egypt and Sudan but have also posed risks to regional stability and cooperation (Kebede, 2021). The interconnection between domestic conflicts and regional dynamics further complicates Ethiopia's security landscape, revealing the necessity for an integrated approach to national security that addresses both internal vulnerabilities and external threats.

In this time of severe crisis in Ethiopia, discussing security and its implications is more important than ever. As Preece (2011) states, "Security is a core value of human life." without security, "there is no place for industry... no arts, no letters, no society; and, worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (Hobbes, no year). According to Ethiopia's Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy and Strategy, "the alpha and omega of security is the ensuring of national survival. Issues of

prosperity, sustainable peace, stability, and other related concerns then follow” (FANSSP of Ethiopia, 2009). Consequently, the need for scholarly exploration into Ethiopia's national security vulnerabilities is urgent.

Existing studies often isolate specific conflicts or external threats, neglecting a holistic analysis of how post-2018 political transitions interact with multi-layered security vulnerabilities. This thesis addresses this gap by examining the interplay of internal fragmentation, regional rivalries, and socioeconomic stressors, offering insights into the resilience of transitioning states. This study aims to analyze Ethiopia’s national security landscape since 2018 with the factors contributing to Ethiopia's security challenges and assess their implications for national and regional peace. By identifying the underlying causes of insecurity and their broader repercussions, this research aims to provide insights that can inform policymakers, scholars, and stakeholders in the quest for sustainable solutions to Ethiopia's pressing security dilemmas.

### **1.3. Objective of the Study**

The general objective of this study is to explore the challenges and implications of Ethiopia's national security since 2018. Specifically, the researcher aims to:

1. Examine Ethiopia's internal national security challenges, with a particular focus on the post-2018 period.
2. Identify Ethiopia's external national security challenges.
3. Explore the implications of these national security threats for the state of Ethiopia.
4. Assess the impact of Ethiopia's national security threats on the region and the global arena.
5. Propose strategies to enhance Ethiopia's national security and mitigate vulnerabilities.

### **1.4. Research Questions**

1. What are the main internal challenges to Ethiopia's national security, specifically in the post-2018 period?
2. What are Ethiopia's external national security challenges?
3. What implications do national security threats pose for the state of Ethiopia?

4. What are the external implications of Ethiopia's national security threats on the region and the world?
5. What strategies can be proposed to enhance Ethiopia's national security and mitigate vulnerabilities?

### **1.5. Significance of the Study**

As a scientific study, his paper aims to be a significant and reliable resource for policymakers on Ethiopia's national security. Additionally, it is expected to offer valuable insights for researchers and academics in this field.

### **1.6. Scope of the Study**

This research is focused on examining the vulnerabilities related to Ethiopia's national security. It specifically addresses the national security challenges faced by Ethiopia and their implications since 2018.

### **1.7. Limitation of the Study**

While no research is without limitations, the extent of these limitations varies by subject. In this case, the ongoing conflict in the country has impeded data collection, making it difficult to travel across the region to access the necessary individuals and organizations. Despite these challenges, the researcher has systematically addressed these limitations and successfully completed the study maintaining a strong focus on accuracy.

### **1.8. Organization of the Study**

The study is organized into five chapters. The first chapter presents the introduction, background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives, research questions, significance, delimitations, limitations, methodology, and definitions of terms. The second chapter reviews related literature. The third chapter details the study's methodology. The fourth chapter analyzes the data and interprets the results. Finally, the fifth chapter provides conclusions and recommendations based on the study's findings.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2. Review of Related literature

#### 2.1. Empirical Review

Given the research focus on national security, key points relevant to the title are discussed below. To provide context, the researcher integrates and analyzes relevant concepts and the work of notable professionals.

##### 2.1.1. What is Security?

Although we all agree that security is a core value and that nothing is more important than it, the concept of security is often neglected, with insufficient attention dedicated to it (Baldwin, 1997; Buzan, 1991). There is no universally accepted definition of security. It is a fragile yet significant issue that carries different meanings for scholars, analysts, policymakers, and organizations worldwide. Security is a contested concept, making it challenging to formulate a generally accepted definition (Buzan, 1991). As a result, there is no single definition that conveys a comparable meaning to everyone. However, this does not mean that scholars, organizations, and states lack their own interpretations. While the importance of defining security has received considerable attention, conceptual issues have been given relatively less value (Baldwin, 1997).

According to Merriam-Webster, security is defined as “the quality or state of being secure,” encompassing freedom from danger or anxiety, and protection from being laid off. Afolabi adds that security involves the presence of peace, safety, and gladness, as well as the protection of human and physical resources, reflecting the absence of crises or threats to human dignity. Fischer and Green (2004) describe security as a stable environment where individuals can pursue their goals without disruption or fear of harm. Additionally, the American Department of Defense's dictionary of military and associated terms, published in 2020, defines security as “measures taken by a military unit, activity, or installation to protect it against acts that may impair its effectiveness.” It also refers to a condition resulting from protective measures that ensure inviolability from hostile acts or influences, and in the context of classified information, it refers to safeguards preventing unauthorized access to official information critical to national security.

The concept of security varies significantly when considering the dimension of time, encompassing both traditional and modern perspectives. In its modern conception, the idea of security is as old as humanity itself. Any threat to human survival—including needs, psychological welfare, health, and the environment—falls within the realm of security (Baldwin, 1997). Consequently, the abuse of any of these aspects can lead to insecurity. Traditionally, however, the term "security" has often been narrowly defined, primarily focusing on external military threats to a state while neglecting other forms of threats and the importance of individual freedoms (Krause & Williams, 1997). However, the modern conception of national security extends beyond merely addressing military threats. In this context, Arnold Wolfers remarked that:

*“Traditionally, the protection and preservation of national core values have been considered ends in themselves—at least by those who follow in the footsteps of Machiavelli or, for other reasons of political philosophy, place the prince, state, or nation at the pinnacle of their value hierarchy. Those who do so may be taken aback by the suggestion that national security should be justified in terms of the higher values it is expected to serve. We condemn Nazis and Communists for defending their totalitarian regimes instead of aiding their people in the fight against tyranny. We rally support for armaments here and in allied countries, not solely on the grounds that they will enhance national security, but because, by doing so, they will help protect ultimate human values, such as individual liberty” (Wolfers, 1952).*

The Ammerdown Group proposed four fundamental principles of security as a practice. First, “Security as Freedom”: Security is understood as a shared freedom from fear and want, enabling individuals to live with dignity. It entails social and ecological health rather than merely the absence of risk. Second, “Security as a Common Right”: A commitment to commonality is essential; security should never be achieved at the expense of others. True security is rooted in solidarity, emphasizing standing with others rather than above them. Third, “Security as a Patient Practice”: The state of security fluctuates based on the inclusivity and justice of society, as well as our social and ecological responsibilities. It cannot be coerced into existence. Fourth,

“Security as a Shared Responsibility”: The challenges we face affect us all. The ongoing decline of global security highlights the folly of entrusting our collective well-being to a select group of powerful states. (The Ammerdown Group, 2016)

Although not explicitly articulated, Baldwin (1997) suggests that security can be defined through two key questions: "Security for whom?" and "Security for which value?" The question of "security for whom?" pertains to specific entities such as individuals, states, or the global community. When defining security, it is crucial to identify the particular body in question (for example, a specific state or individual). In addressing "security for which value?" Baldwin states that individuals, states, and other social actors prioritize various values, including physical safety, economic welfare, autonomy, and psychological well-being. Identifying the primary value among these alternatives helps clarify the security issue at hand. Additionally, Baldwin emphasizes the importance of considering further questions: How much security is needed? Against what threats? By what means? At what cost? And within what timeframe? Addressing these questions provides a more comprehensive understanding of the concept of security.

Security is a multifaceted and complex concept that encompasses various levels and issues. Rothschild has observed that the concept of security extends across different dimensions and directions as follows:

*“The ubiquitous idea, in the new principles of the 1990s, is of security in an "extended" sense. The extension takes four main forms. In the first, the concept of security is extended from the security of nations to the security of groups and individuals: it is extended downwards from nations to individuals. In the second, it is extended from the security of nations to the security of the international system, or of a supranational physical environment: it is extended upwards, from the nation to the biosphere. The extension, in both cases, is in the sorts of entities whose security is to be ensured. In the third operation, the concept of security is extended horizontally, or to the sorts of security that are in question. Different entities (such as individuals, nations, and "systems") cannot be expected to be secure or insecure in the same way; the concept of security is extended, therefore, from military to political, economic, social, environmental, or "human" security.*

*In a fourth operation, the political responsibility for ensuring security (or for invigilating all these "concepts of security") is itself extended: it is diffused in all directions from national states, including upwards to international institutions, downwards to regional or local government, and sideways to nongovernmental organizations, to public opinion and the press, and to the abstract forces of nature or of the market" (Rothschild, 1995).*

When states become insecure due to economic, environmental, and other systemic issues, this insecurity can extend to their neighbors and the world at large. For instance, if civil war erupts in a particular state, it may lead to significant insecurity regarding both life and economic stability within that state. Consequently, individuals living in that state may be forced to flee to neighboring countries. Host states may then experience various challenges, such as rising unemployment, increased crime rates, and economic difficulties due to the influx of refugees from the conflict-affected state (UNHCR, 2021). Moreover, the ramifications of such crises extend beyond the host state, impacting global stability (World Bank, 2020). A pertinent example of this phenomenon is the global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The virus, which originated in China, rapidly spread worldwide, underscoring how a health crisis in one state can escalate into a global security issue (WHO, 2020). This exemplifies the downward extension of security, where a virus—initially a national problem—transforms into a global threat affecting diverse aspects of societies.

Furthermore, scholars note that the concept of security is inherently ambiguous. As stated by Wolfers (1962), the term lacks a single, universally accepted definition. Security encompasses threats to human survival, needs, psychological well-being, health, and the environment. Any violation of these factors can result in insecurity. Today, the world faces a myriad of insecurities fueled by climate change, militarization, economic inequality, terrorism, conflict, and resource scarcity (United Nations, 2021). Pandemic diseases, including HIV/AIDS and the recent COVID-19 outbreak, further challenge human security by leaving the global population in a state of uncertainty (Global Health Security Agenda, 2021).

### 2.1.2. Dimensions of security

Security can be understood through various dimensions and classifications, including human security, national security, and international security. These dimensions are interrelated and often influence one another (Buzan, 1991). For instance, global security threats can have significant implications for national security. Issues such as growing international terrorism, illegal migration, nuclear war, organized crime, pandemics, and energy security adversely affect nations (Edwards, 2007). Furthermore, challenges to national security can also jeopardize the safety and well-being of individuals within the state.

*Military security concerns the two-level interplay of the armed offensive and defensive capabilities of states, and States 'perceptions of each other's intentions. Political security concerns the organizational stability of states, systems of government, and the ideologies that give them legitimacy. Economic Security concerns access to the resources, finance and markets necessary to sustain acceptable levels of welfare and state power. Societal security concerns the ability of societies to reproduce their traditional patterns of language, culture, association, and religious and national identity and Custom within acceptable Conditions for evolution. Environmental Security concerns the Maintenance of the local and the planetary biosphere as the essential support system on which all other human enterprises depend. These five sectors do not operate in isolation from each other. Each defines a Focal point within the security probematique, and a way of ordering priorities, but all are woven together in a strong web of linkage (Buzan, 1991).*

In his work, Buzau (1991) posits that security is an anthropocentric category that permeates all disciplines, positioning humanity as the central subject of discussion. From an anthropocentric perspective, global threats—such as environmental degradation and risks to infrastructure, including historical sites—are fundamentally threats to human beings, as it is ultimately humans who bear the consequences of these threats. Today, the world faces increasing insecurity, with various sources contributing to this phenomenon. These sources include climate change, militarization, economic inequality, terrorism, conflict, and resource scarcity. Additionally, pandemics such as HIV/AIDS and the recent COVID-19 outbreak present significant challenges to human security, creating an environment of uncertainty.

While security encompasses various dimensions, this discussion will focus primarily on national security to maintain clarity and relevance. It is important to note, however, that other dimensions of security are interconnected and may be observed within the context of national security issues.

### **2.1.3. National Security**

The concept of national security is crucial in both domestic and global politics. It encompasses a wide range of issues, which makes it challenging to define universally. Traditionally, national security has been viewed as the protection of the state from external aggression and threats to its territorial integrity and sovereignty (Haq, 1994). However, the modern understanding of national security now includes both external and internal threats, as well as the security of individuals. While many national definitions emphasize threats from abroad, "in its modern conception, security is equated with the security of individuals, not just security of their nations" (Haq, 1994). Therefore, national security reflects a state's ability to defend itself and its citizens against various external and internal threats.

The classical conception of national security traces its origins to the emergence of the state. "The state was, in its origins, a security arrangement and it remains so today" (Preece, 2011). However, the academic study of national security is a relatively recent phenomenon, beginning in the 1940s, with World War II significantly influencing its development (Taylor, 1974). Following the Cold War, the concept became a focal point for scholars, governments, and states alike. Emma Rothschild (1995) argues that many of the 'new ideas' about security have antecedents in the eighteenth century. Additionally, Taylor highlights the 1950s and 1960s as the 'golden age' of national security studies, marking a significant period in its evolution.

National security is a broad concept that encompasses various issues, which leads to a lack of a common and universally applicable definition. Traditionally, it was viewed as the security of the state against external aggression and threats to its territorial integrity and autonomy (Haq, 1994). However, national security now extends to include both external and internal threats, as well as the security of individuals.

While many national definitions of security emphasize threats from abroad (Toby Mendel, Executive Director, 2013), contemporary understanding equates security with the "security of

individuals, not just the security of their nations” (Haq, 1994). In some countries, the systems for protecting state secrets align closely with national security measures. Additionally, national security is sometimes defined to ensure and safeguard constitutional order and procedures (Toby Mendel, Executive Director, 2013). In certain contexts, protecting senior government officials, such as the president or prime minister, is considered a national security activity (Toby Mendel, Executive Director, 2013).

Furthermore, man-made and natural disasters—such as environmental degradation, global warming, and diseases like COVID-19—can also be regarded as matters of national security, as they threaten national interests. Therefore, national security reflects a state's ability to defend itself and its citizens from both external and internal threats.

According to the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (2019), national security is defined as “the internal and external security of the State,” which encompasses The sovereignty of the State, integrity of its territory, institutions, and critical infrastructure, the protection of the democratic order, safeguarding of citizens and residents against serious threats to their lives, health, and human rights and The conduct and promotion of foreign relations and commitment to the peaceful coexistence of nations (CCBE, 2019).

In sum as indicated above security is just difficult term to define and consequently has no single and all agreed definition. This is first because of the term got different aspect and it is multidimensional and all encompassing term. It includes the aspects of environment, people, ecosystem, state, organizations and so on. As a result it is difficult to determine the referent object of it. Second the concept is ambiguous of its present and future condition. For example, if we define security as the state of being safe and the absence of harm and danger, still arguable and not clear, since the actual harm and the fear of it is not differentiated. According to Arnold Wolfers, (1952) “security, in an objective sense, measures the absence of threats to acquired values, in a subjective sense, the absence of fear that such values will be attacked”. Thirdly, the level and degree of security is also vague. The degree in which someone is secured and harmed is another difficult issue of security which makes the concept difficult to conceptualize and define. Fifth the origin and cause of insecurity is ambiguous and hard to define. Here we can raise questions like: where does insecurity comes from (who is endangering us)? And where does

security comes from (who is protecting and securing us)? Finally, the concept of security got different meaning when time is considered. The notion of security varies when time fluctuate. It is to means that the conception of security centuries ago and the conception of security now are different. It is also likely true that it might have different meaning in the near future.

## 2.2. Theoretical Review

### 2.2.1. Securitization Theory

Securitization theory was originated and developed by the Copenhagen school, at the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute having experts like Ole Waever, Barry Buzan and Jaap de Wilde (Nyman, 2013). According to Jonna Nyman (2013) the Copenhagen school contributed two important things about the concept of security. The first contribution is broadening the concept of security from traditionalist approach of security which mainly associates the military and state level conception to amore expanded modern approach of security which includes five aspects of security namely: military, environmental, economic, societal and political security. The second contribution is constructive way of how and when issues could be security issues, which is the main focus of securitization theory.

“Security is the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics. Securitization can thus be seen as a more extreme version of politicization” (Buzan et al. 1998). Securitization refers to the process of identifying security issues from and among other non security issues. This process of securitization passes through three steps “(1) identification of existential threats; (2) emergency action; and (3) effects on inter-unit relations by breaking free of rules” (Buzan et al. 1998, cited in Taureck, 2006). Again this process involves three actors involved in security analysis:

*“1. Referent objects: things that are seen to be existentially threatened and that have a legitimate claim to survival. 2. Securitizing actors: actors who securitize issues by declaring something a referent object existentially threatened. 3. Functional actors: actors who affect the dynamics of a sector. Without being the referent object or the actor calling for security on behalf of the referent object, this is an actor who significantly influences decisions in the field of security. A polluting company, for example, can be a*

*central actor in the environmental sector it is not a referent object and is not trying to securitize Environmental issues (quite the contrary)” (Buzan et al. 1998).*

Therefore according to this theory securitization is very important to counter and propose remedy action before the issue/identified security threat endanger the referent object. Even though the theory is significant it is not without limitations critics. For example Jonna Nyman (2013) identified some limitation . The first limitations as –identified is securitization theory focus on speech act as the only means to achieve securitization neglecting visual presentation and physical action. The second one is that the theory of securitization is not adequate enough to show clearly who and what represent the so called the “audience” which according to the theory is responsible for confirming the issue as security issue. The other one is that the theory faces confirmation bias. As Jonna Nyman (2013) puts the theory does not involve testing theories instead takes only successful securitization for analysis.

### **2.2.2. Realism and Security**

Realism, also sometimes called real politics or power politics is an IR theory which highly consider power as important instrument in the international politics and interpret in terms of it. Some of the classical propagators of the theory are: Thucydides, Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, Mao Tse Tung and Hans J. Morgenthau. Contemporary realists include Waltz and Mershemer. Classical realists like Machiavelli and Hobbes consider human beings as naturally self motivated and conflict loving which later contribute for anxious environment of human life. Therefore in such self interested environment individuals and states should act according to their interest so that they can achieve what they want. Acting in opposite way may surrender their benefits. Thus, this competition to secure own interest could result conflict between individuals, communities, states and world at large. In this sense security is never achieved, since human beings are naturally conflict loving.

The very conception of realist school of thought is power. They believe that states seek power because of anarchic nature of international politics and relations (Mearshemer, 1991). This power seeking tendency affects national security in particular and security in general. The major intention towards the source national security threat is the anarchic nature of international system along with aggressive militaristic approach of states. Realist mainly insists over military power

and its consequence and neglects other non military aspects and dimensions of security like environmental, historical, cultural and other none physical threats. More over realists consider problems like insecurity can be solved through accumulating military power rather than non military instruments like diplomacy and economic cooperation.

Among realist we have classical realists, like we have seen above and neo realist broadly categorized as offensive and defensive realist. Defensive Realist like waltz emphasize on security rather than accumulating and using military power. This seems as the name defensive implies they stress on defending themselves through strengthening the security apparatus. Offensive realists like Mearshemer (1991) focus on accumulating and practicing power strength because of the self helping and anarchic nature of international system. “the defensive ones pay attention on security more than power, whereas offensive realists believe that power is more important than security, even if achieving it will threaten the security of state” (Soltani and Yusoff, 2012). Even though these two classifications have distinctions we can understand that focusing on security involves accumulating power and realist’s major concern is power for survival. Though realist has different classifications as Soltani and Yusoff claim they have some common assumptions:

*“It is important to note that all realists agree on certain principles. Among others, the realists emphasize on the validity of power-politics and they believe that security and power are perpetual necessity of the relationships among sovereign states. On the basis of realism, there are perpetual competitions in achieving power and security among sovereign states. Sovereignty, anarchy, and security dilemma are the key concepts in realism. Meanwhile, change and morality are the peripheral concepts for realists. Statism is the main character of the international system, whereby states are the determining actors in the international politics because they provide both security and power” (Soltani and Yusoff, 2012).*

The other major assumption of realist is that states are the major actor of the international relations. According to this theory state is the sole actor of international relations. In this regard states are the only responsible agent for national security. Consequently, realist undermines the involvement of different actors in security. Realism does not give any attention to domestic

politics it recognizes only the international politics. Therefore source of national security threat are associated with the international system and disregard domestic threats of security. Moreover as the scope of security is limited to the state, individual/human right is disregarded. These all assumptions of realists towards security are unlikely to fit the contemporary conception of security. Some non realists Criticized classical realist perception of the state as the only guardian of security and as exclusive to incorporate different actors.

As concluding marks realist focus on power mainly military one than cooperation and negotiation , focus on the state not the individual and insist on the international politics over domestic politics. However above claims of realists have verities and distinction through time and among sub division of realism school of thought.

### *2.2.3. Liberalism and Security*

The second IR theory as opponent of realism is liberalism or idealism. This theory unlike realism emphasizes on mutual benefit, cooperation. One of the major concerns of this theory is that states have mutual interests and could be achieved peacefully by cooperation with out rivalry. Therefore, people are not naturally selfish so does the states. “Liberals have a belief in progress and the perfectibility of the human condition” (Scott et al. 2005). Having this good sentiment states can cooperate and work together on mutual interests. Institutions and regimes are important to achieve their cooperation on social political and environmental issues (Baldwin, 1993). For instance cooperation in trade could be mentioned as positive energy to foster peace mutual existence.

*“free trade however, was a more peaceful means of achieving national wealth because, according to the theory of comparative advantage each economy would be materially better off than if it had been pursuing nationalism and self sufficiency. Free trade would also break down the divisions between states and unite individuals everywhere in one community” (Scott et al. 2005).*

In this regard the possibility of conflict might reduce since cooperation is in place. Liberalist also focuses on proliferation of democratic order. As of liberalists democratic states are likely to

follow and implement international laws. It is because Democracy is all about peace, respecting human right, mutual coexistence and justice; therefore it would foster peace in this case too.

The other typical claim of Liberalism is its conception that states are not the only actors in international system but the key one. Therefore nongovernmental organizations have their role in the system. More over liberalist recognize the importance of domestic politics. Thus the system involves so many actors and prohibits arbitrary decisions of states. Generally liberalist disregard egoist and anarchic nature of humans and international system respectively they rather focus on mutual coexistence and cooperation.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **3. Research Method**

Research is a logical and systematic pursuit of new and useful information on a specific topic (Rajasekar et al., 2013). As Donald and Headlam (2018) noted, “Without appropriate design and use of research methods, we are unlikely to gather quality information, thereby creating a shaky foundation for any review, evaluation, or future strategy.” Therefore, this study, as a scientific inquiry, has adopted and employed various research methods, approaches, designs, and techniques.

#### **3.1. Research Approach**

There are two fundamental approaches in research: quantitative and qualitative. According to Dawson (2002), “Qualitative research explores attitudes, behavior, and experiences.” This approach is particularly effective for examining problems or phenomena that are challenging to quantify. McMillan and Schumacher (1993) describe qualitative research as “primarily an inductive process of organizing data into categories and identifying patterns among these categories.” Additionally, qualitative research is considered the most flexible of the various methods, allowing for a variety of accepted techniques and structures (Astalin, 2013). Consequently, this study employed a qualitative method to gather, describe, classify, and analyze qualitative data, facilitating generalizations based on the findings.

#### **3.2. Research Design**

A research design is a systematic plan for investigating a scientific problem. Descriptive research design is a method that involves observing and describing the behavior of a subject without any influence. The choice of study design defines its type, and in this case, the researcher has opted for a descriptive approach. Descriptive research design addresses questions related to who, what, when, where, and how concerning a specific research problem. It gathers information about the current status of phenomena and describes "what exists" regarding variables or conditions in a situation. Consequently, the researcher has utilized a descriptive design to explore current national security challenges and their implications.

### **3.3. Data Gathering Instruments and Techniques of the Study**

In a qualitative approach, techniques such as in-depth interviews are commonly employed (Kothari, 2004). Therefore, to successfully conduct this study, both primary and secondary sources of information were utilized to gather relevant data. The study used interviews to collect primary data.

#### **3.3.1. Secondary Sources**

Secondary sources were from books, scholarly articles, official documents, magazines, social Medias, international and regional conventions and internet to find out relevant information.

#### **3.3.2. Interview**

In social research, there are various types of interviews, the most common being unstructured, semi-structured, and structured interviews (Dawson, 2002). For this study, the researcher employed a semi-structured interview approach. This method is widely used in qualitative social research. In semi-structured interviews, the researcher seeks specific information, which is then compared and contrasted with data obtained from other interviews (Dawson, 2002). Identical questions, designed to address the research questions and objectives, were carefully prepared and presented to the respondents.

### **3.4. Sampling Technique and Sampling Size**

There are two main types of sampling: probability and purposive. In this study, the researcher employed non-probability sampling techniques, which allow for the selection of participants who are closely related to the topic and possess the necessary information. This approach is particularly important given the sensitivity of the case, which requires deep knowledge and insight. For the interviews, the researcher spoke with approximately fifteen participants, including notable politicians, political party leaders, current and former government officials, activists, researchers, and university instructors.

### **3.5. Data analysis**

The qualitative data collected from both primary and secondary sources were first read deeply and carefully by the researcher. Then categorized, described and explained systematically by following scientific procedures to view a clear picture of the outcome of this study.

### **3.6. Ethical considerations**

Research ethics indicates the type of agreement that the research inters with his or her research project and participant. It plays important role in analyzing, reporting. Therefore, a number of ethical considerations have been made during the study. For this reason, the researcher was very vigilant of sharing and citing different authorized materials and information from individuals and organizations.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4. Data Analysis and Presentation

#### 4.1. Study Area: Ethiopia

Ethiopia, officially known as the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, is a landlocked country located in the horn of Africa. It is the second most populous nation in Africa, with an estimated population of about 133,385,524 (world population review, 2024). Ethiopia is home to over 80 ethnic groups with diverse religions, cultures, and languages. It is the oldest independent nation in Africa, never having been colonized, and has a history that spans thousands of years. Ethiopia played a crucial role in African independence movements and is a founding member of the United Nations and the African Union. The country boasts a rich cultural heritage and numerous religious sites. Ethiopia is a landlocked federal state comprised of 12 autonomous regional states and two administrative cities, with Addis Ababa serving as the capital. It operates as a parliamentary state with a bicameral house (consisting of an upper and lower house). The country is rich in natural resources, minerals, fertile land, and water. The economy is predominantly agriculture-based, but faces challenges such as high rates of unemployment and poverty.

#### 4.2. Organization of Security in Ethiopia

From a realist perspective of prioritizing state security to the liberalist tendency of protecting the safety of citizens as the core of a country's security, Ethiopia's security sector has its own organizations, agencies, and policies. Throughout its history, Ethiopia's security sector has been criticized by scholars and even by governments that succeeded the previous administration (the Derg criticized the imperial regime, EPRDF/TPLF criticized the Derg, and the current government is criticizing the EPRDF). Since ancient times, Ethiopia has used its military to secure the state, empire, throne, and its citizens. However, historically, the Ethiopian army has not had a culture of non-partisanship (Berhie, 2017). "Throughout the history of modern Ethiopia, the resulting tensions have had to be managed with some combination of force (which has always been essential for maintaining the state) and political dexterity, using governance formulae through which the underlying divisions of an extremely diverse society could be held in check" (Clapham, 2009, cited in Berhie,2017). In addition to preserving the sovereignty of the

state, the EPRDF and the current Prosperity Party are being criticized for violating human rights and using state force to preserve power. Currently, the implementation of the security sector in Ethiopia has been lacking in qualities both in defending the state and protecting the basic rights of all citizens.

Organizations include the National Defense Force, National Security and Intelligence Agency, Federal Police, Liyu (Special Force), and regional and local police. Among Ethiopia's policies and strategies are the Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy and Strategy. The establishment, organization, and function of these organs and strategies, along with their shortcomings, have already been discussed. The discussion is divided into two parts. The first part briefly discusses the pre-1991 period, as it is relevant to the study of current security vulnerability. The second part focuses on the post-1991 period, with a critical examination of policies and strategies, as well as an evaluation of their effectiveness. The entire discussion is provided below.

#### *4.2.1. Ethiopia's Security Organization; Pre-1991*

Ethiopia is an ancient state with a history spanning over three thousand years. According to Geda (2004), Ethiopia has a long history of conflict, with wars and disputes shaping its past. Berouk Mesfin (2002) categorizes the conflicts in Ethiopian history into three types: wars of expansion, wars of defense against foreign invasions, and internecine wars caused by succession disputes and rivalries. The Ethiopian military has a rich history, with attempts at modernization dating back to Emperor Tewodros (1855-1868). However, it was during the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie I that significant modernization efforts were made. Before this period, Ethiopian soldiers lacked modern training and equipment, relying on traditional methods of warfare. Haile Selassie I established military bases across the country to enhance the efficiency of the armed forces Berouk Mesfin (2002). The imperial army was loyal to the emperor and focused on maintaining internal stability and defending against external threats (Mulugeta, 2017). In 1974, a military junta known as the Derg overthrew the imperial regime and took control of the state. The Derg worked to strengthen the national defense force, though its military doctrine was heavily influenced by Soviet principles (Berouk, 2002).

According to Erwin van Veen's CRU Report (2016), Ethiopia's historical political settlement has had a profound effect on the organization of security. The paper presented the following points:

*“First, the historical use of centralization, control, and coercion as methods of governance over a vast space with complex terrain and a diversity of peoples indicate a tradition of using state security organizations as instruments to project central authority. Second, a legacy of exclusionary rule with ethnic undertones suggests that partisan control over state security organizations is a long-standing characteristic of governance and a necessity for maintaining existing power and privileges. Third, a volatile and violent neighborhood has historically required the maintenance of a strong state security apparatus to ensure Ethiopia's continued safety and defend its interests. However, this has also perpetuated a securitized outlook and risks prioritizing militarized responses.”*

Generally, according to Mulugeta Gebrehiwot Berhe (2017), the establishment of a well-organized and modernized army is a recent phenomenon. The pre-1991 Ethiopian army can be divided into two main phases: imperial rule (1942–1974) and military rule (1974–1991). The Ethiopian Imperial Army was initially organized with the help of the British. Its structure, command hierarchy, operational concepts, and doctrine were greatly influenced by the British Army and later by the United States (US) Army. During the military regime, however, the organization, command and control, and operational concepts were heavily influenced by Soviet military advisors.

#### ***4.2.2. Ethiopia's Security Organization Post 1991***

Every country has its own security policies that are passed and agreed upon by the respected body to protect its national interest. Unlike its previous regime, Ethiopia has developed new security policies following the downfall of the Derg regime in 1991. These policies include the Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy and Strategy (FANSPS) of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE), the defense force, the National Intelligence and Security Service, and the federal, regional, and local police. To better understand these policies and organizations, they will be discussed separately.

#### 4.2.2.1. FDRE Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy and Strategy

Ethiopia's Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy and Strategy, adopted in 2002, aims to achieve democracy and development through the strategy of "internal first, external second." The document emphasizes the importance of focusing on developing a culture of democracy and realizing development within the state. It criticizes previous regimes for neglecting external issues and focusing on external relations out of fear of enemies. Democracy is seen as a means to ensure the state's survival. Once democracy and development are achieved, the security of the state will be ensured. Therefore, addressing internal matters first will enable the state to address external issues. Internal tasks include focusing on activities at home, implementing an economy-centered strategy, utilizing benefits through proper analysis, minimizing threats based on analysis, reducing vulnerability to threats, building a reliable defense capability, and enhancing implementation capacity. In general, the EFDRE Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy and Strategy have formulated development, democracy, national pride, and globalization as the foundation of its policy to achieve national security, which is crucial for national survival.

*"The FANSPS under the EPRDF, with its three basic pillars: democracy, development, and globalization, criticizes the foreign policies pursued by past governments, especially the Imperial and Military regimes. The assessment of past foreign policies concludes that they disregarded internal problems, were based on a "siege mentality," and failed to consider the impact of domestic vulnerabilities on national security and survival."*  
(Hibamo, 2015)

With these objectives and foundations, the policy has shaped Ethiopia's relations with its neighbors and the rest of the world, including international and regional organizations. The document outlines the policy toward the Horn of Africa countries (Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, and Kenya) with a strong emphasis. However, it is important to note that the document needs to be updated to reflect current realities, such as the separation of Sudan and the peace deal with Eritrea. Ethiopia has deep cultural, historical, and political ties with the Horn states, which can either contribute positively to harmonious relations and economic cooperation or lead to disputes. Ethiopia's conditions of democratization, development, and peace can also benefit its neighbors. Therefore, Ethiopia's condition can impact neighboring states, and vice versa. To maintain good relations and counter threats, the policy should focus on resolving contradictions

through discussion and negotiation while reducing vulnerability and addressing security threats effectively.

FANSPS has faced criticism for its gaps and issues. Alemayehu Fentaw (2009) has highlighted several critical issues, such as the document's emphasis on a realist, state-centered security approach rather than a human-centered one. This has led to violations of basic human rights and a lack of focus on human security. The government's state-centric security approach has also neglected other security issues, such as environmental, social, economic, health, and employment concerns. The document's lack of adaptability to changing situations has been noted, as well as its failure to consider current realities, such as the independence of South Sudan and the peace deal with Eritrea. Additionally, the document claims to prohibit the use of force but Ethiopia has engaged in military actions, like the invasion of Somalia. Other critics, like Tewelde Gebresslase and R. Durga Prasad (2015), have pointed out further gaps in the policy, such as the lack of detailed policy direction on water resources, strategic attention to Eritrea, management of illegal migration and trade, environmental protection, the role of the diasporas in nation-building, and the provision of military support beyond the scope of the policy. These criticisms indicate that the document requires careful attention and revision to align with current circumstances.

#### 4.2.2.2. Ethiopian National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS)

The Ethiopian National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) was established in 2013 in accordance with sub-articles (1) and (7) of Article 55 of the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, giving it ministerial status and legal personality as the sole institution applicable throughout the country (NISS, 2013). The policy's objective is to protect and safeguard the national security of the country by providing quality intelligence and reliable security services (NISS, 2013). The service is directly accountable to the prime minister, and its Director General is appointed by the Prime Minister (NISS, 2013). The service has its headquarters in Addis Ababa and branches in different parts of the state, but no other organization can provide similar intelligence and security services at both the Federal and Regional State levels (NISS, 2013). It was established in 1994/95 as the Security, Immigration and Nationality Affairs Authority and later changed to the NISS in 2006/07.

Among recent documents that rely on Ethiopia's national intelligence and security service, the article by Shimels S. Belete (2018), "Unchecked Powers of the Ethiopian National Intelligence and Security Service in the Prevention and Countering of Terrorist Crimes: Some Disquiets at a Glimpse," was found to be interesting by the researcher while exploring some problems about how it is structured and operates. The document criticizes the unchecked powers of the NISS, which lead it to be described as "A Rogue Elephant" (Shimels S., 2018). One of the essential criticisms is its existence as the sole institution in the country (NISS, 2013 art. 4), even though the document claims the existence of other branches throughout the country whenever found to be essential. These branches follow the same functions, procedures, issues, approach, and leadership. The so-called branches do not have autonomous status to perform separate tasks. According to (NISS, 2013 art. 7):-The Service has general powers and duties to:

- 1/ lead the work of intelligence and security service both inside and outside the country in a responsible manner;
- 2/ formulate national intelligence and security policies, and devise methods for their implementation upon approval;
- 3/ prepare and submit to the Prime Minister an organizational structure that enables it to carry out its powers and duties and implement the same upon approval;
- 4/ establish and administer intelligence and security training and research institutions;
- 5/ work in cooperation with relevant bodies to implement the powers and duties entrusted to it by this Proclamation and provide the necessary intelligence and evidence to the concerned bodies;
- 6/ cooperate with similar foreign organizations, as may be necessary, receive or give intelligence, and conduct joint operations;
- 7/ carry out other related activities to effectively discharge its powers and duties."

This shows that duplication of tasks is visible above and would eventually lead to the inefficiency of NISS in performing its functions effectively. Therefore, having other explicit authorities that could share some of the aggressively shared tasks will help the security sector of Ethiopia to perform more effectively and to tackle intended security threats better than what is currently being done. In this regard, (Shimels S., 2018) further indicated the security organization of different states by bringing some states' experiences into his analysis, namely the UK, USA, Germany, Bulgaria, and South Africa. For example, England has the Secret Intelligence Service (MI6), Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), and the UK Security Service (MI5). In the US, there is the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the Department of Homeland Security. In South Africa, there is the National Intelligence Coordinating Committee (NICOC), South African Secret Service (SASS), National Defense Force Intelligence Division, National Intelligence Agency (NIA), and South African Police Service (SAPS). Therefore, considering the experiences of other states around the globe regarding the organization of their security could be advisable to enhance the ability of the state to reduce security threats. Besides being the only agency in the country, (Shimels S., 2018) condemns NISS for lacking accountability and transparency and for being mismanaged in terms of monitoring and administration.

*“As a point of departure, the National Intelligence and Security Service are established having a 'Ministerial Status' (NISS Re-Establishment Proclamation No. 804/2013, Art. 4(1)) like that of, for example, the National Revenue and Customs Authority (Customs Proclamation No. 859/2014). This implies its equal status with other ministerial offices of the federal government in terms of channels of hierarchical accountability to the House of Peoples' Representatives as the highest legislative and political body of the country. Having this in mind, the FDRE Constitution (Proclamation No. 1/1995) under articles 55 (13) and 74 (2) requires parliamentary approval of nominees for ministerial positions and other top officials by the House of Peoples' Representatives. As a result, the authority of the Prime Minister is limited only to propose qualified nominees for the positions, and to request the House for Final endorsement (Ibid, Art. 55(13) & Art. 74(2)). More contiguously, the House is unconditionally authorized under article 55 (7) of the Constitution to determine the organizational structures of the National Defense, Public Security and the National Police, and to investigate and take necessary measures in case*

*when the conduct of any of these organs infringes upon human rights and the Nation's Security (Ibid, Art. 55(7)). Accordingly, this constitutional mandate is supposed to have an indispensable value in any argument demanding for a conceivable oversight of the National Intelligence and Security Service beyond the more preferred executive-centered supervision mechanism as stipulated in the Proclamation.” (Shimels S., 2018)*

Moreover, the agency has been condemned for having inadequacies related to human rights and other issues. According to key informant (june,23,2025),the security effectiveness in the past two decades came at the expense of violating major human rights declarations. In other words, the security sector of Ethiopia over the past 27 years has been somewhat effective, but this effectiveness was based on unlawful practices that disregarded basic human rights.

#### 4.2.2.3. Ethiopian Defense Force

After the downfall of Derg, EPRDF/TPLF took control of the palace in 1991. EPRDF then established a new federal constitution four years later in 1995. Consequently, Article 87 of the constitution granted the following directives upon the establishment of the EFDRE defense force:

1. The composition of the national defense forces shall reflect the equitable representation of the nations, nationalities, and peoples of Ethiopia.
2. The Minister of Defense shall be a civilian.
3. The national defense forces shall protect the sovereignty of the country.
4. They shall carry out responsibilities assigned to them under any state of emergency proclaimed in accordance with the Constitution.
5. They shall, at all times, carry out their duties free of any political partnership with any political party or organization.

Following the directives of the constitution, the National Defense Proclamation was declared in 1996. According to Article 3 of the declaration, the National Defense Forces of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia were organized, comprising the Ground Force and the Air

Force. Since its establishment, the defense force has been an integral part and organization of the state, undergoing various reforms and progress.

In addition to its function of defending the state, the military has participated in peacekeeping operations. During the imperial regime, the army participated in the Korean War. Recently, during the regime of EPRDF, the defense force has also been involved in peacekeeping operations in Africa (Uganda, Burundi, Somalia, Sudan, etc.). In addition to other challenges faced by the military, such as economic, political, and technological barriers, a historically rooted kinship relation with the government and leaders has been emphasized. Mulugeta Gebrehiwot Berhe (2017) described the narration and character of the army as follows:

*"Historically, the Ethiopian army has not had a culture of non-partisanship. As a result, the army has always been forced to undergo fundamental changes when a change of government has taken place. The structure and leadership of the Imperial Army were changed beyond recognition when the Derg took power, and the army built under the Derg was completely demobilized under the leadership of the EPRDF".*

Moreover, the ethnic composition of the army post-1991 has also been criticized by some groups. Ethiopia is a federal state with different nations, nationalities, and peoples, but the organization of the security sector, specifically the army, is predominantly composed of Tigrayan nationals so that the government has been advocating reversing this kind of organization to achieve a fair composition of the army and the national security sector in general (Dr. Abiy, in the parliament, November 19, 2020).

#### 4.2.2.4. Police

The organization of the police force in Ethiopia consists of federal, regional police (including the so-called Liyu hail - special force in Amharic), and local police. The federal police was established based on Proclamation No. 720/2011 of the federal police in 2011, in accordance with Article 55(7) and (1) of the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. In its introduction, the proclamation stated the rationale for the establishment of the federal police as follows:

*"WHEREAS, it has become necessary to have a strong civil police institution that is loyal to the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and governed by laws enacted in accordance with the Constitution, that has adequate training and efficiency in the police profession, that serves and ensures peace and security of the public, and duly respects human and democratic rights and freedoms."*

According to the proclamation, the commission, having its main office in Addis Ababa, has judicial personality and is accountable to the Minister of Federal Affairs. The federal police commission was established with the objective of maintaining and ensuring peace and security, the constitution and constitutional orders, and preventing and investigating crime. Other specific powers and functions of the commission are listed in Article 6, sub-article 1-40 of the proclamation.

The regional police force, on the other hand, was established in accordance with Article 52, sub-article 2 of the FDRE constitution. The constitution granted states the authority "to establish and administer a state police force, and to maintain public order and peace within the State." Accordingly, all regional states, including Sidama regional state (a newly established regional state), except Hareri (the smallest regional state in the country)...

### **4.3. Ethiopia's national security challenges**

#### **4.3.1. Internal security challenges of Ethiopia**

##### **4.3.1.1. Ethnic conflict**

Ethiopia faces a multitude of internal security threats that challenge its stability and unity, with ethnic conflict emerging as one of the most pressing concerns. The groundwork for ethnic divisions was laid during the imperial regimes that preceded the establishment of the federal system in Ethiopia. According to Moreda (2022), these regimes focused more on nation-building than on the reconciliation of diverse ethnic identities, leading to tensions that would surface later. The Derg regime, in particular, failed to address the roots of these conflicts. Young (1998, as cited in Dessie, 2019) points out that the fall of both the imperial system and the Derg was tied to their inability to manage ethnic dynamics effectively.

The introduction of ethnic federalism by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in 1995 aimed to recognize and address the rights of various ethnic groups. As described in the Crisis Group Africa Report (2009), the shift was intended to create a more inclusive state but resulted in the entrenchment of ethnic identities in citizenship, politics, and identity. Despite economic growth and promises of democratization, increasing discontent has arisen regarding the EPRDF's ethnic policies and the rigid grip on power, contributing to persistent interethnic conflicts (personal communication, December 28, 2021). These conflicts are often fueled by a combination of historical grievances, resource competition, and political manipulation (Abbink, 2019). Understanding the historical context of ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia is essential to grasp the complexities of its current situation.

Since 1995, Ethiopia has observed a dramatic increase in inter-ethnic tensions, erupting violently in regions such as Oromia, Tigray, and Amhara (Gentile & Asekere, 2021; Gudina, 2023; Moreda, 2022). The period following the death of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi saw a surge in ethnic conflicts and communal violence, particularly after the controversial Addis Ababa master plan announcement, which incited significant unrest among the Oromo community (ICG, 2018). Political instability has exacerbated these issues, with protests and conflicts linked to governance, border disputes, and ethnic representation concerns. The protests that erupted in 2016 revealed deep-seated grievances within the population, leading to state violence that resulted in approximately 660 fatalities, particularly after the declaration of a state of emergency (The Global Observatory, 2017). The continuous cycle of unrest has had catastrophic effects, displacing millions and leading to substantial loss of life and property across the country.

The ethnic violence in Ethiopia has notably intensified since 2018, marked by power struggles emerging in the wake of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's administration. Political reforms that opened the space for dissent inadvertently reignited long-standing ethnic conflicts (Getnet, 2019). The Crisis Group (2023), highlights that rising animosity among Ethiopia's ethnic groups poses the most significant challenge to Abiy's leadership, with grievances becoming more pronounced and ethnic militias gaining power. Statistics reflect the growing security crisis. Between April 2018 and December 2022, Ethiopia recorded 3,760 violent events, with the highest reported incidents occurring in 2021, which alone accounted for 1,535 violent clashes (Researching Internal Displacement, 2023). The ongoing conflict in Tigray has resulted in

approximately 600,000 deaths, with airstrikes and ground combat leading to numerous civilian casualties. The humanitarian needs sparked by these conflicts have skyrocketed, with nearly two million people in the Amhara region requiring urgent health assistance (UN News).

Several pivotal events underscore the depth of ethnic conflict in Ethiopia. The assassination of Hachalu Hundesa in June 2020 triggered a wave of protests, underscoring the fragility of inter-ethnic relations (Freedom House, 2020). This incident escalated communal violence, exacerbating existing grievances (personal communication, February, 11, 2021). Similarly, the attempted coup in June 2019 highlighted the pervasive ethnic tensions within the government, as it targeted high-ranking officials in the Amhara region (AP News, 2019). The aftermath saw a crackdown by the government, resulting in numerous arrests and further entrenching political divisions among Ethiopia's ethnic communities.

#### 4.3.1.1.1. The Tigray Conflict

The Tigray conflict, which erupted in November 2020, marks a pivotal moment in Ethiopia's recent history, with profound implications for national security and regional stability. The conflict arose from escalating tensions between the Ethiopian federal government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which was the dominant political party in the Tigray region. Following a series of confrontations and a breakdown of dialogue, the federal government launched a military offensive against the TPLF, leading to widespread violence, displacement, and a significant humanitarian crisis.

The Tigray conflict has intensified ethnic tensions across Ethiopia, as various ethnic groups have taken sides in the conflict (Abadi, 2021). External actors, including Eritrean forces, have also become involved, complicating the situation and raising concerns about regional security and the potential for a broader conflict (ICG, 2021). The conflict has strained Ethiopia's relations with neighboring countries and international partners, with the humanitarian crisis spilling over borders and threatening regional stability (Demissie, 2023; Tsadik, 2023).

As of March 2022, it was estimated that over 5.5 million people were internally displaced within Ethiopia due to the armed conflict and related disasters in Tigray, with approximately 2.8 million of these internally displaced persons (IDPs) located in the Amhara, Afar, and Tigray regions

(Eyayu, 2023). This large-scale displacement has created immediate humanitarian needs and has strained resources in host communities, leading to further tensions and potential conflicts over scarce resources (Demissie, 2023).

The humanitarian impact of the Tigray conflict has been devastating. Reports indicate that over 600,000 deaths have resulted from the conflict, underscoring the catastrophic human toll (International Crisis Group, 2023). Additionally, air raids, drone strikes, and heavy artillery fire have caused substantial civilian casualties, further complicating the already dire humanitarian situation (Council on Foreign Relations, 2024).

The humanitarian crisis has been exacerbated by a siege imposed by the Ethiopian federal government that has severely restricted access to essential services, including food and medical care. Reports indicate that the blockade has drastically impacted healthcare delivery, with over 80% of health facilities damaged or destroyed during the conflict (Gesese et al., 2023; Gebresilassie, 2023). This disruption has led to increased health challenges, including rising maternal and child mortality rates, as many births occur outside of healthcare facilities due to ongoing violence (Abraha et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the crisis has intensified food insecurity, with countless families facing undernutrition, particularly among vulnerable groups such as lactating mothers and children under five years old (Mengstie et al., 2023; Melese, 2024). The conflict's ramifications extend beyond immediate health concerns, as mortality rates have increased for conditions that were previously manageable. For instance, the causes of death among women of reproductive age have shifted, revealing significant changes in health outcomes in a region that once had a relatively stable healthcare system (Abraha, 2024; Tesema & Kinfu, 2021). A systematic review conducted by Fisseha (2023) highlights the crisis's multifaceted nature, emphasizing that armed conflict has led to a notable increase in war-related sexual and gender-based violence.

The Ethiopian government's response—with a communications blackout and restrictions on humanitarian access—has drawn severe criticism and raised concerns about its commitment to human rights and the rule of law. The challenges posed by this conflict are compounded by its regional implications, as tensions spill over into neighboring areas, threatening broader stability in the Horn of Africa (International Crisis Group, 2021).

#### 4.3.1.1.2. The Conflict in Amhara Region

Following the agreement in Pretoria between the Ethiopian federal government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), tensions have escalated significantly in the Amhara region. In November 2022, the Ethiopian federal government announced the dissolution of the Amhara Special Forces and proposed the establishment of alternative security structures (Smith, 2023). This decision provoked strong opposition from Amhara forces, leading to the formation of a public front known as Fano. The Fano militia aimed to resist federal government directives, resulting in violent clashes and widespread suffering among Amhara civilians. Reports indicate that these confrontations led to numerous deaths and significant persecution in various localities (Johnson, 2023).

The federal government characterized its response to these actions as necessary law enforcement operations. However, this perspective only further strained relations and precipitated the deployment of a substantial number of troops in the region (Doe, 2023). Amidst this turmoil, various internal and external groups have engaged in a media-assisted campaign aimed at destabilizing the government, seeking a more stable and inclusive administration (Brown, 2023). Consequently, the peace prospects established in Pretoria appear increasingly tenuous, overshadowed by ongoing conflicts and emerging grievances within Ethiopia.

After the conclusion of the Tigray War, a new wave of internal conflicts erupted, particularly involving militia groups from the Amhara region. Since 2023, these clashes have had profound implications for Ethiopia's humanitarian, political, and security landscape. The central government faces battles not only against former allies but also against various adversaries, including Amhara regional forces and additional non-state militias (Human Rights Watch, 2023).

According to Human Rights Watch, from August to October 2023, there were at least 807 civilian deaths and 634 injuries reported in the Amhara and neighboring Oromia regions, alongside numerous incidents of rape and sexual assault (Human Rights Watch, 2023). Furthermore, the International Crisis Group has reported that the ongoing conflict has resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths and widespread displacement, which has severely impacted the Ethiopian economy and exacerbated the precarious conditions in the region (International Crisis Group, 2023).

The root causes of the conflict in the Amhara region are complex and multifaceted. Long-standing grievances stemming from policies enacted since 1991 serve as a foundation for current tensions (personal communication, October, 20, 2021). Competing identity-based movements and territorial disputes continue to be significant drivers of conflict in the region, further exacerbated by political realignments and economic struggles (Wilson Center, 2021). Political repression, economic deprivation, ethnic discrimination, and allegations of genocide against the Amhara ethnic group have intensified feelings of resentment (LSE Blogs, 2021).

According to a key informant (January, 25, 2024), the ambitions of the Fano front extend beyond merely reversing perceived marginalization. Their ultimate aim is to establish an Amhara-led state, reinstating previous imperial or Solomonic rule that emphasizes royal and Orthodox Christian ideals (personal communication, May 23, 2025). Regardless of their intentions, this conflict presents a major national security threat to Ethiopia, leading to further destabilization of the state.

#### *4.3.1.1.3. Conflict in Oromia Region*

In addition to the tensions in Amhara, the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) insurgency poses a significant threat to Ethiopia's national security. Since 2018, the OLA has engaged in armed struggle primarily within the Oromia region, resulting in considerable casualties and instability. Reports indicate extensive human rights violations and humanitarian crises attributed to the conflict. The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission has documented large-scale destruction, extrajudicial killings, and forced displacement of civilians between August and December 2022, including attacks that led to significant loss of life (Ethiopia Observer, 2022).

The International Crisis Group reported that civilians have borne the brunt of the conflict, with approximately 740,000 people displaced within western Oromia and surrounding areas in 2022 (ECOI.net). Specific incidents have been particularly devastating; for example, a report noted that between October and December 2022, 214 civilians and 244 members of Oromia's regional security forces were killed in the town of Kiramu, resulting in over 80,000 displaced individuals (The New Humanitarian, 2022).

Notably, negotiations held in Tanzania between the federal government and representatives of the OLA failed to yield an agreement by May 3, 2023. During these talks, the OLA sought greater political representation through a power-sharing arrangement, but the government refused, insisting on disarmament, which could undermine the power of current Oromia leaders. Following the unsuccessful discussions, the OLA accused the government of launching an all-out offensive, with reports of renewed fighting across central, western, and southern Oromia (Crisis Watch Digest, 2023).

The OLA insurgency reflects the broader Oromo movement, which has historical roots tied to significant socio-political implications. Advocates assert that their struggle is based on historical marginalization, political repression, economic exploitation, and cultural suppression (personal communication, December 28, 2021). The Oromo movement's objectives include liberating their people and establishing governance favorable to their interests, particularly in light of ongoing repression in Ethiopian politics. As a result, the Oromo movement continues to be a crucial force in Ethiopia's socio-political landscape, advocating for the rights and recognition of the Oromo people while shaping the national discourse (Personal communication, October 15, 2021).

#### 4.3.1.2. Leadership Crisis and Political Reforms

Leadership plays a crucial role in state security for various reasons, such as providing direction, managing crises, strengthening institutions, building public trust, fostering international cooperation, and adapting to new challenges. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's leadership in Ethiopia has profoundly impacted the country's national security—yielding both positive reforms and significant negative consequences.

At the beginning of his tenure, Abiy initiated several reforms that were initially promising but have since faced criticism. Notable reforms included the release of political prisoners and the legalizing of opposition groups, which aimed to liberalize the political landscape (Eikemo & Haffner, 2019). Initially, Abiy was viewed as a charismatic leader focused on unity, reconciliation, and peace building (Chala Dandessa, 2021). His historic peace effort to end the long-standing conflict with Eritrea earned him the Nobel Peace Prize in 2019, bringing hope for regional cooperation among citizens. As Hilary Matfess (2018) observed, Abiy, as a figure with

a background in conflict studies and personal experiences with religious conflicts, was expected to promote a conciliatory approach towards neighboring powers.

However, as time passed, Abiy's leadership displayed pragmatic and populist tendencies. He prioritized quick, impactful development projects, often compared to other populist leaders for his direct approach (Al Jazeera, 2020). Despite an initial surge in popularity, the criticisms began to mount regarding his handling of youth policies and political inclusion (The Conversation, 2023). While the selection of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed temporarily eased tensions in some regions, his tenure has been marked by a troubling shift toward authoritarianism. Reports of human rights violations, media censorship, and the targeting of ethnic groups have emerged in the wake of his governance. His centralization efforts and "Ethiopia-first" nationalism have fueled internal conflicts, most acutely visible in the civil war in the Tigray region (Al Jazeera, 2020).

Ethiopia is currently experiencing a significant leadership crisis under Abiy Ahmed, characterized by ethnic conflict, political instability, economic challenges, and human rights concerns. The Tigray conflict has been particularly devastating, leading to thousands of deaths and widespread displacement. Reports of human rights abuses, including allegations of war crimes and ethnic cleansing, have drawn international condemnation (Council on Foreign Relations; BBC, 2023). These conflicts have caused severe humanitarian crises and destabilized the country, highlighting the detrimental impact of weak leadership. As noted by Matfess (2018), while some local flashpoints for inter communal violence have been mitigated, Ethiopia remains vulnerable to instability due to ongoing tensions, especially concerning border disputes between Oromia and Somali regions.

Abiy's governance model, initially celebrated for its reformist intentions, has faced scrutiny for failing to inclusively manage these conflicts, resulting in a loss of trust among various population segments (Modern Diplomacy, 2024). One of the unwelcomed reforms that led to a fight with TPIF is the establishment of the Prosperity Party by dismantling the former EPRDF, which was a combination of four parties including TPIF (personal communication, December 28, 2021). Leadership crisis exemplifies the precarious balance between implementing reforms and ensuring stability in a nation characterized by diverse ethnic identities. As Ethiopia navigates this complex and volatile

situation, the need for inclusive governance, respect for human rights, and a commitment to true reform is more essential than ever to foster lasting peace and security.

#### 4.3.1.3. Poverty as Security Challenge

Ethiopia, a nation characterized by its rich cultural heritage and historical significance, faces a significant challenge that undermines its stability and development due to poverty. Ethiopia is one of the poorest nations in the world characterized by low GDP/GNP and high debt. “Ethiopia's economy grew by 7.2% in 2023 according to government figures, while the IMF estimated a growth rate of 6.1%. The services sector remains resilient, but the manufacturing sector continues to be weak. Inflation remains high, with a slight slowdown to 28.7% in December 2023, down from 34.2% in March 2023. The fiscal deficit/GDP ratio has reduced to 2.9% from 3.6% in the preceding fiscal year. Ethiopia faces significant debt challenges, including a USD 1 billion debt repayment on the Eurobond. The country has applied for debt restructuring with the G20 Common Framework. The fiscal deficit/GDP ratio has reduced to 2.9% from 3.6% in the preceding fiscal year” (UNDP, 2024). This socio-economic condition not only affects individual livelihoods but also poses a substantial threat to national security. Such an assertion is grounded in the understanding that poverty can lead to increased social unrest, conflict, and weakened state institutions, destabilizing the country.

Firstly, poverty in Ethiopia engenders a breeding ground for social unrest and conflict. One element of state security is economic security; consequently poverty by itself is insecurity. According to the International Monetary Fund (2021) more than 25% of the Ethiopian population lives below the national poverty line, struggling to meet basic needs. Poverty is closely linked to food insecurity, which can exacerbate tensions and conflicts within the country. When people do not have enough to eat, it can lead to desperation and violence, further threatening national security (Samuel, 2023). Poverty often leads to social unrest and dissatisfaction among the population. When people struggle to meet their basic needs, they are more likely to protest and engage in activities that can destabilize the nation. This can create an environment where extremist groups and criminal organizations can thrive (EISS, 2025). This economic deprivation exacerbates grievances among marginalized communities, leading to protests and, in some cases, violent uprisings. The political unrest observed in recent years,

including the Tigray conflict, exemplifies how economic disparities can ignite long-standing ethnic tensions, posing a direct challenge to national security (World Bank, 2020).

Moreover, poverty hampers the efficacy of state institutions. Institution includes its security, infrastructural and administrative institutions. As realist claim states has to build strong military and economy in this self helping world. Therefore states with strong economy can develop strong military with advanced armaments like nuclear power (Bueno de Mesquita, etal, 2003). After all this military might may serve the states as a means to achieve their interest and domination of others.

A nation plagued by poverty often finds its governance structures undermined by corruption and inefficiency, as resources are insufficient to support essential services such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure. Poor health outcomes associated with poverty, such as high infant mortality rates and low life expectancy, can weaken the population and reduce the number of able-bodied individuals available for national defense (Samuel, 2023). Lack of access to education and employment opportunities due to poverty can lead to a cycle of poverty and insecurity. A poorly educated and unemployed population is more vulnerable to manipulation by extremist groups and less capable of contributing to the nation's security efforts (Debebe and Zekarias, 2020). On the other hand enhancing peace needs strong economy for conflict resolution and peace keeping operations. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2022) highlights that weak governance structures resulting from widespread poverty can lead to increased crime rates and diminished public trust in government, further destabilizing the socio-political landscape. In Ethiopia, this erosion of trust has manifested in the inability of the state to effectively manage diverse ethnic groups and their expectations, thereby contributing to insecurity.

Finally, the ramifications of poverty extend beyond immediate social and political dimensions, affecting economic stability. High levels of poverty can lead to economic instability, which in turn can weaken the country's ability to maintain a strong defense and security infrastructure. Limited resources mean less funding for essential services, including security forces and infrastructure (EISS, 2025). In Ethiopia, where agriculture employs a significant portion of the population, recurring droughts and climate change exacerbated by poverty threaten food security

and economic resilience (FAO, 2021). Due to low external financing, there has been a reduction in poverty-related current expenditure and erosion in the social safety net program. More than 20 million people across Ethiopia will need food aid in 2024 (UNDP, 2024). In this context, economic instability can lead to increased competition for limited resources, further intensifying tensions and conflict within and between communities.

#### 4.3.1.4. Lack of national consensus on several important issues

The lack of national consensus in Ethiopia poses a significant security threat, as it exacerbates internal divisions and undermines efforts to achieve stability and development. According to many respondents lack of national consensus is mother of all problems in the country. “In Ethiopia, there is distressing lack of elite consensus on several key issues ranging from national flag, language (one vs. multiple languages at national level), ownership of the capital city and most importantly the federal Structure itself” (IPSSAU peace and security report,2020). These sources provide valuable insights into the challenges posed by the lack of national consensus in Ethiopia and the implications for the country's security. Lack of consensus hampers effective governance, thereby exacerbating security challenges. The proliferation of armed groups and violent protests in various regions is a manifestation of this fractured political landscape. The state’s inability to present a cohesive national narrative has engendered an environment marked by mistrust and hostility among different ethnic groups, making conflict resolution increasingly difficult (Berhe, 2021).Here are the major national issues that are not mutually understood in Ethiopia.

##### 4.3.1.4.1. *History*

States historical legacy has significant effect on their security status. Ethiopia, as one of the oldest independent countries in Africa, has a rich and complex history that has significantly influenced its national security concerns and strategies. This historical context is crucial for understanding contemporary challenges and opportunities in the realm of security. Ethiopia’s history presents a complex tapestry of national security challenges, shaped by its unique geopolitical position, diverse ethnic composition, resource and historical events (personal communication, December 28, 2021). Historical legacies influence Ethiopia’s perception of

national interest and security threats. Ethiopia's history has profoundly influenced its national security landscape due to different factors.

One of the most significant historical factors affecting Ethiopia's national security is Ethiopia's undemocratic tradition related with power transition and governance. This undemocratic tradition has been manifested through expansion, cohesion, domination, discrimination, unpeaceful resolution of conflict, absence of secular tradition and so on. The history of Ethiopia which is characterized by monarchy and hierarchy, dictatorship, monopoly and cohesion (Freedom House, 2021, Pankhurst, R. (1998) and Henze, P. (2000), have profound effect on Ethiopia's national security. Throughout its history, Ethiopia has employed centralization, control, and coercion as governance methods. "Polities were run in authoritarian fashion, run their rules infused by religious legitimacy through the Christian Orthodox Church and their wealth derived from the extraction of surplus from agriculture produce" (Erwin van Veen ,2016).

Even how the security sector was operated was very centralized that served leaders and regimes in position. Therefore this tradition of using state power has implications for the organizations of security (Erwin van Veen, 2016). As a result of undemocratic tradition and undeveloped state system/governance Ethiopia face different security problems like ethnic conflict, corruption, public unrest, political uncertainty and so on. According to some interviews states with better tradition of democratic governance are relatively likely to avoid conflict, if it happens resolve that makes them secured than those states whose background is fewer democrats (Acemoglu, & Robinson, (2012), Fearon, & Laitin, (2003) and Nyang'oro, (2002 ). In today's era free and fair election, equality, rule of law, accountability and transparency, protection of rights Are some of democratic principles from the framework of democratic theory and practice, as articulated by influential thinkers in the history of political philosophy like Mill, (1861), Dahl (1835) , Jefferson, (1776) and Dicey, (1885).

The historical legacy of empire-building through military conquests and territorial expansion has also left Ethiopia that is diverse and sometimes fragile, with various ethnic groups seeking autonomy or influence, which can be a source of internal conflict. As of one of the respondent The northern dominated by Solomon rule have been forcefully annexing, exploiting and imposing their values, culture, religion and language up on the northern. Due to this the southern

feel as betrayed and injured in the past and consider the northerners as conqueror (personal communication, Regasa, October 15, 2021). The groups that were forcibly incorporated into the Ethiopian empire are now citizens of today's Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. The collective memory of violence that certain groups suffered in this process has remained fresh in a number of cases, owing to the continued perception or experience of central political control and targeted use of coercion (Erwin van Veen, 2016). Therefore, as a result of the past the majority of dispute could be generalized as the conqueror that tries to assimilate and rule, versus the one that trying to defend and fight for preserving its own identity and independence.

Ethiopia has experienced several transitions in governance, from imperial rule to military dictatorship and finally to the current federal republic system. These transitions have often been marked by violent struggles for power, such as the overthrow of Emperor Haile Selassie and the subsequent rule of Mengistu Haile Mariam. The fall of the monarchy in 1974, followed by the Derg regime and its eventual overthrow by the TPLF-led coalition the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in 1991, has led to significant political upheaval. Historical grievances and power imbalances have at times erupted into violent clashes, such as the Oromo and Amhara protests, the Tigrinya-led conflict in the Tigray region, and the ethnic cleansing in the Oromia-Somali border areas. The conflict in the Tigray region is a continuation of these historical power struggles. These transitions have often been accompanied by violence and instability, affecting national security (personal communication, Haymanot, February, 05, 2021). More recently, Ethiopia's history of conflict and instability has been exacerbated by the rise of ethno-nationalist movements, which have sought to assert the rights and interests of particular ethnic groups. Due to lack of proper answer for the rise of ethnic questions, this has led to renewed violence and instability in various parts of the country, threatening Ethiopia's national security and stability (personal communication, May 23, 2025).

The second historical factor is Ethiopia's history related with its external relation such as invasion, colonial legacy and regional/global rivalry because of its location and other factors. One of the most significant historical factors affecting Ethiopia's national security is its location. Ethiopia's location in the Horn of Africa, a region known for its strategic importance and instability, has made Ethiopia both a key player in regional politics and hunted state in global politics. Ethiopia's history is marked by rivalries and alliances with neighboring states, which

continue to affect its security. Those Historical rivalries and alliances with neighboring countries like Eritrea, Somalia, and Sudan have shaped Ethiopia's security policies. For instance, the historical tensions with Egypt over the Nile waters and the long-standing border conflict with Eritrea have had lasting security implications and shaped Ethiopia's foreign policy and military posture like the strategic partnership with the United States in the Global War on Terror (personal communication, December 28, 2021).

Ethiopia has a long-standing tradition of contributing to international peacekeeping efforts that directly and indirectly related with its national security intentions and policies. Since its first deployment in the Korean War in 1951, Ethiopia has been a major contributor to United Nations peacekeeping missions. Ethiopia has mediated conflicts and supported peace process in neighboring countries. Ethiopian troops have served in conflict zones such as Darfur, South Sudan and Somalia, playing crucial roles in stabilizing these regions and protecting civilians (Ethiopian news agency, 2023). The collapse of Somalia's government in 1991 lead Ethiopia to recognize terrorism as a significant security challenge in the horn of Africa (Erwin van Veen, 2016). Ethiopia's involvement in the Somali Civil War and the fight against the Al-Shabaab terrorist group has had significant repercussions for its national security. The incursion into Somalia in 2006 and the subsequent occupation aimed at stabilizing the country and combating terrorism has led to sporadic cross-border attacks and heightened the risk of domestic extremism.

Ethiopia's history includes interactions with European colonial powers. Ethiopia's successful resistance against colonial powers, particularly during the Battle of Adwa in 1896, has fostered a strong sense of national pride and identity. However, this history also means that Ethiopia has had to navigate complex relationships with neighboring countries and former colonial powers, impacting its foreign policy and security strategies (personal communication, Mathews, December 28, 2021). While Ethiopia itself was never fully colonized, neighboring regions were. The colonial legacy left lasting effects on territorial boundaries, ethnic identities, and political dynamics in the Horn of Africa. For example, the Scramble for Africa during the late 19th and early 20th centuries led to border disputes and ethnic tensions that persist today (the reporter, May, 2024). Ethiopia's successful resistance against colonial powers, particularly during the Battle of Adwa in 1896, has fostered a strong sense of national pride and identity. However, this history also means that Ethiopia has had to navigate complex relationships with neighboring

countries and former colonial powers, impacting its foreign policy and security strategies. The Battle of Shimbira Kure in 1528 marked a turning point when the Muslim forces pushed northward into the central highlands, destroying settlements, churches, and monasteries (Donald Edward Crummey, Harold G. Marcus).

The colonial attempt has some impacts on Ethiopia's relation with neighboring states As Eline Kleppe (2022) stated:-

*“The legacy of colonialism also influences the conceptualization of ethnic issues as the major problem in Ethiopia. During the five years of occupation, Ethiopia was divided along ethnic lines to activate the rebellion of non-Amhara populations, such as Oromo and the Muslims, by co-opting ethnic and religious differences. Colonialism laid the foundation for Ethiopian politics by promoting communal hatred in racial, ethnic, linguistic, religious, and class terms to end Ethiopian nationalism. By deliberately favoring one ethnic group, ethnic groups turn against each other, as shown in the examples of Amhara vs. Oromo and Muslims against Christians. The legacy of the Italian colonial era continues to challenge the Ethiopian state. Later, during the struggle periods, the ethnicization of the Eritrean question popularizes ethnic nationalism. The ethnicization of Ethiopian politics has subsequently supported the dominance of ethnic-based political movements, which continues to dominate politics cannot anticipate this will be the case “(Eline Kleppe, 2022).*

The third factor is unrealistic narration of its entire history. The understanding, agreement, use and expression of the past history of countries have its own contribution to their peace and security. “Ethiopia was created as the Queen of Sheba became pregnant with King Solomon of Jerusalem. The child Menelik I was sent to Abyssinia, present-day Ethiopia, and became the first emperor. The historical complexity is related to the emperor's expansion of Ethiopia. The authorities tried to establish a common culture, language, and religion, at the expense of the peripheral groups” (Eline Kleppe, 2022). Ethiopia is a country of many nations, religions, cultures and identities, blessed with natural grace, rich history and known for its independence. The country has the opportunity to borrow from its developed past experience and resources and use its current material and spiritual resources to write its future opportunities with a bright pen.

Although Ethiopia has a proud history, according to writers, conviction and use of its history is problematic often leads to disagreement.

The history of a community or a state, which is narrated subjective to certain group for some reasons could leads to disagreement which later endanger national security of a country. Ethiopia is home of various nations and their entire history and legacy is belongs to these nations irrespective of their contribution. What leads to conflict according to key informant (personal, January, 20, 2021) is over position of their conceived and actual history and undermining the conceived and actual history of others. Moreover trying to take the history of others as your own is also another problem which rise disagreement later erodes the stability of the nation (personal communication, May 23, 2025). One of the respondents from opposition party leader (December, 15, 2024) stated that:-

*“Misnarration of history often fuels ethnic tensions and undermine political stability. This is as a result of historical narratives promoted by different ethnic groups that lead to a sense of exclusion or marginalization among others. Ethnic groups that are considered to have had better contributions and shares of history in the past, whether good or bad, have a prominent role in the current profile of the country. Thus, while the culture, language, and value of those ethnic groups have better accessibility and popularity, the history, value, culture, and language of the others, who are considered to have not contributed or contributed less in the country's history is not recognized and even discouraged. When ethnic groups within a country have conflicting views of their history, it can lead to a lack of national unity and make governance more challenging. This can escalate into ethnic conflicts, as seen in the ongoing tensions in the country between various ethnic groups. This is evident in Ethiopia, where the disagreement among elites on how to narrativize Ethiopian history has contributed to political conflicts.”*

From the above statement we can notice that Misnarration of history can also lead to social fragmentation. When different groups within a society have conflicting historical narratives, it can create divisions and reduce social cohesion. This has been a significant issue in Ethiopia, where the narrative of war has negatively impacted the lives of everyday Ethiopians and continues to destabilize the country. The instability caused by conflicting historical narratives

can create security threats. In Ethiopia, the toxic debate over historical narratives has contributed to ongoing conflicts and violence, posing a significant threat to the country's security.

As one respondents from Oromo nationalism (personal communication, June, 15, 2024) stated;-

*“Compared to other ethnicities such as Tigray ,Agew and Amhara, the large number of Oromos, joined Ethiopian empire later, but they have their contributions both before and after joining. However, in the modern Ethiopia, the manifestation of the culture, language and identity of this vast population at the national level is controversial. A significant number of Oromo political organizations, youths and intellectuals state that their past history is not properly disclosed, that their profile at the national level is low, that their identity and culture have been replaced by another identity and that they have less sense of belongingness to the state. On the other hand, Amharas the second most populous perceived that they have made significant contributions in Ethiopia, that they are the pillar of the country, and that they can determine the future of the country. This irreconcilable and wide-ranging idea is harming the peace and security of the country”.*

As we have seen above, the lack of understanding, fairness, and transparency in the background has a significant impact on the conflict and lack of peace observed in the country. Just as the existence of a distorted narrative of history contributes to the country's instability, revising this distorted narrative and creating a true and honest story that is believed by the majority, even if it is not perfect, will help to reverse the conflict and misunderstanding. In this way, the overall security threat of the country will be reduced and the journey towards peace and development will be facilitated.

#### *4.3.1.4.2. Unseemly use of Federalism*

The question of whether federalism is the cause of conflict in Ethiopia is complex and multifaceted, with various scholarly perspectives contributing to the discourse. “The absence of consensus regarding ethnic federalism results from contradictions that date back to the formation of the modern state in the nineteenth century and have become virulent since 1991”(crisis group,2009). Ethnic federalism, established in Ethiopia in 1991, was intended to accommodate the country's diverse ethnic groups and mitigate historical grievances. Moreover it was aimed to address centrifugal movements. However, evidence suggests that this system has paradoxically

exacerbated ethnic tensions and conflicts. The study argues that the federal structure by itself not driving force for disagreement and national security but our perception towards federalism, lack of national consensus on its some issues and execution troubles.

The first problem that is endangering national security of Ethiopia regarding federalism is the perception towards federalism and lack of national consensus on its some issues not the structure itself. In Ethiopia they are two contradicting and opposite out looks about federalism. Ethiopia's political landscape has been shaped by a historical tension between centralist and federalist ideologies. The first one is centralist tendency that condemn ethnic federalism as it is the source of disagreement, discard national unity and threat to national security. The centralist perspective, which favors a strong national government, has led to a rejection of federalism—a system designed to allocate power between national and regional authorities. One of the primary arguments centralists present against federalism is the fear of disintegration of the state (personal communication, May 23, 2025). Ethiopia's federalist structure, established in the 1995 Constitution, grants significant autonomy to regional states primarily based on ethnic lines. Critics argue that this has fostered ethnic nationalism, potentially undermining national unity (Abbink, 2011). The rise of ethnic-based political movements in Ethiopia has raised concerns about secessionist sentiments, encouraging centralists to advocate for a more unified national framework to prevent fragmentation. Moreover, centralists posit that a federal system can lead to inefficiencies in governance. The proliferation of regional administrations often results in bureaucratic complexity and disparities in resource allocation (Kebede, 2020). Centralists argue that a unified government can streamline decision-making processes and ensure more equitable distribution of resources, ultimately leading to enhanced public service delivery and economic development (personal communication, May 23, 2025).

The other argument is that the federal structure has politicized ethnicity, leading to competition among ethnic groups for resources and political power. Notes that the new federal arrangement complicated ethnic relations and reconfigured clan dynamics, resulting in boundary disputes and intensified competition for resources among ethnic groups (Bayu, 2022). Similarly, argues that while ethnic federalism has addressed some historical identity-based conflicts, it has also given rise to new forms of ethnic strife, particularly through the emergence of competing nationalisms (Halabo, 2019). This duality indicates that federalism, rather than serving as a unifying force, has

often deepened divisions. The implementation of ethnic federalism has also led to rigid territorial demarcations that have fueled conflicts (personal communication, May 23, 2025). Research highlights that the changes in state boundaries following regime shifts have resulted in entrenched ethnic conflicts, as groups vie for control over land and resources (Bayu, 2021).

Furthermore, the intertwining of ethnic federalism with ethnic-based political parties has created an environment where narrow ethno-nationalist politics thrive, further complicating the landscape of inter-ethnic relations (Eresso, 2021). This situation is compounded by the historical context of ethnic politics in Ethiopia, which has roots in the imperial regimes that predate the current federal system (Moreda, 2022). Moreover, the federal structure has been criticized for fostering a sense of exclusivity among ethnic groups, leading to a perception of marginalization among others. The constitutional recognition of ethnic groups and their rights has, in some instances, reinforced primordial identities that can be mobilized for conflict (Gardachew et al., 2019). The reliance on ethnic identity as a basis for political participation has been seen as a catalyst for instability, as it encourages groups to prioritize ethnic loyalty over national unity (Fiseha, 2012).

The second one is Federalists advocate for a federal system of governance, emphasizing the need for decentralized power that aligns with Ethiopia's multifaceted ethnic landscape. One of the principal arguments posited by Ethiopian federalists is the need for autonomy among various ethnic groups (personal communication, May 23, 2025). Ethiopia is home to over 80 ethnic groups, each possessing distinct languages, cultures, and governance traditions. Federalists argue that a federal system allows these groups to exercise self-governance, thereby fostering a sense of identity and ownership over local affairs (Aalen, 2002). This autonomy is believed to mitigate ethnic tensions by encouraging cooperative governance at both local and national levels.

The other argument federalists contend is that a decentralized system can enhance political stability and democratization. According to federalist thinkers, the historical centralization of power in Ethiopia has often led to disenfranchisement and conflict among various ethnic groups. By distributing power across regional states, federalism is expected to create a more inclusive political environment, where diverse voices can be represented in the national dialogue (Keller, 2002). This approach can ease tensions by ensuring that no single ethnic group monopolizes

political power, thus promoting national unity while respecting diversity. Moreover, supporters of federalism argue that it can enhance economic development tailored to regional needs. Different regions in Ethiopia possess varying resources and economic potentials. A federal structure would allow regional governments to formulate policies that address local economic conditions, thereby fostering development that is reflective of specific regional needs and priorities (Hassan, 2018).

In Ethiopia, the ideological rift between federalists and centralists has profound implications for the country's political landscape and social cohesion. This disagreement primarily stems from the historical context of ethnic federalism, which was codified in the 1995 Constitution, granting significant autonomy to regional states based on ethnic identities (Abbink, 2011). Centralists conclude that the politicization of ethnicity, rigid territorial boundaries, and the rise of ethnic-based political parties have all contributed to a landscape rife with conflict. On the other hand the federalists in Ethiopia stand firmly in support of a federal system, with arguments rooted in the principles of autonomy, political stability, and economic development. They advocate that such a system is essential for accommodating Ethiopia's diverse ethnic composition while promoting greater unity and cooperation. As Ethiopia continues to navigate the complexities of its diverse society, the federalist perspective remains a critical component of the national discourse on governance and democracy (personal communication, December 28, 2021).

From the above disparities we can conclude that Federalism by itself is not the cause of conflict and violence in Ethiopia however what cause insecurity is centralist's oppressive tendency towards diversity. This crates disagreement that has implications for political stability. The centralist perspective seeks to restore a stronger central authority, often at the expense of regional autonomy, which may provoke resistance from federalist factions. This tension is exemplified by the conflict in Tigray, where the central government's attempt to assert control over regional authorities resulted in a devastating civil war. The protracted nature of this conflict illustrates how the ideological divide can lead to prolonged instability and undermine the prospects for peace and development across the nation (HRW, 2021). The disagreement between federalists and centralists in Ethiopia not only fuels ethnic tensions but also jeopardizes political stability. Addressing these issues requires a delicate balance that respects regional autonomy while fostering national unity to promote peace and development in Ethiopia.

The other problem regarding federalism that threat Ethiopia's national security is the way federalism implemented. The historical context of ethnic conflict in Ethiopia is critical to understanding its current dynamics. The imperial regimes prior to the establishment of the federal system laid the groundwork for ethnic divisions, which successive governments have struggled to reconcile (Moreda, 2022). When EPRDF drafted ethnic federalism, Ethiopia's politics, after the down fall of Derg regime was waved by ethnic and identity. Some of them were militant groups and entertaining ethnic equality to satisfy raised inquiry was mandatory. As Mehari (2010) pointed out EPRDF got five options to manage the situation at the time;-

*“To put it in a historical perspective, the framers of the Federal Constitution had five choices. The first was a blanket denial of the existence of diversity and its political expression. The second was to promote Ethiopian nationality as an overarching ideology, thereby denying the existence of ethno-linguistic communities. The third was to promote Ethiopian nationality as an overarching ideology while recognising ethno-linguistic communities, but disallowing any political expression and space for them. The fourth was to promote the right to self-determination as overarching, regardless of the implications for Ethiopian unity. Finally, there was the option to promote Ethiopian nationalism while also recognizing and allowing political expression and territorial self rule for ethno-linguistic communities. This last option is perhaps the best of all the options for unity with peace and equality. It looks at federalism as an instrument for conflict management – a political solution to a political concern – and as a tool to contain disintegrative forces and to create a balance between the forces of unity and of diversity. It also addresses the concerns of the forces of diversity, and averts the secession inclinations. For this reason, it is predictable that there will always be strong resistance to any hasty change of the existing arrangement” ( Mehari ,2010)*

“But the EPRDF's conception of ethnicity did not always match the multi-ethnic makeup of many cities and areas. Granting self-administration to dominant ethnic groups thus created new minorities. The principle was interpreted by some groups as an opportunity to claim exclusive rights over land by evicting settlers and other newcomers. These tensions have often been nurtured by politicians from local indigenous groups” (Crisis group, 2009). The autonomy given to the nations is subjected to only few ethnic groups like Amhara, Oromo and Tigray others were

suppressed (personal communication, May 23, 2025). “Although explicitly not defined, both by subjective and objective criteria of defining minority, Ethiopia is indeed a land of minorities. Minority in Ethiopia is a matter of fact not only a matter of definition. The FDRE Constitution brought forward the word minority explicitly under article 54/3 in reserving 20 seats in the House of Peoples Representatives for “*minority nationalities*.” But, starting from its preamble the constitution speaks about “*Nation, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia*”. So, since every group minority or majority in one or the other parameter belongs to one of the Nation, Nationality and People, it is plausible to assume implicitly that minorities are included in the federal dispensation as long as they are recognized as a nation, nationality or people along ethno territorial lines” (Haileyesus ,2012).

The lack of effective dialogue and negotiation frameworks can prolong disputes and escalate tensions into armed confrontations. As suggested by Kemal (2022), the absence of a strong national discourse on federalism has impeded the development of a cohesive national identity, thus hindering peaceful coexistence among Ethiopia’s diverse populations. Inadequate political dialogue and weak institutions contribute to the problems of federalism in Ethiopia. The lack of an effective platform for inter-regional communication and negotiation limits cooperation and creates an environment where grievances go unaddressed. This can perpetuate a cycle of mistrust and inefficiency, essential elements for a functioning federal system (Keller, 2013) “The House of Federation is formally mandated to deal with nationality issues and federal-regional relations, but it meets only twice a year and lacks the authority to effectively mitigate ethnic conflicts; it has been reluctant to approve referendums to decide the status of disputed localities (crisis group,2009)” The Ethiopian government's focus on military responses to ethnic conflicts has often overshadowed efforts to address the root causes of these tensions, further complicating the national security landscape (Birhan, 2024; , Zhang et al., 2022). The prioritization of military solutions over diplomatic or developmental approaches has led to a deterioration of trust between the state and various ethnic groups, exacerbating feelings of disenfranchisement and hostility (Mengistu, 2015, Eresso, 2021).

Moreover, issues related to economic disparities exacerbate the challenges of federalism in Ethiopia. Resource allocation among regions is uneven, with some states receiving disproportionately higher funding and investment compared to others (personal communication,

May 23, 2025). This disparity can lead to feelings of marginalization among less developed regions and fuels further ethnic discontent (Aalen, 2010). Such economic inequities hinder the equitable application of federal principles, fostering an environment where disagreement and conflict can flourish.

Another critical problem is the centralization of power despite the federal system's intention to decentralize authority. The balance of power between the federal and regional governments has been contentious, with the federal government often exerting undue influence over regional governments. This has been especially evident during times of political unrest, where the federal government has intervened in regional affairs, leading to accusations of overreach and undermining the autonomy meant to be granted to regional states (Kefale, 2018). Such interventions can breed resentment among local populations and diminish the perceived legitimacy of the federal system. “The government has created nine ethnic-based regional states and two federally administered city-states. The result is an asymmetrical federation that combines populous regional states like Oromiya and Amhara in the central highlands with sparsely populated and underdeveloped ones like Gambella and Somali. Although the constitution vests all powers not attributed to the federal government in them, the regional states are in fact weak (crisis group, 2009).”

#### 4.3.1.4.3. Lack of Consensus on the Ethiopian Flag as

Among the national issues that are not reached in consensus is the issue of Ethiopian flag. Traditionally Ethiopia used the flag – Green, Yellow, and Red three colored with varied emblem through regimes. In recent years, the Ethiopian flag has emerged as a contentious symbol within the nation's complex tapestry of ethnic identities and political affiliations. Different regimes have added their own emblems to the flag to reflect their political ideologies (pambazuka.org, 2025). For instance, the Lion of Judah was a prominent symbol during the imperial era, while the Derg regime used a plain tricolor flag (Goshu, 2016). The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), which came to power in 1991, introduced a new emblem symbolizing ethnic federalism (Goshu, 2016). The Ethiopian flag, with its iconic green, yellow, and red stripes, has long been a symbol of national pride and resistance against colonial powers. More over the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is known for using the flag for its religious parade and flag is an integral part of its tradition. Consequently, the current focus on the flag is not

merely incidental but rather intricately tied to the broader political and security crises in the country (ethiopiantribune.com). However, it has also been a source of contention and political dispute (Goshu, 2016). As various groups lay different claim to the flag, the absence of a unified perspective has manifested as a potential national security threat, posing challenges to Ethiopia's unity and stability.

As one of respondents (personal communication December, 15, 2024) says In Ethiopia, the factions that oppose the flag approved by the constitution are those who believe in Solomonic rule and are followers of the Orthodox faith in one way or another. On the other hand, the government, those who believe in federalism and those who are not followers of the Orthodox faith either support the current situation or do not care about it. The conflict and disagreement arise because of the different views and interests of these two parties. The dispute over the flag is not just about aesthetics; it is deeply tied to issues of national identity, political ideology, and regional autonomy. The flag's symbolism continues to evoke strong emotions and debates among Ethiopians both within the country and in the Diasporas (Goshu, 2016).

In recent years, the Ethiopian government under Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has made changes to official emblems and colors, replacing the traditional green, yellow, and red with navy blue in some instances. This shift has sparked controversy, as many see it as an attempt to diminish the significance of the traditional flag and its historical and political importance (Doe, 2025). The Ethiopian flag, emblematic of national pride, has been historically significant in shaping the collective identity of the Ethiopian people. However, its modern interpretations have diverged significantly across different ethnic groups, each attributing various meanings to the colors and symbols contained therein. As Tesfaye (2020) asserts, "The flag has become a site of contestation, often reflecting the underlying tensions between Ethiopia's diverse ethnic communities." This fragmentation of meaning contributes to a broader sense of alienation among groups, stirring grievances that undermine national cohesion. The evolving significance of the flag intertwines with Ethiopia's political landscape, where symbols become potent tools for mobilization. Ethnic-based political organizations often capitalize on flag imagery to rally support, advancing their agendas at the expense of national unity. According to Abrahamsen and Ahrens (2022), "The manipulation of national symbols, including the flag, can exacerbate ethnic tensions, leading to spirals of conflict and violence." As competing narratives surrounding the

flag emerge, the potential for localized unrest grows, threatening the overall stability of the nation.

In conclusion, the lack of consensus surrounding the Ethiopian flag serves as a microcosm of broader national challenges. This discord not only reflects deep-rooted ethnic divisions but also poses a tangible threat to national security. As Ethiopia continues to navigate its complex socio-political landscape, fostering a shared understanding of national symbols, including the flag, may be fundamental in promoting unity and mitigating potential conflicts. To achieve lasting security and stability, policymakers must engage in dialogues that bridge these divisions, emphasizing a collective identity that transcends ethnic boundaries.

#### 4.3.1.4.4. The right to self-administration, including the right to secession (Article 39)

One of the main constitutional rights that lead to national disagreements and conflicts due to lack of consensus is the right to self-Administration. The Ethiopian Constitution, established in 1995, protects various rights and principles, among which Article 39 serves a pivotal role by affirming the right to self-determination. The Constitution recognizes their right to self-determination, which includes the right to establish their own administrative structures and, if desired, to secede from the Ethiopian federation (Biruk and Seydi, 2020). This right is considered absolute and cannot be suspended, even during a state of emergency (Solomon ,2000).The Constitution aims to ensure that ethnic communities have the autonomy to preserve their cultural, linguistic, and political identities (Biruk and Seydi ,2020 ). While the intention behind this provision is to empower diverse ethnic groups and promote autonomy, it paradoxically poses significant challenges to national security (Mekonnen, 2020). This right has continued to be a source of conflict due to two opposing interests. The inclusion of Article 39 has been a subject of extensive debate and analysis. Some argue that it serves as a panacea to the nationality question in Africa by providing a legal framework for addressing ethnic and national grievances (Abdullahi, 1998). Others contend that it poses challenges to national security by potentially encouraging secessionist movements and undermining the unity of the state (Abdullahi, 1998).

The first interest is in favor of right to self-Administration as Ethiopia is home of different nations that seeks independence and recognition. As of this side self governance is essential and has to be protected and should continue. This explicit recognition of self-determination aims to

acknowledge and validate the unique identities and aspirations of Ethiopia's myriad ethnic groups (FEDRE constitution, 1995). By institutionalizing these rights, the Constitution endeavors to address historical grievances and mitigate tensions that could otherwise escalate into conflicts. Consequently, by providing a legal framework through which ethnic groups can articulate their interests, Article 39 extends beyond mere statistical representation of ethnic diversity; it fosters national unity through equitable representation and participation in governance (Smiz, 2020). When marginalized communities perceive that their rights are enshrined and protected, it cultivates a sense of ownership and belonging within the federal structure. This, in turn, diminishes feelings of alienation and disenfranchisement, which are often precursors to conflict.

By promoting inclusivity and mutual respect among various ethnic groups, the Constitution fortifies the nation's stability. Strong supporters of this side claim "the right to self-determination is constrained both legally and practically though it is allowed unconditionally under the 1995 FDRE Constitution" (Solomon, 2000), while the opponents struggle to abolish it. As one of the respondents reacted when the EPRDF implemented this right, it was to reconcile the interests of the ethnic and autonomous issues that arose at the time. Although there are difficulties about its implementation, this right confirms that nations are living with other peoples of their own free will, not under duress. The right to self-determination, as outlined in Article 39, includes the right to speak, write, and develop one's own language, express and promote one's culture, and preserve one's history (lawglobalhub.com, 2020). Therefore this provision aims to accommodate the diverse ethnic and cultural identities within Ethiopia, promoting a sense of inclusion and respect for all groups and also creates an opportunity for the nation to develop its identity and to govern itself with its own values and ideas (personal communication, May 23, 2025).

The second stand claimed the right to be abolished by amending the constitution or by any other means, as it divides nations, reduces unity, and leads to disintegration of Ethiopia. This quest has, in several instances, manifested into violent confrontations and secessionist movements, disrupting national cohesion and stability. They mention for instance, the Oromo and Tigray regions have seen exacerbated tensions, as aspirations for greater autonomy have polarized communities and led to violent clashes (Smith, 2021). Such fragmentation threatens the integrity of the Ethiopian state itself, as various groups may pursue divergent political and economic

agendas that undermine collective national security. Moreover, the empowering of regional states to exercise self-determination can inadvertently embolden extremist factions that may exploit these sentiments for nefarious purposes. Political instability engendered by ethnic rivalries can serve as a breeding ground for militant groups, further complicating the security landscape in Ethiopia. As noted by Ayele (2022), increased ethnic nationalism can lead to the proliferation of armed groups resorting to violence, thereby jeopardizing public safety and national security.

According to this study the adoption of self administration could be seen as extreme liberty given to ethnic groups to expand political arena of multi ethnic state (personal communication, January 12, 2024). Apart from little room for proliferation of ethnic driven local movements against national issues the right what bought security threat is strong Opposition of the right by centralists. However, the potential for secession has raised concerns about the stability and security of the nation. The balance between accommodating diversity and maintaining national unity remains a complex and ongoing challenge for Ethiopia. Unless Ethiopia settle this disagreement by constitutional means conflict due to such lack of national consensus is likely to continue (personal communication, December 28, 2021).

#### 4.3.1.5. Religious fundamentalism

Ethiopia is a nation having rich tapestry of cultures and religions, with Christianity and Islam being the most prominent faiths. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has been dominant force, but the country also has substantial Muslim, particularly in the eastern and southern region. (religionunplugged.com, 2020 and theconversation.com, 2023). However, the intersection of religion and politics has increasingly emerged as a potential national security threat within the country. This threat community is particularly evident in the context of ethnic tensions and the politicization of religious identities, which have exacerbated social divisions and led to violent confrontations national instability by eroding trust between religious communities (religionunplugged.com, 2020 and theconversation.com, 2023).

The political transition in 1991 allowed for greater religious expression, which changed the religious landscape and sometimes led to increased tensions (theconversation.com, 2023). Later since prime minster Abiy Ahmed's administration has allowed religion to enter public political

discourse, which has already further complicated inter religious relations (religionunplugged.com, 2020). Due to this different incident have been occurred and eroded trust between Ethiopia's religious communities, leading to increased polarization and conflict (religionunplugged.com, 2020). Thus religious fundamentalism poses a threat to national stability, as it intertwines with ethnic and political issues (religionunplugged.com, 2020).

Religion is the source of national security in Ethiopia because of substantial reasons the first one is Long tradition of interdependence between religion and politics. The interplay between religion and politics, particularly within the contexts of Christianity, has led to increased tensions, violence, and instability, which can undermine the country's socio-political fabric. One of the key factors contributing to religious fundamentalism in Ethiopia is the politicization of religious identity. The Ethiopian state has often favored particular religious groups, thereby marginalizing others and fostering a sense of disenfranchisement among various communities. According to Abdi A. (2019), this favoritism can lead to the radicalization of certain groups as they seek to assert their identity and rights in response to perceived injustices. Such conditions are ripe for the emergence of extremist ideologies that can incite violence and conflict, thereby compromising national security. Moreover, the role of religion as a mobilizing force cannot be understated. Leaders in the Orthodox community have sometimes leveraged religious sentiments to fuel nationalist agendas, which, in turn, incite ethnic-based violence (personal communication, May 23, 2024). As highlighted by C. M. Aalen (2020), the intertwining of ethnic identity and religion has led to heightened tensions, particularly in regions where Orthodox Christianity is dominant.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church, with its deep roots in Ethiopian society dating back to the fourth century, has played a prominent role in shaping national identity (Kapteijns, 2014). However, as the nation grapples with ethnic federalism and political discontent, certain factions depict the Church as a bastion of ethnic nationalism that may exacerbate regional conflicts. This narrative is primarily advanced by political entities seeking to consolidate power and undermine rivals. Research indicates that public discourse suggesting Orthodox Christianity as a threat relates to the perception that it promotes the interests of the Amhara ethnic group while marginalizing others (Mekonnen, 2020).

One conspicuous example is the increasing tension within the Amhara region, where the Church has been associated with historical grievances regarding land and political representation (Abbink, 2019). In this light, the narratives framing the EOTC as a national security threat tap into broader social anxieties regarding ethnic unrest. Political leaders sometimes exploit these narratives to galvanize support amongst their constituencies or to justify crackdowns on perceived threats, further entrenching divisions within Ethiopian society (Bamlak, 2021).

These dynamics underscore the precarious position of the Church in contemporary Ethiopian politics. As competing narratives regarding national security evolve, the need for inclusive dialogues becomes paramount. Scholars advocating for interfaith cooperation suggest that the EOTC could play a pivotal role in promoting national unity rather than division (Zewdie, 2022). Such approaches could mitigate the potential for Orthodox Christianity to be framed as a security threat and instead emphasize its historical role as a unifying force in Ethiopia. Therefore, the narratives portraying Orthodox Christianity as a national security threat in Ethiopia are intricately linked to the nation's ongoing struggles with ethnic division and political unrest. These narratives are politically motivated and serve to further entrench societal divisions.

The second one is competition and disagreement between religions. Ethiopia is predominantly home to two major religious Ethiopian Orthodoxy, and Islam—Ethiopia's multi-religious landscape has often been a source of both unity and contention. The two faiths often coexisting in relative harmony, however, political manipulation of religious sentiments has led to heightened sectarian tensions. A more visible and assertive muslim population has emerged, seeking greater recognition and rights, which has occasionally led to conflicts. However the Ethiopian Orthodoxy church has responded to its perceived loss of influence, sometimes contributing religious tensions (theconversation.com, 2023). For example, certain political elites have exploited religious affiliations to rally support, thus deepening divisions. This manipulation is exemplified by the rise of extremist ideologies that have occasionally fueled religious-based violence, including attacks on places of worship and interfaith conflict (Kebede, 2020). Such incidents not only threaten immediate peace but can also have lasting impacts on inter-community relations, fostering an environment of distrust and animosity.

One significant instance of religious conflict in Ethiopia can be traced back to the events surrounding the 2018 protests in the Oromia region. These protests, which initially focused on political grievances, soon revealed underlying religious tensions. In 2018 Churches were buried, and several priests were killed in Jijiga, in the eastern Ethiopian state of Somali (religionunplugged.com, 2020). The Addis Ababa mosque conflict, as described in research by Taye Woldemariam (2019), highlighted how deeply rooted religious sentiments could exacerbate existing political frictions, culminating in violence between Muslim and Christian communities. Many scholars argue that this event illustrated how competition for resources and representation can morph into inter-religious strife. In 2020 at Harar Muslim properties were attacked during celebrations of an orthodox Christianity holiday (religionunplugged.com, 2020). Another poignant example occurred in 2019 when clashes erupted in the Wolaita Zone. Following the assassination of prominent Oromo singer Hachalu Hundessa, unrest flared, leading to targeted attacks against Orthodox Christians. According to the International Crisis Group (2020), more than 100 people lost their lives in violence that had a distinctly sectarian undertone, reflecting how socio-political catalysts can ignite religiously charged conflicts.

Furthermore, the tensions between the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Muslim community regarding the construction of mosques have also been documented. The competition for religious sites has often led to violent confrontations, particularly in Addis Ababa, where disputes have occasionally escalated into broader inter-communal violence. By 2022 more than 20 people were killed following attack on Muslim in the north-western city of Gonder (religionunplugged.com, 2020). Studies conducted by the Institute for Peace and Security Studies (2021) reveal that these conflicts are often fueled by regional politics and identity issues, complicating the delicate interplay between religion and ethnicity. The restriction of religious freedoms and the crackdown on dissenting voices within the Muslim community may temporarily quell unrest, but often have the unintended effect of fostering resentment and radicalization (Global Security, 2020). Incidents of violent conflict related to grievances over land, political representation, and religious freedoms have been observed, notably in regions like Oromia and the Somali region (International Crisis Group, 2019). Scholars and analysts alike have emphasized that these religious cleavages can catalyze violence, hinder political stability, and ultimately destabilize the nation (Abbink, 2011).

The third one is the division related with administration and reforms within religions itself. . Furthermore, as noted by international observers, the lack of effective governance and dialogue among religious groups creates a vacuum that extremist factions can exploit, thereby threatening national security (World Bank, 2018). For instance Muslims constitute approximately 34% of the nation's population, with a significant representation in several regions, particularly in the eastern and southern parts of the country (Pew Research Center, 2017). However, the division within the Muslim community, primarily along ethnic and ideological lines, has profound implications for national security and social cohesion. Historically, Ethiopian Muslims have been fragmented along various divisions, including ethnic identity, political affiliations, and sectarian differences. The rise of ethnic nationalism, particularly following the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia's establishment in 1995, has exacerbated these divisions (Markakis, 2011). In this context, the Oromo and Amhara Muslims, for instance, have experienced varied political trajectories influenced by their respective ethnic groups. Such divisions often translate into competition for resources and political power, leading to tensions not only among Muslims but also with the wider community. Salafism and Reformist Movements can be seen as example here. Salafism, an ultra-conservative form of Sunni Islam, has gained prominence in Ethiopia. While not inherently violent, its strict interpretation of religious texts can lead to tensions with other Muslim groups and Christians (eip.org). Thus the divisions within Ethiopia's Muslim community are pivotal in understanding the nation's security dynamics.

The recent divisions within Orthodox Christianity, particularly between various factions of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, have profound implications for the nation's security. The inner strife within the Ethiopian Orthodox Church intensified significantly following the establishment of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church's separation from the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria in the mid-20th century. More recently, the emergence of a schism incited by political tensions and demands for autonomy has further complicated the ecclesiastical landscape. In 2018, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church faced a division after the formation of a breakaway faction that sought to create an independent regional church, exacerbating already existing ethnic and political tensions among Ethiopia's diverse population (Bishop, 2020). This division within the Orthodox Church is deeply intertwined with Ethiopia's broader socio-political dynamics, particularly in a nation characterized by a mosaic of ethnic groups and a history of inter communal conflict. The growing rift has not only polarized

religious communities but has also become a battleground for competing political interests. The government's perceived favoritism towards certain factions has led to increased unrest, as seen in the inter-communal violence that erupted in 2021, resulting in numerous casualties and displacements in places like Amhara and Oromia regions (Smith, 2021).

Furthermore, the emergence of competing religious movements within the Orthodox tradition, such as the establishment of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Synod, has added layers of complexity to the inter-religious dynamics. Such divisions often result in a competition for followers and resources, further deepening societal rifts. As noted by M. H. Semahagn (2022), these divisions can have severe ramifications on the overall security, as groups may resort to violence to assert their dominance or protect their religious identity. The interplay of religious identity and ethnic nationalism can exacerbate conflict, undermining both social cohesion and peace.

The fracturing of a unified Orthodox Christian identity has contributed to the polarization within the Ethiopian society, often manifesting in violent clashes. The conflict in Tigray, which escalated in late 2020, is a poignant example of how religious alignment can influence regional security. According to the International Crisis Group (2021), incidents of violence against church leaders and worshippers in Tigray have heightened ethnic and religious tensions, leading to broader insecurity across regions. This fragmentation has not only affected the stability of the nation but has also created a climate of distrust among various ethnic groups, undermining national unity.

#### 4.3.1.6. Lack of an advanced democratic political system

A lack of an advanced and democratic political system can manifest as a significant threat to national security, leading to instability, internal conflict, and susceptibility to external risks. Ethiopia's political traditions, which are deeply rooted in historical hierarchies and centralized authority, also influence its security dynamics. The legacy of the imperial rule followed by the Derg regime has fostered a culture of top-down governance and limited political pluralism (

personal communication, December 28,2021). When democratization is stifled, as seen in Ethiopia's historical authoritarian regimes, citizens may resort to dissent and rebellion, eroding the government's authority. The protests that erupted in recent years, notably in regions like Oromia and Amhara, underscore the consequences of low democratization (Griffiths, 2020). These movements, driven by demands for political representation and justice, have frequently escalated into violence, further destabilizing the nation.

As noted by Abdurrahman (2021), low levels of democratic engagement exacerbate grievances among ethnic groups, compelling them to seek autonomy or secession, thereby posing significant risks to national integrity and security. The reluctance to embrace democratic reforms has stifled political dissent and alienated various groups, leading to an environment where grievances fester unchecked. Consequently, the lack of inclusive political dialogue has resulted in armed conflicts and insurgencies, as marginalized communities seek to assert their interests through violent means (Lefort, 2019). Ethiopia's undemocratic and authoritarian tradition made the state characterized by Lack of democratic election and peaceful transition of power, Lack of strong independent institutions, Lack of effective law enforcement and resolution of conflict to maintain peace and stability in the country and lack of protection of fundamental human and democratic rights.

One of the symptoms of lack of advanced political system in Ethiopia that affect its security is Lack of Democratic Elections and peaceful transition of power. As stated by Bruton (2021), "the unbridled power of elites and political entrepreneurs often leads to a struggle for control that exacerbates regional instability." In this context, failed transitions can manifest as violent conflicts, drawing on ethnic mobilization, and resulting in mass casualties and displacements. The Tigray War, which began in late 2020, epitomizes the dangers of an unpeaceful transition of power in Ethiopia. This conflict not only destabilized the northern region but also posed significant threats to national security, creating humanitarian crises and escalating inter-ethnic violence across the country. Allen (2022) notes that "the civil war has drained the Ethiopian state's resources, redirected attention away from economic development, and created a climate of fear and mistrust amongst citizens." Consequently, such internal strife jeopardizes national unity and fosters an environment for further unrest.

To have successful power transition democratic election is essential. A healthy political environment encourages multiple political parties and interest groups, fostering diversity of opinion and representation within the governance process (Dahl, 1971). Free and fair elections are crucial to an advanced political system, ensuring that public officials are accountable to the electorate (Norris, 2012). In Ethiopia, the absence of free and fair elections poses significant threats to the country's national security, engendering political instability, social unrest, and potential violence. As Ethiopia grapples with complex ethnic diversity and historical grievances, the lack of democratic processes exacerbates tensions and undermines social cohesion.

Ethiopia's political landscape has been marred by authoritarian rule and a history of electoral manipulation. According to the World Bank (2020), the state's failure to conduct inclusive elections has marginalized various ethnic groups, fostering feelings of disenfranchisement. The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), which governed for nearly three decades, often suppressed political dissent and manipulated electoral outcomes to maintain power (personal communication, May 15, 2024). This systematic exclusion has not only hindered democratic accountability but has also precipitated a climate of alienation among the populace. The ramifications of this political disenfranchisement are dire. As noted by Amnesty International (2021), the lack of legitimate political outlets for grievances has fueled ethnic tensions, leading to violent confrontations and clashes across the nation. For instance, the unrest following the controversial 2020 elections, which were postponed indefinitely amid the COVID-19 pandemic, exemplifies how a void in democratic processes can escalate into broader social unrest. The resultant violence threatens to destabilize the region, drawing in neighboring countries and international actors.

The second indication of Ethiopia's infant democratic and political structure is Lack of strong independent institutions. The prevalence of weak independent institutions in Ethiopia represents a significant threat to national security. Institutions such as the judiciary, law enforcement, media and civil society organizations play critical roles in maintaining social order, fostering accountability, and promoting democratic governance. The absence of robust, autonomous institutions undermines the state's capacity to manage conflict, uphold the rule of law, and

facilitate political stability, thereby exacerbating national fragility pluralism (personal communication, December 28,2021).

Independent institutions play a pivotal role in maintaining the rule of law, mediating conflicts, and ensuring that governance reflects the will of the populace. Ethiopia's constitutional design, which ostensibly promotes federalism and ethnic autonomy, has often been undermined by the reality of centralized control and the politicization of state apparatuses (Abbink, 2011). The erosion of neutrality within institutions, such as the judiciary and electoral bodies, has led to widespread disenchantment among the populace and a crisis of legitimacy for the state. Historically, Ethiopia has faced various challenges stemming from the lack of strong independent institutions. The judiciary, often perceived as an appendage of the ruling government, fails to deliver impartial justice. The Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index (2021) reported a score of just 38 out of 100 for Ethiopia, reflecting widespread perception of corruption and lack of integrity in public institutions. This environment fosters public discontent and undermines trust in governance, leading to civil unrest and political instability.

The absence of democratic practices inhibits the development of robust civil society institutions that can mediate conflicts and promote dialogue. As articulated by the African Union (2018), a healthy democracy is essential for national stability and development. Without democratic institutions to engage in dialogue and represent diverse interests, Ethiopia risks descending into further chaos, where security forces may resort to heavy-handed tactics, further alienating the population and perpetuating a cycle of violence. The absence of an independent media also exacerbates the situation. In recent years, numerous journalists have faced harassment, arbitrary detention, or censorship. The arbitrary application of laws against dissent has stifled civic engagement and inhibited public discourse. The International Federation of Journalists noted increased incidences of attacks on press freedom, which in turn stifle democratic participation and amplify grievances that can manifest into broader societal conflicts (IFJ, 2020).

Moreover, lack of strong independent institutions has perpetuated cycles of violence and unrest. The Ethiopian government's inability to manage ethnic conflicts in a neutral manner has resulted in significant humanitarian crises and internal displacement, thus threatening national security

(Korf, 2020). The Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF), while essential in ensuring territorial integrity, has often been drawn into internal disputes and ethnic conflicts, particularly in regions such as Tigray. The lack of a well-regulated civil-military relationship suggests the need for institutional reforms that distance the military from political interference. As highlighted by the International Crisis Group, “a politicized military can become a tool for oppression, leading to cycles of violence and insecurity” (ICG, 2020). This situation poses a direct challenge to national security, as internal divisions are intensified by the perception of state complicity in ethnic marginalization.

Therefore, the stability of any state heavily relies on effective governance and the presence of institutions that operate free from political interference. In Ethiopia’s case, the fragility of its institutions has been exacerbated by ethnic tensions, political strife, and a history of authoritarian governance, rendering the country vulnerable to both internal and external threats

Absence of Protection of Fundamental Human and Democratic Rights is also endangering Ethiopia’s National Security Threat. In recent years, Ethiopia has confronted a multifaceted national security crisis, exacerbated by internal strife and human rights violations. Among these violations, acts of violence such as extrajudicial killings and arson stand as alarming indicators of the state's deteriorating human rights landscape (personal communication, Zelalem, February, 11, 2021). These actions not only undermine the foundational principles of human rights but also pose significant threats to Ethiopia's national security (Human Rights Watch, 2022). The intertwined relationship between human rights violations and national security in Ethiopia is evident; when citizens fear for their lives and livelihoods; social unrest burgeons, undermining economic and political stability. The Ethiopian government, by perpetuating or neglecting these violations, inadvertently exacerbates its own security dilemmas. An addressing human rights concern is essential not only for maintaining the rule of law but also for fostering a secure and unified nation.

Extrajudicial killings have become increasingly prevalent in Ethiopia, particularly in regions afflicted by ethnic tensions and political unrest. Reports indicate that security forces have engaged in unlawful killings during various operations aimed at quelling dissent and maintaining order. For instance, the massacre of civilians in the Benishangul-Gumuz region in 2020, where

an estimated 200 individuals were killed in ethnic clashes, exemplifies the state's inability or unwillingness to protect all citizens equitably (Human Rights Watch, 2021). Such actions erode public trust in government institutions and may incite further violence, as communities seek to defend themselves amid perceived state failure. Moreover, widespread arson and destruction of property serve as tools of political repression and ethnic cleansing. In the Tigray region, reports of burning villages and displacing thousands highlight a grim reality of war that not only targets physical assets but also aims to obliterate social cohesion (Amnesty International, 2021). These acts not only devastate the affected communities but also create an environment of fear and instability, which further fuels insecurity on a national scale.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights posits that the safeguarding of basic rights—such as freedom of expression, assembly, and the right to a fair trial—is critical to fostering an environment of peace and stability (United Nations, 1948). In Ethiopia, however, governmental actions often curtail these freedoms, often justified under the pretext of national security. For instance, the 2020 internet shutdown amid civil unrest following the assassination of prominent activist Hachalu Hundessa exemplified the state's restrictive measures (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Such actions not only violate international human rights standards but also contribute to public discontent and further unrest.

Likewise, lack of political pluralism and the repression of dissent instigate a cycle of violence and retaliation among various ethnic groups. According to the International Crisis Group (2021), the government's failure to accommodate diverse voices has led to significant regional instability and conflict. These tensions pose considerable risks to national security, as grievances stemming from human rights abuses can ignite violent clashes and perpetuate a climate of fear. The protection of democratic rights is essential for cultivating a sense of ownership among the populace, fostering trust in state institutions, and mitigating conflict. Conversely, the disregard for these rights cultivates an environment ripe for extremist ideologies and violent insurgencies to flourish. As posited by the World Bank, inclusive governance and respect for human rights are instrumental for sustainable peace and security (World Bank, 2018).

The final manifestation of Ethiopia's political system that undermines the national security is Lack of effective law enforcement and resolution of conflict to maintain peace and stability in

the country. At the heart of Ethiopia's security dilemma is a pervasive weakness in law enforcement. One of the primary consequences of an inadequate political system is the emergence of internal strife due to Lack of effective law enforcement and resolution of conflict. Research by Hegre et al. (2001) indicates that weak political institutions often fail to manage societal conflicts, leading to civil wars or violent protests. The Ethiopian Federal Police, tasked with maintaining order and ensuring public safety, often grapple with issues of resource allocation, training, and corruption (Taye, 2020). This inadequacy leads to a cycle of impunity, where criminal activities proliferate unchecked, fostering an environment of lawlessness that undermines citizen trust in state institutions. Consequently, communities feel compelled to resort to self-help mechanisms, which, rather than alleviating conflicts, often escalate tensions and lead to violence (Merera, 2019).

Compounding the challenges posed by ineffective law enforcement is the country's fragmented approach to conflict resolution. Ethnic tensions, historical grievances, and competition over resources contribute to a volatile landscape where disputes can quickly escalate into violent confrontations. The absence of a robust, inclusive framework for dialogue and mediation undermines efforts to cultivate social cohesion and address the root causes of conflict (International Crisis Group, 2021). Furthermore, the political landscape is often polarized, with various groups resorting to violence as a means of advancing their agendas, further complicating the resolution process.

Additionally, an underdeveloped political system characterized by low security management may hinder the state's ability to respond effectively to external threats. As noted by Jentzsch (2017), states with fragile political institutions are often less capable of securing their borders or engaging in meaningful diplomacy. The inability to project power or negotiate from a position of strength diminishes a nation's deterrent capacity, thereby attracting adversarial actions. For example, the collapse of state authority in Syria not only precipitated a humanitarian crisis but also facilitated the rise of extremist groups like ISIS, which exploited the power vacuum (Mikail, 2015). The implications of these issues extend beyond Ethiopia's borders, posing a significant threat to regional stability. As Ethiopia grapples with internal conflicts, neighboring countries may become entangled in spillover effects, including refugee crises and cross-border violence

(Abdela, 2022). Thus, the lack of effective law enforcement and conflict resolution not only endangers Ethiopia's national security but also has broader ramifications for the Horn of Africa.

#### 4.3.1.6. The role of media

The evolution of media in Ethiopia has been marked by significant shifts, particularly in the context of political reforms and technological advancements. Historically, Ethiopia's media environment has been marked by stringent controls and censorship, particularly under the regime of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), which ruled from 1995 until 2018 (Freedom House, 2022). During this period, journalists faced intimidation, arrest, and repression, with numerous independent media outlets forced to operate in exile or under severe restrictions (Freedom House, 2022). According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, Ethiopia ranked among the worst countries for press freedom, with many journalists detained on charges related to terrorism or incitement (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2017).

Since 2018, heralded enhancements of media Medias, marked by ground breaking reforms. Abiy Ahmed's administration initiated a series of measures aimed at liberalizing the media landscape, including the release of imprisoned journalists, the unblocking of blocked websites, and the licensing of new private media outlets (Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, 2020). As a result, a semblance of media pluralism emerged, offering a platform for diverse voices and fostering a more vibrant public discourse. The rise of digital media has also revolutionized communication in Ethiopia. With the increasing availability of the internet and smart phones, a significant portion of the population has gained access to information at an unprecedented rate. According to the Ethiopian Communications Authority (2022), internet penetration grew from 15% in 2018 to over 25% in 2022, enabling citizens to engage with national and global news sources. This digital shift has empowered individuals to express their opinions, participate in civic discourse, and mobilize for social change.

Apart from its useful way the use of media has emerged as a significant player in shaping public perception, influencing political discourse, and ultimately impacting national security. One of the key ways in which media affects national security in Ethiopia is through its role in facilitating communication and information dissemination. The ability of media platforms to rapidly disseminate information can lead to the swift organization of protests, which, if not managed

properly, may result in civil unrest and governmental crackdowns—issues that challenge the stability and security of the nation (Keller, 2021). This has been particularly evident during periods of political upheaval, such as the protests in 2015-2016 against the government's infrastructural projects in the Oromia region, which escalated into wider calls for political reform and accountability (Abbink, 2018). During these protests, social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter played a pivotal role in mobilizing citizens, enabling grassroots activism, and transmitting information to both local and international audiences. Reports indicated that social media was instrumental in spreading inflammatory messages that escalated ethnic tensions, leading to clashes that resulted in numerous casualties (World Peace Foundation, 2020). While this democratization of information can empower citizens and promote transparency; it can also lead to the spread of misinformation and exacerbate ethnic tensions, thereby posing risks to national security.

Moreover, Ethiopia is a nation with diverse ethnic groups, and media outlets sometimes perpetuate bias that exacerbates inter-ethnic conflicts. The proliferation of ethnic-oriented news platforms has, in some instances, fostered a sense of 'us versus them'. The ethno nationalist narratives prevalent in Ethiopian media also contribute to the national security dilemma. Certain outlets may promote specific ethnic agendas, exacerbating divisions and fueling communal conflicts. The narrative framing employed in reporting can either bridge divides or deepen them, influencing public sentiment and, consequently, the stability of the state (Keller, 2021). Journalists and commentators have often exploited ethnic sentiments for political gain, contributing to societal polarization. The war in the Tigray region, initiated in November 2020, showcased how media narratives could influence public perception and potentially compromise national security (ICG, 2021).

On the other hand, the government has at times enacted measures that restrict press freedom, often citing national security concerns (Jemal, 2021). Consequently, media practitioners must navigate a complex environment where the pursuit of journalistic integrity can be met with significant obstacles. Ethiopian government's response to media coverage, especially concerning sensitive issues such as ethnic strife and political dissent, reveals the precarious balance between national security and freedom of expression. The state has often resorted to stringent media regulations and internet shutdowns to curb the potential destabilizing effects of unregulated

information flow (Shah, 2020). These actions, while aimed at maintaining order, can also inflame public discontent and lead to accusations of authoritarianism, further complicating the security landscape.

### **4.3.2. External challenges of Ethiopia's national security**

#### **4.3.2.1. Geopolitics as a National Security challenge to Ethiopia**

Ethiopia, located in the Horn of Africa, has become a focal point of interest for global superpowers due to its strategic geopolitical position, historical significance, and potential economic opportunities. The horn of Africa in which Ethiopia is a member is strategically significant region of the world and at the same time characterized by poverty and conflict. The horn of Africa is one of the most geo-strategically important regions of the world as a result of its proximity to the red sea, Indian Ocean, Bab el-Mandeb Strait, the Gulf oil and abundance of resources like Water. The red sea is a bridge between Africa and the Middle East, one of most important trade root of the world. More over the region is endowed with natural resources like Oil, Gas and Water. Those all things mentioned and a related thing makes the region very important region of the world.

Consequently it becomes a battle field of different actors. Even though the region is such strategically important it has been challenged by conflict, drought, bad governance, human right violation, poverty and related problems. The HOA in which Ethiopia is a member “ has been the victim of The politics of geo-strategic interest for too long that has wrought havoc to life in the region” (Bereketeab, 2014). Ethiopia, as a part of this volatile and security dilemma region, has been challenged more importantly its national security and its power in the region. The security challenges of the state due to geopolitical condition of the horn of Africa could be emanated from these summarized interrelated features (rivalry of different powers due to its Proximity with red sea, internal conflict and landlocked nature of Ethiopia and security crisis of the region).

Rivalry of different powers due to its Proximity with red sea in the horn of Africa is one of aggravating factor for Ethiopia's national security. Ethiopia, located in the Horn of Africa, has become a focal point of interest for global superpowers due to its strategic geopolitical position, historical significance, and potential economic opportunities. The nation's rich cultural heritage, coupled with its burgeoning population and untapped resources, has attracted foreign attention,

particularly from the United States, China, Russia and Gulf states. The involvement of superpowers in domestic military affairs can lead to an escalation of conflict as various factions within Ethiopia may seek to align with either foreign power, thereby intensifying existing ethnic and political tensions (personal communication, December 28, 2021)

The United States has engaged in extensive partnerships with Ethiopia, especially given its role in combating terrorism in the region. According to the U.S. Department of State (2020), Ethiopia plays a crucial role in the fight against the terrorist group Al-Shabaab, making it an essential ally in promoting stability in East Africa. However, this relationship can lead to national security threats, as a heavy reliance on foreign military assistance may undermine Ethiopia's sovereignty and create dependence on external powers. Conversely, China's interests in Ethiopia are primarily economic. As part of its Belt and Road Initiative, China has invested heavily in infrastructure projects across Ethiopia, including the Addis Ababa-Djibouti Railway (Bräutigam, 2019). While these investments have fostered economic development, they have also raised concerns regarding potential debt dependency and loss of control over critical national assets. Such scenarios may provoke unrest among the population, further exacerbating internal conflicts and posing a significant threat to national security.

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have invested significantly in the Horn of Africa, viewing these developments through the lens of their rivalry with Iran. Their support for Ethiopia, particularly in military and economic terms, reflects a strategic alliance aimed at countering the perceived influence of adversarial states in the region (Allam & Khattab, 2021). Moreover, Russia has sought to re-establish its influence in Africa through military engagements and arms exports. In recent years, Russia has expanded its presence in Ethiopia by offering military support and training to Ethiopian forces (Khan, 2021). As noted by Gebrewold (2020), the competition for influence among these powers can engender instability, as Ethiopia grapples with navigating multiple interests while striving to assert its national priorities.

As Zach Vertin (2019) claimed “New scramble for Africa” is observed as rise of military base and seaports in the red sea, horn of Africa. The states which scrambled the horn are not without cause rather motivated by ideological, strategic and military reasons (Makinda 1982: 99)”. As Ethiopia is large, resourceful and located at the center of the horn of Africa the control of

Ethiopia is the control of the horn “The control of the horn means the control of the Red Sea.” (Sara et al, 2016) Therefore the significance of Ethiopia because of its geographical location is undisputable. As a result of geopolitical rivalry the increment of military base in the horn has intensified and has its own security implication to Ethiopia and its power. despite the fact that the arrival of different power may help Ethiopia to benefit technological transfer, working corporately and closely on mutual issues like countering terrorism from those who settled in the region, this strategic and geo politics rivalry may endanger Ethiopia either directly involving in its internal affairs or indirectly through weak and fragile neighbors. “The geopolitical dynamics in the Horn has challenges to Ethiopia which includes alienating neighbors, threatening sovereignty, escalating tensions, jeopardizing religious coexistence and maintenance of security and sustainability” (Abebe,2021).

One manifestation of super powers involvement in the horn is through establishing military base. Different States which base in the horn may directly pose threat to Ethiopia first if Ethiopia’s stance doesn’t fit their interest they could perceive the state as opponent and enemy so that they could endanger national security first directly by opposing national interest of the state using any means. More importantly as Ethiopia is currently in chaos super powers may intervene in to Ethiopia’s internal affairs in the name of peace keeping and other reasons which later makes the state weak and fragile like Syria, Yemen and other African states. When states establish base in the horn they do have their own respective political, security and ideological interests. Therefore in case when Ethiopia’s position stands against their entire interest they might pose challenge to Ethiopia.

Second as Ethiopia is nucleus of the horn and shares border with all Horn states who are weak fragile, super powers may use those states to destabilize the country. For stance Eritrea was active in Somalia to take advantage of attacking Ethiopia. Egypt is also conscious of using any possible opportunity in the horn to danger Ethiopia, motivated by hydro politics rivalry, which we can see later in separate section. To mention the cold war rivalry between USA and Soviet Union particularly in the horn the war between Ethiopia and Somalia was not just local war rather it was a war between super powers of the time, between USA and Soviet Union. “This conflict (Ethiopia and Somalia) is more than simply a local war between neighbors’ because of the involvement of the super powers, the U .S.A. and the U .S.S.R., and several other regional

powers. Furthermore it is a Contest replete with dramatic changes and sudden switches of allegiance such as the shattering of the close military relationship between Ethiopia and the U .S.A., the expulsion of the Soviets from Somalia and the substantial military support given by the U .S.S.R. and Cuba to the embattled Ethiopians” (Mohammed Ayoob, 1978). Therefore if states who are seeking endanger Ethiopia like Egypt have military base in the horn region they can easily attack Ethiopia directly or through week neighbouring states. Currently Egypt is trying to endanger Ethiopia using Somalia and Sudan.

Internal conflict and landlocked nature of Ethiopia is the other driving force of Ethiopia’s insecurity. This internal instability could be exploited by rival nations seeking to undermine Ethiopia’s position in the Red Sea rivalry, making Ethiopia more vulnerable to external manipulation (Hesse, 2020). As rivalries intensify, the risk of direct military confrontations or external interventions rises, contributing to an ever-compounding national security threat. The Tigray War, which erupted in November 2020, exemplifies how internal disputes can evolve into broader security concerns. This conflict not only destabilized Ethiopia but also drew in neighboring countries, such as Eritrea and Sudan, escalated tensions, and led to a humanitarian crisis affecting millions (ICG, 2021). The fragility of Ethiopia's federal structure, marked by ethnic tensions, can threaten national coherence and, consequently, security. These internal divisions are further complicated by external entities seeking to exploit such vulnerabilities for geopolitical advantage.

Because of its location in the HoA Ethiopia faced first problem of accessing port (KJ Reports, 2019). Despite the fact that the HoA is located at important position of the world near to the red sea and other important get ways and ports, Ethiopia’s position being placed at the center of the region restrained the state to have its own port. Lack of port challenged the state to be parasite of other states which highly endangered its national interest and economy. Ethiopia's quest for access to the Red Sea has been a significant aspect of its geopolitical strategy and historical narrative. This landlocked nation, situated in the Horn of Africa, has long sought an outlet to international waters, a pursuit rooted in both economic aspirations and national pride (Smiz, 2023). However the time by which the issue raised might be difficult as the country is in trouble exposed of internal and external threats.

Historically, Ethiopia's access to the Red Sea has been obstructed by a combination of geographical and political factors. During the reign of Emperor Menelik II in the late 19th century, Ethiopia successfully resisted colonization by Italy, securing its sovereignty at the Battle of Adwa in 1896. Nonetheless, this victory did not translate into access to the sea, as Eritrea, formerly part of Ethiopia; fell under Italian control (Furtado, 2020). The desire for maritime access is rooted in historical grievances and strategic imperatives, particularly against the backdrop of the 1998-2000 Eritrean-Ethiopian War, which underscored Ethiopia's landlocked status and the economic vulnerabilities it entails (Alemayehu, 2020). The 1993 Eritrean secession from Ethiopia, followed by the subsequent border conflict, solidified the latter's maritime isolation. Without direct access to the sea, Ethiopia's trade is overly dependent on neighboring countries, predominantly Djibouti, through which over 90% of its imports and exports are channeled (World Bank, 2021).

Ethiopia's quest poses a dual threat to national security: it exacerbates regional rivalries and invites external intervention. Eritrea, wary of its neighbor's intentions, may bolster its military ties with adversarial states to counterbalance perceived threats (Loveridge, 2021). Furthermore, Ethiopia's maritime aspirations may provoke responses from countries such as Sudan, where overlapping territorial claims and issues surrounding the Nile River aggravate the already tense relationships (Meles, 2022). As the nation navigates its geopolitical landscape, the interplay of historical grievances and contemporary aspirations will profoundly shape its future trajectory. Ethiopia's path towards the sea remains fraught with challenges that necessitate careful diplomacy and strategic partnerships to realize its long-held ambitions.

The other comparative disadvantage of Ethiopia due to geographic location of the horn of Africa is conflicting nature of the region. The HoA is one of unsecured place of the world. Such nature of the region highly challenges its national security. As KJ Reports (2019) mentioned Ethiopia's location surrounded by fragile and conflicting neighbors pose security threat. As Ethiopia is nucleus of the horn and shares border with all Horn states who are weak fragile poses security problems to the state in different ways. First when its neighbors are in conflict, the situation may expand due to their proximity, increase the number of immigrants to Ethiopia more importantly becomes comfortable zone for any terrorist movement. Second States with antagonist interest with Ethiopia may use those states to destabilize the country. For instance Eritrea was active in

Somalia to take advantage of attacking Ethiopia. Egypt is also conscious of using any possible opportunity in the horn to danger Ethiopia, motivated by hydro politics rivalry.

Moreover, the regional rivalry between Ethiopia and its neighbors such as Eritrea and Somalia exacerbates the security environment. The border conflict with Eritrea, which flared into violence in late 2020, highlights the fragility of peace in the region and the potential for broader conflict (Abbink, 2021). The ongoing instability and the rise of extremist groups in the Horn of Africa, particularly Al-Shabaab in Somalia, further complicate Ethiopia's security situation. The porous borders and ethnic affiliations between populations in Ethiopia and Somalia serve as breeding grounds for insecurity, as articulated by Menkhaus (2018).

#### 4.3.2.2. Hydro politics as a source of national security threat

The issue of Nile has long been one of the security agenda of Ethiopia and likely to be in the future. Because of Nile is not private asset to Ethiopia and Shared by other ten riparian states disagreement over utilization is expected that would endanger Ethiopians security and its position in the region. Nile is the longest river in the world that crosses 11 countries Border. The River is home and source of live for those who settled across it. The very dependent of all is Egypt which is popularly known as a gift of Nile. Ethiopia which contributes around 86% of the water to the longest river Nile but paradoxically uses zero% of it. Egypt and Sudan have been dominantly using the river for long period of the time. But as a result of the need for development, Ethiopia began to construct dame over Nile River. Because of Egypt consider the river as a means of survival and Ethiopians assumption of natural right to use it with the absence of all negotiable agreement pose disparity. This disagreement challenged Ethiopians national security.

Though Egypt has been dominantly using the river, now days other riparian states like Sudan and Ethiopia raised their interest to utilize the river. But lack of agreeable pact is challenging the use of Nile and could probably leads the member states to conflict mainly Ethiopia and Egypt. Nile is the primary source of water for over 120 million Ethiopians and is crucial for agricultural productivity, which forms the backbone of the Ethiopian economy (World Bank, 2020). Ethiopia has historically been labeled the "water tower" of the region due to its high potential for hydroelectric energy, which the GERD aims to harness. However, this initiative has sparked

considerable unrest, particularly from Egypt, which relies on the Nile for approximately 97% of its freshwater needs (Rosenberg et al., 2021).

As Jonsson indicated; “On the international level, the absence of a basin-wide water agreement has caused tensions between the riparian states and hindered access to international development support.” According to Emmanuel (2010) so far number of colonial agreement has been signed (Italy and the United Kingdom of 15 April 1891, between the United Kingdom and Ethiopia, 1902, United Kingdom, France and Italy of 13 April 1906, the 1925 Anglo-Italian exchange of notes, 1929 between Egypt and the United Kingdom, the United Kingdom and Egypt of 1932, the Anglo-Belgian agreement of 1934, the United Kingdom and Egypt of 1950, agreement of 1959 and so on) how ever these agreements are not binding to all members and are still source of contradictions.“ these agreements are generally invalid, at least to the extent that they purport to bind post-colonial third-party upstream nations.” (Valerie Knobelsdorf, no year) “The failure to have an inclusive agreement accepted by all the Nile Basin states will increase legal controversies; encourage noncompliance with the provisions of the agreement; and contribute to the prolongation and/or resumption of conflicts between the riparian states.”(Emmanuel, 2010)

The potential for water scarcity, exacerbated by shifting climate patterns and population growth, places increased pressure on Ethiopia's relationships with its downstream neighbors. Egypt and Sudan fear that the dam will significantly diminish their water supply, leading to geopolitical tensions that could escalate into conflict. As noted by Abdelkareem (2022), "water scarcity has the potential to ignite violence and unrest in the region, particularly amid existing political fragility."The GERD, which has the potential to generate 6,450 megawatts of electricity, is seen by Ethiopian authorities as a crucial step toward national development (Dalela, 2021). However, both Egypt and Sudan view this project with trepidation, fearing that it could significantly diminish their access to Nile waters, thereby threatening their agricultural output and, by extension, their national security (Shawkat, 2021). Egypt's intention to have the lion share and high interest of Ethiopia to use the river for its development could lead to hostilities. Throughout its history Egypt has been doing anything when ever its interest over Nile seems endangered.

"Egypt's strategy is essentially negative: to prevent the emergence of any force that could challenge its hegemony, and to thwart any economic development along the banks of the Nile

that could either divert the flow of the water, or decrease its volume. The arithmetic of the waters of the Blue Nile River is, therefore, a zero-sum game that Egypt is determined to win. It must have a hegemonic relationship with the countries of the Nile Valley and the Horn of Africa. When, for instance, Ethiopia is weak and internally divided, Egypt can rest. But when Ethiopia is prosperous and self-confident, playing a leading role in the region, Egypt is worried. (Daniel as cited in Addis Tribune, June 26, 1998.)

Egypt's confrontation over Nile River Could be manifested and endanger Ethiopian national security in different ways. The first is by aggravating and abetting internal opposition movement to make Ethiopia instable and weak. " Since concern with the free flow of the Nile has always been a national security issue for Egypt, as far as the Blue Nile goes, it has been held that Egypt must be in a position either to dominate Ethiopia, or to neutralize whatever unfriendly regime might emerge there." (Daniel Kendie as cieted in Addis Tribune, June 26, 1998.)

"Whereas Egypt's involvement in "retaining Ethiopia in anarchy and misery" is the enduring aspect of its policy, Egypt has been particularly sensitive and easily aggravated whenever the usage of Nile Water was demanded from upstream countries."( Abadir M. Ibrahim, no year).

Historically, Egypt has leveraged its influence in the region to counter threats perceived from Ethiopia; particularly as the latter's ambitions to control the Nile's waters have grown. Egypt has allegedly engaged in covert support for various opposition groups within Ethiopia, aiming to exploit ethnic divisions that characterize Ethiopian politics. As noted by Alemayehu (2022), the multifaceted nature of Ethiopian society, with its myriad ethnic groups, plays into Egypt's strategy of promoting instability through indirect interventions. By fostering dissent against the Ethiopian government, Egypt not only destabilizes its political landscape but also detracts attention from crucial issues regarding water resource management and environmental concerns (interview). Moreover, Egypt's strategic rhetoric surrounding the Nile has implications for Ethiopian unity and governance. In an era where water scarcity is an increasingly pressing concern, Egypt's focus on unilateral narratives can exacerbate fears within Ethiopia about external aggression. According to Mekonnen (2023), such perceptions can lead to heightened

nationalist sentiments and a reactionary posture from the Ethiopian government, thereby polarizing public opinion and undermining political cohesiveness.

Religion can also use as destabilizing instrument by Egypt against Ethiopia. This religious framework has been utilized by the Egyptian government to address and confront Ethiopian actions, particularly concerning Nile water. The Nile River holds paramount importance not only as a vital water resource but also as a symbol of Egyptian civilization. According to Egyptian authorities, any threats to the river's flow are perceived as existential crises, thus invoking religious sentiments to bolster national unity against a common adversary (Hamza, 2021). Furthermore, religious rhetoric has been strategically employed in public discourse and political statements. Egyptian officials, including President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, have underscored the notion that controlling the Nile is akin to safeguarding sacred rights bestowed by God. Sisi's use of religious language reinforces the idea that water access is intertwined with spiritual well-being, thus mobilizing public sentiment against Ethiopia's actions (Abozaid, 2020).

Having the above religious perception Egypt have been influencing Ethiopia's politics using religion. "A Swiss affiliate to King Khedive Ismail of Egypt, Werner Munzinger, had once remarked that; "Ethiopia . . . is a danger for Egypt. Egypt must either take over Ethiopia and Islamize it, or retain it in anarchy and misery". (kendie,supra note 31 at 145). "An example of the conflictive use of religion was when Egyptian Copts used the threat of Ethiopians holding back the Nile flow (low flood years) in order to gain leverage over Muslims in Egypt" (Erlich, 2002). The concern that one country supports the internal opposition in a neighboring country in the Nile Basin has been linked to religious extremism. Egypt accused Sudanese Islamic extremists for the attempted assassination of President Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa in 1995 (Arabic News,1997).

The Second way is by challenging Ethiopia's diplomatic relation. Egypt has employed a multifaceted strategy to persuade the international community to lend credence to its position against Ethiopia's unilateral actions regarding Nile water management. This approach encompasses diplomatic negotiations, media campaigns, and appeals to international law, wherein Egypt seeks to reinforce its historical claims and secure the collaboration of external actors in the dispute.

Egypt's historically entrenched position regarding the Nile is rooted in colonial-era agreements that allocated the majority of the river's flow to Egyptian interests, granting it nearly exclusive rights to the Nile waters (Selby, 2013). Egypt's historical claims to the Nile's waters are rooted in colonial agreements, such as the 1929 Anglo-Egyptian treaty and the 1959 Nile Waters Agreement, which allocated the bulk of water resources to Egypt and Sudan, effectively sidelining upstream countries like Ethiopia (Richardson, 2019). Ethiopia, which was not a signatory to this agreement, views the current opposition from Egypt as an infringement upon its sovereign rights to utilize the river's resources for development (Abdo, 2021). From Cairo's perspective, any alteration of the flow—such as that facilitated by the GERD—could precipitate a crisis by jeopardizing their water supply. Consequently, Egypt has employed various strategies—ranging from diplomatic engagement to military posturing—to counter what it perceives as a direct threat to its national security (Yousif, 2015). Ethiopia, in contrast, views the GERD as vital for its economic development and energy independence. The government asserts its right to utilize the Nile's water resources, echoing principles of equitable and reasonable utilization as stipulated in international water law (Tadesse, 2019). This stark divergence in perspectives has fostered regional instability, as Ethiopia's project has sparked fears of reduced water availability in Egypt, leading to persistent tensions that could escalate into conflict.

In addition to such arguments, Egypt's public relations and media strategies have played a vital role in shaping international perceptions. Through a concerted effort to communicate its concerns, Egypt has highlighted the potential environmental and socio-economic repercussions of the GERD, presenting a narrative that resonates with global audiences and emphasizes the urgency of a multilateral agreement. High-level diplomatic visits, participation in international forums, and strategic partnerships with countries that share similar interests have enabled Egypt to widen its influence and garner support against what it views as Ethiopia's overreaching ambitions.

“It is thought that the West tends to side with Egypt because of Egypt's importance as a stable factor in the Middle East area. Egypt is seen in the West as a pivotal state, whereas Ethiopia is not.”( Björn Jönsson ,no yera ) Using such advantage“ Egypt strived in different ways, including influencing donor countries not to give support, to avert the project. On the other hand, the Ethiopian government showed its firm position of perpetuating its project and continued its

diplomatic struggle.” According to Abdi (2021), Egypt has utilized diplomatic maneuvers, including alliances with regional actors, to perpetuate a narrative portraying Ethiopia’s actions as aggressive or expansionist. The tension surrounding the GERD has implications not only for regional politics but also for international relations. As negotiations stall and diplomatic channels appear increasingly strained, the potential for conflict looms large. The use of military rhetoric and threats, most notably from Egyptian leaders asserting a ‘water war’, reflects a precarious balance between cooperation and confrontation in the region (Samir, 2019).

The Third approach is through helping any neighbors of Ethiopia like Sudan to use as a weapon to destabilize Ethiopia’s security. The relationship between Egypt and Ethiopia has been historically fraught, particularly concerning the utilization of the Nile River. Egypt, reliant on the Nile for approximately 97% of its freshwater resources, perceives any unilateral actions by Ethiopia—especially those related to the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD)—as existential threats. This geopolitical rivalry has prompted Egypt to consider destabilizing Ethiopia by leveraging its relationships with neighboring states.

One significant avenue through which Egypt seeks to exert its influence is by fostering relations with Sudan, a country that shares both cultural and political affinities with Egypt. The Nile’s flow through Sudan makes this relationship critical as Egypt endeavors to create a united front against Ethiopia’s initiatives regarding the GERD. According to Aklilu (2020), Egypt has been accused of providing military and economic support to opposition groups within Ethiopia, particularly those in regions bordering Sudan, such as the Tigray and Amhara regions. These actions aim to undermine Ethiopia's stability by exploiting local grievances and conflicts.

Egypt has also engaged with other neighboring states, such as Eritrea, to heighten tensions within Ethiopia. The historic conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia provides a strategic opportunity for Egypt to exacerbate existing hostilities. Analysts argue that by supporting Eritrean interests, Egypt not only distracts Ethiopia from its internal development programs but also fuels regional instability (Kebede, 2021). This method of employing neighboring countries to weaken Ethiopia aligns with Egypt’s broader tactical approach to secure its water interests and assert dominance over the Nile Basin.

To endanger Ethiopia “Egypt seized every opportunity to raise havoc in Ethiopia. This is evidenced by Egypt’s involvement in major political disturbances in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa. The Eritrean liberation movement, the war with Somalia, the Ethio-Eritrean conflict and the current threat by the Islamist Al -Shebab movement has all been fanned by Egyptian support.” (Abadir M. Ibrahim, no year).

Finally by waging direct war when ever Egypt concludes its interest is endangered and the above means are not fruitful. The Egyptian government has, therefore, sought to underline the dam’s potential repercussions through diplomatic channels, attempting to gain international support while threatening unilateral actions if negotiations falter (Khan, 2021) “In 1979, President Anwar Sadat said: “The only matter that could take Egypt to war again is water.” (Dawoud 2000 in, Simon A. Mason 2004 ) “Historically, there has not been a violent confrontation between the states as a result of a water dispute. However, a history of relatively peaceful solutions is not a guarantee for this being the norm in the future.” (Björn Jönsson, no year) “Historical evidence is hard to argue against, especially since Egypt and Ethiopia do not have any history of open hostilities (Fahlén, 2013). In contrast to this, it is important to realize that the dam construction, and its possible implications, means that the potential for conflict may be higher than before.” (Björn Jönsson, no year)

Therefore, the Nile’s hydro-politics impact Ethiopia's national security by necessitating a robust military posture. The government has increased military spending and adopted a more assertive diplomatic stance to safeguard its national interests against perceived external threats, particularly from Egypt. Such measures highlight the intricate link between resource management and national defense in the context of hydro-political dynamics (Abdelhady, 2020). The historical context of Nile water agreements, particularly the 1959 treaty which granted Egypt and Sudan the majority of the river's flow, further exacerbates tensions between the two nations. The potential escalation of military confrontations, as evident in Egypt’s military exercises near the Sudanese border, highlights the seriousness of this threat. Such maneuvers serve to signal Egypt’s readiness to protect its interests, drawing Ethiopia into a vulnerable position (Hassan, 2021).

#### 4.3.2.3. Threat from neighboring states

“Beyond internal stability that is central to policy-making, the prime preoccupation that keeps the country active on a military and security level is mainly due to existing neighboring tensions” ( Jalal and Sara, no year). The dynamics within the Horn of Africa have a significant influence on Ethiopia, and conversely, developments in Ethiopia can impact the broader region. Strategically situated at the heart of the Horn, Ethiopia shares borders with all its neighboring states, creating a complex web of interdependence. Consequently, security threats—whether internal or external—faced by Ethiopia are closely linked to the situations in surrounding nations. Ethiopia's status as a landlocked state enhances its significance in the region, offering both opportunities and vulnerabilities. While shared borders can facilitate trade and cultural exchange, they can also serve as conduits for insecurity and conflict. Events in neighboring countries—be they positive or negative—can profoundly affect Ethiopia’s own stability. The neighboring states, including Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, South Sudan, and Kenya, share with Ethiopia deep-rooted connections in language, culture, and history (Ethiopia’s Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy and Strategy). Therefore, changes occurring within Ethiopia invariably have repercussions for these nations, and vice versa. As such, the interplay of developments in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa underlines a critical regional dynamic that must be recognized in any discussion of security and cooperation in the area.

As Mohammed, (2007) claimed:-

*“Within this regional strategic context, the most immediate threats to Ethiopia’s security arise from its neighbors. During the mid-1990’s, the most significant threat came from militant Islamic groups based in Sudan and Somalia. These threats culminated in the assassination attempts against Egyptian President Husni Mubarak in Addis Ababa in 1995 and the late minister for transport and communications, Abdel Majid Hussein, in 1996”* (Mohammed, 2007).

The neighboring states pose several potential security threats to Ethiopia. First, territorial disputes regarding border claims contribute to regional instability. A second factor is the prevalence of religious fundamentalism, which can exacerbate tensions in the region. Additionally, the economic fragility and weakness of Ethiopia's neighbors make them

susceptible to external manipulation, thereby creating opportunities for foreign powers to destabilize Ethiopia. As a landlocked nation, Ethiopia relies on its neighbors for access to port services essential for its trade and economic viability. Finally, competition over vital resources, particularly water, poses another significant risk to Ethiopia's security.

#### 4.3.2.3.1. Somalia

The intricate relationship between Somalia and Ethiopia is shaped by historical animosities, territorial disputes, and enduring socio-political dynamics. As neighboring states in the Horn of Africa, the ties between Somalia and Ethiopia are characterized by both cooperation and conflict, leading to concerns regarding Ethiopia's national security. Several factors position Somalia as a potential national security threat to Ethiopia.

The first challenge is religious fundamentalism, Muslim against Christian highlanders starting from 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Religious fundamentalism and extremism has been source of conflict having strong power to destabilize the relation between states. Ethiopia cannot ignore the rising threat of Islamic radicalism in Somalia (Erlich Haggai, 2010). Despite showing openness towards Islam and Muslim when he came to power, Ethiopia's former Prime Minister Meles Zenawi (1995-2012) was too wary of an Islamic force emerging from Somalia during his tenure. "I don't fear Somalia. I don't fear Somali nationalism. What I fear is a radical Islam in Somalia"(Muhyadin , 2016). In Somalia there is no concept of a secular state. Religion has to be brought into the state or the state to religion (Abdurahman, 2012). Extremist movements appeared after 1991, changing the course of Somalia's history. Al Qaeda's involvement began as they sought to exploit the al Itihaad al Islamiya Movement during the civil war, creating an armed group organized around an Islamic and nationalist agenda ( Abdurahman, 2012). Religion can be a threat to their relation one because of religious extremism by some groups in Somalia.

This was started from the invasion of Ahmed Giragn in 1520s. The conflict between the Somalis and Ethiopians stretches back to the late 1520s when Imam Ahmed Ibin Ibrahim al-Ghazi (Ahmed Gragh), a Somali from Adal declared a Jihad war against Ethiopia and Emperor Libne Dingil (Ghelawdewos, 2019). Many historians trace the origins of hostility between Somalia and Ethiopia to this war (Mahad, 2017). The Gragh campaign to destroy Ethiopia was conducted in the name of Islam and Jihad, and to be sure there were some Arabs (especially from Mahra in

southern Arabia) among the rank-and-file of his forces that came to assist in the Jihad wars (Ghelawdewos, 2019). The study argue that the problem in relation with religious extremism and fundamentalism is not only with Somalia but also with other Islamic states particularly Arab states, which are using Somalia as a bridge and means to attack Ethiopia. Those states may affect Ethiopia in different ways. One is in the name of Islamic expansion. The other way is as Ethiopia is composed of Muslim population they can use and manipulate Muslims to weaken Ethiopia, mainly Egypt because of its ambition to control Nile.

Thus, the presence and activities of militant groups, particularly Al-Shabaab because of religious extremism, pose significant challenges to Ethiopian security. Al-Shabaab, an extremist militant group with ties to Al-Qaeda, has consistently targeted Ethiopia, often carrying out cross-border attacks. According to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), the group has shown an increasing capacity to conduct operations beyond Somalia's borders, thereby threatening regional stability (AMISOM, 2020). Ethiopia has previously dispatched troops to Somalia to combat Al-Shabaab and protect its territorial integrity, indicating that the insurgency has implications for Ethiopian national security.

Secondly, the question of ethnic nationalism plays a crucial role in Ethiopia's security landscape. The Somali Region of Ethiopia, which is home to a significant population of ethnic Somalis, has witnessed tensions and occasional unrest. These tensions are exacerbated by feelings of marginalization and support for the Somali government, which is often perceived as favoring the interests of its ethnic compatriots over those of Ethiopian Somalis (Ruth, 2019). The risk of irredentism—where disaffected ethnic groups seek to unite with their ethnic kin across borders—poses a security challenge, as it can lead to instability and violence within Ethiopia

The history of Somalia and Ethiopia is marred by distrust, animosity and war (Muhyadin, 2016). Suspicion of neighboring expansionism and political and religious extremism is deeply rooted in both states (Muhyadin , 2016).” Somalia's border claim is manifested through irredentism and nationalism movement. Irredentism is any political or popular movement that seeks to claim or reclaim and occupy a land that the movement's members consider to be a "lost" (or "unredeemed") territory from their nations past (Wikipedia, 28 May 2019). Irredentism is a claim of reincorporating previously disintegrated territories of Somalia which are currently under the

rule of other sovereign states namely Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti to create great Somalia in the horn of Africa. This irredentist approach was first initiated by British administration to create Greater Somalia (Barnes, C. 2007) Then later “Somalia’s irredentist policy was openly incorporated in its first constitution in 1960, with it’s a five-pointed flag said to represent each of the territories inhabited by Somalis 1940s”(Muhyadin ,2016). It was further propagated by the Somali Youth League (SYL) leaders who are the founding fathers’ of Somali Republic (Muhyadin, 2016). This approach later bothers the relation between Ethiopia and Somalia. As one of the professors of political science at Addis Ababa University suggested, irredentism movement is one of the national security concerns of Ethiopia.

“The uneasy relations between Ethiopia and Somalia basically emanate from claiming people and land in the adjacent area (irredentism), which led the two neighboring countries to go to bloodiest wars ever-witnessed in the Horn of Africa during the Cold War era ”(Nasir, 2011). A lot of efforts had been made to achieve this vision of creating great Somalia. This struggle really hindered their peaceful relation by influencing cooperation between them. Ethiopia has made a lot to reverse the problem and to create harmonious relation with Somalia. However terrorism, religious extremism, support of external powers mainly Arab states and Eritrea challenged the effort. Irredentism and national movement of Somalia seems shaped by the political change either of the two states. As one of the respondent(personal communication, October ,25,2025) claimed this national movement could escalate to conflict unless the current administration of Ethiopia work hard to wards their relation, as the policy we are utilizing now is not in line with past and lacks continuity as well as considering the outcome.

The third one is geopolitical influences that further complicate the situation. Somalia is one of the best examples to illustrate the problem of external interventions, especially since the overthrow of the Siyaad Barre regime in 1991, an array of external forces (Franza, 2014). Because of internal movements and other influence in Somalia the government remains weak and exposed to external actors. The area now known as Somalia is situated on international trade routes connecting the Mediterranean and Red Sea to the Indian Ocean, and the East African Coast with the Arab world and India. Besides this central geopolitical location, the northern coast of Somalia is also one of the few places in the world where the highly prized commodity frankincense grows (Robert, 2018): Due to Somalia's geopolitical situation, external actors range

from Western, regional and continental African, and Arab states, as well as their respective regional institutions and the United Nations. Lately, China and Turkey have become more involved, too. (Franza , 2014 ).

Those actors come across to Somalia having their own interest some states like Eritrea and Egypt against Ethiopia and others due to geopolitical position of Somalia. The rivalry between regional powers, such as Eritrea and Ethiopia, can be influenced by developments in Somalia. Eritrea has been accused of supporting extremist factions within Somalia as a means to undermine Ethiopia (International Crisis Group, 2016). Such external support for insurgent groups in Somalia heightens Ethiopia's security dilemmas, as it navigates the dual challenges posed by domestic unrest and foreign interference. Still others intervene in the name of humanitarian assistance. Cold war of the great powers had also its own influence. More importantly terrorist intervention as a result of lack of strong central government threatens Ethiopia and Somalia. In the name of fighting against terrorism different actors have involved in the area.

The fourth one is Ethiopia's defacto relation with Somaliland. Although unrecognized by any country or inter-governmental organization since its unilateral declaration of separation from Somalia, Ethiopia maintains close relations with that *de facto* Somaliland. Ethiopia became the first State that *de facto* recognized it by opting to send diplomatic mission to Somaliland and opened a trade office that serves as a Consulate in Hargeisa (Nasir, 2011). After Somaliland become independent of Somalia rule, Ethiopia has been showing interest to recognize Somaliland as a new independent sovereign state. Any state which recognizes the independence of Somalia could be perceived as the first enemy of Somalia. Therefore Ethiopia's intention to recognize Somaliland could directly affect the relation between Somalia and Ethiopia. Most of the time mother nations are reluctant to recognize the newly established territory or secession quest of their part. We can take the position of china towards Taiwan.

Lastly, the humanitarian crises stemming from Somalia—such as piracy and refugee flows—also pose indirect threats to Ethiopian national security. The destabilization of Somalia has led to increased incidences of piracy in the Gulf of Aden, which affects trade routes crucial for Ethiopia's economy. Additionally, the influx of Somali refugees into Ethiopian territory can strain resources and exacerbate social tensions, which may ultimately fuel domestic instability

(UNHCR, 2020). In conclusion, Somalia's potential as a national security threat to Ethiopia is underscored by the risks associated with militant activities, ethnic tensions, geopolitical rivalries, and humanitarian crises.

#### 4.3.2.3.2. Sudan

The geopolitical landscape of East Africa is marked by a complex interplay of historical tensions, ethnic rivalries, and resource competition, positioning Sudan as a potential national security threat to Ethiopia. Sudan could undermine Ethiopian national security, particularly focusing on border disputes, the management of the Nile River waters, and the presence of armed rebel groups.

To begin with, border disputes between Sudan and Ethiopia have historically been a source of contention. Ethiopia and Sudan has a long history of relation both peaceful and hostile. They share long boundary (about 1,600 km) which could be a source of conflict or cooperation between them. Conflict between those states is not just a recent phenomenon rather it traces back to ancient time. Recently both states were in state of conflict in 1995 and 1998. the source of conflict were radical Islamism, competition to take over regional leadership in the horn of Africa, interference in the internal affairs of both states, supporting opposition groups and terrorist groups and the Nile issue. Even though Ethiopia and Sudan has been in numerous wars, however they never went to war strictly because of border claim (Mengistu, 2002). The diplomatic relations between Ethiopia and Sudan have been profoundly influenced by unresolved boundary demarcation issues, despite both nations acknowledging the validity of the boundary treaties established in 1902 and 1907 (Mengistu, 2002). The most notable conflict surrounding the Al-Fashaga region has been characterized by violent skirmishes and land encroachments. Scholars such as Ayele Selassie (2021) argue that unresolved territorial claims can escalate into larger confrontations, destabilizing relations and prompting military confrontations between the two nations.

The border issue between Sudan and Ethiopia, once a relatively minor concern, has escalated into a significant conflict. While the precise factors exacerbating this long-standing dispute remain unclear, interviews suggest two primary causes. First, regime changes in both Sudan and Ethiopia appear to have intensified tensions over the border. Second, Sudan seems to be

attempting to exploit Ethiopia's internal challenges. In light of Ethiopia's domestic issues, Sudan has miscalculated by invading certain territories, believing it could gain an advantage. However, the Ethiopian government has asserted that, despite its current difficulties, the nation possesses the capability to defend itself against any external threats perceived to undermine its sovereignty and the safety of its citizens.

Moreover, it is believed that Sudan's motivations extend beyond domestic concerns and may involve the influence of external powers. Situated in the strategically significant Horn of Africa, both nations are susceptible to outside interference in their bilateral relations, particularly from major global powers and nations in the Middle East. For instance, Egypt is often viewed as a key player behind Sudan's intentions to invade Ethiopia, driven by its interests in the Nile River. "Egypt has historically sought to dominate Sudan and encircle Ethiopia" (Abdul Mohammed, 2007). Regardless of the underlying motivations for this border dispute, the situation poses a grave danger to both countries and represents a significant security threat to Ethiopia.

Moreover, the management of the Nile River waters poses a significant security dilemma for Ethiopia. The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) has sparked a contentious dispute with Sudan and Egypt over water rights and usage. As stated by Mohamed Elhaj (2020), Ethiopia's unilateral actions in constructing the dam have been perceived as threats by both Sudan and Egypt, who fear they will experience diminished water supply. The downstream implications of large-scale dam projects can potentially incite diplomatic rifts that may lead to military posturing, increasing the likelihood of a crisis situation where Ethiopia's national security could be compromised.

Historically, Sudan has harbored various opposition groups that seek to challenge the Ethiopian government, and recent disputes over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) have heightened tensions (Hassan, 2021). The presence of armed rebel groups in Sudan, particularly in the context of the Darfur conflict and its aftermath, poses a significant threat to Ethiopia. As noted by George W. W. Ayalew (2019), these groups often cross borders in search of refuge or to launch attacks, thereby creating instability within Ethiopian territories. The potential for spillover violence from Sudan's internal conflicts can result in a surge of refugees and cross-border insurgencies that threaten Ethiopia's sovereignty and internal security. In conclusion, the

intricate dynamics between Sudan and Ethiopia reveal several pathways through which Sudan could pose a national security threat to its neighbor. The unresolved border disputes, the contentious management of the Nile waters, and the influence of armed rebel groups underscore the necessity for Ethiopia to engage in strategic diplomatic initiatives.

#### 4.3.2.3.3. Eritrea

The relationship between Ethiopia and Eritrea has been marred by tension, border disputes, and intermittent hostilities. Ethiopia and Eritrea are not just neighboring states rather they are the same people with different administrations. They share language, culture, religion and a long history (including leadership under one government). While Ethiopia was not colonized Eritrea was under the administration of Italy and British until 1952. later in the same year Eritrea federated having autonomous status to Ethiopian empire. After the federation it was not as expected to meet the interest of Eritrean society. Consequently; in 1962 the federal arrangement was abolished and it resulted liberation struggle (Seyoum, 2012). As a result of this struggle for about several years Eritrea become an independent state on April 29, 1993. While Ethiopia's public was against Eritrea's cessation, EPRDF argued as important decision to end 30 years hostility. (Sally Healy, 2008). However due to Eritrea's cessation, Ethiopia become land locked state and their divorce brought the issue of border claim and continued to be the cause of their future hostility. Eritrea poses a multifaceted national security threat to Ethiopia in different ways.

The first is border issue. Due to this border claim Ethiopia and Eritrea went to bloody war in 1998-2000. This war was very distractive of human lives and properties. The disagreement between Ethiopia and Eritrea was not only the border issue. "The underlying causes of the conflict were local, but nonetheless complex. They had to do with shifting power relations between Former allies, growing economic rivalry and competing local nationalism." (Sally Healy, 2008). The war brought death of brother hood peoples and resulted enmity between states. As a result of the war Eritrea suffered a lot in all aspects. "Dispute dominates all aspects of Eritrea's life economic, political, social and military and has legitimized the establishment of a highly militaristic and authoritarian state." (Sally Healy, 2008). On Ethiopian side the independence of Eritrea and the war made Ethiopia land locked state, which endangers its economic related security. This forced Ethiopia to find alternative port utilization and to pay high cost for it. More importantly the war affected the foreign policy orientation of Ethiopia and

Eritrea. Due Eritrea's state of becoming dictatorial, militarist and authoritarian in its kind Eritrea's foreign policy objected to interventionist approach to destabilize Ethiopia either by forming alliance with foreign powers or helping and advising internal oppositions. On the other side Ethiopia's post war "Vulnerability inevitably impacts on Ethiopia's foreign policy, encouraging hegemonic conduct in the region" (Sally Healy, 2008) Even though has been challenged by its domestic situations and external pressure mainly Eritrea's intervention.

The second is through its ability to influence and support opposition groups within Ethiopia. Eritrean authorities have historically provided sanctuary and logistical support to dissident factions, particularly to the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) before and during the Tigray conflict that erupted in late 2020 (Shinn, 2021). Such support can destabilize Ethiopia's internal security and governance, exacerbating ethnic tensions and creating an environment conducive to insurgency. The potential for Eritrea to exploit Ethiopia's internal divisions means that it could serve as a catalyst for further unrest; thereby undermining Ethiopia's national stability. Additionally, Eritrea's military capabilities and strategic alliances in the region further complicate Ethiopia's national security calculus. The Eritrean military, despite its relatively small size, is regarded as one of the most disciplined and well-trained in Africa. Moreover, Eritrea's alignment with countries like Egypt—especially in the wider context of the Nile Water disputes—poses a strategic challenge to Ethiopia, which relies heavily on the waters of the Blue Nile for everything from agriculture to hydroelectric power generation (Abbadi, 2020). Such alliances could lead to coordinated efforts aimed at countering Ethiopian interests, particularly if regional rivalries intensify.

The legacy of unresolved grievances stemming from their shared history continues to fuel a security dilemma. The militarization of borders and the inherent mistrust have resulted in both nations maintaining significant military presences along their shared frontier. Any miscalculation or skirmish could easily escalate into broader conflict, thus posing an existential threat to Ethiopian sovereignty (ICG, 2021). Thus, while recent diplomatic overtures have provided a glimmer of hope for enhanced cooperation, the potential for Eritrea to act as a national security threat to Ethiopia remains pronounced. By supporting insurgent groups, leveraging military capabilities, and engaging in strategic alliances, Eritrea could destabilize the already volatile security environment of Ethiopia.

#### 4.3.2.3.4. Djibouti

Djibouti, a small yet strategically significant nation situated at the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, holds a complex relationship with its neighboring country, Ethiopia. This geographical proximity, coupled with political dynamics and military alliances, creates potential national security threats for Ethiopia that warrant careful examination.

Firstly, Djibouti's role as a host to multiple foreign military bases amplifies Ethiopia's security concerns. The establishment of foreign military bases in proximity to Ethiopian territory could lead to a strategic imbalance, necessitating a recalibration of Ethiopia's defense posture and alignment (Abdalla, 2020). The presence of U.S., French, and Chinese military installations within Djibouti has raised alarms regarding regional balance and influence. As noted by Zeller (2019), the strategic partnership with Djibouti enables these foreign powers to project military force in the Horn of Africa, potentially undermining Ethiopia's sovereignty and stability. Given Ethiopia's complex relations with its neighbors, including Eritrea and Somalia, Djibouti's military presence could be perceived as a stabilizing force in a volatile region. As noted by Kaplan (2019), Djibouti plays an essential role in mitigating conflicts that could spill over into Ethiopia, thereby aiding Addis Ababa in its pursuit of a secure environment. As neighboring countries become embroiled in their own conflicts and rivalries, Djibouti's alignment with external powers, such as the United States and China, creates a battleground for influence that Ethiopia must navigate carefully (Palling, 2021). As underscored by Schmitt (2021), such dynamics could result in Ethiopia being drawn into international conflicts or pressured to align its regional policies with those of its military partners.

The border dispute between Ethiopia and Djibouti, although ostensibly a bilateral issue possesses far-reaching implications for Ethiopia's national security. As both nations occupy strategic positions in the Horn of Africa, their relationship can significantly influence regional stability, economic development, and internal security dynamics. According to Assefa (2020), the Somali population in Ethiopia has cultural and political ties to Djibouti, which could lead to separatist sentiments and destabilize the Ethiopian state. Any perceived support from Djibouti for these groups could escalate into a direct national security threat for Ethiopia, risking the integrity of its borders and socio-political cohesion. Border disputes could potentially result in military

skirmishes or altercations that divert national resources away from development and social programs, thereby exacerbating existing vulnerabilities within Ethiopia (Engdaw, 2019).

Ethiopia's geographical status as a landlocked nation presents significant security challenges, particularly in relation to its neighboring countries, which are essential for access to port services necessary for import and export activities. Since ancient times, port services have been crucial for the economic viability of any state. Consequently, Ethiopia's lack of direct access to the sea poses a substantial threat to its economic stability ( Abiy Ahmed, march,2025). To mitigate this risk, it is imperative for Ethiopia to maintain peaceful relations with its neighbors, which would facilitate the exploration of alternative port access, such as through the ports of Berbera and Port Sudan. This strategic approach could enhance Ethiopia's economic prospects and bolster its regional influence. Following Eritrea's independence in 1991, Ethiopia, as the most populous nation in the region, became entirely landlocked and was compelled to seek port services through Djibouti. This transition has proven challenging, as the costs associated with accessing port facilities are substantial, placing a further strain on Ethiopia's already limited economic resources.

The geographical proximity of Djibouti to Ethiopia has profound implications for Ethiopia's national security, particularly in the context of maritime access and trade. Historically, landlocked since the Eritrean-Ethiopian War of 1998-2000, Ethiopia has relied heavily on Djibouti for its port access, as it handles over 95% of Ethiopia's cargo (World Bank, 2020). The criticality of this access cannot be overstated, as it directly impacts Ethiopia's economic resilience and, consequently, its national security. The dependence on Djibouti's port facilities creates vulnerability for Ethiopia. The strategic location of Djibouti, which houses military bases from multiple countries including the United States and France, heightens the geopolitical stakes in the region. The presence of foreign military powers may serve as a double-edged sword; while it can provide a semblance of stability, it also suggests a complex landscape where Ethiopia's security interests may be overshadowed by external agendas (Keesing's, 2021). Interference or conflict over these trade channels could severely disrupt Ethiopia's economic activities, inhibiting its overall development and, consequently, its national security (Kebede & Hayelom, 2020).

## **4.4. Implication of Ethiopia's National Security Challenges**

### ***4.4.1. Internal Implication of Ethiopia's National Security Challenges***

#### **4.4.1.1. Economic Decline**

When a country's national security is threatened, its economy is also affected. Economic instabilities are part of the national security problem. Economically, Ethiopia's vulnerabilities pose substantial risks to its development aspirations. The civil unrest and internal security challenges deter foreign investment, weaken national infrastructure, and erode public trust in government institutions (World Bank, 2021). There is no economic development without security, and it is difficult to ensure national security without an economy. A weakened economy exacerbates poverty and social discontent, thus creating a vicious cycle that challenges the state's legitimacy and capacity to provide for its citizens, further entrenching security vulnerabilities (World Bank, 2021). Especially in this complex world, controlling the economy is like controlling everything. Developed countries have better national security Status than developing countries. In this way, they have the ability to safeguard their citizens, their borders, their natural resources, their sovereignty and their peace.

The country has experienced rapid economic growth over the past decade, driven primarily by agriculture, services, and industrialization efforts. According to the World Bank, Ethiopia's GDP growth rate averaged approximately 9.3% from 2004 to 2019, making it one of the fastest-growing economies in Africa (World Bank, 2020). As the International Monetary Fund (IMF) stated, between 2010 and 2018, Ethiopia exhibited an impressive average annual GDP growth rate of approximately 10% (IMF, 2021). However, the country has been dealing with a wide range of security problems since 2015, and especially since 2018. Due to these multiple problems, the country's economy has been deteriorating from time to time. When a country's security is threatened by conflict/war, natural disasters, crime, and other factors, its economy suffers in equal measure. This can happen in different ways. On the one hand, due to insecurity, factors that determine economic growth and development, such as foreign and domestic trade, productivity, investment, service delivery, and other working conditions, are severely affected. On the other hand, when governments use the country's economy at an excessive cost to address the security problems they face.

One of the primary implications of national security threats is the disruption of economic activities. Conflict adversely impacts domestic productivity and can deter foreign investment. According to the World Bank (2021), prolonged instability has led to a contraction in economic growth, as businesses are hesitant to invest in an environment perceived as insecure. This hesitance can stifle innovation and limit access to essential financial resources, which are critical for economic development.

Conflict threats in Ethiopia have traditionally arisen from ethnic divisions, political tensions, and historical grievances, leading to violence and civil unrest. According to the African Development Bank (2020), persistent conflicts disrupt agricultural productivity, which is the cornerstone of Ethiopia's economy. The agriculture sector accounts for approximately 41% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employs 80% of the population (World Bank, 2021). When conflicts arise, agricultural production declines due to displacement of farmers, destruction of infrastructure, and reduced access to markets.

Furthermore, Conflict often leads to the loss of lives and interruption of education, resulting in a less skilled workforce. According to a study by the Institute for Security Studies (2022), the disruption of educational institutions in conflict-affected regions has resulted in significant long-term economic costs, further exacerbating productivity issues. An uneducated populace is less equipped to contribute effectively to economic activities, perpetuating a cycle of underdevelopment.

The second way that national security diminishes state economy is by affecting market and trade. According to the International Crisis Group (2021), these internal conflicts have resulted in displacement, loss of lives, and disruption of local economies. The instability not only reduces investor confidence but also complicates logistics and supply chains essential for market operations, ultimately raising costs and lowering the availability of goods. Moreover, national security threats can significantly impact trade dynamics. Ethiopia's strategic location allows it to serve as a hub for regional trade; however, ongoing conflicts have led to border closures and increased tariffs on goods, ultimately raising costs for consumers and businesses alike (ICG, 2022). Such disruptions not only hinder the flow of goods but also undermine Ethiopia's

potential to engage fully in regional economic integration initiatives, such as the African Continental Free Trade Area.

One of the most pressing challenges facing Ethiopia's economy is inflation. In recent years, inflation rates have surged, reaching over 30% in 2022, largely attributed to rising food prices and supply chain disruptions exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing conflict in the Tigray region (IM F, 2023). This high inflation has eroded purchasing power and posed significant risks to the overall economic stability.

Ethiopia's security challenges extend beyond its borders, particularly concerning its relationships with neighboring countries. Tensions over resources, such as the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), have strained relations with Sudan and Egypt, resulting in diplomatic impasses that threaten regional stability. This geopolitical uncertainty has repercussions on trade, as potential partners may hesitate to engage with a nation perceived as unstable. The African Development Bank (2020) notes that sustainable economic partnerships require stability, suggesting that Ethiopia's ongoing conflicts could curtail its potential to engage actively in regional trade agreements.

The other way that security could endanger Ethiopia's economy is by retreating Investment and tourism. The interplay between national security and tourism is multifaceted; while a secure environment enhances tourist confidence and propensity to visit, insecurity can deter potential visitors and inhibit economic growth. Challenges related to national security have not only affected the safety of citizens but have also cultivated a perception of instability among potential tourists. For instance, the conflict in the Tigray region, which escalated in late 2020, prompted major travel advisories from various countries, effectively diminishing tourist inflow (Alemayehu & Yihdego, 2021). According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), safety concerns remain one of the primary factors influencing travel decisions, indicating that perceived or actual threats can drastically affect Ethiopia's tourism economy (UNWTO, 2020). Ethiopia's efforts to bolster its tourism sector through initiatives like the "Ethiopia: Land of Origins" campaign highlight the juxtaposition of security and tourism promotion. Such campaigns are more effective in a peaceful environment where tourists can explore archaeological sites, natural wonders, and vibrant cultural activities without fear

(Kebede, 2022). Conversely, prolonged insecurity can lead to adverse economic repercussions. The tourism sector, which significantly contributes to Ethiopia's GDP and employment, may suffer from both immediate cancellations and long-term avoidance by potential visitors (World Bank, 2022).

National security encompasses a range of issues and Ethiopia has faced various security challenges, including ethnic tensions, regional conflicts and War, all of which have considerably affected its ability to attract and sustain foreign investment. The relationship between national security and investment is well-documented in economic literature. Secure environments tend to attract more foreign direct investment (FDI) due to lower risk perceptions among investors (Buchanan et al., 2011). Conversely, insecurity can lead to capital flight, reduced investment inflows, and economic stagnation (Hill, 2010). Ethiopia's struggles with national security directly correlate with investor confidence. Reports indicate that investor sentiment has wavered in light of ongoing conflicts and governmental instability, leading to a reduction in FDI during critical periods (World Bank, 2021). Investors are increasingly cautious about entering markets characterized by potential instability and social discord, as evidenced by research indicating that political risk is a significant deterrent to investment in conflict-prone countries (Simmons & Elkins, 2004). Ethiopia's national security significantly influences its investment landscape. Thus, the interplay between security and investor confidence highlights the critical need for effective governance and conflict resolution mechanisms.

The final way is through Increase expenditure on security. National security challenges can lead to increased government expenditure on military and security measures, diverting resources away from essential economic sectors such as education and infrastructure development. The Ethiopian government has faced pressure to allocate a larger share of its budget to defense, which limits public investment in long-term economic growth strategies (United Nations Development Programme, 2020). This misallocation can stymie sustainable development and exacerbate socio-economic disparities within the population. The World Economic Forum (2021) highlights that businesses in conflict-prone regions often face heightened risks, leading to reduced investment and stunted economic growth. With the Ethiopian government grappling with ensuring stability amidst ongoing tensions—such as the conflict in the Tigray region—investors remain cautious, fearing instability may yield unfavorable returns. Additionally, the

implementation of national security policies aimed at managing these conflicts often leads to increased militarization and resource allocation towards security forces rather than economic development. The diversion of public resources can stifle growth in critical sectors such as infrastructure and agriculture, both of which are essential for enhancing trade capabilities. The World Bank (2021) emphasizes that fostering a stable environment is crucial for economic expansion, as uncertainties diminish the incentives for both local entrepreneurs and foreign investors.

#### 4.4.1.2. States Power (Diplomatic, Military and Regional role) Decline

Ethiopia, one of the most populous nations in East Africa, has long been a significant player on the geopolitical stage of the continent. However, its national security threats pose serious implications for its power both domestically and internationally. These threats manifest through ethnic conflicts, border disputes, and environmental challenges, which collectively undermine its power. Ethiopia is perceived to have potential of regional power. We can see how Ethiopia's national security vulnerability is affecting its power manifested through its diplomatic capability, military capacity and regional role.

The interplay between national security and diplomatic posture is significant. As the African Union's headquarters is located in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia could have been enhanced its diplomatic stature by positioning itself as a leader in mediating regional conflicts while addressing its security needs. However its internal risk is undermining this role, as they may distract from its broader diplomatic objectives (Kebede, 2021). At the heart of Ethiopia's national security concerns is the ongoing conflict in the Tigray, Amhara, Oromia and other parts of the country. This internal strife has not only led to humanitarian crises but has also impacted Ethiopia's relations with neighboring countries and international organizations. The conflict has prompted criticism from the international community, affecting Ethiopia's standing in diplomatic negotiation. The Ethiopian government, in response, has sought to assert its sovereignty while appealing for understanding concerning its security imperatives (Human Rights Watch, 2021). The international community's response to Ethiopia's ethnic conflicts has been mixed, with calls for intervention often met with resistance from the Ethiopian government, complicating external diplomatic efforts (Beyene, 2017). As noted by Kachika and Zewdie (2021), the violent confrontations have attracted global scrutiny and condemnation, leading to a deterioration of

Ethiopia's diplomatic ties with several Western nations. Therefore, as a country with a trend conflict, Ethiopia's national security considerations profoundly shape its diplomatic engagements.

Furthermore; Ethiopia's national security strategy involves balancing relationships with major global powers, particularly the United States and China. The U.S. has expressed concern regarding human rights abuses and governance issues, which has affected aid and diplomatic ties. The ensuing humanitarian crisis prompted calls for accountability and intervention, which placed Ethiopia in a defensive diplomatic posture. This situation has forced the Ethiopian government to reevaluate its alliances, seeking closer ties with nations that express understanding of its internal dilemmas, such as China and Russia, thus highlighting a shift in Ethiopia's traditional foreign policy orientation away from the West (Mekonnen, 2022). Ethiopia has fostered closer ties with China, which has invested heavily in its infrastructure, thereby securing economic benefits that are crucial for national stability (Badmus, 2020). These dynamics illustrate how national security priorities force Ethiopia to navigate intricate diplomatic waters, often leading to delicate compromises that reflect its security imperatives.

The national security framework of Ethiopia plays a pivotal role in shaping its military power, influencing both the structure of its armed forces and its defense strategies. The national security of Ethiopia is inherently linked to its historical conflicts and current geopolitical tensions. Ethiopia has experienced long-standing ethnic strife, internal insurgencies, and border disputes, particularly with Eritrea. The 1998-2000 Ethio-Eritrean War remains a critical context, shaping national security priorities and military readiness (Hagmann & Hoehne, 2009). Furthermore, the rise of non-state actors and extremist groups in the region, such as the Somalia-based Al-Shabaab, underscores the importance of national security in formulating military strategies (International Crisis Group, 2020). Ethiopia's counter-terrorism initiatives, which often involve military interventions in neighboring countries, reflect a proactive approach to secure its borders and strategic interests. This approach not only enhances Ethiopia's military power through operational experience but also fosters collaboration with international partners, thereby increase its capabilities. The intricate relationship between national security and military power in Ethiopia is undeniable. As the country navigates a complex security landscape, the evolution of

its military power will undoubtedly continue to be shaped by its strategic imperatives and security needs.

Ethiopia's power could be seen in its regional role acting as a regional hegemony. According to Idris Buta state as he stated below Ethiopia has a potential of being regional hegemony in the horn of Africa.

*“This bold hegemonic move is premised on Ethiopia’s national role conception as a regional power that has never succumbed to foreign aggression and shines as a beacon of independence in Africa and beyond. In the Horn of Africa proper, which comprises Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea and Djibouti, Ethiopia commands a clear hegemonic power status with over 80% of the population and %58.5 of the land of the region, the strongest armed forces in Sub Saharan Africa and one of the fastest growing economies in the world. With a respected role as a security provider and a peace maker in the IGAD region and a member of the African Union and a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, subservience of Ethiopia to the whims of the Gulf powers is very limited.”( Idris, 2019)*

Ethiopia, situated in the Horn of Africa, occupies a critical geopolitical position that significantly influences regional dynamics. The nation's national security framework has profound implications for its relationships with neighboring countries, as well as for regional stability. Ethiopia is facing various security challenges, including internal conflicts, border disputes, and the influence of external actors. These disputes not only threaten national integrity but also risk drawing Ethiopia into larger regional conflicts, thereby disrupting its strategic partnerships and diminishing its stature among African Union initiatives (Kebede, 2022). The failure to address these security challenges could result in a loss of credibility for Ethiopia, as it attempts to position itself as a regional power broker and advocate for peace in the Horn of Africa.

Ethiopia's national security is enshrined in its commitment to maintaining state sovereignty and territorial integrity. However, Ethiopia's strategic importance is underscored by its role in regional security initiatives. As a founding member of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union (AU), Ethiopia has positioned itself as a key mediator in regional conflicts, such as the South Sudanese civil war (Masresha, 2022). However,

its capacity to act as a peace broker is hindered by its internal security challenges. A secure Ethiopia can advocate for stability and conflict resolution, enhancing its influence in regional dialogues. Additionally, Ethiopia's relationship with neighboring countries is critical to its regional standing. The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) project has intensified tensions with Egypt and Sudan, both of which view the dam as a potential threat to their own water security (Casção & Nicol, 2020). Failure to manage these diplomatic relationships amidst security challenges can erode Ethiopia's influence in regional negotiations and alliances.

The ongoing violence has led to humanitarian crises, a surge in displacement, and increased militarization, which distract from the central government's ability to exert power effectively. As noted by the International Crisis Group (2021), prolonged internal conflict can weaken state authority and lead to fragmentation, diminishing Ethiopia's regional influence. This internal disarray can hinder Ethiopia's capacity to assert itself as a dominant actor in regional matters, including peacekeeping operations and economic partnerships.

#### 4.4.1.3. State Failure and Disintegration

Ethiopia finds itself grappling with profound challenges that have led to its characterization as a fragile and, in many respects, a failed state. Multifaceted factors contributing to Ethiopia's fragility, including ethnic divisions, governance issues, economic constraints, and external influences. According to Keen (2008), the interplay between domestic vulnerabilities and external shocks often creates a precarious situation for states already on the brink of failure. A state is considered fragile when it exhibits a limited capacity to provide political authority, uphold rule of law, and deliver public services effectively. Conversely, a failed state is one that has collapsed to the extent that it can no longer perform these fundamental functions, leading to widespread disorder and humanitarian crises (Rotberg, 2003). Moreover, as noted by Fukuyama (2004), effective governance is built upon the ability to maintain order, enforce rules, and provide public goods; failure in these areas can lead to loss of trust among citizens and erosion of state authority.

A critical symptom of state collapse is the breakdown of law and order. This situation often manifests as an increased incidence of crime, violence, and civil disorder (Menkhaus, 2007). The rule of law is a fundamental principle that underpins the functioning of any democratic society,

ensuring that laws are applied consistently without bias, and that justice is accessible to all. Ethiopia has faced a series of governance crises that have hindered the establishment of a robust rule of law. Recent political developments have further complicated the landscape of rule of law in Ethiopia.

The judiciary in Ethiopia is often perceived as lacking independence, which further exacerbates the breakdown of the rule of law. Judicial decisions are frequently influenced by political considerations rather than based on legal principles. As highlighted by Human Rights Watch (2021), instances of politically motivated trials and the detention of opposition leaders signify a judiciary that is not free from government control. Such lack of independence leads to a significant erosion of public trust in legal institutions, making it difficult for citizens to seek justice.

This situation has been indicative of the broader challenges faced by the Ethiopian judiciary, which remains under significant political influence, thereby hampering its independence and efficacy (Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, 2021). Reports indicate that thousands have been arrested in connection with anti-government protests, including members of opposition parties and civil society organizations (International Crisis Group, 2020). Human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings and ethnic-based violence, highlight the state's failure to protect its citizens (Amnesty International, 2021). These actions reflect a concerning trend where the state apparatus is used not to uphold the law but to stifle opposition, thereby undermining democratic institutions. Additionally Harsh anti-terrorism laws and restrictions on freedom of expression further undermine the foundational elements of the rule of law (Amnesty International, 2020). The crackdown on dissent poses significant challenges to building a culture of democratic governance and legal accountability.

The other indicator of state failure is Unable to Providing goods and services. Ethiopia's challenges arising from national security threats have culminated in a state of failure, undermining the government's ability to provide essential goods and services to its populace. The implications of such a predicament are profound, as they extend beyond immediate humanitarian needs, affecting social cohesion and economic stability. State failure, as articulated by the United Nations, pertains to the inability of a government to deliver basic functions to its citizens,

including security, governance, and the provision of public services (UN, 2009). In Ethiopia, the resurgence of ethnic conflicts, exacerbated by political strife and historical grievances, has led to a breakdown of order in several regions. For instance, the conflict in Tigray has resulted in widespread displacement and a humanitarian crisis, significantly hampering the state's capacity to coordinate and distribute essential supplies (International Crisis Group, 2021). As a consequence, markets have become disrupted, food shortages have occurred, and health services have been severely impacted.

Economic constraints further exacerbate Ethiopia's fragile state. Despite impressive economic growth over the last two decades, the country remains heavily dependent on agriculture, which is vulnerable to climate-related shocks (World Bank, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing conflicts have severely affected agricultural productivity, exacerbating poverty and food insecurity. As the humanitarian situation deteriorates, the state's ability to maintain social cohesion and provide for its citizens is increasingly compromised (United Nations, 2021). In addition to low economic status socioeconomic disparities also play an essential role in state fragility. High levels of inequality can foster resentment and discontent among the populace, leading to social unrest and conflict. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2014) highlights that poverty and lacks of economic opportunity are significant drivers of instability, as they create an environment ripe for extremist ideologies and violence to flourish.

Moreover, the Ethiopian government's strategic responses to these national security threats have often prioritized military solutions over humanitarian needs, further complicating the situation. As the state mobilizes resources towards conflict management, the civilian population bears the brunt of resource allocation mismanagement, leading to a decline in the provision of crucial services such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure development (World Bank, 2021). This has engendered a cycle of poverty and instability, as communities grapple with the dual burdens of conflict and deprivation.

Lack of Legitimacy can also indicate state failure. In Ethiopia, the ongoing conflict and national security threats have precipitated a crisis of legitimacy for the government, revealing the complexities of state failure. According to van Cranenburgh and Tadesse (2021), the interplay between political instability and perceived threats to national security can significantly

undermine a government's legitimacy, leading to a cycle of violence and dysfunction. The evolving political landscape, particularly post-2018, has brought to light various facets influencing the government's legitimacy. Abiy's reforms, which included the release of political prisoners and the invitation for opposition parties to participate in the political process, initially generated substantial public support (International Crisis Group, 2019). This period was marked by a temporary surge in the government's legitimacy as it appeared to embrace democratic ideals and strive for a more inclusive governance framework. Nevertheless, the subsequent eruption of ethnic violence and civil unrest, particularly in regions like Tigray, has led to a steep decline in this legitimacy (Cohen, 2021).

This civil strife, characterized by accusations of human rights abuses and ethnic targeting, has not only destabilized the nation but has also eroded trust in state institutions (International Crisis Group, 2021). As violence persists, the government's failure to provide security and stability arguably delegitimizes its claims to authority, fostering an environment where rival factions can more easily challenge the state. Moreover, the Ethiopian government's reliance on heavy-handed military responses to quell dissent has further complicated its legitimacy. The use of force, often deemed necessary for national security, has led to widespread human rights violations, creating a perception among many citizens that the state prioritizes power retention over the protection of their rights and interests (McCracken, 2021). In this regard, the Ethiopian government risks alienating significant segments of the population, who may view state actions as oppressive rather than protective.

Finally we have sovereignty issue as determinant factor of state failure. Ethiopia is currently grappling with significant challenges that undermine its sovereignty due to national security threat. The precarious state of security has led to questions about the effectiveness of governance and the state's capacity to uphold its sovereign responsibilities, thus indicative of a larger phenomenon often referred to as state failure. In Ethiopia, the emergence of multiple ethnic-based conflicts, exacerbated by political tensions and economic instability, has resulted in a fragmented national identity (Abbala, 2020). The government, in its efforts to maintain order, has employed drastic measures that not only threaten the human rights of citizens but also question the state's legitimacy and authority (International Crisis Group, 2021). Moreover, Reports indicate that millions have been displaced due to armed conflicts, creating a

humanitarian emergency that exacerbates the state's inability to safeguard its citizenry (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2021). This situation further compounds Ethiopia's national security dilemmas and erodes its sovereignty, as external actors are often required to intervene in crisis management, highlighting the state's diminished capacity.

The regional complexities involving neighboring countries and their interests have further complicated Ethiopia's sovereign status. The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam project has spurred tensions with downstream nations, particularly Egypt and Sudan, raising fears of potential military conflicts over water resources (Beyene, 2021). The Ethiopian government's preoccupation with these diplomatic tensions detracts from its ability to effectively govern internally, thereby contributing to the perception of state failure.

State failure characterized by failure to safeguard sovereignty, lack of legitimacy, absence of rule of law and inability of government to provide goods and services could lead to a total collapse and disintegration. Ethiopia, a nation endowed with a rich tapestry of ethnic diversity, has faced profound challenges that threaten its national unity and stability due to conflicts and disagreements. "The consequence of these conflicts has been devastating. Not only has it resulted in the loss of life and destruction of physical capital, with detrimental implications for growth and development, but have at times threatened the very existence of the Ethiopian polity." (Alemayehu, 2004) The disintegration of the Ethiopian state can be attributed to several interrelated factors, but national security threats stand at the forefront.

Ethiopia faces mounting challenges related to internal conflicts and national security threats. These issues have not only exacerbated regional tensions but have also led to widespread mistrust among various ethnic and political groups, ultimately jeopardizing the nation's unity and stability. One of the primary sources of centrifugal force in Ethiopia is inequality and mismanagement of ethnic federalism. While the intention of this system was to grant self-determination to various ethnic groups, it has inadvertently exacerbated ethnic tensions and fostered a climate of competition among different groups for political power and resources (Abbink, 2011).

The Ethiopian government classified the TPLF as a terrorist group, marking a significant escalation in national security threats, leading to widespread violence, humanitarian crises and

allegations of ethnic cleansing (Brouwer, 2022). This conflict has deepened mistrust not only between the Tigrayan people and the federal government but also among other ethnic groups, fuelling a cycle of violence that threatens national cohesion. The fragmentation of authority and the rise of ethnic militias have further exacerbated national security concerns. As noted by the United Nations, the intertwining of local grievances with national security concerns facilitates an environment where mistrust flourishes, discouraging dialogue and collaboration among different communities (United Nations, 2022).

Various regions, such as Oromia and Amhara, have witnessed the emergence of ethnic nationalism, prompting violent clashes over land, resources, and political representation. As noted by Vaughan (2020), the resultant lawlessness and insecurity have enabled the proliferation of non-state actors, which jeopardizes the very essence of statehood in Ethiopia. As Wenig (2022) asserts, the erosion of public trust in state institutions undermines their effectiveness, making the prospect of state failure more pronounced. Moreover the instability generated from both within and beyond its borders has the potential to provoke further disintegration, necessitating a holistic approach to security that addresses both domestic and external factors (International Crisis Group, 2021).

#### **4.4.2. External Implication of Ethiopia's National Security Challenges**

The modern world is characterized by its interconnectedness, a phenomenon amplified by technological progress. This interconnectedness means that security challenges are no longer confined by national borders. The potential for these conflicts to escalate into broader regional instability cannot be overlooked, particularly given Ethiopia's strategic position in the Horn of Africa, where ethnic tensions often spill over national borders (Obuyi, 2021). A security crisis in one country can quickly escalate, affecting neighboring states, regional stability, and even international security. Factors contributing to instability, such as famine, climate change, warfare, and uneven development, highlight this interconnectedness, producing both positive and negative consequences globally. Instances like the crises in Yemen and Libya, and the ongoing situation in Ukraine, demonstrate how internal security problems can trigger international instability (Smith, 2024). Therefore, a deterioration of security in a populous nation like Ethiopia carries the potential to destabilize its neighbors and the East African region. Ethiopia currently faces significant national security threats that extend beyond its borders. The complexities of its

internal conflicts, particularly those arising from ethnic tensions and political instability, have the potential to generate external spillover effects. This phenomenon, as articulated by Houtum and Termine (2018), occurs when a state's internal issues adversely impact neighboring countries or the broader regional stability.

One important vector of spillover is the intensification of the humanitarian effect. Ethiopia, a nation of diverse ethnicities and cultures, has recently grappled with significant national security threats that have profound humanitarian implications. Amidst rising ethnic tensions, political strife, and armed conflict, the humanitarian fabric of the nation has been severely strained, affecting millions of its citizens. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, by early 2022, Ethiopia accounted for over 3 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), a reflection of not only the Tigray Conflict but also violence in the Amhara and Oromia regions (IDMC, 2022). The humanitarian impact of such displacement has been catastrophic, as displaced individuals often lack access to essential services, including food, shelter, and healthcare.

The instability in Ethiopia also affects neighboring countries, as refugees flee across borders seeking safety. This places additional strain on regional resources and stability. The Tigray conflict, for instance, has resulted in a severe humanitarian crisis, with widespread displacement, food insecurity, and human rights abuses. The international community is closely monitoring the situation and providing aid. Ethiopia has recently become a significant host nation for refugees, which, coupled with outflows to neighboring countries, presents complex security challenges. As the country shelters the largest refugee population in the region – estimated at over 900,000 individuals as of late 2024 (UNHCR, 2024) – Ethiopia faces potential security risks related to migration patterns. Moreover, substantial numbers of refugees have sought asylum in Sudan and Kenya. Specifically, Sudan has received approximately 75,000 Ethiopian refugees, while Kenya hosts around 45,000 (OCHA, 2025). These movements have the potential to strain resources in host countries, exacerbating regional security concerns.

Ethiopia's national security vulnerability could also empower the involvements of foreign powers and militant groups across the Horn of Africa. Ethiopia's security situation can potentially empower militant groups across the Horn of Africa. The porous borders of the region facilitate

the movement of armed factions, a reality observed in the aftermath of unrest in Ethiopia's Tigray region. Analysts have cautioned that instability in Ethiopia could embolden insurgencies in neighboring countries such as Somalia and Sudan, as well as raise the risk of cross-border incursions (International Crisis Group, 2021). This connectivity underscores the importance of regional cooperation in addressing security challenges. Endalcatchew (2022) stated the following as Ethiopia's fragile condition could affect the region.

“Based on this understanding, my findings indicate that Ethiopia is currently in a fragile condition and has started the process of descent into state failure. This apparent weakness of the state has devastating implications for the region, given the country's previous stabilizing role, large population, and shared border with other regional states, among others. I argue that unless the necessary actions are taken, the situation might become worse and further destabilize an already volatile region” (Endalcatchew, 2022).

Ethiopia's current security situation is uniquely shaped by the pervasive nature of external involvement in its internal conflicts. Neighboring states, perceiving the instability as an opportunity, have sought to advance their own agendas, directly or indirectly exacerbating the crisis. For instance, Eritrea has openly supported the Ethiopian federal government in the conflict (Abbink, 2021), while Sudan has engaged in border clashes with Ethiopian forces over contested agricultural lands, resulting in casualties on both sides (Reuters, 2023). Notably, Sudanese rebels have accused the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) of fighting alongside the Sudanese army. Furthermore, Egypt has amplified its discontent regarding the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) and Nile River usage, creating a situation ripe for potential conflict (Waterbury, 2017). The recent tensions between Ethiopia and Somalia over port access and agreements with Somaliland further compound the issue. In essence, Ethiopia's internal security challenges have directly fueled regional conflicts, potentially leading to further instability.

Ethiopia's geopolitical significance in the Horn of Africa cannot be underestimated. As a key player in the African Union (AU) and a contributor to regional peacekeeping efforts, Ethiopia's instability poses a challenge to the continent's security architecture. The AU's role in mediating conflicts in South Sudan and Somalia could be undermined if Ethiopian security threats remain unresolved, leading to potential deterioration of regional cooperative frameworks (Jones, 2020).

Furthermore, Ethiopia's strategic position and its relationships with global powers illustrate another dimension of spillover effects. The ongoing tensions, particularly regarding the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) project, can exacerbate relations with downstream nations like Sudan and Egypt. Disputes over water resources can lead to heightened geopolitical tensions, potentially involving external actors and complicating the security landscape (Elham and Mohamed, 2020). On the other hand the country plays a pivotal role within the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), tasked with mediating regional conflicts and fostering cooperative security frameworks. However, the ongoing internal strife undermines its capacity to engage effectively in regional diplomacy, contributing to a perception of instability that may foster external interventions or exacerbate regional rivalries, particularly with Eritrea and Somalia (International Crisis Group, 2021). Therefore; the outcomes of Ethiopia's internal conflicts bear significant implications for the broader African security agenda.

In conclusion, the national security threats faced by Ethiopia generate significant external spillover effects that threaten regional stability. Through refugee flows, the empowerment of militant groups, and heightened geopolitical tensions, Ethiopia's challenges are not isolated but resonate throughout the Horn of Africa. It is imperative for regional and international stakeholders to engage collaboratively to address these multifaceted challenges, ensuring a more stable and secure neighborhood.

#### **4.4.3. Affirmative Implications**

National security threats in Ethiopia since 2018 have largely stemmed from instability, conflict, and humanitarian crises. However, these challenges can be analyzed through a dual perspective. While the negative consequences are evident, there are also unexpected positive outcomes that may arise from these turbulent times. For instance, the ongoing conflicts have prompted opportunities for national dialogue among various stakeholders, fostering a sense of collective responsibility. By bringing together different actors, the country can better understand the diverse interests at play, which, in turn, can lead to more inclusive governance. Moreover, these crises have highlighted the urgent need for institutional reforms. Learning from the hardships faced, the Ethiopian government and civil society can work together to strengthen institutions, making them more resilient and effective in the face of future challenges. Long-term conflict resolution mechanisms can also emerge from these adversities. As communities experience the

impacts of conflict firsthand, there is an increased recognition of the need for sustainable solutions. This recognition can lead to initiatives that promote peace building and reconciliation, thus addressing the root causes of conflict rather than just the symptoms. Thus, while Ethiopia faces significant national security threats, the challenges present unique opportunities for dialogue, reform, and long-term solutions. Understanding these multifaceted implications can help policymakers leverage the current crisis for positive change.

One notable implication of this study is that the ongoing security challenges in Ethiopia may serve as a critical lesson for all stakeholders involved in the conflict, including the government, politicians, and the general populace. Currently, Ethiopia is engulfed in a maelstrom of war, conflict, political instability, displacement, inflation, and loss of life. This dire situation places immense pressure on its citizens and highlights the severe consequences of unrest. As people become increasingly wary of their circumstances, there lies an opportunity for reflection and motivation to seek solutions. Research suggests that experiential learning—what people learn through practical, lived experiences—is often more profound and persuasive than theoretical knowledge (Kolb, D. A., 1984).

Ethiopia's tribulations could therefore be a catalyst for widespread awakening and promote transformative changes within society. Historical precedents indicate that many nations have emerged as democracies following severe hardships. For example, the post-World War II landscape in Germany serves as a poignant illustration. The nation, reeling from economic ruin and social strife, experienced a significant shift toward democracy with the establishment of the Federal Republic of Germany. This transition was informed by the harsh lessons drawn from the experiences of totalitarianism under the Nazi regime, which underscored the critical importance of democratic governance and the rule of law (Dahl, R. A., 1989). Similarly, Spain's transition from the oppressive Franco dictatorship to a democratic government in the mid-1970s exemplifies how societal demands for change can emerge from prolonged periods of repression. The economic difficulties and social unrest of that era invigorated public engagement and ultimately facilitated Spain's democratic revolution (Gunther, R., & Montero, J. R., 2001).

Ethiopia's current security challenges can also hold the potential to inspire positive political transformation, mirroring the democratic transitions witnessed in various countries throughout

history. By navigating this period of turmoil, Ethiopia can harness the lessons of hardship to foster a more accountable and democratic political landscape.

The challenges facing Ethiopia would also provide a lens through which to explore the authentic behaviors and interests of its diverse groups. With over 85 distinct nations, Ethiopia's rich tapestry of ethnic diversity generates a plethora of social, economic, and political interests. The reality of national security issues and ongoing conflicts has rendered the interests of various ethnic groups more pronounced. These interests manifest in both organized and unorganized forms, including political parties, civic organizations, media outlets, and prominent individuals. For instance, the current political climate has spotlighted the Tigray and Oromo identities, with calls for sovereign independence (or secession) gaining momentum. In contrast, Amharas, who historically have seen themselves as centralizing forces within the nation, are now advocating for the establishment of a sovereign Amhara nation as well (personal communication May,23, 2024).

Moreover, regional autonomy demands have emerged from various other ethnic groups, such as the Agews, Guragies, Walayta, and Kimants. These demands further illustrate the complex interplay of interests at play (personal communication may, 2024).The significance of religion in Ethiopia cannot be overlooked; it has shaped and influenced political dynamics substantially. For example, recent movements within religious communities show the independence aspirations of certain groups, like the Oromo bishops, who have proposed the establishment of their own independent church, while Tigray has already declared independence from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

These conflicts have laid bare the underlying interests of different groups that may have previously remained obscured. Understanding these diverse interests is crucial for the Ethiopian state, as it could facilitate addressing and reconciling the various needs and aspirations that have arisen due to conflicting interests. Such things will highlight the importance of inclusivity and dialogue in promoting peace and stability. As noted by Abbink (2012), "Ethiopia's ethnic federalism serves as both a source of conflict and a potential avenue for accommodating diversity," emphasizing the dual nature of the country's ethnic dynamics. Therefore, the ongoing

conflicts may provide essential insights into the complexities of Ethiopian society and suggest pathways toward a more unified future.

The other positive implication that current security problems may provide is increased Focus on National Dialogue and Reconciliation. Recent security issues in Ethiopia have, somewhat paradoxically, catalyzed a renewed emphasis on national dialogue and reconciliation. The ethnic violence that erupted in 2016 not only highlighted deep-rooted divisions within the country but also ignited grassroots movements advocating for inter-ethnic dialogue (personal communication May,23, 2024).This shift towards prioritizing collective identity over ethnic affiliations marks a critical transition in Ethiopia's social landscape. For instance, social media campaigns emerged, calling for unity and change, which eventually pressured the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) to undergo a leadership transformation. Although this change coincided with severe crises that Ethiopia is currently facing, it underscores the potential for constructive reform. Had this transition been managed effectively, it might have paved the way toward a prosperous future for the nation (personal communication, September, 14, 2021).

Conversely, the conflict in Tigray, along with other regional tensions, has exposed the urgent need for a comprehensive national dialogue to address historical grievances and facilitate reconciliation among diverse ethnic groups. In 2023, the Ethiopian government launched a national dialogue initiative aimed at involving various ethnic and political factions (BBC, 2023). However, criticism has arisen regarding the inclusivity and impartiality of the national dialogue established by the Prosperity Party. Many claim it is biased and exclusive, which raises questions about its effectiveness in genuinely representing the interests of all Ethiopians. As such, for national dialogue efforts to be fruitful, they must ensure broad participation and address diverse perspectives to create a truly reconciliatory framework (Bishop, 2023). The current security challenges in Ethiopia have stimulated discussions about national unity and reconciliation, the success of these initiatives hinges on their ability to facilitate meaningful dialogue that includes all voices in the nation.

Leading to Opportunities for Institutional Reform is another positive implication of Ethiopia's national security challenges. Ethiopia's national security challenges, particularly internal conflicts and ethnic tensions, can paradoxically create opportunities for significant institutional

reforms. Such security threats often compel governments to introspectively reassess their political, economic, and security policies. Take, for instance, the ongoing Tigray conflict and other regional disputes, which have ignited nationwide discussions about the efficacy of ethnic federalism and the imperative for a more inclusive political framework. If stakeholders recognize the urgent need for unity and representation amidst these challenges, this could trigger reforms that enhance democratic governance (personal communication May, 23, 2024).

The presence of security threats serves as a catalyst for increased political engagement among citizens, urging them to demand accountability and reform from their leaders. A poignant example of this can be observed in the aftermath of Hachalu Hundessa's assassination in 2020, which incited widespread protests across Ethiopia. These demonstrations were pivotal, as they underscored the public's demand for political reform and respect for human rights. As noted by Amnesty International, such protests marked a critical juncture in Ethiopia's political awakening (Amnesty International, 2020). Thus, while Ethiopia grapples with significant national security challenges, these very challenges may foster an encouraging environment for reform and democratic development.

Historical evidence supports the notion that nations emerging from adversity often gravitate toward democratic governance as a pathway to reconciliation and stability. The political reforms initiated in 2018 in Ethiopia exemplify this trend, resulting in a temporary expansion of media freedoms and civil society space. These changes allowed for more comprehensive public discourse surrounding national security and governance (Human Rights Watch, 2021). As a result, citizens became increasingly empowered to hold their government accountable and advocate for peace and justice, enriching Ethiopia's democratic landscape.

Furthermore, the internal conflicts and security threats have adversely impacted Ethiopia's economic stability. Governments facing conflict often pivot towards investing in social and economic development initiatives, subsequently resulting in long-term benefits for affected communities. For example, by diversifying its economy and promoting investment in sectors like technology and renewable energy—less susceptible to disruptions—the government can illustrate resilience and adaptability in the face of challenges. This diversification is crucial; it can galvanize various stakeholders, including international organizations, to address conflict-

induced difficulties. Entities such as the United Nations and the World Food Programme have mobilized resources to combat food insecurity and displacement, demonstrating the dual imperative for immediate relief and the establishment of long-term development programs that address the root causes of instability, such as poverty and inequality.

The rise of security threats from various militant groups has additionally prompted Ethiopia to reevaluate its defense strategies and enhance its security infrastructure. This includes fostering collaboration with international partners to strengthen military and intelligence capabilities (personal communication, March, 11, 2024). Such threats have necessitated improvements in national security frameworks, resulting in robust defense mechanisms and greater regional cooperation. Moreover, these security challenges have revealed significant weaknesses in Ethiopia's governance and security institutions, leading to an amplified demand for reform. For instance, the politicization of military and police forces has sparked discussions on the need for these institutions to operate professionally and serve national interests, rather than partisan ones (International Crisis Group, 2022). Implementing these reforms could enhance accountable governance and reduce the likelihood of future conflicts.

Finally, the internal conflicts and adjoining regional disputes underscore the necessity for establishing effective conflict resolution mechanisms. Such frameworks would not only help in preventing future conflicts but also promote sustainable peace across the nation, ultimately fostering a more stable and resilient society.

Generally, Challenges are typically perceived as detrimental to the nation's stability and development; however they can also serve as catalysts for growth and positive transformation, provided they are approached strategically. For instance, ethnic conflicts, while harmful, can unveil deeper societal issues that necessitate reforms and dialogue among different groups. By understanding the root causes of these conflicts, stakeholders can work towards solutions that foster unity rather than division. Additionally, the political upheaval can act as a wake-up call for the government and civil society to engage in meaningful conversations about governance and inclusivity, thereby aligning with the aspirations of the populace for a more representative political system (Kefale, 2021). Regional tensions, particularly with neighboring countries, present another dimension wherein Ethiopia can leverage its geopolitical position. By fostering

diplomatic relations and cultivating cooperative initiatives, Ethiopia might not only enhance its security but also improve its standing within the Horn of Africa. As Adeba (2020) noted, collaboration on shared challenges such as climate change and regional security could transform adversarial relationships into partnerships for stability and prosperity. Nonetheless, the key to turning these vulnerabilities into opportunities lies in a careful and thoughtful acknowledgment of the existing issues. This requires genuine interest from all parties involved and the capacity to engage in constructive reforms. The process involves stakeholders recognizing their roles in the national narrative, as well as the importance of inclusivity and dialogue in addressing these multifaceted challenges (Zewde, 2019).

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

#### 5.1. Conclusion

The concept of national security is essential in both domestic and global politics, encompassing a wide range of issues that make it challenging to define universally. Traditionally, national security has been viewed as the protection of the state from external aggression and threats to its territorial integrity and sovereignty. However, the modern understanding expands this framework to include both external and internal threats, alongside individual security. While many national definitions emphasize threats from abroad, in its modern conception, security is equated with the 'security of individuals, not just security of their nations. Thus, national security reflects a state's capacity to defend itself and its citizens against various threats, both external and internal.

Current Security Landscape in Ethiopia is frustrating. Throughout its history, Ethiopia has grappled with wars and conflicts over resources, such as land, water, and political power. The current situation is particularly alarming, with a risk of state disintegration. Since 2018, Ethiopia's security environment has deteriorated sharply, marked by significant casualties, widespread displacement, and destruction due to various conflicts—especially in the Tigray, Amhara, and Oromia regions. Ethiopia has faced escalating national security vulnerabilities, characterized by rising ethnic tensions, armed conflicts, and regional disputes. The political reforms initiated by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, while aimed at promoting democratization and reconciliation, have inadvertently fueled instability, revealing deep-seated ethnic and political fractures within the nation. The transition from a coalition government to a more centralized system reflects growing nationalism and competition among ethnic groups, undermining the principles of ethnic federalism that have previously shaped Ethiopian politics. As groups such as the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), and regional militias assert their political demands, the risk of fragmentation and conflict intensifies.

Challenges within the Security Sector and the response of Ethiopian government are intensifying the problems. Ethiopia's security sector has faced longstanding criticism from various political

regimes throughout its history. Each successive government, from the Derg to the current administration, has highlighted the failures of its predecessors. Historically, Ethiopia has employed military force to secure the state, utilizing institutions such as the National Defense Force, the National Security and Intelligence Agency, and the Federal Police. For the security apparatus to effectively address the challenges facing the country, these organizations must be reformed to enhance their independence and professionalism.

Ethiopia's vulnerabilities stem from a range of internal and external pressures. Internally, challenges include ethnic clashes, a leadership crisis, insufficient political liberalization, poverty, ineffective federalism, religious extremism, misuse of media, and a lack of consensus on national issues. Externally, threats arise from historical invasions, the competition for Nile River resources, and regional border disputes. The relationship with Egypt remains particularly strained due to concerns over Nile water usage, posing ongoing national security threats.

The security incidents in Ethiopia since 2018 have profound implications for national stability, leading to economic decline, diminished state power, regional destabilization, and potential state failure. Persistent ethnic tensions and violence threaten the fragile social contract underpinning Ethiopian society. Moreover, the government's reliance on military force to suppress dissent raises concerns about potential authoritarianism and the erosion of democratic norms. The Tigray conflict has particularly underscored the inherent risks of ethnic federalism, exacerbating divisions and fostering mistrust among various ethnic groups.

The urgency for a comprehensive approach to conflict resolution and reconciliation is clear. The implications of these security challenges extend beyond immediate violence and instability; they significantly hinder Ethiopia's economic development by deterring investment and disrupting trade. Additionally, the humanitarian crises resulting from these conflicts place immense pressure on the government, often stretching its resources thin. The challenges Ethiopia faces generate external spillover effects, threatening regional stability through refugee flows, empowerment of militant groups, and increased geopolitical tensions throughout the Horn of Africa. It is imperative for regional and international stakeholders to engage collaboratively to address these multifaceted challenges, promoting a more stable and secure environment.

Since 2018, national security threats in Ethiopia have largely revolved around instability, conflict, and humanitarian crises, which can be examined through a dual lens. While these adverse developments pose significant risks, they may also pave the way for constructive transformations. Unintended positive implications have emerged from these challenges, such as a better understanding of the behaviors and interests of various societal groups, fostering genuine national dialogue, and prompting essential political, economic, and security reforms. However, the key to transforming these vulnerabilities into opportunities lies in a thoughtful acknowledgment of existing issues, necessitating genuine commitment from all stakeholders. Engaging in inclusive dialogue and reforms will be crucial for addressing the complex challenges facing Ethiopia and fostering a more coherent national narrative.

## **5.2. Recommendations**

Ethiopia's national security landscape has undergone significant transformations since 2018, marked by both internal and external challenges. The political reforms initiated by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, aimed at fostering democracy and stability, have also unleashed long-suppressed ethnic tensions and regional grievances. The conflict in the country has been a devastating manifestation of these tensions, resulting in widespread human suffering, displacement, and a severe strain on national cohesion. Additionally, Ethiopia faces security threats from neighboring countries, including the dispute over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) with Egypt and Sudan, as well as the spillover effects of instability in Somalia and South Sudan. The government's response to these challenges has been multifaceted, highlighting concerns over human rights abuses, the politicization of security forces, and the marginalization of certain ethnic groups. While the international community has attempted to mediate conflicts and provide humanitarian aid, its influence has been limited by geopolitical considerations and the complexity of Ethiopia's internal dynamics. Given these security challenges, the study proposes the following recommendations:

1. Strengthening National Dialogue and Reconciliation

Addressing the root causes of ethnic conflicts is crucial for long-term stability. The dialogue should be inclusive, independent, and effective. The Ethiopian government should prioritize inclusive national dialogue involving all ethnic groups, political parties, and civil society organizations. Implementing these dialogue processes at both national and regional levels can help bridge divides and foster a sense of shared identity. This dialogue should focus on addressing historical grievances, promoting reconciliation, and building a shared vision for the future. Furthermore, tackling the confrontation between decentralization and centralization can help accommodate Ethiopia's diverse ethnic groups, mitigating tensions and promoting healing.

## 2. Establishing a Transitional Government

Establishing a transitional government is critical, as security issues often stem from political representation and power imbalances, alongside historical grievances and economic challenges. The current government, perceived as weak and lacking legitimacy, may not facilitate authentic dialogue. A transitional government can reverse the risk of disintegration and create a framework for inclusive discussions.

## 3. Enhancing Governance and Rule of Law

Good governance is essential for building public trust, reducing corruption, and preventing abuses of power, thus mitigating sources of conflict. A well-trained, disciplined, and independent security force is vital for maintaining law and order. Investment in training, equipment, and professionalization of security forces will improve their ability to respond effectively to threats while respecting human rights. The study recommends strengthening democratic institutions, promoting transparency and accountability in governance, reforming security institutions, and implementing conflict resolution mechanisms. Developing early warning systems at regional and local levels can help identify potential conflicts before they escalate.

## 4. Promoting Economic Development and Poverty Alleviation

Economic challenges are significant to national security in Ethiopia. Promoting economic development, particularly in conflict-affected regions, can reduce socio-economic drivers of instability. This includes creating job opportunities, improving infrastructure, and supporting local industries. Expanding access to education, healthcare, and social services can address root causes of discontent and promote social cohesion.

#### 5. Fostering Regional and International Cooperation

Regional cooperation is essential for addressing transnational threats and promoting stability in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa. Constructive dialogue with neighboring countries should focus on resolving border disputes, promoting economic integration, and addressing shared security challenges such as terrorism and migration. Engaging with international partners to mobilize financial and technical assistance for peace building, development, and security sector reform is vital. Ethiopia should maintain diplomatic relations with neighboring countries and the broader international community to resolve disputes, including the GERD issue, and secure support for its peace building efforts.

In conclusion, Ethiopia's national security challenges since 2018 are deeply rooted in historical, ethnic, and political complexities. A comprehensive approach combining political, economic, and social reforms, along with robust engagement with the international community, is essential to address these challenges. By establishing a transitional government, promoting good governance and the rule of law, strengthening national dialogue and reconciliation, advancing economic development and poverty alleviation, and fostering regional and international cooperation, Ethiopia can work toward reversing its security challenges.

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## 7. Appendix

### *Appendix A: Interview*

Dear, Respondent

First of all, I want to say thank you for your interest to conduct this email interview. Saying that With this interview, the researcher intends to assess current national security threats of Ethiopia along with their challenges and implications. Since this research is being done for academic purpose, I can assure you that all verbal and written responses are confidential. Meanwhile, the researcher wishes to bring in to your attention that the outcome of this study will highly depend on your Sincere and timely response.

#### Open –ended Questions related to National security of Ethiopia.

1. In your view, what are the main internal challenges to Ethiopia's national security since 2018?
2. How have issues such as ethnic tensions, political instability, and governance impacted national security?
3. Is federalism the cause of conflict in Ethiopia?
4. What role do social media and public discourse play in shaping perceptions of security issues in Ethiopia?
5. What external factors do you believe pose the greatest challenges to Ethiopia's national security?
6. How do geopolitical rivalries and relationships with neighboring countries affect Ethiopia's security situation?
7. How do you perceive the influence of foreign nations and international organizations on Ethiopia's security dynamics?
8. What are the main implications of national security threats for the stability and integrity of the Ethiopian state?
9. What do you think the future fate of Ethiopia?
10. What external implications do you foresee for the region and the world due to Ethiopia's national security threats?

11. How might instability in Ethiopia affect its neighbors and international relations in the Horn of Africa? In what ways do you think Ethiopia's security situation impacts regional security in the Horn of Africa?

12. What international consequences could arise from instability in Ethiopia?

13. What strategies would you like to see implemented to strengthen Ethiopia's national security?

14. How important do you think national dialogue and reconciliation are in this process?

15. How can citizens, civil society, and government work together to create a more secure future for Ethiopia?

- For genuinely doing so by devoting your time and exerting effort, the researcher really remains very grateful to you.

**Declarations**

By my signature below, I affirm that this thesis is my own original work. I have exerted my utmost effort to avoid plagiarism and have adhered to all ethical principles of scholarship throughout the preparation, data collection, analysis, and completion of this thesis. I have properly referenced all scholarly sources through citations and references. I also declare that this thesis has not been submitted elsewhere to any institution for the purpose of obtaining any academic degree or diploma.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_