DSPACE

https://dspace.org/

Ethnic Federalism and Social Cohesion in Ethiopia

Gebiso, Meseret Tesfaye

2023-10
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
https://hdl.handle.net/10539/38955
Gebiso, Meseret Tesfaye. (2023). Ethnic Federalism and Social Cohesion in Ethiopia [Master's dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg]. WireDSpace. https://hdl.handle.net/10539/38955

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

ETHNIC FEDERALISM AND SOCIAL COHESION IN ETHIOPIA

Meseret Tesfaye Gebiso

A research report submitted to the School of Governance, Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, in 50% of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management (in the field of Public Policy).

October, 2023

Table of Contents

Abstract 3

Declaration 3

Acknowledgment 4

Chapter 1 Introduction and Background 5

1.1. Research Problem 8

1.2. Research Purpose 9

1.3. Research Objectives 9

1.4. Research Question 10

Chapter 2 Literature Overview and Conceptual Framework 11

2.1. Introduction 11

2.2. Ethnic Diversity and Conflict 11

2.3. Social Cohesion 13

2.4. Social Cohesion and Institutions 16

2.5. Social Cohesion and Conflict 18

2.6. Ethnicity and the Institution of Ethnic Federalism 20

2.7. Ethnic Federalism and Social Cohesion 22

2.8. Ethiopian Ethnic Federalism and Social Cohesion 23

2.9. Analytical and Conceptual Framework 26

Chapter 3 Research Methodology 29

3.1. Research Approach 29

3.2. Research Tools and their Application 29

3.3. Sampling 30

3.4. Process of Analysis 31

3.5. Limitations, Feasibility & Positionality 33

3.6. Ethical Considerations 34

3.7. Credibility, Dependability and Confirmability 34

Chapter 4 Presentation and Analysis of Secondary Data 35

4.1 Prevalence and Impact of Conflicts 35

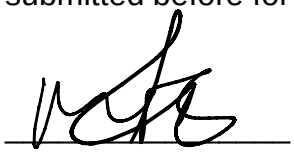
4.2 Data on Dimension of Social Cohesion 39
4.3. Vulnerability to Conflict 44
4.4. Preference on Political Parties and Federalism System 46
Chapter 5 Presentation and Interpretation of Primary Data 48
5.1. Inter-Ethnic Conflicts and Violence in Ethiopia 48
5.1.1. The Accuracy of Secondary Data Findings on the Level of Conflict 48
5.1.2. Change in the Nature of Conflicts 50
5.2. The Ethnic Federalism System and Social Cohesion 52
5.2.1. The Ethnic federalism System 52
5.2.2. The Federalism System's Implication for Inter-ethnic Group Cohesion 54
5.2.3. Ethnic Identification 57
5.2.4. How Minorities are Affected 58
5.2.5. The 2018 Transition and Increase in Conflict 59
5.2.6. The Ethnic Federalism System and the Civil War 63
5.2.7. Ethnicity as a Basis for Political Organisation 64
5.2.8. Can the System be Implemented Better or Improved? 65
5.2.9. On the Possibility of Alternative form of Federal Arrangement 68
Chapter 6 Discussion of Findings 71
6.1. On Dimensions of Social Cohesion 71
6.2. Conflict and Social Cohesion 74
6.3. The Role of Ethnic Federalism 76
6.3.1. Ethnic Federalism, Identity and Inter-ethnic Cohesion 77
6.3.2. Ethnic Federalism and Conflict 79
6.4. Ethnic Federalism and Social Cohesion in Ethiopia 81
Chapter 7 Conclusion and Recommendation 85
7.1. Conclusion 85
7.2. Recommendations 88
List of References 91
Appendices 100
Interview Questions 100

Abstract

As an ethnically diverse country of more than eighty ethnic groups, Ethiopia adopted ethnic-federalism system in 1995. Ever since its adoption, the system has been a very controversial subject in Ethiopia. The discourse on the issue has been very polarised. This study explores the relationship between the ethnic federalism system and social cohesion in Ethiopia so as to contribute to the discourse with empirical evidence and analysis which is lacking in the Ethiopian context. Primary narrative data that is interviews of key informants and secondary data from international data bases is employed to answer the research question. The secondary data analysis has illustrated that conflicts and violence have significantly increased and social cohesion is declining. The primary data analysis has revealed that the system's narratives, structures and implementations strengthened exclusive identities; incentivised elite behaviours that lead to conflicts and violence. Overall, the findings indicated that the ethnic federalism system has played a role in the erosion of inter-ethnic cohesion and in increasing inter-ethnic conflicts and violence

Declaration

I declare that this report is my own, unaided work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Management (in the field of Public Policy) in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.



Meseret Tesfaye Gebiso

31 October 2023

Acknowledgment

I am very grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Christine Hobden- for her valuable guidance throughout the research process, for her commitment, patience, understanding. I also thank Dr. Erin McCandless for her assistance during the proposal development stage and early phase of report writing. I really appreciate Hallelujah Lulie's valuable help in connecting me with some of the key informants for the interview data. I am grateful to my husband, Biniam, for all the love, support and encouragement he gave me that helped me push forward throughout my coursework and research process and for the beautiful life that we share. I am always grateful for my entire family and especially my parents for their endless love. And I am most grateful to my son Barkon, for the love and joy he is.

Chapter 1 Introduction and Background

Ethiopia is a country of more than eighty ethnic groups. The country was a unitary state with a highly centralised government until the adoption of the 1995 constitution which restructured Ethiopia into a federal state of nine regional ethnic states and two federally administered cities. Since the adoption of the constitution institutionalising ethnic federalism system, there have been debates that it can threaten stability and unity of the country. And since 2016 violent inter-ethnic conflicts have been increasing signifying that social cohesion is declining. This study explores the relationship between the ethnic federalism system and social cohesion at the national level.

The ethnic federal system is a very contested issue in Ethiopia; it is also the most polarising one. The proponents argue that before the adoption of the ethnic federalism system, many ethnic identity groups used to be forced to assimilate in the name of unity (Gudina, 2015; Habtu, 2003). These different ethnicities were not represented in politics. Nor have identity groups demanding self-rule been granted this. Instead, in the pre-federalism era, the Amhara, which according to Central Statistical Agency (2007), comprises 27% of the population used to dominate the political space. Hence, the proponents of the system argue that the ethnic federal system has given different ethnic groups self-rule and ensured fair representation at the federal level (Gudina, 2015; Habtu, 2003). The opponents of the system, on the other hand, believe that this system creates more problems than it solves. They argue that this system has magnified ethnic differences, created division, and threatened national unity (Anderson, 2014; Bayu, 2022; Fessha, 2017; Kefale, 2010). Some advocate for a territorial rather than ethnic federalism system (Mamdani, 2019).

While the federal system was adopted in 1995, and formally the country seemed to have a decentralised state structure, the then ruling party, Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) which was a coalition of ethnic parties, continued the de facto centralisation of power through the party's centralised system based on the Leninist principle of "democratic centralism". Democratic centralism is a practice used by ruling parties in some countries to enable a unified/centralised state power whereby the top leadership of the party makes most of the decisions (von

Beyme, 1975). It was through this centralised system that the allocation of federal-level administrative, political and defence positions had been managed. Moreover, it was an authoritarian system that used force to keep nationalist movements under control (Yusuf, 2019).

This started to change as Oromo protests which reached its peak in 2016 took place across the Oromia region, which is a region of the largest ethnic group. The Oromo protest started in 2015 as an opposition to the government's master plan to expand the boundaries of the capital city, Addis Ababa into the surrounding Oromia region. The protests were initially against the displacement of Oromo farmers from their land as part of implementation of this plan. But they morphed into demands for more political and socioeconomic rights. In 2016 the protests spread to the Amhara region. The government used violence to repress these mass protests but that only led to their intensification and for opposition forces in and outside the country to become somewhat united (Kelecha, 2021 Dias and Yetena, 2022). In early 2018 the unrest in the country finally forced the then Prime Minister, Hailemariam Desalegn to resign and for the ruling party to pursue a series of major political reforms.

As a result, in 2018, a new prime minister, Abiy Ahmed Ali came to power and the country transitioned towards political liberalisation. Even though there was optimism at the beginning of this new era, it did not take long for conflicts to emerge – notably in border areas across different ethnic regions and between minorities and the majorities within regions. These conflicts increased in number and intensity and have displaced millions (Human Rights Watch, 2019). Then, in November 2020 a civil war broke out between the central government and a regional government, the Tigrayan regional government, Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF). The war broke out after two years of tensions between Abiy's administration and TPLF (International Crisis Group, 2020). The TPLF used to be the dominant party within the coalition EPRDF dominating politics for three decades. However, under Abiy's administration the TPLF was sidelined. In 2019, when Abiy dissolved the EPRDF and formed a new party, Prosperity Party, the TPLF refused to join this new party and retreated to Tigray region. The tensions kept escalating as TPLF kept defying the federal government and finally leading to war which lasted two years (International Crisis Group, 2020; Peralta, 2020; Yibeltal, 2019).

Other conflicts in the country's other regions have also been flaring up. At the time this study concluded, the Amhara region is under state of emergency because of conflicts between Amhara youth militia and the central government (ENA, 2023). The chaos in Ethiopia has shown the state's fragility and even led some to speculate that the country could be at the verge of state failure (Bayeh, 2022).

There have been arguments that ethnic federalism is to be blamed for the increased ethnic tensions, ethnic conflicts, and polarisation. Restructuring the country along ethnic lines and decades of politicisation of ethnicity has led to inter-ethnic conflicts and polarisation along ethnic lines (Abbink, 2006; Bayu, 2022; Kefale, 2013; Mamdani, 2019). The ethnic divisions and polarisation have made it impossible for political elites to bridge differences and reach a semblance of consensus.

At the beginning of the 2018 transition, cognisant of the increasing ethnic divisions, the current government came up with initiatives that focus on fostering unity and national pride. There have also been political parties suggesting that geography-based rather than ethnic-based federalism should be adopted. However, most ethnic-based political parties reject this suggestion. This study on the role of ethnic federalism in the declining social cohesion will enable an exploration of these debates and decisions through systematic analysis and empirical evidence.

Social cohesion is often defined as the 'glue' or 'bond' that keeps societies together (Capshaw, 2005; Larsen, 2014). Socially cohesive societies have common identity, sense of belonging, trust, and tolerance that enables them to exist as one community (Green et al., 2009, p. 8). Thus, social cohesion is essentially the presence of a good relationship between individuals and groups in a country that enables them to resolve differences peacefully (Langer et al., 2017, p. 322). Thus, it is both the presence of bond and the absence of violent conflicts (Colletta & Cullen, 2000, p. 12; Kawachi & Berkman, 2000, p. 175; Manca, 2014, p. 6027). The study of social cohesion focuses on the institutional and social forces at work to make this possible (Harell & Stolle, 2011, p. 15). This is because institutions can either promote or cause a decline in social cohesion (Cox & Sisk, 2017, p. 17; Easterly et al., 2006, p. 116). These institutions could be constitutions, administrative structures, policies on election, policies on political party organisation, and educational policies. Since institutions set the rules of the game incentivising political behaviours and they serve

as a means to resolve different interests. In a multi-ethnic society like Ethiopia institutions that are designed to manage the ethnic diversity can have a significant role to play in inter-ethnic group cohesion. That is why this research endeavours to understand the role ethnic federalism as an institution played in social cohesion in Ethiopia

1.1. Research Problem

Polarisation along ethnic lines is an increasing phenomenon in Ethiopia. Violence and ethnic conflicts are becoming very common. The rule of law, security, and safety have been deteriorating (Yusuf, 2019). Reaching political consensus has become difficult. And the country has gone through two years of civil war that broke out in 2020 and more conflicts are erupting.

Conflict and violence are indicators of a decline in social cohesion as various studies in other countries have shown that there is a significant relationship between lack of social cohesion and an increase in conflicts and violence (Langer et al., 2017; United Nations & World Bank, 2018). This lack of social cohesion is usually attributed to institutions and policies (Beauvais & Jenson, 2002; Cox & Sisk, 2017; Easterly et al., 2006; Hooghe, 2011). Similarly, in Ethiopia too, there are assertions that ethnic federalism has played a big role in the creation of conflicts (Abbink, 2006; Mamdani, 2019; Selassie, 2003).

Ethnic federalism is a system that subdivides the country into sub-units/regions along ethnic lines. Many ethnic federations have disintegrated in history (Anderson (2014). There are studies done showing that ethnic federalism system can incentivise ethnic elites to exploit ethnic differences, evoke historical disadvantages and grievances to mobilise people and gain support and political power; that ethnic federalism can cause conflict and division threatening national unity (Abbink, 2006; Anderson, 2014; Bereketeab, 2011; Selassie, 2003). The challenges Ethiopia is facing in terms inter-ethnic conflicts is attributed to the federal system (Aalen, 2006; Frank, 2009).

Even though existence of conflicts indicates a decline in social cohesion, no systematic empirical research to my knowledge has been done examining the relationship between ethnic federalism and social cohesion in Ethiopia. Social

cohesion is still a developing concept and the majority of published research around the subject of social cohesion is concentrated in the western world with only South Africa, from African countries, having some shares of this (Chan et al, 2006; Leininger et al., 2021; Moustakas, 2022).

A study examining the role ethnic federalism plays in social cohesion will create a deeper understanding of the relationship and the particular ways in which ethnic federalism influences social cohesion, contributing to divisions and ethnic tensions in Ethiopia. By doing so, the study aims to enable policymakers to devise effective policies and institutions to mitigate the effect. It can also contribute to scholarship and serve as an input for further research on the issue.

1.2. Research Purpose

This study aims to explore the relationship between the ethnic federalism system and social cohesion in Ethiopia. Since this is a little-explored relationship, this study intends to fill the gap in the policy and academic literature. It seeks to measure the social cohesion indicators and analyse the pattern and intensity of inter-ethnic conflicts. It intends to understand the role the ethnic federalism system has played in changing levels of social cohesion and inter-ethnic conflicts through narrative data from experts and politicians.

1.3. Research Objectives

This research seeks to:

- understand the prevalence, patterns and impact of inter-ethnic conflicts within and across regions throughout the country;
- assess the trend of social cohesion dimensions: trust, belonging, tolerance, solidarity;
- examine the evolution and implementation of the ethnic federalism system in the last three decades to trace how the workings of the institution of ethnic federalism has contributed to social cohesion;
- synthesise this data together with the literature to develop an analysis of the relationship between the ethnic federalism system and social cohesion in Ethiopia.

1.4. Research Question

This research aims to answer the question: What is the relationship between ethnic federalism and social cohesion in Ethiopia?

Sub-questions:

- What are the history patterns and impacts of inter-ethnic conflicts, ethnic tensions, and polarisation in Ethiopia over the past three decades?
- What is the trend of identification/belongingness, trust, tolerance and solidarity in Ethiopia?
- How did the workings of ethnic federalism system contribute to inter-ethnic conflicts and polarisation along ethnic lines in Ethiopia?

The next chapter of this research report presents the overview of the literature and conceptual framework, which discusses the central concepts and explains the analytical framework and measurement indices. The literature review argues that institutions influence social cohesion; they can promote or erode social cohesion. The social cohesion measurement indicators, their relevance and implications are discussed. It also looks at the implications of conflicts for social cohesion. A review of literature is done on ethnic federalism system as an institution and the possible ways it can influence social cohesion. It then looks at the literature in the Ethiopian context and identifies the gap that there is a need to look at the trend social cohesion indicators in Ethiopia, and explore the relationship with the Ethnic federalism system. The third chapter covers the research methodology which includes description of the research approach, the kind of data collected and sampling used. Chapter four will be presentation and analysis of secondary data while chapter five is presentation and analysis of primary data. The next chapter, chapter six is findings and interpretations. And the last part, chapter seven, is conclusion and recommendation.

Chapter 2 Literature Overview and Conceptual Framework

2.1. Introduction

This literature review defines and explains the central concepts of the study, examines the empirical studies done so far concerning the problem under investigation, identifies and explains the appropriate analytical framework and measurements and highlights the knowledge gap. The main themes in this literature overview are: i) Ethnic Diversity and Conflict, ii) Social Cohesion and Institutions, iii) Ethnicity and Ethnic federalism, iv) Social Cohesion and Conflict, v) Ethnic federalism and social cohesion.

The literature review begins by determining the relationship between the level of ethnic diversity and conflict. It then explores the concept of social cohesion, examines its relationship with institutions and discusses the implication of presence of conflict on social cohesion. It also looks at ethnic federalism as an institution and its implication for ethnic identity. Thereafter, it focuses on the discussion of social cohesion, and on examination of the literature on the relationship between ethnic federalism and social cohesion. It looks at arguments in the literature concerning the relationship between ethnic federalism, social cohesion and conflicts. And then it highlights the gap in empirical evidence on the interplay between the political system, indicators of social cohesion and the nature of conflicts in the Ethiopian context.

2.2. Ethnic Diversity and Conflict

When studying social cohesion in ethnically diverse societies, studies particularly focus on the relationship between the different ethnic groups (Langer et al., 2017, p. 324). The underlying relationship between ethnic diversity and conflict is often argued to be determined by the level of perceived threats to identity, resources and power. In a seminal paper in this field, (Gurr, 1994) argues that the most common drivers of ethnopolitical conflicts in the post-Cold War period were “contention for state power among communal groups in the aftermath of state formation, revolution, and efforts to democratise autocratic regimes” (Gurr, 1994, p. 347). At the micro level, the link between intergroup competition for limited resources and conflict has been established using experimental evidence as far back as the 1950s (Sherif et al., 1961).

More recent studies indicate that inter-group (inter-ethnic) cohesion can be positively or negatively affected by governance practices (McCandless, 2018, p. 54). This literature falls in line with the broader argument that ethnic diversity in and of itself has not been a cause for instability for countries historically (Berman, 2010, p. 3). Also, socially cohesive societies are not necessarily the ones that are homogenous or do not have diversity; they are rather those that have managed to direct their diversity towards socially optimal outcomes (Marc et al., 2013, p. 40).

Berman & Takahashi (2019, pp. 161–165) and Bereketeab (2011, p. 73) point out that it is the specific political situations of countries that lead to conflicts and a decline in social cohesion rather than the mere number of ethnic groups. In countries with a small number of ethnic groups like Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and Somalia, gruesome conflicts have occurred; these are cases where ethnicisation of political life led to ethnic cleansing and genocide. This observation is corroborated in a systematic statistical analysis of the effects of ethnic fractionalisation vs ethnic polarisation on conflict (Montalvo & Reynal-Querol, 2005). They construct an index of ethnic polarisation which takes a higher value when an ethnic majority is faced with a large ethnic minority instead of a large number of equally fragmented ethnic groups. Their analysis shows that ethnic polarisation is a more significant predictor of conflict than ethnic fractionalisation.

In a comprehensive quantitative study of civil conflicts covering multiple decades, Fearon & Laitin, (2003, p. 75) show that the most significant predictor of the risk of civil war is not the ethnic or religious characteristics of countries but rather the “conditions that favour insurgency”. They identify poverty, political instability, rough terrain and large populations as the most important factors that facilitate insurgency. Similarly, Easterly (2001, p. 701) argues that diversity increases the probability of conflicts, but institutional arrangements that set the rules of the game can mitigate the threat of violent conflicts. The existence of countries with high ethnic diversity but with no violent conflicts like Canada, Malaysia, and Thailand demonstrates that it is the quality of institutions that make a difference instead of high ethnic diversity.

The potential three-way relationship between ethnic fractionalisation, political institutions and economic development is another factor that complicates the empirical determination of the causal relationship in one or another direction (Alesina et al., 2003). Hence, it is not the mere existence of diversity that leads to ethnic

conflict and violence. Only few countries in the world are homogenous anyway (Horowitz, 1985, p. 601). Some ethnically diverse states experience ethnic conflict and violence and others do not. Even the presence of divisions itself does not necessarily lead to violence; it is Institutions that incentivise political behaviours (Horowitz, 1985, p. 684). As such there seems to be consensus in the literature that institutions and political arrangements make a difference in creating or averting conflict regardless of the degree of diversity.

2.3. Social Cohesion

The possible origin of the concept of social cohesion goes as far back as the 19C to the prominent sociologist Emile Durkheim's work (Larsen, 2014, p.3; Moustakas, 2022, p.1). However, it is over the past two decades that there have been a lot of attempts to define and conceptualise the term. Most of the global research on the topic of social cohesion is confined to high income countries with United States and United Kingdom taking the top two position of around 35% of the research. Other countries with a large share of the research on the subject include South Africa, China, Mexico and Brazil (Moustakas, 2022, pp. 5-6)

Social progress entails not only economic growth but also political and social factors. That is why countries like Australia, United Kingdom, Canada and European countries have policies and programs that gives special emphasis to promoting social cohesion. Social cohesion is an important factor to enable a society to move together in a common direction (Moustakas, 2022, p. 1). Defining and measuring social cohesion is however still a work in progress (Leininger et al., 2021). Even though there are a wide range of definitions much more effort is still needed to come up with clear cut measurements. The analysis of social cohesion in the literature is still inadequate (Chan et al., 2006).

Social cohesion is often defined as the 'glue' or 'bond' that keeps societies together (Capshaw, 2005; Larsen, 2014). It concerns both the vertical aspect of relationships in societies: state-society relations and horizontal aspect: relations between citizens, actors, groups, institutions (Chan et al., 2006, pp. 290, 294; McCandless, 2018, p. 49; UNDP, 2020, p. 18). Most accepted definitions focus on social cohesion being about relationship between different actors in a society; on behaviours and attitudes

of individuals and groups; and on social cohesion having both vertical and horizontal dimensions (Leininger et al., 2021, p.4).

The horizontal dimension is about the relationship between individuals or groups within a society. The horizontal aspect involves a relationship of trust, solidarity, sense of belonging between individuals and groups. The vertical dimension is about the relationship between individuals or groups with the state and public institutions. It comprises political participation, trust in public figures, confidence in political institutions (Chan et al., 2006)

According to Langer et al. (2017, p. 322), social cohesion is basically the presence of good relationships between citizens, between individuals and groups in a country, entailing a sense of belonging, acknowledgement of the whole society is greater than the parts and resolving disagreements in a peaceful manner. Another definition by Green et al. (2009, p. 8) lists attitudes and behaviours, including shared values, sense of belonging, common identity, trust, tolerance, and civic cooperation. Thus, the study of social cohesion focuses on the institutional and social forces at work to make all these possible. It focuses on how individuals separated geographically, politically, socially, are glued together into one community with shared values and identity (Harell & Stolle, 2011, p. 15).

There are various dimensions of social cohesion. According to Langer et al. (2017, p. 325) the dimensions are trust, identity, and perceived inequality. Whereas Jenson's (2010, p. 17) dimensions include feelings of belongingness, equality of opportunity, political participation, tolerance, and respect for diversity, legitimacy/ representativeness of institutions. Generally, the most accepted aspects and the ones that are used in measuring social cohesion empirically are trust, identity/ belongingness and solidary or cooperation.

Trust is considered an important part of social cohesion because when trust is absent in a country, it is impossible to find and agree on political solutions that are best for everyone, which results in sub-optimal outcome (Larsen, 2014, p. 5, 38). He states that in diverse societies, the level of social trust depends on the collective political action that aims to create a coherent society.

The trust aspect in social cohesion analysis is between different groups of society instead of trust within a group. In fact, having a very strong trust within a group can

work against creating trust among different groups (Leininger et al., 2021 pp. 4-5). The existence of broad-based trust is viewed as an indicator of a cohesive society. Trust is an important element in both horizontal and vertical social cohesion. Trust between different social groups serves as bridge and creates bond between them. On the other hand, trust that citizens have in national institutions is important since it is national institutions that hold a society together (Easterly et al., 2006). In empirical studies to measure trust, individuals are asked "generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?" (Larsen, 2014, p.5)

Identity/belongingness is the bond people have with their political community or country and is especially relevant in inter-group cohesion. A country's social cohesion can likely be at risk if people value their group/ethnic identity more than the national one. This will create a fertile ground for polarisation, conflict, and violence (Langer et al., 2017, p. 326). People identify to different social groups and can give emotional significance to some of their identities more than the other. These identities or one's identifications are very important factors for creating social cohesion. According to Chan et al (2006), identification is the most important aspect of social cohesion; without it the other aspects could just be part of general humanitarianism.

Leininger et al (2021, p. 5) present hierarchies of social identification and introduce the terms "subordinate" and "superordinate" to differentiate them. They state that the identities of a larger social group are superordinate, that they should be of more value to individuals for societies to be cohesive. Whereas identities of smaller groups should be subordinate. By the same token, national identity is superordinate identity to sub-national group identity. These hierarchies that individuals give to their different and overlapping identities have implications for social cohesion. But the meaning that people give to their identities is not fixed or static, it can change.

It is these supraordinate identity that links people together that are otherwise divided by ethnicity or culture (Harell & Stolle, 2011). If people give more significance to their group identification, for instance to their ethnicity, then they are more likely to have ingroup bias and they will behave in a way that favours their group at the expense of other groups or the nation at large. Hence, the emotional significance that people

give to their different identities needs to coexist in a balance in a way that enhances social cohesion and avoid tensions and conflicts between groups in a country (Leininger et al., 2021, p. 6).

While creation of superordinate identity can decrease ingroup bias, trying to strengthen inclusive national identity through suppressing subgroup identities can create tensions. It is when the superordinate national identity is enhanced while subgroup identities are still given a space to exist or co-exist that the relationship between groups improve (Leininger et al, 2021, p. 6). The challenge of this balancing act is also reflected in the tension between the concepts of civic nationalism and ethnic nationalism which often leads to severe disputes regarding the transition from primordial modes of association to rule-based citizenship (Tamir, 2019).

A society is said to be cohesive if people have a feeling of common identity/ belongingness to the society as a whole, not just to a specific sub-group; if they trust each other and cooperate. The subjective feelings of having common identity and trust affect their actual behaviour and cause them to cooperate. (Chan et al, 2006) Trust and inclusive identity create a conducive environment for citizens and for different groups to come together and work for an outcome that benefits the society at large. It creates a fertile ground for solidarity. Solidarity then is more of an outcome of the other dimensions of social cohesion.

The process of working for a common good in turn positively influences mutual trust and inclusive identity. Trust, identity, and cooperation/solidarity reinforce each other. Thus, in a cohesive society there is a virtuous cycle between these elements (Leininger et al., 2021, p. 9)

2.4. Social Cohesion and Institutions

The above sub-section on ethnic diversity and conflict has shown the emerging consensus in the literature regarding the moderating role of institutions for conflict in ethnically diverse socities. This sub-section focuses on the role of institutions for social cohesion in general, regardless of ethnic diversity.

State-level institutions and policies can either promote or cause a decline in social cohesion (Beauvais & Jenson, 2002, p. 14; Hooghe, 2011, p. 10; Cox & Sisk 2017, p. 17 and Easterly 2006, p. 116). This is not to mean that non-state institutions are

not important for social cohesion. For instance, the seminal study by Putnam (1995) on the decline of social cohesion in the United States points to declining civic engagement and participation in community organisations as a fundamental reason. However, the state is deemed to have a more critical role in modernising and democratising societies. Thus, when studying social cohesion, it becomes imperative to examine state-level institutional setups to understand what role they have played.

Based on the empirical observation that institutions and policies make a difference in promoting social cohesion, some authors have concluded that countries must see to it that their institutions and policies improve social cohesion or at least not cause a damage to it (see for example, Capshaw, 2005, p. 53,75). This is why most European countries explicitly include social cohesion in their policy agendas (Dobbernack, 2010, pp. 147, 148). One of the policies through which institutions can influence social cohesion is inclusion for both individuals and groups. For instance, Oxoby (2009, p. 1139) maintains that policies that promote equal access to education, healthcare and employment opportunities for all ethnic groups can improve social cohesion.

More broadly, welfare state institutions are often associated with improving social cohesion. For instance, in the 27 European Union countries, the better the social service quality, the higher is level of social cohesion within the country (Andrews & Jilke, 2016). But the effort to use inclusive institutions to improve social cohesion is not limited to the mature Western European welfare states. Several of the emerging social protection schemes in developing countries also aim to contribute to better social cohesion (Babajanian, 2012).

Governments also play an important role in creating social cohesion by designing and promoting “symbols, mottoes, pledges, and a national language” that create the “glue” that keeps societies together (Capshaw, 2005, p. 75). In societies that have diversity, it becomes even more critical to devise institutions and policies that will strengthen common identities as a nation and weaken exclusive ethnic identities (Capshaw, 2005, p. 53; Hino et al., 2019, p. 3). Such institutions could be as basic as well functioning party system. Bonotti (2017), for instance, argues partisanship contributes to social cohesion by exposing definitions of group identities to open contestation and promoting liberal values through the process. Thus, in studying social cohesion, and especially in multi-ethnic societies, it is essential to examine

state-level institutions and policies, and the particular ways these institutions work to understand what role they have played in promoting social cohesion (Berman & Takahashi, 2019, pp. 164–170).

2.5. Social Cohesion and Conflict

In its broader interpretation, social cohesion refers both to the presence of strong bond among social groups and the absence of conflict and polarisation, whether in ethnic or other forms (Colletta & Cullen, 2000, p. 12; Kawachi & Berkman, 2000, p. 175; Manca, 2014, p. 6027). In the presence of social cohesion, people are inclined to come together and work for the common good to overcome national crises, to prevent conflicts from happening, or to seize opportunities as a country which emanates from a sense of belongingness to same political community (Easterly et al., 2006, p. 105). Socially cohesive societies pursue mutually beneficial relationships and resolve differences peacefully and amicably. Social Cohesion is instrumental in avoiding potential conflicts (Hino et al., 2019, p. 2). It enables the various components of a state system to work harmoniously, which helps it to function efficiently and result in good governance (Cox et al., 2014, p. 29). Social cohesion is thus, a factor in creating a peaceful society (McCandless, 2020, p. 6).

Having a relatively high level of social cohesion does not mean that society will be immune to future erosion of cohesion or even conflict. For instance, the global crisis that was caused by the 2008 financial crisis has led to a series of adverse developments that have exposed growing tensions even in the most stable social democracies (Green & Janmaat, 2011). This means no society could be expected to have achieved complete social cohesion as countries and the global environment they exist in continue to evolve. The growing trend of political polarisation in many parts of the world including mature democracies such as the United States and illiberal democracies such as Turkey shows that social cohesion cannot be taken for granted (McCoy et al., 2018). Moreover, social cohesion is not something that can directly be achieved. Instead, countries strive to create situations that are conducive to promoting social cohesion (Koonce, 2011).

The presence of conflicts and violence is an indication that a society is not in a state of social cohesion. Research has shown that there is a strong relationship between a decline of social cohesion and an increase in conflicts and violence (Langer et al.,

2017, p. 336). These violent conflicts within societies destroy trust, cooperation, social bond, and unity (Colletta & Cullen, 2000, pp. 3–4). They cause loss of trust towards other groups and towards states' ability and interest in enforcing the rule of law and protecting citizens, which, according to Hino et al. (2019, p. 3), are not easy to replenish.

The lack of social cohesion does not only make conflict more likely but the resulting conflict makes it harder to foster social cohesion in the future (Fiedler & Rohles, 2021). As such, the initial lack of social cohesion could eventually lead to an even larger gap in social cohesion through a cycle of conflict and mistrust. However, sociological research suggests that the presence of intergroup conflict can have the effect of strengthening the emotional bond between group members as well as promoting in-group and out-group stereotyping (Benard & Doan, 2011). Ultimately, the process can contribute to reshaping social interactions by solidifying inter-group divisions. Social cohesion is thus deemed to be as both "an independent and dependent variable" (Beauvais & Jenson, 2002, p. 19; Cox et al., 2014, p. 26).

Hence, the presence of conflicts and violence is not only an indicator of lack of social cohesion, but also a cause for further damage to social cohesion. Thus, it is important to identify the factors that led to conflicts and address them so as to repair social cohesion; and since social cohesion is "a function of policies" that incentivises people to consider themselves as "stakeholders" in a society, the effort of repairing social cohesion should focus on policies (Siddique, 2001, p. 18)

Marc et al. (2013) argue that declining social cohesion increases a country's risk of fragility. They view fragility both a function of state capacity and of societal relations, more specifically inter-group relations that allows them to cooperate so as to sustain the state. Thus, promoting social cohesion is an effective method to prevent the risk of state fragility (Kaplan, 2009).

In studying inter-group cohesion, it is important to measure the presence or absence of repeated incidents of violent conflicts between the different identity groups (Foa & Tanner, 2012, p. 13). This can be done by exploring the number of reported incidents of ethnic conflicts. Moreover, getting an expert assessment on the level of ethnic tensions would also be useful (Foa & Tanner, 2012, p. 30; Staveren et al., 2014, p. 22).

2.6. Ethnicity and the Institution of Ethnic Federalism

Ethnicities in Africa are not static but rather “dynamic processes of social and political creation” and this process is influenced by the state’s intentional policies and actions (Berman, 2010, pp. 3–4). Ethnic federalism is one such institution that influences the relationship between ethnic groups as well as between citizens and their states. Ethnofederalism is a federal political system in which a country is intentionally subdivided into subunits or regions of each ethnic group and of the currently existing federations in the world, the ones organised this way are only Ethiopia, Belgium, and, perhaps Bosnia (Anderson, 2014, p. 172).

The term “ethnofederalism” was first used by the Soviet Union’s government to describe its system designed to solve what it called its “national problem” and to enable its different ethnic groups to have self-rule in their “homelands” (Anderson, 2014, p. 171). The basis of ethnic federalism system is ethnonationalism, which in turn is based on the belief that particular people are different and unique and that they need to have self-rule in their homeland. That results in the division of a country into subunits with coinciding political and ethnic/ linguistic boundaries (Anderson, 2014; Selassie, 2003). Even though ethnofederalism can be conceived simply as one form of devolution, it is distinctly different from the standard form of (non-ethnic) federalism because all the sub-national units have enough power to make them seem like small countries within the larger country (Roeder, 2009, p. 204).

Ethiopia’s ethnic federalism system resembles the former Soviet Union’s federalism. The proponents of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia applaud it for recognising ethnic diversity, addresses past injustices, grants equality and self-rule to the different ethnic groups (Bereketeab, 2011, pp. 74–76; Gudina, 2015); and insist on further devolution of power to regional states. However, there is little disagreement that federalism is a difficult system; it does not make governance smooth and efficient (Anderson, 2014, p. 201; Selassie, 2003, p. 85). Federalism in itself, without the ethnic element, is a difficult form of government. History has shown that it faces instability and secessionist movements.

Nonetheless, advocates of the system view it as an institutional arrangement that should be adopted in multi-ethnic societies when there are no practical alternatives for holding a country together when a unitary form of government has failed to

reconcile interests. Granting ethnic groups self-rule is thought to lessen grievances and decrease the chances of conflicts and disintegration (Bereketeab, 2011, p. 74; Gudina, 2015; Habtu, 2003; International Crisis Group, 2009, p. 22).

The opponents of the system, on the other hand, argue that organising societies along ethnic lines could be a source of both physical and emotional division that puts national unity in danger (Selassie, 2003). Based on a series of case studies of protracted conflicts around the world, (McGarry & O'Leary, 1993, p. 35) conclude that, even though federalism is adopted with the intention of giving ethnic groups self-administration rights", it does not have a good track record in helping reduce conflicts in multi-ethnic countries.

The opponents' concern regarding ethnic federalism emanates from the fact that, as Anderson (2014, p. 168) points out, many ethnic federations in history have disintegrated, and studies have shown that it is ethnic federations and not the other kinds of federations that disintegrate. They see it as a major setback for nation-building process and a dangerous undertaking that causes disintegration of the country (International Crisis Group, 2009, p. 22)

While there are some ethnic federalism systems that succeeded in the world, many of them have failed mainly in Eastern Europe, Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and other federations. A number of African countries like Congo, Kenya, Uganda, Cameroon adopted a certain form of ethnic federalism following independence, but eventually abolished it due to its tendency to escalate crises (Shewadeg, 2019, pp. 24–25)

As is mentioned above, ethnic identities in Africa are fluid, overlapping and changing through time (Berman, 2010). The same is true for Ethiopia. The ethnic federalism system takes ethnicity as a main aspect in territorial demarcation, and political representation. Ethnicity is taken as a fixed identity. The system demarcates territories and divides the country into different regions with each region belonging to a specific ethnic group. But ethnic groups are not neatly settled into separate territories, they intermingle. That has caused a lot of border conflicts between neighbouring regions (Shewadeg 2019, p.27). Moreover, the people living in any region are not ethnically homogenous; each region has ethnic minority groups. This has also been problematic.

2.7. Ethnic Federalism and Social Cohesion

Ethnic federalism system institutionalises division of people along ethnic lines, which magnifies ethnic differences instead of eventually decreasing them (Selassie, 2003, pp. 85–88). As ethnicity becomes a political identity, people will tend to identify more strongly with their specific ethnic group than with their country and give more emotional value to their subnational citizenship. That becomes a threat to social cohesion (Hino et al., 2019, p. 3).

Ethnic identities are easily manipulatable by ethnic elites (“ethnic entrepreneurs”) for political power (UNDP, 2020, p. 37). Moreover, ethnic federalism system gives these ethnic elites the institutional resources that will enable them to exploit ethnic differences, manipulate and mobilise people in their ethnic group to gain support (Anderson, 2014, pp. 169–170). They evoke historical disadvantages and grievances (Abbink, 2006, p. 403). Generally, government structures are not inconsequential for social stability because “the structure of political institutions can shape the ambition of politicians in ways that disrupt or reinforce public order”(Roeder, 2009, p. 207).

What is worse is that if one ethnic group is mobilised along ethnic lines, other ethnic groups are bound to follow suit (Easterly et al., 2006, p. 116). This creates division and threatens national unity. It erodes the bond that is a source of solidarity and equitable resource sharing and reaching national consensus become extremely difficult if not impossible (Selassie, 2003, p. 86). Considering that identity is often malleable, political institutions, in general, could play a prominent role in inducing individuals to identify with either more with the state or with their group (Penn, 2008).

It is social integration and interdependence of societies that lead to what is called “organic solidarity” (Larsen, 2014, pp. 2–4). In the ethnic federalism system, a country is subdivided along ethnic lines, and thus the system does not encourage the integration of the different ethnic groups. Therefore, it does not bring organic solidarity and affects social cohesion negatively. Consequently, it is also likely to prevent the emergence of broader class identities that are predicted – according to Marxist theory - to replace ethnic identities as a result of urbanisation and industrialisation by bringing together the working class (McAll, 1990).

Although the balance of the argument in the literature appears to favour the negative implications of ethnic federalism for social cohesion, there is another side of the

debate that views ethnic federalism as a useful arrangement in diverse societies that protects minority rights and ultimately prevents deteriorations in social cohesion. These studies typically draw on the experiences of case like India and Switzerland and highlight the benefits in terms of “satisfying demands for autonomy on key issues, localising potential conflicts, promoting unifying identities, and reducing opportunities for the central government to exploit minority regions” (Hale, 2004, p. 166).

Other African countries come up with different policies to avoid the danger of ethnic groups identifying as distinct groups and politicising ethnicity. In Ghana, for instance, political parties are not allowed to be organised based on ethnicity (Taye, 2017, p. 43).In Nigeria, boundaries of regional states are drawn with the purpose of ensuring that same ethnic groups are living in different states. This is to avoid the risk of identifying as separate people from other ethnic groups and politicising ethnic identity (Berman, 2010, p. 24; Selassie, 2003). South Africa’s federation is not strictly based on ethnicity. It is referred to as “devolved union” than federation. Ethnic groups do not have their own regions (Berman, 2010, p. 25). A constitutional design combining proportional representation in the electoral system and the sharing of redistributive instruments between central and provincial governments is believed to have helped South Africa accommodate minority interests within majority rule(Inman & Rubinfeld, 2013; Reynolds, 1995). No such efforts were made in the Ethiopian context to avoid the danger of eroding social cohesion, as the next sub-section presents.

2.8. Ethiopian Ethnic Federalism and Social Cohesion

The current constitution of Ethiopia which was adopted in 1995 deliberately “marries ethnicity with federalism”, and rules that each major ethnic group has autonomy in only one regional state. According to (Fessha, 2017, pp. 233, 238) , the “original sin” of Ethiopian federalism is it “freezes” ethnicity as the primary political identity ignoring other historical and political identities like “provincialism”. This historically formed socio-political identity divided ethnicities into provincial units and created sub-ethnic identities. Until 1991 governments used it for administrative divisions. The current constitution, however, imposed ethnic identity over these provincial identities.

Similarly, Kefale (2010) and Bayu (2021) stress that the federalism system takes into account only ethnic lines and ignored shared variables like religion that two neighbouring ethnic groups, like Oromo and Somali share. This creates division, strengthens “ethnic allegiance” and can cause inter-ethnic tensions. There was little to no consideration to the implications the system can have on inter-ethnic relations (Fessha, 2017, p. 243). It would have been possible to respect the rights of ethnic groups without making ethnicity the only political identity.

Shewadeg (2021, p. 27) argues that even though advocates of the federal system claim that it gives ethnic groups the right to self-determination and would bring peace and unity, in actuality, the restructuring of the state became a source of conflict. Drawing boundaries that correspond to ethnicity itself is problematic because ethnic groups are not necessarily living exclusively in one regional state. Ethnic groups are not bounded by the geographic boundaries that were drawn. They can for instance live in two neighbouring regions. This has created border disputes and conflicts among neighbouring regions and ethnic groups.

Kefale's (2013) study that examined the impact the restructuring of the country along ethnic lines has on ethnic conflict, showed that it has been a source of violent inter-ethnic conflicts in many regional border areas of the country. Other studies have also concluded that the Ethiopian ethnic federalism system incentivises conflict over territorial claims (Ayele et al., 2023; Bayu, 2022). Also, regions do not have homogenous people; they have minority ethnic groups who do not have rights and are dominated by the majority ethnic group. This has caused conflicts and displacements, for example the Gedio and Guji conflicts (Shewadeg, 2021)

Moreover, Article 39 of the constitution stipulates that “every nation, nationality and people in Ethiopia has an unconditional right to secession” (Gebeye, 2022, p. 164). He explains that this article implies that regions can secede at any time without providing any rationale. This shows that “Ethiopian federalism has no solemn commitment to the continuity and territorial integrity of the Ethiopian state (Gebeye, 2022, p.164).”

Adeno (2022) looks at the system from the perspective of citizenship and legal safeguards. He points out that a constitution is supposed to signal to people that they are members of one political community. But under the Ethiopian constitution,

people are primarily citizens of their ethnic region. The “fully ethnicised federation” is not designed to create integration of the different ethnic groups and does not incentivise citizens to work towards common good. Also, minority ethnic groups living outside of their ethnic regions not having equal rights shows that citizens of the country do not have equal citizenship all over the country. They do not have equal legal safeguards which made minorities vulnerable and created internal displacements (Adeno, 2022, pp. 191–155).

The prevalence of conflicts and the state’s lack of capacity to protect its citizens has shown that the state is fragile and has probably “started the process of descent into state failure” (Bayeh, 2022, p. 1). He argues that this also has implications for the Horn of Africa, as Ethiopia has been an anchor of stability in the region. Similarly, (Adeto, 2020) points out that the violent conflicts in Ethiopia caused increased flow of refugees and displaced people from Ethiopia to neighbouring countries; there are cross border interactions of violent extremists, cross-border flow of arms, and trans-border organised crimes. He argues that the “ethnic extremism” in the country has consequences for the stability of the neighbouring countries.

As has been discussed so far, research shows that ethnic federalism system does not make governance smooth and can cause a decline in social cohesion. Consequently, there seems to be a consensus in the literature that while the ethnic federalism system in Ethiopia granted ethnic groups self-governance and cultural expression, it has failed to promote shared identity and could create ethnic conflicts (Aalen, 2006, p. 261; Frank, 2009, p. 16). The prevalence of conflicts and the challenges Ethiopia is facing is attributed to the ethnic federalism system (Abbink, 2006; Mamdani, 2019; Selassie, 2003). The system takes ethnicity as a sole factor to divide the country into regions ignoring other shared identities (Fessha, 2017) This does not create integration of the different ethnic groups and weakens social bonds. The constitution signifies that people are primarily citizens of their ethnic region rather than the country (Adeno, 2022), this works against promotion of a common national identity. The restructuring of the state itself is a source of conflict since the boundaries drawn do not actually coincide with the settlement patterns of ethnic groups and territorial disputes arise because of this (Ayele et al. 2023; Shewadeg, 2019).

While there are studies focusing on ethnic conflict and the ethnic federalism system in Ethiopia (Abbink, 2006; Bayu, 2022; Kefale, 2010, 2013; Shewadeg, 2019; Taye, 2017), I have not been able to find studies that looked at both the level and nature of conflicts all over the country over a reasonably long period of time together with data on how the attitudes of people in terms of their identification/belongingness, trust and tolerance has shifted over the years and linked these to the ethnic federalism system. In other words, there is little evidence showing the empirical link between the institution of ethnic federalism system in Ethiopia and the decline in social cohesion. That is what this research aims to achieve and as a result, contribute to the very limited research on social cohesion in Ethiopia and the role of the ethnic federalism system in the declining social cohesion.

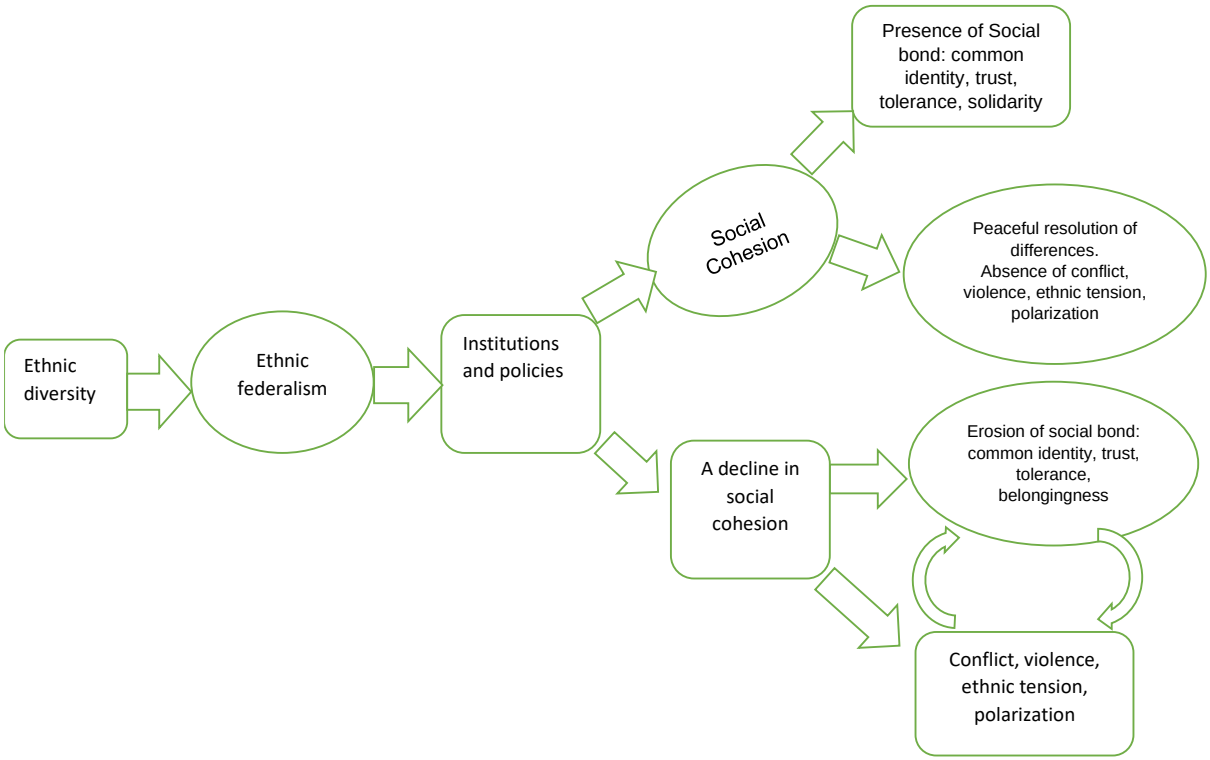
2.9. Analytical and Conceptual Framework

This analytical framework starts by accepting scholarly findings that institutions and policies have a significant role to play in promoting or eroding social cohesion as they set the rules of the game incentivising political behaviours and the means to reconcile diverse interests peacefully (Cox & Sisk, 2017, p. 17; Easterly et al., 2006, p. 116). Hence, to answer the research question on the relationship between ethnic federalism and social cohesion in Ethiopia, I undertake to examine the role of institutions and policies – in this case, the ethnic federalism system.

As has been discussed in the previous sub-sections, in its broader interpretation, social cohesion has two aspects: the presence of bonds in societies which are manifested in trust, shared identity/feelings of belongingness (which are used interchangeably in this study), tolerance, solidarity and the absence of violent conflict and polarisation (Colletta & Cullen, 2000, p. 12; Kawachi & Berkman, 2000, p. 175; Langer et al., 2017; Manca, 2014, p. 6027). Accordingly, this research endeavours to assess both aspects of social cohesion in Ethiopia. I intend to look at the trend of social cohesion dimensions -trust, belonging, tolerance- using data from Afrobarometer and World Values Survey. I also analyse the prevalence of violent inter-ethnic conflicts through sourcing data from ACLED. I assess the impact of these conflicts through analysing data from iDMC, and the country's vulnerability to further conflicts using data from FSI. Moreover, since state-level institutions contribute significantly to social cohesion, I explore the role the ethnic federalism has

played in creating inter-ethnic conflicts, ethnic tensions and polarisation through interviewing experts and political actors.

To better illustrate the relationship between the concepts, I have developed the following analytical map. The ethnic federalism system was established to manage ethnic diversity, more specifically to grant self-governance to the different ethnicities. The Ethnic federalism as an institution and policies can potentially play a role in either promoting or eroding social cohesion depending on how it works and what kind of behaviour it incentivises (Beauvais & Jenson, 2002; Berman & Takahashi, 2019; Capshaw, 2005; Cox & Sisk 2017; Easterly 2006; Hooghe, 2011;). If it promotes social cohesion, then there will be a strong social bond between the different ethnic communities and an absence of violent conflicts, ethnic tensions and polarisation. If it erodes social cohesion, then there will be violent conflicts, ethnic tensions, polarisation. Therefore, the presence of conflicts signifies a decline in social cohesion; they also in turn create further damage to it. Hence, it is imperative to explore the role institutions and policies have played in increasing in conflicts.



Accordingly, the next chapter outlines the methodology used to carry out this research: it specifies how the different data is collected and analysed to explore the actual relationship between these phenomena in the Ethiopian context. The fourth chapter focuses on the analysis of data on social cohesion indicators in Ethiopia and on the level and impact of inter-ethnic conflicts while the fifth chapter presents data mainly on the role the federalism system has played in the declining social cohesion and increasing inter-ethnic conflicts. Chapter six brings these different parts together to give the findings and analysis of this research. And then, the last chapter offers conclusion and recommendation.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

3.1. Research Approach

This is an exploratory qualitative study. It is a qualitative study because it attempts to do an in-depth analysis of a system-level phenomenon. The literature shows that the politicisation of ethnicity causes a decline in social cohesion. Secondary data on social cohesion indicators, on the level of inter-ethnic conflicts and primary narrative data is collected and analysed to understand the relationship between the ethnic federalism system and social cohesion. It is an exploratory study since it is a first step to see what the relationship between the ethnic federal system and a decline in social cohesion is in Ethiopia.

3.2. Research Tools and their Application

Secondary data on conflicts that have occurred across all regions of Ethiopia, on the impact of the conflicts and the state's vulnerability to further conflicts is sourced from international databases: "Armed Conflict Location and Event Data" (ACLED), and Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (iDMC) Fragile States Index (FSI).This data helps to understand the prevalence and patterns of inter-ethnic conflicts since the literature points out that the prevalence of conflicts indicates a decline in social cohesion. I have also assessed the trend of social cohesion dimensions- identification, trust, tolerance- using data from Afrobarometer, and World Values Survey.

Moreover, according to the literature, levels and quality of social cohesion is a result of institutions and practices (Beauvais & Jenson, 2002, p. 14; Cox & Sisk, 2017, p. 17; Easterly et al., 2006, p. 116; Hooghe, 2011, p. 10). To understand the link between the institution of ethnic federalism and the decline in social cohesion, experts who have extensive knowledge about the ethnic federalism system and about the conflict trends in the country were interviewed. The research also uses interviews of politicians as key informants representing views of different social groups who will help understand the effect of ethnic federalism system from the different perspectives.

Semi-structured interviews were used since it is exploratory research, the interviewees have plenty of experience in politics in the country, and the researcher's knowledge of the issue is still limited and evolving. This enabled the interviewees to talk freely, and then follow up questions were asked to clarify answers. Each interview took about 30 minutes on average. The interviews are recorded and then transcribed by the researcher. The respondents were asked for consent to be recorded.

3.3. Sampling

This is a state-level study since the study is on a system-level phenomenon. Thus, secondary data on the prevalence of inter-ethnic conflicts across the nine ethnic regions and data on social cohesion indicators for the past three decades was sourced and analysed.

ACLED is a dataset of real-time data on the locations, dates, actors, causalities, and types of all reported political violence and protest events (ACLED, www.acleddata.com). The data shows the type and identity of the two main actors and associated actors and the type of incident for each conflict. Using ACLED's codebook ACLED (2019) as guide, out of the data available on Ethiopia, I selected the ones that involved ethnic based actors engaging in violent conflicts and filtered out the rest. This enabled me to source the data on violent inter-ethnic conflicts between 1999 and 2022.

Fragile States Index are scores obtained from triangulating quantitative, qualitative and expert validation to establish patterns and trends and show vulnerability to conflict and risk of fragility (The Fund for Peace, https://fragilestatesindex.org/). Out of the different indicators available on the data base, relevant indicators, that are specified as indicators of cohesion on the database are chosen for this study.

Afrobarometer conducted only two surveys in Ethiopia in 2013 and 2020 at the time of this study. The surveys used a nationally representative, random, stratified probability sample of 2400 adults for both rounds (Afrobarometer Data, [Ethiopia], [Round 5,8], [2013, 2020]). Similarly, WVS uses a nationally representative a multi-clustered sample stratified by region and urbanity. A sample size of 1230 adults were interviewed at their home in 2007 and 2020 (Haerpfer et al., 2020; Inglehart et al.,

2018). The answers to the questions on trust, identity, tolerance and preference for political parties and federal system was selected for this study.

For key informant selection, non-probability purposive sampling was done. Four politicians who have differing views on the ethnic federal system, who have been in the political arena and have rich experiences were selected. Three of the politicians are members of political parties, both from the ruling party and opposition parties, and one of them is a member of a regional militia force. The political parties the politicians are selected from include both those organised along ethnic lines, and multi-ethnic parties. Each of the politicians are from different ethnic groups. Further detail on the political parties is not included to protect the anonymity of the participants.

Two experts on the federalism system who have in-depth knowledge and understanding of the ethnic federalism institution and practices and who have done studies on the ethnic federalism system were interviewed. A human-rights expert who has knowledge about the extent of conflicts and human rights violations in different regions was selected. Moreover, an expert on peace and security studies and an expert on conflict resolution were interviewed.

Interviewees	**Expertise**	**Time allotted (average)**
Four political actors	Of different political affiliations	30 minutes each
Two experts	On the ethnic federalism system	30 minutes each
An expert	On Human Rights violations	30 minutes
An expert	On Peace and Security	30 minutes
An expert	On Conflict Resolution	30 minutes

3.4. Process of Analysis

Data on the patterns and prevalence of inter-ethnic conflicts was collected to determine if and how much conflicts have indeed increased in the past three decades and the nature of these conflicts. The literature shows that a prevalence of conflicts indicates a decline in social cohesion. Also, available survey data was used

to assess the trend of social cohesion indicators to see if there is a decline or an increase in social cohesion.

I used the sourced data from ACLED, computed figures to assess the trend of inter-ethnic conflicts, their spatial distribution and the change in the number of ethnic actors involved in the conflicts from 1999 to 2022. I also mapped the changes in the level of conflicts to the corresponding political events at specific years. The data from iDMC on internal conflicts due to violent conflicts enabled me to assess the impact of these conflicts. The FSI data available for Ethiopia are from 2006 onwards and this is analysed to assess if the country's vulnerability to conflict and fragility is improving or getting worse. The data sourced from Afrobarometer and WVS is used to analyse the change in the level of social cohesion dimensions: identity, trust and tolerance.

Institutions and practices have a central role in the promotion or erosion of social cohesion. Thus, it is essential to understand ethnic federalism institution and practices, their evolution, the particular ways in which they work. Thematic analysis was done on the data gained from the key interviews with politicians, academics, and experts. The interviews with the politicians helped to understand the effects of ethnic federalism system from different perspectives. Interviews with experts shed light on the actual workings of the ethnic federalism and the prevalence and impact of conflicts

The themes were identified from the data include: change in the nature of conflicts, the complexity of conflicts, on the federalism's role, the EPRDF's repression of conflicts, the centralised party dynamics of the EPRDF, the weakness of current government, change in monopoly of violence, lack of conflict resolution mechanisms, foreign intervention, the 2018 transition process, the issue of representation at the central government, the federalisms positive aspect, the minority problem, violence as political instrument

All the data is juxtaposed with the literature/theory to explore the relationship between the ethnic federalism system, inter-ethnic conflicts and social cohesion in the Ethiopian context

3.5. Limitations, Feasibility & Positionality

The political situation in the country did become an obstacle. Because of the polarisation, half of the selected politicians and experts were not willing to be interviewed and talk about the issue. I had to find other key informants with similar profile. I planned to interview eight politicians but I interviewed only four. But the ones I have interviewed are from different political parties, affiliations and ethnic groups. Thus, I was able to capture the different points of views. I also planned to interview four experts on the ethnic federalism system from two different institutions but managed to interview only two experts-one from each organisation. Thus, the two experts on ethnic federalism system have enabled me to get adequate data for the study. But I was able to interview the other three experts on conflict resolution, on human rights and on peace and security. Thus, in total, I planned to interview 16 key informants but managed to interview only nine.

The other limitation was that I am currently living outside of Ethiopia and do not have the financial means and time to go back and forth to collect these data in Ethiopia. Thus, I have done all of the interviews through WhatsApp call. One of the key informants, the government official mentioned that he would have been able to say more if it was in person interview. He gave me limited information through WhatsApp call interview.

The researcher's opinions about the issue can bias the data collection and analysis. Being aware of these biases and articulating them was the first step to overcome them I am an Ethiopia and I grew up in the system. Therefore, I have my own opinions about these issues. I am of the opinion that the ethnic federalism system has contributed to the increase of the conflicts and the decline in social cohesion in general. But I was also eager to learn, so I approached it with an open mind from a scientific point of view. I made sure to include interviewees that represent the different views. I had some interview questions before hand based on the aims of the study and the research question. I asked follow up questions when appropriate, keeping an open mind all through the interviews with an intention to learn. I used triangulation and negative case analysis, i.e. recognising alternative viewpoints, was used to ensure that the researcher's biases did not influence the findings.

3.6. Ethical Considerations

Before data collection is started, ethical clearance from the university was obtained. The secondary data collected from databases and the document analysis part of data collection are public information and thus have no risk. Key informant interviews have low risk. Hence, it was considered at the school level.

Interviewees were informed that their involvement is voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time. They were asked to sign consent forms. They were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. The issue discussed is controversial but the key informants gave the interview on their personal capacity.

3.7. Credibility, Dependability and Confirmability

All the data collected throughout this study will be kept in its original form. This collected data is transcribed. Triangulation is used in this study: secondary data, and interviews were combined. Negative/deviant case analysis was also used which involves finding and discussing parts of the data that do not support the patterns picked up from the data analysis, and are exceptions to the rule (Molnar, 1967). This is to get an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study and to ensure credibility

The researcher made sure the findings are based on the data; thus, enough evidence has been provided to corroborate the findings. I was aware of my own opinions and beliefs in the matter. I was careful not to influence the interviews. I looked at the data and findings through the perspective of different theories and arguments to question the findings.

To summarise the methodology, the study used a combination of primary and secondary data on social cohesion, inter-ethnic conflicts and the implementation of the ethnic federalism system in Ethiopia. Systematic analysis and triangulation of all data was conducted to identify patterns and draw conclusions in a manner that minimises subjectivity and biases.

Chapter 4 Presentation and Analysis of Secondary Data

This chapter presents and analyses secondary data on inter-ethnic conflicts and their impact; the trend of social cohesion dimensions; state fragility and vulnerability to further conflicts, and political preferences of citizens in Ethiopia. This data will be triangulated with the interview data that will be presented in the next chapter to provide a better of understanding the relationship between ethnic federalism and social cohesion in the country.

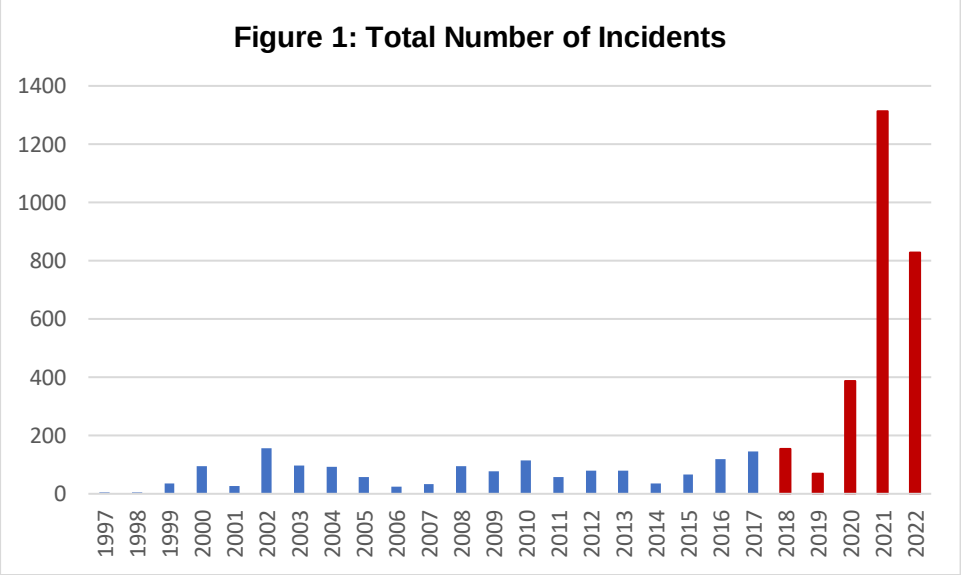
4.1 Prevalence and Impact of Conflicts

For this study data was taken from Armed Conflict Location and Events Data (ACLED) website (https://acleddata.com/). The data covers conflicts in Ethiopia between 1997 and November 4, 2022. It describes the type and identity of the actors involved in the conflict. In every incident, there are two main actors and other associated actors involved in the conflicts. The data selected for this research, is only of conflicts involving ethnicity-based actors like ethnic militias, ethnic rebels or ethnically motivated conflicts as is noted in the data. This means the filtered data leaves out conflicts that: do not involve ethnic groups or are not ethnicity motivated, or perpetrated by religious group, non-ethnic based political parties, civilian protestors, rioters, foreign forces, unidentified armed groups or clashes between state forces and civilians. Incidents of strategic developments like agreements are also not included.

Consequently, the data selected for this research consists of the following specific categories of incidents: violent incidents between ethnic rebels or ethnic militias of different ethnic groups, attacks by ethnic groups or ethnic rebels on civilians of different ethnic groups, ethnic militias or ethnic rebels engaging in conflict with state forces, state forces affiliated with one ethnic group attacking or fighting with federal forces, rioters of one ethnic group attaching another ethnic group.

Figure 1 shows the total number of incidents for each year between 1999 and November 4, 2022. It illustrates that the prevalence of conflicts was somewhat low until 2016. After 2016, the number of incidents started picking up. What took place in 2016 were widespread protests in Oromia region to stop the federal government's Masterplan to expand Addis Ababa's boundary to the surrounding Oromia region.

The demands of the protests grew to more political rights for the Oromo people and the protests spread to other regions. As the protests continued till 2018 and opposition forces became united putting pressure on the ruling party, they eventually led to the resignation of the then prime minister, Hailemariam Desalegn. In 2018 a new prime minister, Abiy Ahmed Ali took over and different liberalization measures were introduced that inspired a lot of optimism. Concurrently, the conflicts showed a decline. After he came to power, between 2018 and 2019 there was a decline in conflicts with only 69 incidents being reported in 2019. But that changed quickly after 2020, the pace of conflicts accelerated significantly in 2020 and reached a pick of 1313 recorded incidents in 2021. Pre and post 2018 bars were coded in a different color in the graph to make comparison before and after the transition easier.



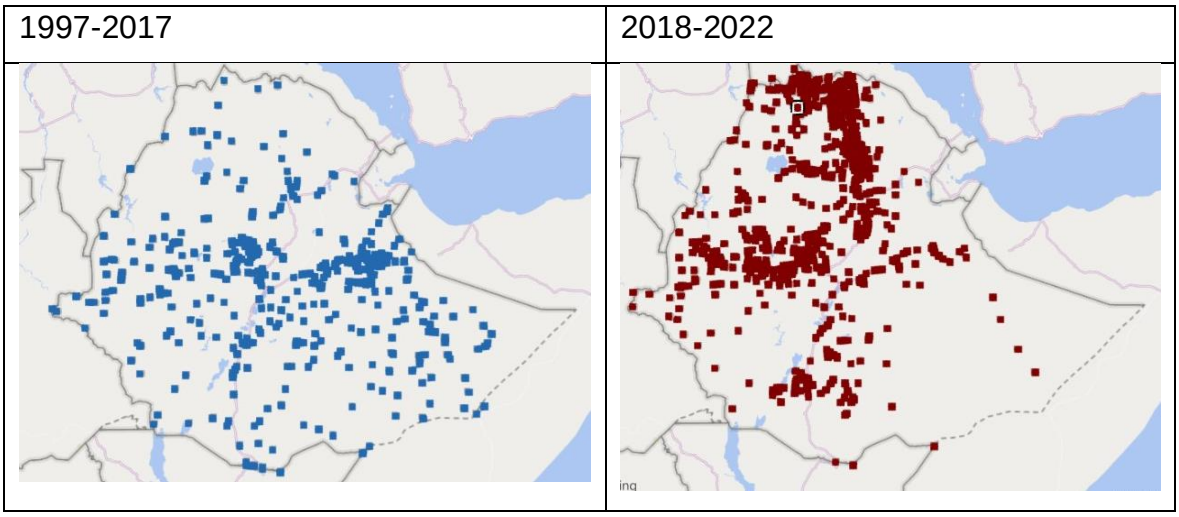
Source: Computed by author using data obtained from ACLED, www.acleddata.com.

Until 2018, the government was organised around a highly centralised party system, despite the constitutional stipulation for a devolved federal system. The regime was an authoritarian government with effective control and monopoly of violence. Particularly, the period between 2006 and 2013 was characterized by authoritarian consolidation which ultimately turned the country into a de-facto one-party system (Woldesenbet et al., 2022). Thus, as the overall trend until 2016 shows, it managed to keep conflicts between ethnic groups under control. But the government that came to power in 2018 does not have consolidated power as the previous one, and hence could not exercise effective control. As a result, conflicts started to flare up in

different parts of the country. The primary data analysis will elaborate this process better.

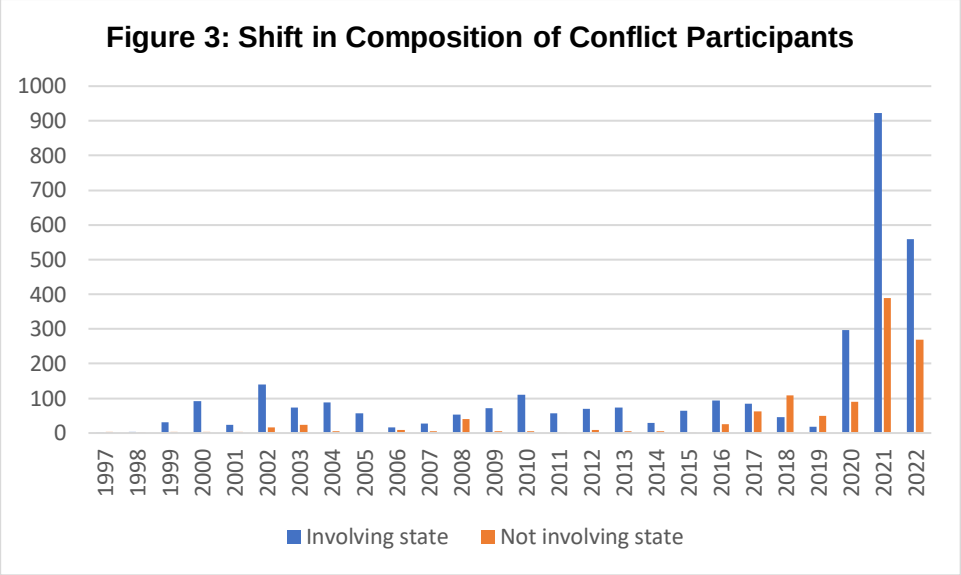
The geographical distribution of conflict events has also shifted in the period following the 2018 transition. As the left panel in Figure 2 shows, incidents were more dispersed over the entire territory of the country in the pre-2018 period than in the post-2018 period. The geographic distribution of conflict has been concentrated along the central-north and central-west parts of the country where the three politically most important ethnic groups and regions of the country (the Oromo, Amhara and Tigray) exist. This shift indicates the fundamentally ethnic nature of the conflict in the post-2018 period.

Figure 2: Spatial Distribution of Conflict in the Pre- and Post-transition Periods



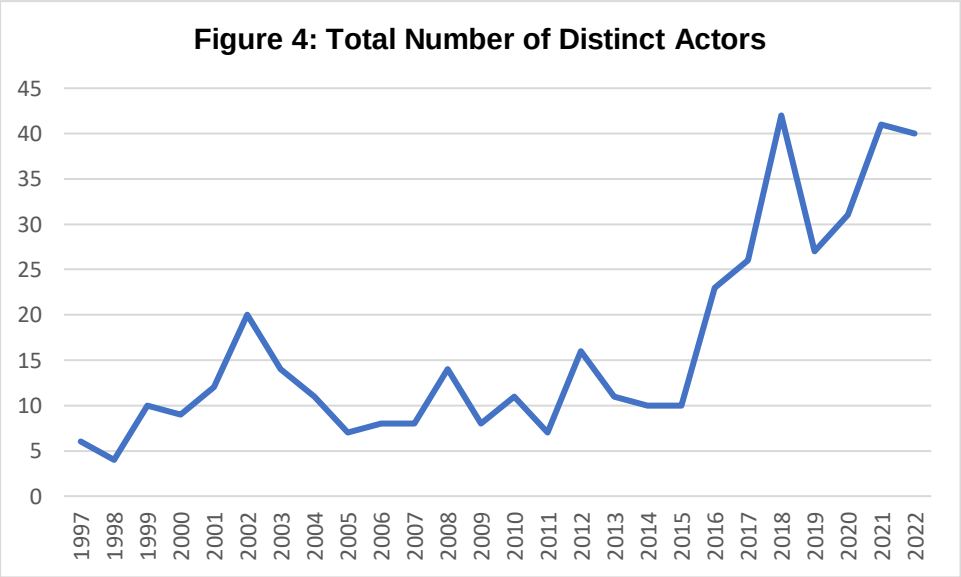
Source: Constructed by author using data from ACLED, www.acleddata.com.

One indicator of the ethnic nature of the conflict is the number of incidents that are exclusively among non-state actors. Selected incidents involving non-state actors exclusively were coded separately to identify trends in conflicts involving different ethnic groups. The result shows that it is not just the number of conflicts that increased. As Figure 3 illustrates, the conflicts before 2016 were mostly involving the state. But after 2016, conflicts not involving the state but amongst actors from different ethnic groups increased. Thus, it can be inferred that inter-ethnic conflicts have substantially been increasing.



Source: Computed by author using data from ACLED, www.acleddata.com.

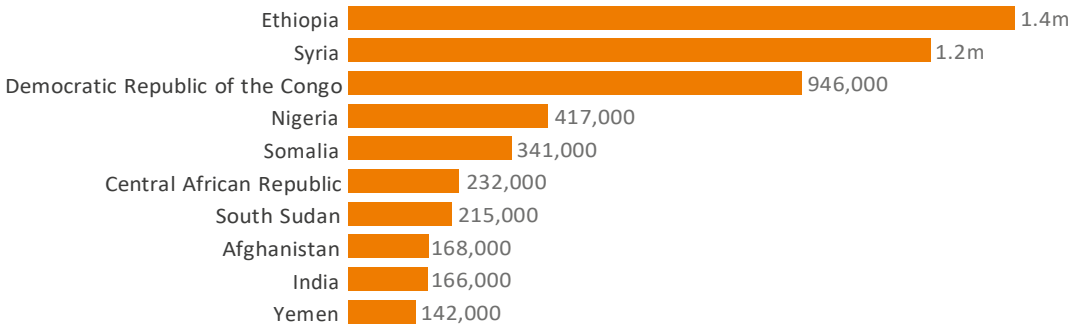
Moreover, as figure 4 illustrates, it is not just the number of ethnic conflicts that increased. The number of distinct actors organised along ethnic lines or are affiliated with such groups who are involved in these inter-ethnic conflicts started increasing in 2016. The number of actors increased fourfold in the space of three years between 2016 and 2018. This means that new types of political actors and interest groups than traditional political groups proliferated in the lead-up to the 2018 transition. This increase in the number of actors could be conceived both as a cause and consequence of the emerging conflict dynamics shown by the previous figures.



Source: Computed by author using data obtained from ACLED, www.acleddata.com.

These conflicts have caused large displacements. Data from Internal Displacement Monitoring Center's (iDMC, 2018) shows that in the first half of 2018, Ethiopia had the largest number of internally displaced people (IDPs) due to conflict and violence in the world. Figure 5 indicates that 1.4 million were recorded in Ethiopia.

Figure 5: Countries with Most New Displacements Associated with Conflict and Violence from January to June 2018



Source: (iDMC, 2018)

This was just the mid-year figure, the number by the end of that year was 2.9 million. The country continues to have high figures of internal displacements due to conflict and violence; with 5.1 million reported in 2021 and more than two million in 2022 (iDMC, 2023). The all-time high figure of 2021 was mostly due to the escalation of the war in the northern part of the country.

The analysis in this subsection has illustrated that inter-ethnic conflicts have increased significantly. It also demonstrated that there is a shift in composition of actors involved in these conflicts, the number of ethnic actors involved in the conflicts are increasing. The destructive impact of these conflicts is also seen with millions being displaced.

4.2 Data on Dimension of Social Cohesion

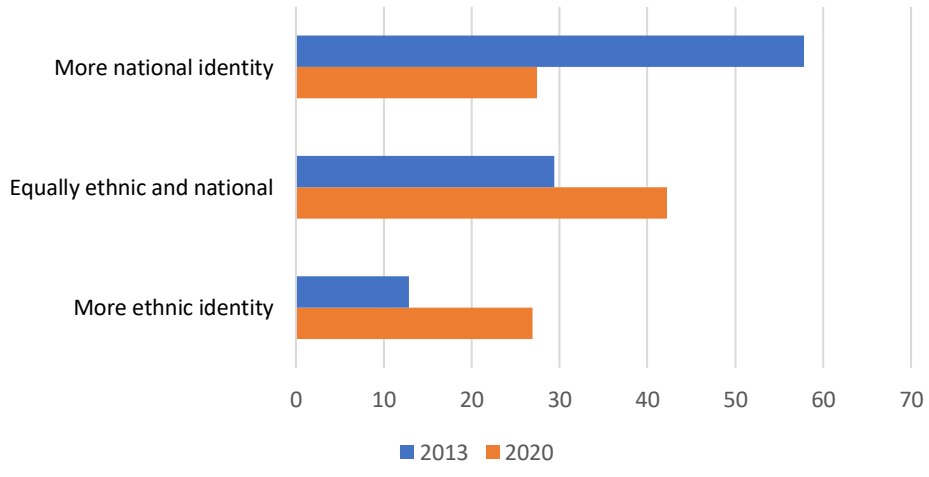
This section analyses public opinion data on the dimensions of social cohesion: identity/ belongingness, trust tolerance. As is pointed out in the literature review, identification is a very important dimension of social cohesion especially in ethnically diverse societies. Figure 6 presents survey data collected by Afrobarometer in 2013 (round 5) and 2020 (round 8). Afrobarometer is a "survey research network that

conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, the economy, and society" in Africa. The Ethiopian survey was conducted in 2013 and in 2020. in round 5 and round 8 respectively. These are the only two surveys Afrobarometer conducted in Ethiopia at the time of this research, they will be used for the analysis in this section.

In both 2013 and 2020 surveys, a nationally representative, random, stratified probability sample of 2,400 adults were interviewed. Participants in the survey were asked if they identify ("feel" is the word used in the survey) more as Ethiopian or more with their ethnic group. As the figure illustrates, in 2013 the majority of people (58%) identified more with their country than with their ethnic group. But in 2020 only around 27% of people identify more with their country than with their ethnic group. And the percentage of people identifying more with their ethnic group increased from 13% in 2013 to 27% in 2020 (Afrobarometer Data, [Ethiopia], [Round 5,8], [2013, 2020]).

Therefore, comparison of the data for these two years (round 5 and 8) shows that, in just seven years, the percentage of people identifying with their country decreased by half while the percentage of people identifying with their specific ethnic group doubled. For convenience, the answer "more national" and "only national" are grouped together under more national and likewise, "more ethnic" and "only ethnic" are grouped together under "more ethnic".

Figure 6: Ethnic vs. National Identity (2013 & 2020)



Source: Computed by author using data from Afrobarometer, [Ethiopia], [Round 5 & Round 8], [2013, 2020]

Data on trust is collected both from Afrobarometer and from World Values Survey (WVS). WVS is an international research program studying changes in values, attitudes and beliefs of people in many countries in the world. It uses country representative random sample based on multi-stage regional stratified selection of the population above 18 years of age. In Ethiopia, WVS uses a nationally representative a multi-clustered sample stratified by region and urbanity. A sample size of 1230 adults was used and face to face interviews at the respondents' home was conducted.

In both Afrobarometer's and WVS survey respondents in all countries surveyed were asked: "would you say that most people can be trusted or that you must be careful in dealing with people". As Table 1 shows the data for Ethiopia in 2007, 2013 and 2020. The results show that not only generalised trust level has been very low for decades but it is declining. The percentage of people replying that they "need to be careful" in dealing with people was 64.6% in 2007 WVS, 71.5% in 2013 Afrobarometer's survey and 80.3% and 87.8% in 2020 Afrobarometer's and WVS respectively.

While this data shows that the general level of inter-personal trust has been very low in the country, it does not specifically demonstrate the level of trust among individuals of the different ethnic groups. Such data measuring inter-group trust is unfortunately not available. The data used here shows only the general level of inter-personal trust, which does not show inter-ethnic trust. However, this data shows that people's trust in their fellow countrymen is declining which indicates that social cohesion between individuals in general is declining in Ethiopia. The literature shows that prevalence of conflicts destroy trust (Colletta & Cullen, 2000; Fiedler & Rohles, 2021). This data show that inter-personal trust is being eroded further as citizens are experiencing pervasive conflicts and as the state's capacity to uphold rule of law and ensure citizens security is declining.

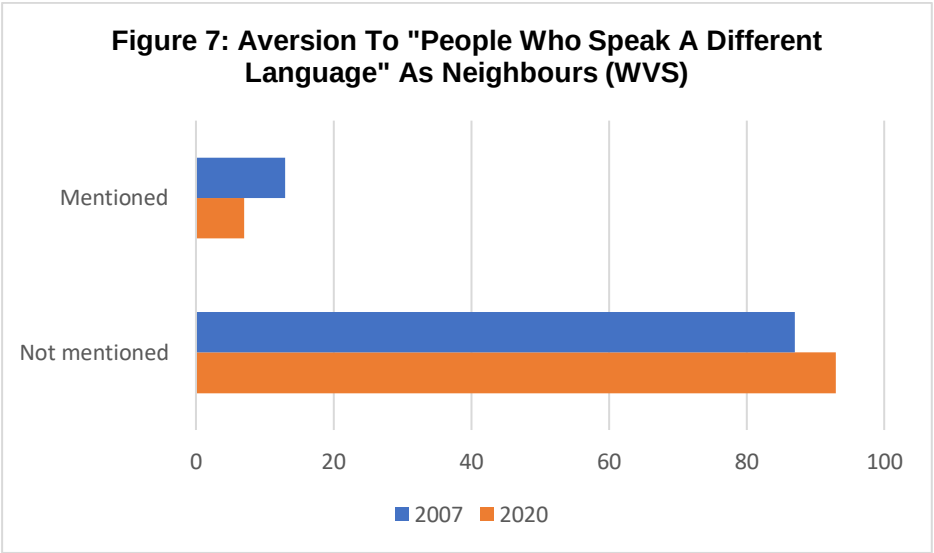
Table 1: Data on Trust

	Afrobarometer		World Values Survey	
	2013	**2020**	**2007**	**2020**
Must be very careful	71.5%	80.3%	64.6%	87.8%
Most people can be trusted	23.1%	19.4 %	24.5%	11.9%

Source: Computed by author using data obtained from Afrobarometer, [Ethiopia], [Round 8], [2020] and WVS (2020), (See: Haerpfer et al., 2020)

Despite the declining level of trust, tolerance/acceptance of people from other ethnic groups has been high and is even improving. Figure 7 presents data from WVS collected in 2007 and in 2020. Participants were asked if they would not like having people who speak a different language as neighbors. Given the language-based delineation of ethnic identity that is common in Ethiopia, “People who speak different language” is largely understood to be a synonym for people of different ethnicity. The data shows that people who mentioned that they would not like having neighbors who speak different language is low both in 2007 and 2020. That can be taken as a sign that tolerance among different ethnic groups on individual level has not been negatively affected over decades. It shows that people do not have overt aversion to people of different ethnicity.

Figure 7: Aversion To "People Who Speak A Different Language" As Neighbours (WVS)



Source: Computed by author using data from World Values Survey Wave 5 & 7; see (Haerpfer et al., 2020; Inglehart et al., 2018)

This is also confirmed by Afrobarometer's 2020 data which inquired directly about ethnic groups, instead of language spoken, as shown in Table 2. People were asked if they would like having people from different ethnic group as neighbors. Most people, around 84% either would like having people from other ethnic groups as neighbors or would not care.

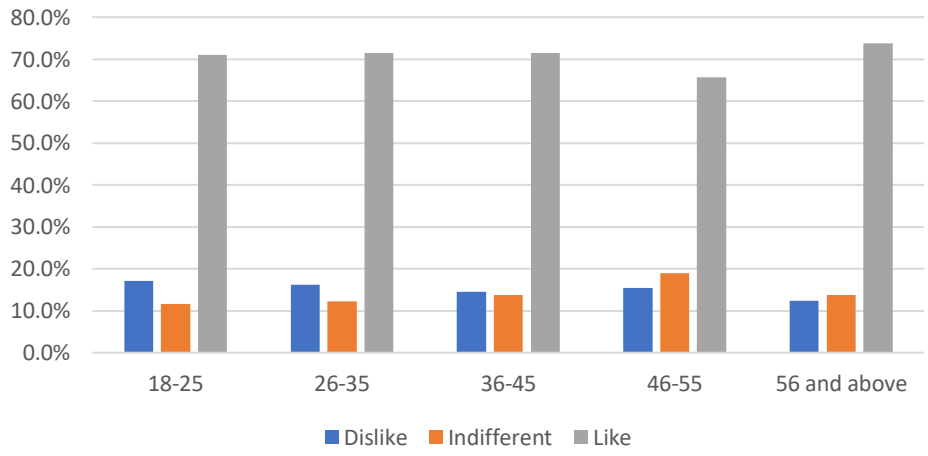
Table 2: Having people from other ethnic groups as neighbours

Answer	Percentage Total for 2020
Dislike	16.2
Would not care	13.4
Like	70.1
Don't know	0.3

Source: Computed by author using data from Afrobarometer [Ethiopia], [Round 8], [2020]

The pattern of aversion to other ethnic groups across different generations that may espouse divergent social and political views is analysed by disaggregating the data by age groups. Figure 8 shows that the pattern remains the same across different age groups. People's aversion of others who are from different ethnic group has not changed much over time, between 2007 and 2020, or across different generations.

Figure 8: Preference for People from Other Ethnic Groups as Neighbours (Afrobarometer)



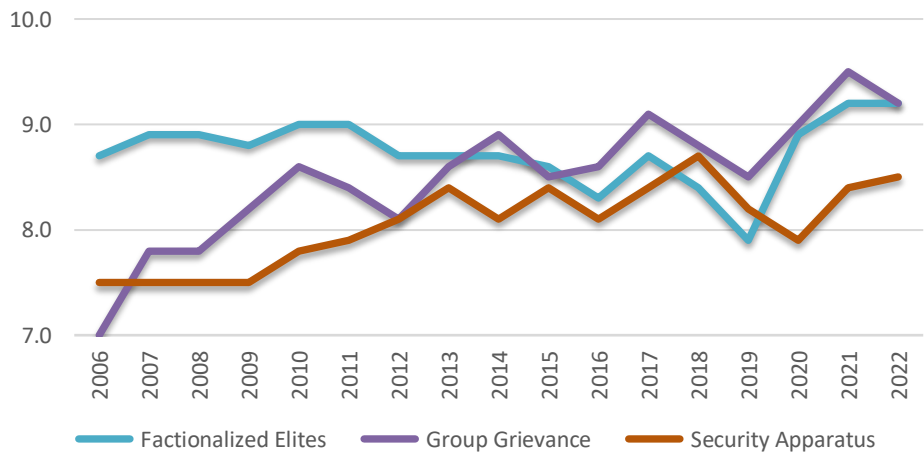
Source: Computed by author using data obtained from Afrobarometer, [Ethiopia], [Round 8], [2020]

Ethiopia is not an exception in having low inter-personal trust while embracing diversity. Logan et al (2020) analysed Afrobarometer's data for 18 African countries and they note that inter-personal trust is low for eighteen African countries both for the ethnically homogenous ones and for those that have high ethnic diversity. But "other indicators paint a significantly different picture" of inter-personal relations, for instance most countries welcome people of different ethnic backgrounds to their community. They take this to mean that social cohesion is a complex phenomenon to study hence, the measurements for it need to be nuanced (Logan et al., 2020)

4.3. Vulnerability to Conflict

Fragile state index (FSI) is produced by the Fund for Peace (FFP) which collects and analyses data on conflict risk indicators. The FSI is obtained from "triangulating large volumes of data from pre-existing quantitative data sets, content analysis and qualitative expert analysis and subjecting them to critical review" (The Fund for Peace). The indicators measure vulnerability to conflict. They are measured on a scale of 0 to 10, 0 being the most stable and 10 being the least stable. Data is available from 2006 onwards, permitting analysis of the overall trends of conflict risk indicators during the relevant historical period which enables to determine whether conditions are improving or worsening. Among the indicators compiled for the index, the ones more relevant for this study are the cohesion indicators: fractionalised elite, group grievance and security apparatus (The Fund for Peace) [1]

Figure 9: FSI Cohesion Indicator Trends, Ethiopia 2006-2022



Source: Computed by author using data from The Fund for Peace, available at https://fragilestatesindex.org/

[1] https://fragilestatesindex.org/indicators/

The “group grievance” indicates divisions between different groups in society and it includes: inclusion in political process, citing of real or perceived past injustices, real or perceived denial of autonomy, being singled out by state authorities, being used as scapegoat by state authorities, ethnically motivated violence, reports of vigilant justice, inter-ethnic relations, real and perceived oppression, ethnic intolerance, distribution of resources, inclusion, post conflict responses (the Fund for Peace). Figure 9 illustrates the rating for group grievance has been rising relatively steadily over the years reaching its highest score, 9.5 in 2021. Ethnic federalism system was put in place with the claim that it will address and hence alleviate group grievances. However, as the graph illustrates, group grievances have been getting worse under the system.

The factionalised Elites indicator shows “fragmentation of state institutions along ethnic lines, gridlock between ruling elites,” use of ultra-nationalistic political rhetoric by ruling elites, absence of legitimately representative leadership for the whole country, power struggles. The indicator of elite fractionalisation has remained high for the duration of the period since 2006. It did show a decline in 2019 but then started picking up again in 2020.

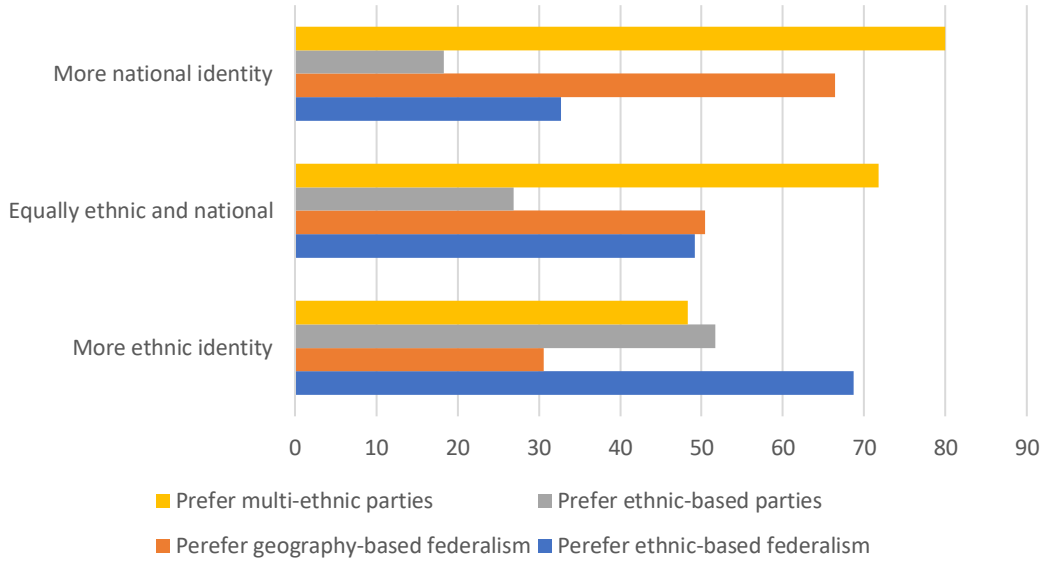
Similarly, the security apparatus indicator has been fluctuating for years, showed a decline between 2018 and 2020 and have been rising since 2020. “The Security Apparatus indicator “considers security threats to a state, including armed resistance to a governing authority that challenge a state’s monopoly to the use of force”, high availability of weapons, perceived trust of citizens in domestic security, and serous criminal factors.”

The declines in the scores of these indicators mean an improvement. These improvements between 2018 and 2020 can probably be attributed to what, at the beginning, seemed like a smooth political transition in 2018. The rising scores of these three indicators after 2020 show the country’s fragility, that is the country’s propensity to conflict along with state’s inability to have monopoly of force. There is an exposure to the risk of conflict but at the same time there is insufficient capacity to manage it.

4.4. Preference on Political Parties and Federalism System

The link between the identification of citizens and their preference for political system could shed light on how existing institutions reinforce themselves by reshaping the perceived identity and policy choices of the public. People's identification, that is, identifying more with one's ethnic group or more with the country, influences people's preferences on political parties and political system. The following data (Figure 10) illustrates this relation.

Figure 10: Political Preferences by Ethnic/Natonal Identification



Source: Computed by author using data from Afrobarometer, [Ethiopia], [Round 8], [2020]

Figure 10 presents Afrobarometer's data collected in 2020. Afrobarometer's website allows cross tabulation of data hence, for this study purpose a cross tabulation was done for identification and people's preference on political parties and on the kind of federalism system the country should have.

Survey participants were asked if they prefer ethnic based parties or multi-ethnic parties and if they prefer ethnic based federalism or geography-based federalism. Most of the people who identify more with their ethnic group than with the country (69% of them), prefer ethnic based federalism than geography-based federalism. In contrast, 66% of those who identify more with their country prefer geography-based federalism than ethnic based federalism. Similarly, 88% of the people who identify more with their country than with their ethnic group prefer multi-ethnic political parties while 52% of those who identify with their ethnic group prefer ethnic-based parties.

Even though there is no previous data to compare it with, looking at this data itself is very informative of where people stand in terms of these issues. The results indicate that identification of citizens (people identifying more ethnic group or more country) is a politically salient factor. In other words, people's identification has an implication on their political preferences and hence their decisions and actions. This could also be interpreted as demonstrating the self-reinforcing nature of the ethnic-based political system which has rendered more citizens to identify with their ethnic group over time and increased their support for its own existence in the process.

The secondary data analysis in this chapter has shown that conflicts have increased, the number of ethnic actors involved in these conflicts is also increasing. The analysis also showed that there is a shift in social identification. The impact of these conflicts has also been analysed; the country has one of the largest IDPs. The literature review in the previous chapter has shown that identification is considered to be the most important indicator of social cohesion. The data analysis has demonstrated that the percentage of Ethiopians who identify more with their ethnic group than with the country is increasing. Similarly, the other important indicator of social cohesion-trust, more specifically in this case, generalised Inter-personal trust is also decreasing. However, tolerance for different ethnicities is still high, it has not been affected as the other cohesion indicators. With the shift in social identification, people's political preferences are also changing. The analysis also showed that group grievance and division within state institutions is increasing and at the same time the security apparatus capacity to deal with the conflicts is decreasing indicating that the country's vulnerability to further conflicts and the state's fragility. The next chapter explores the ethnic federalism's role in the increasing inter-ethnic conflicts and declining social cohesion.

Chapter 5 Presentation and Interpretation of Primary Data

Five experts of different backgrounds that have an in-depth knowledge, experience and understanding of the ethnic federalism system and the conflicts in the country and four political actors of different political affiliations representing various ethnic groups were interviewed for this research. The experts will be referred to as E1, E2, E3, E4 & E5 the political actors as P1, P2, P3, & P4. The questions the interviewees were asked were mostly about what role the ethnic federalism system played in creating inter-ethnic conflicts. Thematic analysis was done on the interview transcripts. The themes emerged include: change in the nature of conflicts, the complexity of conflicts, the federalism and inter-ethnic relations, the EPRDF's repression of conflicts, the centralised party dynamics of the EPRDF, the weakness of current government, change in monopoly of violence, lack of conflict resolution mechanisms, foreign interventions, the 2018 transition process, the issue of representation at the central government, the federalism's positive aspect, the minority problem, violence as political instrument, revising the federal system, changing the federal system. The findings are presented in the following sections are organised around two main themes: the first part focuses on the inter-ethnic conflicts and the second part on the federalism's role in creating these conflicts.

5.1. Inter-Ethnic Conflicts and Violence in Ethiopia

5.1.1. The Accuracy of Secondary Data Findings on the Level of Conflict

The experts interviewed were asked if in their expert opinions the ACLED and other databases showing a substantial increase in inter-ethnic conflicts over the past five years was accurate. This is important because such databases often rely on digital news sources which could sometimes deviate from expert assessments. Respondent E1 stated that other studies have also shown the same result. The respondent mentioned a study by Boundary Commission of Ethiopia which showed the conflicts increased both in intensity and frequency, and the number of actors also increased. Similarly, E4 mentioned that the increase in conflicts is confirmed by other studies like a study by the Ministry of Peace.

The expert E3 also confirms that conflict has increased both in number and intensity over the past five years as the secondary data shows but asserts that the

improvement in the documenting of incidents in recent years should also be taken into account in analysing conflict trends. According to the respondent, with the political liberalisation, information law, better internet and social media, documentation is better. Plus, ethnic groups document and report what has happened to them better than before. Thus, the political mobilisation of ethnic groups itself has made the documentation better.

Interviewees were asked how, beyond the conflicts captured in the data bases, the effect of ethnic tensions are manifested and what the extent of violent inter-ethnic conflicts and ethnic tensions in the country is. All of the respondent stated that these conflicts are taking place all over the country. There are conflicts on all borders between all ethnic regions. Even within regions that have more than one ethnic group, there are tensions and conflicts in local ethnic based boundaries.

The human rights expert E3 mentions different humanitarian data sources like OCHA's (United Nation's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) data and iDMC's (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre) report. IDMC's report showed that Ethiopia had the most internally displaced people (IDPs) in the world. OCHA's report shows the humanitarian crisis caused because of the conflicts, it shows the number of IDPs, how much humanitarian help is needed. It indirectly shows the extent of conflicts. The expert also mentioned that the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission Report shows how the number, frequency and the impact of conflicts have increased. Thus, the expert adds:

> *There are enough data sources showing that there are a lot of conflict hot spots, and most of the conflicts have an ethnic undertone. Even when there are conflicts with a religion undertone, there is a lot of cross fertilisation; the ethnic conflicts can have a religious undertone and the religious conflicts can have an ethnic undertone. But they are predominantly identity based, ethnic based conflicts. Multiple data sources indicate this.* (E3)

Moreover, a politician, P4, a member of paramilitary force, mentioned having a responsibility that included documenting the conflicts that took place in the country for three years before the war in Tigray. The respondent alleges the findings showed that for instance, in the year 2017/18 there were inter-ethnic conflict every day for the entire year between Somali and Afar, Oromo and Sidama, Wolaita and Sidama,

Tigray and Amhara and etc. Thus, the number of conflicts increased, there are conflicts all over the country that involve every ethnic group.

All of the respondents have confirmed that the findings from the secondary data on the significant increase of conflicts and violence over the past five years is accurate. Moreover, they have corroborated that the conflicts are between ethnic groups and have been taking place between and within every region in the country.

5.1.2. Change in the Nature of Conflicts

Both of respondents E1and E4 mention that there is some similarity, in terms of the proliferation of ethnic actors, between now and what happened in the late 1980's and early 1990's just when EPRDF came to power. A lot of ethnic rebel groups were created then. The respondent E4 mentions around seventeen organised different liberation fronts being formed then. After the fall of the socialist military regime, being organised along ethnic lines and attacking the central government became common suddenly because the central government was weak for some time when EPRDF came to power. But once the EPRDF government security apparatus became strong enough, eventually most of the rebel groups changed into political parties. The EPRDF-led government was effective in maintaining security for almost three decades. Thus, according to them, what is happening now seems to follow a similar pattern of ethnic interests strengthening as the centre becomes weak again. Despite these similarities, they state that both the number of violence conflicts and ethnic actors involved in them are so much higher now and "the extent of violence and atrocities is nothing like we have ever seen before."

According to the expert E3, that fundamental cause of conflicts in Ethiopia is similar: competition for power and resources. The respondent points out that what has fundamentally changed over the past three decades is the political structure. The federalism has created a structure. It has decentralised both power and resource; institutionalised ethnic politics; decentralised power to ethnic groups; opened doors for ethnic mobilisation. According to the constitution, Ethiopia is a sum of these ethnic groups, it is the sum of these parts. "It gave that a flesh, there is the land, there is the administrative structure, zone etc." That is the basic structural change that took place within the last three decades. That change has an impact on the conflict dynamics.

The nature and extent of conflicts before and after the implementation of the ethnic federalism system have changed, as all of the respondent highlight. Inter-ethnic conflicts have been there before the federalism. All of the respondents have explained that the conflicts used to be between neighbouring communities, farmers, or pastoral groups over natural resources, over grazing land, water and other resources. There were, for instance, conflicts between Somali and Oromo, between Afar and Somali. The expert E3 states that "The Somali and Oromo border conflicts have been taking place for 100 years and the Afar-Isa conflict has been taking place for 70 years." But now conflicts have evolved into conflicts between different ethnic political groups and regional government forces get somehow involved in these conflicts.

The expert, E1 highlights that:

> *now the conflicts can be between two regional special forces. They are in armed conflict with each other like two independent countries.*

The expert on the federalism system and politics, E2 explains the federalism system transformed conflicts into "protracted identity conflicts which are difficult to resolve" pointing to the fact that none of the boundary conflicts are peacefully resolved, "they just keep re-emerging at different times." Examples cited include the Wolqaite dispute, Borana, and around Hararghe. According to the respondent, Boundary contestations and related problems were created because of the federalism system's design and its narratives. The conflict resolution mechanism of the system is through referendum, which means one groups loses and another wins. This, states the respondent, is not a sustainable way of resolving conflicts. The losing party will have grievances, would organise and attempt to take back what it lost through violent means.

Respondent P4 argues that when the federal system was put in place it was with a claim that it will stop domination by one ethnic group, it will stop conflicts and create peace. But organising the country along ethnic lines created contested areas, it made conflicts worse, created conflicts all over the country. The respondent also pointed out that "no one knows how to solve these conflicts." The constitution does not give directions for resolving conflicts.

The respondent E5 emphasised that:

> *Other countries like Kenya have peace policies. They develop peace policies, after studying the contexts of the conflicts in different areas, they look at the root causes of the conflicts, the actors in the conflicts. Then prescriptions will be put in place. And actions will be taken based on these prescriptions. But Ethiopia does not have that kind of practices. So, there is no conflict resolving mechanisms put in place in the system.*

Hence, what is apparent is that conflicts existed before the implementation of the federalism system, however, these conflicts were over natural resources with few individuals or a small group of individuals involved in them. But after the implementation of the federal system, the conflicts are between two or more ethnic groups, they became an inter-ethnic group conflict with regional state forces and ethnic elites involved. As a result, the scale, frequency and intensity of conflicts have increased as is also confirmed by secondary data sources. Moreover, with the presence of multitude of actors, the conflict dynamics has become very complex while there is no conflict resolution

5.2. The Ethnic Federalism System and Social Cohesion

5.2.1. The Ethnic federalism System

The expert on the ethnic-federalism system, E1 describes Ethiopia's Ethnic federalism system as a federation of ethnic communities pointing out that federations in other countries are territories that come together to form a federal arrangement. But in Ethiopia, it is ethnic communities that came together, conceptually. So, it is "a communities' federation, not a territories federation."

Similarly, according to the other expert on the federalism system E2, the portrayal by some of the system as a multi-national federalism of nations and nationalities is not accurate. This is because multi-national federalism is when there is one nation with multiple identities and cultures that it recognises but at the same time the system works for the development of one national citizenship. "Canada is one example where the system recognises the rights of the different cultures and language, at the same time maintaining Canadian identity." In Ethiopia the emphasis is more on ethnic differences, "on otherness. The whole structure is based on what makes one different: representation, political party organisation, provisions like the secession

clause and etc". The respondent also points out how the preamble mentions "redressing past injustices" but there is no mention of 'unity' in it. It focuses on ethnic differences; thus, it is an ethnic federalism.

The ethnic federalism system has positive aspects as the respondents point out. The respondent E1 acknowledges that it gave political visibility to ethnic communities that were politically invisible, it enabled cultural visibility and promotion. The system has given self-administrations rights and institutional space to ethnic communities. As all of the respondents acknowledge the system was put in place with stated claim to protect, promote and advance the right of ethnicities and nationalities, their language, culture, history and the system has indeed promoted these rights.

While some of the experts and politicians argue that it was right to adopt the federalism system for Ethiopia, others disagree. For the expert E3 it was the "right response to the political problems" at the time of its adoption. But the respondents E4 argues that the institutional response was not proportionate to the issues needed to be addressed.

The politician P2, thinks that "the multi-national federalism is the right system for the country." to address historical injustices and give self-administration rights. The respondent's party is an opposition party that advocates for the preservation of the federal system. The respondent refers to the system as "multi-national" federation and argues that it is "the best system for the country" while acknowledging that it needs some improvements.

In contrast, for the politician P1, another opposition political party member, the response to address the historical injustices should have been proportionated; the different available options should have been explored to advance those rights without going to the extent of destroying imagined one political community. The respondent's party is an opposition party that advocates citizenship-based system. The respondent argues that the issues raised were respect for diversity, inclusiveness, participation, empowerment of historically marginalised to be given space in politics and etc and these are issues of social justice. These are human right questions that should include not just ethnic issues but gender, disability, centre-periphery, urban-rural dynamics etc. But the federalism system focused only on ethnicity. "If for instance the issue is to have children to have the right to study in

their language, then the issue should have been to make sure that the country's laws to respect the international (UNESCO) agreement that grants this right which the country signed. The same applies if one wants to be tried in court in one's own language. The response according to the respondent P1, should have been:

> *how should we bring a more inclusive system and not let us organise the country into eighty different ethnic groups.*

Nonetheless, the federalism system itself could have been better designed and better implemented to avoid the risks. The respondent E1 clarifies that in the federalism discourse there are various approaches. There is the institutional design approach for instance. What institutional design approach to choose is a political decision. E1 argues that the people in power at the time of adoption were aware of the risks since there were other countries' experiences and there were researches and debates. He argues that there was no political will, it was a deliberate institutional choice.

5.2.2. The Federalism System's Implication for Inter-ethnic Group Cohesion

The ethnic federalism system has affected inter-ethnic relation. The expert on the federalism system E1argues that other countries have different institutional responses to promote cohesion while giving representation and visibility. But Ethiopian federalism system does not give attention to bringing the different ethnic groups together, it has not given attention to national cohesion. Ethiopia's system gives too much emphasis to sub-national autonomy taking ethnicity as the sole factor. A person's identity is defined only by one's ethnicity. The respondent states that, for example, an Amhara can be a Muslim or a Christian. "The system ignored these layered identities." Out of the identities that defines a person, only one is chosen and given political salience. The politician P2 also acknowledges that selecting ethnicity as the only identity and "neglecting cross-cutting identities" that could have strengthened relationship between groups as a weakness of the system. Examples the P2 gave are Harrarge Oromos and the Somalis share Islamic religious identity; the Amharas and Tigrayans share Orthodox Christianity

Over the past three decades, the system highlighted differences instead of promoting shared identity, society and history. An example is groups that live near

the administrative boundaries of ethnically defined regions. The respondent E4 points out that:

> *Rayan's (a community that live near the border between Tigray and Amhara region) did not care much if they are considered either as Amharas or Tigrayans. They speak both languages. They hold different identities. On Oromia and Somali border, most people speak two or three languages. But under this system people are forced to choose one identity over the other.*

Exclusive identity is encouraged. These also led to even businesses like banks being organised along ethnic lines.

The respondent E2argues that the federalism changes the dynamics of relationships between ethnic groups. Ethnic groups get administrative region, zone or woredas. This gives them incentives to focus on what makes them different from their neighbouring communities. There are two examples of ethnic elites magnifying differences to demand administrative autonomy. The first example is the Silte community which used to be part of Gurage administrative zone, which had to differentiate itself from Gurage to demand its own administrative unit. The second example is the Kimant community in Amhara region where elites have been trying to assert the group's distinct identity in an attempt to secure their own administrative unit and the position and privileges that come with it. Thus, the respondent argues,

> *the system gives incentives to tear apart bonds that were created over a long period of time.*

The practice of the system and the political discourse eroded common identity and cohesion with the exception of very few instances like the GERD[2] was used as a unifying project, according to the respondent E4. The respondent mentions the lyrics of Tigray region's anthem as a very important example[3]. The song's lyrics include: "we will never be defeated, let it be (even when) we're surrounded by hyenas, when the teeth of our enemies' pierces through our flesh, when our blood flows like flood, our bones be crushed and get scattered". The respondent infers that "the enemies" in this case are other Ethiopians and stresses that children have grown up singing

[2] Great Renaissance Ethiopian Dam which is under construction since 2011

[3] TPLF was a rebel group for decades fighting for an independent Tigray before joining with other political parties in the country to create EPRDF, the party that ruled the country for three decades. The anthem was written when TPLF was a rebel group and later became the region's anthem

this song. In Oromia too, “students were discouraged from learning Amharic”, the working language of the country.

Respondents stress that the system made inter-ethnic relations “rigid, institutionalised and politicised”. The system considers ethnic identity as fixed. The respondent E4 highlights that

> *under this system, if you are in one region, you learn the language, get education and all services in that language and you are expected to identify as that ethnic group forever. But ethnic identity should not be fixed. You can identify as an Oromo today and your grandchild can identify as a Somali.*

At the national level it does not incentivise solidarity, argues the respondent E2. Competitions are not between governing elites, but rather between ethnic groups: “It is about which ethnic group gains and which one loses.” This has made worse the historically zero-sum game aspect of the political culture.

Similarly, the politician P2 states that there is an “inter-ethnic rivalry to control state power.” According to politician, these rivalries also have “historical roots” mainly because of how Ethiopia has been created in the 19th century, expanding from the Abyssinian core into neighbouring territories making different ethnic groups part of the country. The “state was not able to accommodate these diversities, it was assimilationist”. These created grievances, the federal system was established to address these grievances, it gave the right to self-determination. The respondent however acknowledges that even though the federal system tried to address the previously existing grievances, the structure and competition for control of state power created new type of conflicts, and inter-ethnic rivalry for control of power.

These problems are even in the military, where there is ethnic competition for positions between the different ethnic groups. The politician P1 argues that since power, positions, representation and resource distribution is based on ethnicity and not based on merit, the system can be discriminatory and susceptible to exclusion. People can be discriminated against or get to benefit just because of their identity. The ethnic group that are not represented in the federal government are always resentful. It keeps reproducing grievances. “A system should be based on equality and equality should be based on citizenship not ethnicity.” The system itself that exposes the country to conflict and instability.

5.2.3. Ethnic Identification

Afrobarometer's data showing more percentage of people identifying with their ethnic group more than the country in 2020 as compared to 2013 was mentioned to the interviewees and they were asked if that can that be attributed to the ethnic federalism system. All of them, except for respondent P2 find the result of the data not surprising. They point out that the younger generation is raised under federalism system. They stress that the younger generation is socialised through the experience of rights and privileges based on ethnicity, through education system that creates political subjects that fit the ethnic federalism system, the media, the narratives that are institutionalised.

Hence, their belongingness is more to their ethnic region than to the country. The opposition political party member P1 mentions that that there are:

> *regions that are rejecting the country's flags to not be used in their regions. National identity is being disregarded. National unity, national identity is challenged. National institutions, state institutions like national election board, security sector, etc are influenced by ethnic identification.*

However, for the other opposition political party member P2, people identifying more with their ethnic group than the country is because people feel that the "Ethiopian identity is not inclusive of their ethnic identity and that it is imposed on them, and that is because of the failure of the nation building process starting from the 19th century." But this does not explain why that it is only recently that identifying more with one's ethnicity is increasing.

A respondent E5 argues that the ethnic identifications became strengthened especially after the transition with inter-ethnic violence increasing and people being victims of the violence. The respondent also mentioned that even the prime minister, in a speech after a major violent incident, listed out "how many people died from each ethnic group" instead of just informing the public the number of victims. This pushes people to identify more with their ethnic group and be organised along ethnic lines, to be safe.

However, both of the respondents E1& E4 mention that we should also look at this data with caution because when the country gets threatened those same people fight

for their country. That is what is seen both during the Ethio-Eritrea war in the 1990's and during the northern civil war in 2020.

5.2.4. How Minorities are Affected

"Minorities" has different meaning in the current Ethiopian context, as the respondents clarify. There are minorities in multi-ethnic regions like the South Nation and Nationalities Region. There are big and small ethnic communities in this region. The relatively bigger groups may try to oppress the smaller ones. There are conflicts between them. But of these are all indigenous communities. They are entitled to live there and have rights according to the constitution.

The other type of minorities is those that live outside of their ethnic region, for example Amharas living in Oromia region. Amhara is not a minority per se from a national point of view, but the Amharans living in Oromia region are seen as minorities. The constitution views them as guests who are "at the mercy of the indigenous people's hospitality and kindness," as the federalism expert E1 states. They do not have representation in the region, their political participation is limited. They are disadvantaged.

The expert E3 points out that the system has linked land, resources and administration with ethnicity. For instance,

> *land is administered by the regional authority. Land is the most important resource, since Ethiopia is still a predominantly agrarian society. The country's politics is intertwined with land resource. And because of the system, land is now linked with ethnicity. The minorities face displacements from their land because displacing people has become a political instrument during the last four years. For example, in Oromia most of the displaced people are these minorities, and in the northern war, a lot of Tigrayans were displaced from different places.*

The respondent emphasises "there is no accountability for these displacements." So, these minorities are like "orphans." The respondent argues that the problem emanates both from the constitution itself and from lack of enforcement of the constitution.

The politician P2 however argues that minorities have been living in different regions for a very long time, the reasons they are being attacked and displaced now is that "there are people within the state who are causing conflicts among communities to benefit from the violence." According to respondent, these displacements and inter-ethnic conflicts are deliberately created to push for an agenda of changing the federalism system. People in the government itself "kill minorities for instance and blame it on another group like blame a rebel group." And the federal government is either unwilling or unable to intervene and stop the violence

However, people within government mobilising and creating conflict among communities is itself a result of ethnic politics, it is incentivised and created by the system. The minorities problem, as the experts explained, emanates from the fundamental flaw of the system that erodes inter-ethnic solidarity, not giving rights to these minorities and as a result exposing them to violence from the indigenous communities and other actors. As a result, the country has the largest number of IDP's in the world.

5.2.5. The 2018 Transition and Increase in Conflict

The conflicts increased substantially after 2018, as the secondary data showed. The expert on the federalism system, E1 explains that:

> *There has been a build-up of conflicts; these conflicts do not just happen over-night. identities had to be formed, groups had to be created, territories had to be defined. These were building up over the past three decades and waiting for an opportune moment to explode*.

If the transition had happened few years earlier, the respondent hypothesises, there would have been lower level of conflicts as groups were not formed like they have now. Thus, as respondents argue that these problems have been simmering for years and reached a level where they erupted. The ethnic federalism system, respondent P1r argued, "planted the seed" for these conflicts and they have finally "bear fruit."

Respondents explain how before the 2018 transition, the EPRDF government managed to keep conflicts low. The respondent E2 portrays the EPRDF's system as "choreographed." The respondent explains that:

There was the constitution, there was the party system and there was ideology. It was a vanguard party that insured balance between these three.

It was a dominant party which filled the loose-ends in the constitution. The party "tamed" nationalism, which meant that an official exhibiting extreme nationalism would be sacked. The party had no problem undermining the constitution to do all these. It was a "choreographed system that had a check and balance system."

The respondent E1 explains that the ethnic federalism system gave constitutionally formalised rights for each ethnic community to form their own regional states with their own local government, budget and other benefits. Thus, the ethnic elites have incentives to push for creating their own regional state since there is position and privileges that come with it. For decades there were many requests of forming more regional states by ethnic elites**.**

Even though this was a constitutionally guaranteed right, in practice those requests were suppressed by the previous EPRDF government. For instance, the Sidama ethnic group demanded to have their own regional state even before the 2005 election but their question was repressed. The respondent explains that the EPRDF gave different excuses for denying those rights mentioning that it is not convenient for administration. And after it adopted developmental state model, it claimed that those requests are not compatible with development strategies. Thus, the requests were rejected and those requesting were prosecuted or chased away. When the ethnic elites fail to accomplish this formally, they resort to using armed force. The transition period was an opportune time for them.

Thus, even though the federalism system created exclusive identity, affected inter-ethnic relations negatively and incentivised conflicts, the EPRDF regime's party system, its strong military power and strong intelligence enabled it to keep the system stable through repression. But after the 2018 transition, the central state became weaker. Monopoly of violence, intelligence, security structure weakened.

The expert on conflict resolution E5 on the other hand, explains that

the EPRDF government had an early warning and rapid response mechanisms to conflicts. It used to have the capacity to sense conflicts and respond before they turn violent. Our institution used to work with the government in studying

and identifying conflict prone areas in order to avert conflicts. Conflicts used to be addressed before they turn violent."

Thus, the conflicts were managed even though the root causes were not addressed yet. But since the current government is weak, it does not have the capacity to respond in such a manner. These mechanisms are no longer used.

With the 2018 reform there was opening up and the party element was removed; there is no centralised system and centralisation of power like the TPLF-EPRDF government had. "There is no longer a system where the central government can have its orders be implemented from top to bottom", as the respondent E1 describes. Moreover, the P1 states that as the core force (TPLF) who were pushed out of power pulled out of the centre a vacuum of power was created. The central government became weak. That created an environment in which there is "competition for power and resources without necessary institutions and systems to tame it", the expert E3 explains. It created a fertile ground for conflicts to proliferate.

Thus, after the transition, the government's law enforcement capability became weaker and the suppressed conflicts started flaring up. According to the politician P2 however, the weakening of power of the central government began even before the transition, during the Oromo protests that "shook governments power to the core". Hence, the security structure has been unable to contain conflicts that are arising in different places.

The respondents also mentions that there is political division at the centre. The respondent E1 mentions that "there are division and every faction pushes its agenda, that has its own impact." The government is unable to contain conflicts. The politician P1 highlights that the transition process itself, grievances that were created during the process as one factor for the increase of conflicts after the transition. There are "groups that were pushed out of power who fear accountability for what they have done and there are also other groups that were hoping to take over power."

The respondent P2 however attributes these grievances and the resultant conflicts to "the mismanagement of the transition." He highlights that the first six months of the transition were somewhat peaceful, there was a lot of optimism. But later, as the government was consolidating power "a narrative that showed signs of the government wanting to change the federalism system started to be seen. The hope

and optimist started to die and that led to violence.". Respondents also point out that the northern war has forced the government to redirect all of government forces to it. That created a gap and has made it difficult to secure peace in the rest of the country.

Hence, after the transition, on top of the build-up of conflicts, the centralised party system was no longer there, central government's law enforcing capacity weakened and divisions were created within government mainly because of views on the federalism system. All of these together with regions having military power created a chaotic situation.

It is not just ethnic mobilisation but "militant ethnic mobilisation" that has increased. Respondents point out that regions having military power, having heavily armed special forces is a problem. Special forces, according to the respondent E3, are "not law-enforcement forces." Their training and weapons are over and above what is normally needed for a law enforcement force. "These special forces have an ethnic undertone. Now they are being used for power contestation."

The respondent P1 points out that within in the governing party itself, there is division mainly concerning the federalism system. Thus, different groups are trying to make sure that the central government is not a strong government by creating conflict everywhere diverting governments power especially in Oromia region. Creating conflict is being used as a negotiation power, as an instrument to secure interests. This created a chaotic environment.

The respondent E3 argues that political culture itself has contributed to this problem. The political culture in general is not civil. Violence is seen as one means and is accepted by many actors; "it is not condemned in the political culture as much as it should be. Those in power use violence to protect their position and those who want to have power use violence to get it. The political elite has accepted all means." And the last four years has revealed it even more. The ethnic mobilisation and resource incentive being added to this political culture, created a ripe situation for conflict and violence.

The already existing ethnically mobilised society, very convenient social and economic structure for violence and crisis have been taken advantage of for economic and political gain. The structure and "the impunity," made violence

rewarding in the political system because there is no accountability. Using “violent protests, burning houses and buildings, became acceptable as long as you have the right narrative.” This gives “incentive to engineer a certain crisis or conflict,” the expert E3 depicts.

The involvement of foreign interests is mentioned by all of the interviewees including the government official P3 who stressed that “there are foreign forces trying to disintegrate the country.” The other respondents argue that foreign interests’ involvement may or may not be as much as the government claims but it would be difficult to say that they are not involved. They stress the geopolitical and the global context: disagreements with Egypt because of the Dam construction; problem of instability in the horn of Africa; illegal arms trade coming to Ethiopia from different countries; all playing a big role. Countries like Egypt and others get accused. Hence, even though it is difficult to say what the extent of foreign interest involvement is, it has played a role. However, all of the respondents acknowledge that it is the grievances and divisions in the country that made it more vulnerable to these interferences.

5.2.6. The Ethnic Federalism System and the Civil War

Many factors led to the start of the civil war/the northern war that erupted in 2020, but the ethnic federalism system has contributed in many ways. The respondent P4 takes the federalism system as the fundamental cause for the conflicts in the country in general and for the Tigray war in particular. The respondent argues that “The Tigray war is more than a simple conflict, it is genocide, by every ethnic group against one ethnic group.”.

The war was essentially between the old and the new government. As the respondent explains even though the transition from the old to the new government in 2018 seemed peaceful on the surface, underneath it was filled with “double crossing, betrayals, deception and even terror” between the old groups and the new groups that took power. Consequently, there was fear and mistrust created between them. This was made worse by the TPLF being excluded from the Ethio-Eritrea peace deal.

As was discussed in the previous parts regions having military power, having heavily armed special forces is a problem; it is one factor for the disagreements created

between the Tigray government and the federal government eventually leading to the war. Those special forces were used to attack the countries' military base. P4 mentioned that Tigray had well-organised military power with better military capacity in Tigray and that Tigray could not be subordinated to the federal government.

The possibility of secession in the constitution is another underlying cause for the war. Respondent E1 explains that in other countries federal systems, the assumption is that the union is indestructible, it signals that "We are here together for better or worse". But Ethiopia's federalism system is destructible. That itself can be a source of tension. If ethnic communities can

> *imagine themselves being an independent country someday, then that gets them to ponder how much territory, population they would take, which resource would be under their control. That potential calculation is a because of the system, conceptually and constitutionally. (E1)*

The respondent mentions that there are contested border issues in Tigray war, like the Welkait, Raya, and etc. If secession was not made a possibility by the ethnic federalism system, issues like to which region these contested areas belong to would not have been so important. But since that is not the case, there is a fear that they can take these areas with them if they seceded.

Moreover, as all of the politicians directly or indirectly mentioned the discussion of ethnic federalism system itself contributed to the creation of conflicts and to the civil war as well. The federal government showed willingness to debate about the problems of federalism system and TPLF as the establisher of the federal system, saw itself as a protector of the system. Hence, the discussion of the system itself creates conflict and violence; it is one of the causes that led to the war.

5.2.7. Ethnicity as a Basis for Political Organisation

For the respondent P1 it is necessary that political organisations should be civic based which is not surprising given that the respondents party advocates for citizenship politics. According to the respondent, ethnic politics is not based on what political problems people have; it is a grievance politics. Competition is not based on policy or ideology. There are different political parties in the regions who claim to stand up for their ethnic group but competition amongst them is not about housing

problem, educational or unemployment policies, agriculture etc. The competition amongst them is “how much grievance they can trigger which is based on lies.”

> *All ethnic groups have liberation parties, it is not clear who they are liberating themselves from anymore.” Hence, it is necessary to change the basis of political organisation.*

For the respondent P2 however, it is not time yet to consider civic based political organisation since the “question of nationalities and fundamental questions relating to the state” are not yet addressed. He argues that political parties mobilise and organise along ethnic lines because issues of identity like language and representation are not yet addressed. He argues that moving on to being organised along issues like employment, education or other policies without first addressing identity issues is like “putting the cart before the horse.”

But the respondent hopes “within ten to twenty years” ethnicity would lose its relevance as a bases of mobilisation and organisation once these issues are resolved. “Oromo politics started from a far leftist narrative that totally excludes being an Ethiopian, being anti-Ethiopian because of the feeling that Ethiopia has suppressed our identity.” That is changing now and there is an acknowledgment that the country is more accommodative. If the Oromos are “properly included into the Ethiopian identity structure, within ten to twenty years, no twenty to thirty years,” Oromo parties would start organising along ideology or economic issues. That is, when there are no more identity issues that need to be addressed.

It seems Oromo language becoming the federal language is the most important demand to Oromo politicians. It was mentioned many times by the politician P2. This confirms what interviewee P4 stated (as is discussed in the next part) that every group has something that they want that requires constitutional amendment, for Oromos it seems, it is the language issue. But it is not clear if addressing the language question would solve the feeling of not being included in “the Ethiopian identity structure.”

5.2.8. Can the System be Implemented Better or Improved?

All of the respondents acknowledge that there is a need for improving the system, that there are flaws in the system design and implementation. The problem with this

system is that instead of growing and evolving, it has been rigid (E3). Over the past thirty years, the federalism's shortfalls and mistakes should have been corrected. The loose-ends should have been amended. The human right expert E3 argues that the system should have been growing to a more democratised and human rights friendly system. No effort has been made to address the problems created by the system and the structure throughout the years. For instance, the respondent stresses, the minority issue is a very clear loose end that should have been addressed.

The expert on the federalism system, E2 stresses that good federal systems in the world are reformed for instance during crisis times citing examples: the US's federal system was reformed after the civil rights movement and the Nigerian federal system was reformed after the civil war, in the 1960's. Other countries take measures to "tame politicisation of ethnicity," the expert E3 mentions. Nigeria and Ghana, prevent parties from being organised along ethnicity lines. But Ethiopia has not taken any measures to address this problem." Nigeria has more than forty regions but after Biafra war, there has not been any major war there. It is prevented through course correction.

The respondent E2 cautions that it is either reform or state collapse. The respondent argues if the country disintegrates that it is unrealistic to expect broken down states having any chance of becoming stable states like in the case of the breakdown of former Yugoslavia and Soviet Union, only endless chaos and war. However, revising the constitution is not going to be easy, as most of the respondents acknowledge, there will be resistance. The system has created and entrenched identity and interests. Identities have been created; people identify with the ethnic regions. There are also interests, positions, salary, civil service positions, political appointments, and etc. Hence, any attempt to change the system would be met with huge opposition. It is not going to be easy.

Hence, "gradual deconstruction" of the ethnic identification and ethnicisation of politics is suggested. The experts E1, E3, E4 mention different methods others countries applied to that end: creating sub-regional institutions, decreasing politicisation of ethnicity, increasing the law enforcement capacity of the federal state, making sure that regions do not commit human right violations and etc.

Implementing these kinds of gradual reform mechanisms can decrease the conflict tendencies without causing more conflict and disintegration.

But the respondent E4 pointed out that the events of the last few years show that revising the constitution is inevitable. With referendum, new ethnic regions are being created. There is a talk of making four languages the working language of the government. Each ethnic group has demands that need revising the constitution and revising the constitution requires all regions to agree. It is if every region gets what it wants that it will agree to a revision. And the respondent hopes that once elites come together and start negotiating extremism and polarisation can decrease

The opposition political party member P2, as an ardent supporter of the system, is against any reckoning that the federalism is the cause of most problems and warns that any attempt to do away with it could lead to the total disintegration of the country. But the politician acknowledges that the system has

> *"weaknesses and problematic aspects that need to be addressed… but the country should build up on it and evolve into a stronger multi-national federation.*

The government official P3 did not want to take any position on the matter. The official stated that discussing the federalism system is not easy, especially for someone within the governing party. What the respondent stressed repeatedly is that there is no willingness to have an honest discussion and negotiation about it, that groups do not explicitly state what they want and do not show willingness to negotiate. The respondent mentioned that "the trust element is the problem and that in Ethiopian context, negotiation is not in the political culture" and argues that groups are avoiding negotiation because negotiation requires compromising, it requires giving and taking but no group is willing to do that. It seems the "zero-sum game" aspect of the political culture together with ethnicisation of politics is stalling the negotiation process as was also mentioned by the expert E2.

This government official's P3 unwillingness to discuss the issue and the government's detachment from the public discourse on this issue in general is because the federalism is very controversial issue in the country but it is also because the government in power does not seem to have any clear stand on the

issue. Moreover, the official's answers to the questions show that whether or not to reform the ethnic federalism is being used as a bargaining chip for power game.

5.2.9. On the Possibility of Alternative form of Federal Arrangement

Considering alternative forms of federalism like geographic federalism is voiced in the public discourse. The respondent P1 also argues that since the ethnic federalism system in Ethiopia has been a source of conflict and created enmity between groups, the country should consider other forms of federalism. However, all of the other respondents, stress that under the current political context, it is not possible to consider alternative systems. They warn that it would be counter-productive, it can bring more violence and disintegration. It is better to focus on reforming the system.

The respondent E5 mentions that there is polarisation, there are two extremes regarding the federalism:

> *On end there are those who threaten that the federalism is not up for negotiation and on the other end those who insist that the constitution be thrown away. Amhara ethnic forces are fighting with the government, asking for the constitution to be changed. But Oromo rebel groups are demanding guarantees from the government during negotiations that the constitution will not be changed. Thus, there are these two extremes. But these extremes are not the solutions.*

Respondent P4 envisions either loose federation where the central government has less power and regional governments have more autonomy or confederation or separation/disintegration. As a person coming out of two-year civil war in Tigray, the respondent argued that "if we cannot stay as a country anymore, to end the suffering of people, we should consider disintegration." But even disintegration, as was state by the expert E2, will only lead to more suffering of people.

The respondent P4 did however point out an important troublesome element of the system. The federal government is usually dominated by one ethnic group, other ethnic groups do not get enough representation or no representation at all. Consequently, the federal government's law enforcement measures in regions that are not represented in the federal government "feels like a foreign government, like a colonialist". The respondent admits that since the previous government was

dominated by Tigrayans, law enforcement measures taken in Amhara or Oromia region were done like a colonialist and similarly, the current government's measures taken in Tigray is done like a colonialist.

What this shows is that even though the federalism was claimed to stop domination of one ethnic group, that has not actually been achieved. Cultural and identity rights are respected, but the federal government is, in practice, still controlled by one ethnic group. This was true during the previous regime and it is true now. The EPRDF was composed of four different ethnic parties but in practice TPLF was the dominating party. The current government PP is a party of different ethnic groups but in practice it is dominated by the Oromo ethnic group. Thus, different ethnic groups take turns dominating the federal government. Hence, the terminology commonly used in the country now to refer to the government- "teregna," to mean the group that took its turn to dominate.

The respondent E1 also stresses that studies need to look at that what institutional responses and implementation methods can be used to make the federal government more representative instead of one ethnic group being "teregna". Similarly, while giving self-rule at sub-national level, what institutional responses should be there for national cohesion need to be explored. The respondent suggests that the army, police, civic service etc can be used to create national cohesion.

The interview data analysis in this chapter has confirmed that inter-ethnic conflicts have increased and that there are conflicts all over the country in every region. It also revealed that the nature of conflicts has changed after the ethnic federalism system was adopted in Ethiopia. Conflicts have changed from being between few individuals over grazing land or water resources to an inter-ethnic group conflict, at times involving regional special forces engaging in violent conflict between regions. The data analysis has shown that the federalism system has given cultural and political visibility to ethnic groups but it has not given attention to national cohesion, it gives too much emphasis to sub-national identity. By focusing on ethnic differences, the system encouraged exclusive identity and made inter-ethnic relations rigid. The Ethiopian federalism system does not give people living outside of their ethnic region equal rights as the indigenous people and as a result exposed to conflict and displacements.

The data analysis has also shown that the Ethiopian federalism system incentivises conflict but it does not have conflict resolution mechanism. The conflicts have been managed and repressed by the previous government. But after the 2018 transition, when the central government became weak, conflicts started to flare up. Other factors that contributed to increasing the conflicts include mismanagement of the transition process, foreign interventions, instability in the region (horn of Africa), arms proliferation. The respondents stress that there is a need for improving the system but they also mention that it will face a lot of resistance as interests and identity are entrenched. Thus, gradual deconstruction of ethnic identification and gradual reforms are recommended.

Chapter 6 Discussion of Findings

This study intended to explore the relationship between the ethnic federalism system and social cohesion in Ethiopia. Accordingly, it looked at the level of social cohesion in the country and the role the federalism system as an institution played in changing the level of social cohesion.

The literature review has established that institutions set the rules of the game incentivising political behaviours thereby either promoting or causing a decline in social cohesion. The literature also ascertains that social cohesion is both the presence of strong bond that glues societies together into one community and the absence of conflicts between groups in society. The presence of bond helps in resolving differences peacefully and avoiding conflicts. Thus, prevalence of conflicts and violence indicates that bonds are eroded, that there is a decline in social cohesion. The study has explored social cohesion in Ethiopia from both perspectives: it looked at the presence of bond through exploring the data on social cohesion dimensions and also at the conflict dynamics. It then examined the federalism system's role in changing the level of social cohesion.

This part of the study combines the findings from the secondary data analysis and primary data analysis, together with the literature review. It is organised in line with the three research questions that this research intends to answer. Accordingly, the first part is about the dimensions of social cohesion in Ethiopia, the second part is on inter-ethnic conflicts, and the third part is on the federalism's role in changing social cohesion.

6.1. On Dimensions of Social Cohesion

This research was conducted with the intention to answer the questions including: "What is the trend of identification/ belonging, trust, tolerance in Ethiopia?" For that, the available data on the dimensions of social cohesion on Ethiopia were collected and analysed to examine whether or not there is a change in social cohesion dimensions over time.

The literature part of this study has shown that there are different dimensions of social cohesion: identity/belongingness, trust, tolerance, solidarity/cooperation and etc. (Chan et al, 2006; Langer et al, 2017, p. 325; Green et al., 2009, p. 8). When

there is inclusive identity and trust in a society, that results in cooperation/solidarity and working for a common good. In contrast, when exclusive identities are strengthened and when there is mistrust, that creates a fertile ground for conflicts.

The literature has established that identification is the most important aspect of social cohesion, that without identification, the other dimensions can be aspects of general humanitarianism than indicators of level of social cohesion (Chan et al, 2006). People have hierarchies of social identification. People can give more value to their national identity than to their sub-national identity or vice-versa. This hierarchy of social identification has consequences for social cohesion (Leininger et al (2021, p. 5). For societies to be cohesive, it is important that people give more value to their national identity than to their sub-national identity, for the whole needs to be more important than the parts. This is more important in diverse societies.

It is this value that people give to their collective identity that enables them to have more bond and loyalty to their country than to their sub-national group (Harell & Stolle, 2011). But if people give more significance to their group identification, be it ethnic or culture, they can behave in a way that disadvantages the country to benefit their ethnic group. That will endanger social cohesion and can open doors for conflict and violence (Langer et al., 2017, p. 326). Moreover, these hierarchies that people give to their social identification are not static. They can change over time, so does the level of social cohesion with it.

The secondary data presented in this study have shown that this social identification is changing in Ethiopia. Comparison of data for the years 2013 and 2020 has shown that the percentage of people giving more significance to their ethnic group identification than the country has doubled. And the percentage of people identifying with their country than with their ethnic group had decreased by half. Hence there is a shift in people's identification, or in the hierarchies of identification.

This is confirmed and explained by the primary data analysis. Respondents have highlighted that the secondary data gives a fair representation of the reality in the country (Respondent E1, E2, E4, P1). They explained that the country's demographic structure shows the majority of people are young, they were born, raised and socialised under the institutions and narratives of the ethnic federalism system including educational system, media, etc. Therefore, more people identifying

with their ethnic group is expected. The level of trust in society is also an indicator of cohesiveness, as the literature has ascertained (Larsen, 2014, p. 5). Surveys have demonstrated that the percentage of people replying that they “need to be careful” in dealing with people was 64.6% in 2007, 71.5% in 2013 and more than 80% in 2020. These results imply that inter-personal trust is has been low in the country and that they are declining. Unfortunately, data measuring trust among different ethnic groups is not available. Even though the data does not show trust between ethnic groups, the declining level of generalised trust indicates that social cohesion between individuals in general is declining. The primary data analysis has also shown that there is low level of generalised inter-personal trust in the political culture, and this has been made worse by the ethnic federalism system. The system has at least done nothing to promote trust. Moreover, as the literature points out conflicts destroy trust in society (Colletta & Cullen, 2000; Fiedler & Rohles, 2021), the findings show that as citizens are experiencing violent conflicts, their trust in their fellow countrymen is declining.

In contrast, the secondary data showed that the tolerance level among different ethnic groups on individual level has not been affected much over the decades. In the survey data both for the years 2007 and 2020, more than 80% of people stated that they would either like or would not mind having neighbours who are ethnically different from them. This result is the similar for all age groups. The result shows that people do not have aversion to people of different ethnicity. This implies that at an individual level, tolerance has not been eroded.

Hence, this study has looked at the trend of indicators of social cohesion: identity, trust and tolerance; integrating the literature and the findings from the primary and secondary data, it is evident that social cohesion is declining as identification is the most important indicator of social cohesion The hierarchies people give to their social identifications can change through time and the findings of this study show that they are indeed shifting indicating a decline in social cohesion. This shift in identification is a cause for concern. This is because in an ethnically diverse country like Ethiopia, it is the shared national/country identification that glues the different ethnic groups together to enable them to work together for a common good and making them less vulnerable to inter-ethnic tension and conflict (Harell & Stole, 2011; Hino et al., 2019). The findings have also shown that generalised inter-

personal trust is declining signifying a decline in social cohesion in general. This substantiates the literature's claim that increase in conflict erodes social trust in societies. In contrast to the trend of these two indicators, tolerance level between individuals of different ethnic groups has not been affected negatively. The role of ethnic federalism in the trend of indicators of social cohesion will be discussed in detail in the following sub-sections of this chapter.

6.2. Conflict and Social Cohesion

This study aimed to answer the question, "What are the history and patterns of inter-ethnic conflicts, ethnic tensions, and polarisation in Ethiopia?" This is important because as the literature review demonstrated the prevalence of conflicts and violence indicates a decline in social cohesion (Langer et al., 2017, p. 336). The literature review has clarified that in the presence of social cohesion there is sense of belongingness to same political community and hence people come together to work for common good, and resolve differences peacefully (Easterly et al., 2006, p. 105; Hino et al., 2019, p. 2).

The literature review also showed that the number of reported incidents of violent conflicts between different ethnic groups can serve as an indicator of inter-group cohesion level. This can also be triangulated with expert assessment on the level of ethnic tensions (Foa & Tanner, 2012, p. 30; Staveren et al., 2014, p. 22). Accordingly, this study analysed data on the prevalence of inter-ethnic conflicts and the findings have illustrated that there is high prevalence of inter-ethnic conflicts.

The secondary data has shown that inter-ethnic conflicts and violence have existed for a long time but the prevalence was somewhat low. The level of conflict showed an increase in 2016 and then decreased again in 2018 and 2019. But it picked up again in 2020 reaching an all-time high in 2021. The number of actors organised along ethnic lines involved in different violent conflicts have also shown a sharp increase after 2018.

The findings from the primary data have also shown that increase in conflicts is corroborated by multiple local studies familiar to the experts interviewed (E1, E3). These conflicts are taking place all over the country. There are ethnic tensions and conflicts on all borders between all ethnic regions. Even within regions that have more than one ethnic group, there are tensions and conflicts in local ethnic based

boundaries. Hence, this study triangulated data from primary and secondary data that has confirmed that the number, frequency and the impact of conflicts have increased.

The study has also looked at the impact of these conflicts. The secondary data shows that there are high number of internally displaced people in Ethiopia to such an extent that Ethiopia had the largest number of internally displaced people due to conflict and violence in the world as of 2018. The primary data has shown that those displaced are mostly ethnic groups who were living outside of their ethnic region. The federalism system does not give them equal rights and it does not protect them. As a result, they are exposed to violence and displacements.

The expert interviews offer explanations as to why the level of conflicts increased after 2018. The ethnic federalism system's structure, narratives and practice have for decades been incentivising behaviours that lead to division, conflicts and violence, as is discussed in later part of this chapter. But the EPRDF government was able to keep the country stable using its centralised party system and security strength. It also had an early warning and rapid response mechanisms to conflicts before they turn violent. But after the 2018 transition, the central government's law enforcement capacity was weakened and there was no longer centralisation of power through a party system. The grievances created during the transition and the mismanagement of the transition process in the first few months generated fear and mistrust and have contributed to further division and conflicts. There is suggestive evidence that this local environment was taken advantage of by foreign interests to intervene and worsen the situation.

Moreover, the primary data findings have demonstrated the federalism system has transformed the nature of conflicts. Respondents E1 E2 & E3 point out that the conflicts that existed before the implementation of the federalism used to be between neighbouring communities over grazing land, or water resources and etc. and they were limited to few individuals or groups of individuals. But after the system was put in place, conflicts evolved into identity conflicts that are difficult to resolve. These are often inter-ethnic conflicts, at times even involving the regional government forces. Hence, the nature, level, intensity and complexity of conflicts have changed and the level of atrocities and human right violations caused are unparalleled in the country's

history. These conflicts create a vicious cycle of division, posing more challenges to enforcing rule of law and replenishing social cohesion. Inter-group conflicts are symptomatic of a decline in inter-group cohesion but the conflicts in turn cause further damage to inter-group cohesion. They damage bonds between ethnic groups while strengthening bonds within groups. This creates division and causes people to identify more with their ethnic group than the country. The conflicts destroy trust and make it even more difficult to cooperate (Colletta & Cullen, 2000; Fiedler & Rohles, 2021). Hence, at a national level social cohesion gets eroded further.

Therefore, the triangulated findings of this study demonstrate that the number, frequency, ad impact of inter-ethnic conflicts have increased which indicate a decline in social cohesion, as the literature showed. The findings have also indicated that the federalism system's structure, narratives and practice have incentivised behaviours that lead to conflict and as a result has transformed the nature of conflicts into prolonged identity/inter-ethnic group conflicts. Consequently, there are ethnic tensions and conflicts in all borders of the ethnic regions in the country. If not rectified, the conflicts will keep eroding the social cohesion further as the literature and the findings have corroborated. The next sub-sections in this chapter will discuss in detail the role of the system in the increasing ethnic conflicts and the declining social cohesion.

6.3. The Role of Ethnic Federalism

This research also intends to answer the question: "How did the workings of ethnic federalism system contribute to inter-ethnic conflicts and polarisation along ethnic lines in Ethiopia?" The literature review has conveyed that institutions and policies that are put in place can result in changing the social cohesion of a country. They can promote or erode social cohesion (B. J. Berman & Takahashi, 2019). It is for that reason countries see to it that their institutions and policies promote social cohesion and must avoid eroding it. These measures can be as seemingly simple as designing symbols, mottos, pledges or they can be party systems, welfare policy, structures of political institutions that glue societies together. In ethnically diverse societies it is imperative that governments make sure institutions and policies promote common identities and discourage exclusive identities (Capshaw, 2005; Hino et al., 2019).

The literature shows that structure of political institutions can incentivise behaviours and ambitions of political elites that may have adverse impact on social stability (Roeder, 2009). Hence, this study has analysed what political behaviours the ethnic-federalism system has incentivised and what role that has played in changing the level of social cohesion and in incentivising conflicts.

6.3.1. Ethnic Federalism, Identity and Inter-ethnic Cohesion

The literature review has elaborated that identities can be influenced by political institutions. Since identities are not fixed, they can be strengthened or weakened. Political systems play a big role in changing people's identification with a country or ethnic group (Berman, 2010; Capshaw, 2005; Hino et al., 2019). As ethnicity becomes a political identity, people will tend to identify more strongly with their specific ethnic group than with their country and give more emotional value to their group identification which can erode social cohesion.

The findings of this study have underscored that the federalism system takes ethnicity as the primary political identity while disregarding the other historical and political identities. As respondents E2, E4, point out, the system recognises ethnicity as the only political identity ignoring common identities between ethnic groups like religious identities that could bring different ethnicities together and strengthens bonds between them. It magnifies differences instead of promoting already existing shared identities and histories. Hence, the system encourages exclusive identities. In situations where people could identify with two or more different ethnic groups, the system effectively forces them to choose one identity over another. The system tears apart already existing bonds that were created over a long time. It erodes already existing common identities. The literature review explicates that having common identity and trust between people induce cooperation, solidarity between them. However, the findings of the study has shown that the federalism system by eroding common identity has eroded bonds and created a fertile ground for conflict.

The federalism system does not give attention to bringing the different ethnic groups together. It leaves little room for promoting national cohesion. It gives too much emphasis to sub-national autonomy taking ethnicity as the only factor. The federalism emphasises differences since regional states, representations, party organisations are based on ethnic differences. As a result, it made inter-ethnic

relations rigid, institutionalised and politicised. Political competitions at the state level are not between governing elites, but rather between ethnic groups which has created inter-ethnic rivalry to control state power.

The literature review explicated that social integration and interdependence of societies is important to create organic solidarity between people (Larsen, 2014, pp. 2–4). In the ethnic federalism system, the country is subdivided along ethnic lines, and thus the system does not encourage the integration of the different ethnic groups. It is not designed to create integration of the different ethnic groups and it does not incentivise citizens to work towards common good.

The narratives and symbols promoted by the system have also been creating divisions between people. The constitution mentions “redressing past injustices”, but there is no mention of unity or common identity in it. There have also been symbols like ethnic region’s anthems that encourages enmity between people.

The ethnic federalism system has given each ethnic community rights to form their own regional states with their own local government, budget and other benefits. Thus, the ethnic elites have incentives to push for creating their own regional state since there is position and privileges that come with it. Ethnic elites have been highlighting differences of their communities from their neighbouring communities to get their own administrative unit. Similarly, since party organisation and political representation is based on ethnicity, that gave ethnic elites incentivises to exploit ethnic differences, manipulate and mobilise people in their ethnic group to gain support through evoking historical disadvantages and grievances.

To summarise, identities/identifications are not fixed. They are dynamic, they can be strengthened or weakened, they can shift through time. Political systems can influence the shift in value people give to their group identity compared with the value they give to their national/ country identity. The findings of this study have corroborated this claim of the literature review and confirmed that the ethnic federalism, which has been implemented for more than three decades, has socialised people to give more value to their ethnic identity than their national/country identity. Having shared identities between groups enhances solidarity and cooperation between them and helps to avoid ethnic tensions and violent conflicts. The findings have shown that the ethnic federalism, instead of

promoting shared identities and bonds, it has magnified differences between groups basing regional state structure, representation, party organisation on only ethnic differences. This does not encourage integration and interdependence of people which literature shows, enhances solidarity between groups. This has also incentivised ethnic elites to exploit differences and mobilise people. As a result, it teared apart already existing bonds between people and making the country vulnerable to ethnic conflict. Hence, the system has played a pivotal role in the shift of identification and in the declining social cohesion.

6.3.2. Ethnic Federalism and Conflict

The system reorganised the country along ethnic lines giving regions to ethnic groups as if every ethnic group is contained within their given regions while in actuality ethnic groups are not bounded by geographic boundaries that were drawn by the system. They can for instance live in two neighbouring regions. This has created border and territorial contestations between neighbouring regions leading to violent conflicts. Moreover, while the country is reorganised along ethnic lines, there are people who happen to reside outside of geographic boundaries assigned for their ethnic group. They do not have equal rights and legal safeguards under the constitution. They do not have representation in the region the reside in. As a result, people who live outside of their ethnic region have been exposed to displacement and violence.

Other federation in the world are indestructible but the constitution of Ethiopia gives ethnic groups self-administration rights including Secession. The possibility of Secession in the constitution is another underlying cause for territorial disputes leading to conflicts including the northern war. The ethnic federalism system by making secession a possibility incentivised ethnic elites to imagine and have the ambition of having their region be independent and thus to contest for territories violently. The contestation of areas itself is created by the structure the system installed. And these contestations are made worse with the possibility of Secession

Regions have special forces, military power that is above what is needed for law enforcement purposes. This military power was used by ethnic political elites in their attempt to secure their interests. Regions having heavily armed special forces is also one factor for the disagreements created between the Tigray government and the

federal government eventually leading to the war. Those special forces were used to attack the countries' military base. These forces are being involved in conflicts between ethnic groups.

The system has been creating conflicts but it does not have conflict resolution mechanism (Respondents E5, P4). The constitution does not give directions for resolving conflicts. None of the boundary conflicts are sustainably resolved, they just keep re-emerging at different times. The requests by the ethnic elites to form their own regions were also suppressed by the previous EPRDF government.

All these factors that have been discussed so far have been building up division, tension, conflict. The previous EPRDF government was able to manage and supress conflicts without necessarily addressing the root causes of the conflicts, without resolving them. But after the transition when there is no longer strong central government to manage the conflicts, it created an opportune moment for the ethnic political actors who for decades have not been able to achieve their ambitions. As a result, violent conflict increased. The primary data has shown that after the transition, the signs of openness within government to discuss revising the federalism system have caused divisions and led to conflicts. The discussion of the federalism system itself is a very controversial and polarising issue leading to conflicts.

The literature review gives examples of countries that have made party organising along ethnic lines illegal to prevent elites from mobilising ethnic group against each other (Berman, 2010, p. 24; Selassie, 2003; Inman & Rubinfeld, 2013; Reynolds, 1995). But that is not the case in Ethiopia. Most political parties are organised along ethnic lines as the system incentivises it. The secondary data showed most of the people who identify with their ethnic group than with their country (52% of them) prefer ethnic based parties. And of those who identify more with their country than their ethnic group, 88% of prefer multi-ethnic parties.

Similarly, most of people who identify more with their ethnic group than with their country, 69% of them prefer ethnic based federalism than geography-based federalism. Most of the people who identify more with their country than with their ethnic group, 66% of them, prefer geography-based federalism than ethnic-based federalism. These figures indicate that people's identification influence their political preferences. It shows that the system and its resultant ethnic identification reinforce

each other. It is not just the interests of political elites that get entrenched but people's preferences. People get conditioned and socialised by the system as is corroborated by the expert interviews.

This study has also looked at indicators of the state's vulnerability to further conflicts and fragility as the literature showed declining social cohesion increases state's fragility (Marc et al., 2013; Kaplan, 2009; Bayeh, 2022). The findings show that the country's vulnerability to conflict is increasing while state's capacity to manage conflicts is declining.

To sum up, this subsection has been describing how the ethnic federalism system contributed to the inter-ethnic conflicts, since that is one of the sub-questions of this study. The findings have shown that the system's division of the country along ethnic lines has been problematic because ethnic group settlements are not confined to one ethnic region. As a result, border and territory contestations are widespread. Moreover, the constitution gives secession rights to ethnic regions, and that incentivises elites to have the ambition of someday having independent states and hence creating border contestations. Even though it is apparent that the system incentivises conflicts, it does not have conflict resolution or management mechanisms. The conflicts created were repressed by the previous government but the current government's weakness/lack of consolidation of power (Respondent E1) and the mismanagement of the transition process (Respondent P2) have created a convenient situation for conflicts to proliferate. Thus, even though there are other factors that contributed to the increasing inter-ethnic conflicts, the ethnic federalism system has been the main contributor to the prevalence of in inter-ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia.

6.4. Ethnic Federalism and Social Cohesion in Ethiopia

The overall aim of this study is to explore what the relationship between ethnic federalism and social cohesion is in Ethiopia. As has been discussed above institutions play a big role in promoting or eroding social cohesion. The ethnic-federalism, as an institution designed to manage ethnic diversity can have implications for inter-ethnic cohesion. That is why this study aimed to explore the role ethnic federalism has played in changing social cohesion levels. The study aimed to look at the trend in social cohesion indicators and in inter-ethnic conflicts to establish

if there is indeed a decline in social cohesion; and aimed to explore in what ways the federalism system has contributed to the declining social cohesion.

The findings from the data analysis have illustrated that there is indeed a decline in social cohesion and that there is high prevalence of inter-ethnic conflicts. The number of actors organised along ethnic lines involved in different violent conflicts have also significantly increased. The nature of conflicts after the implementation of the federal system have evolved into prolonged identity conflicts that are difficult to resolve. The nature, level, intensity and complexity of conflicts have changed. The data analysis has also shown that there is indeed a shift in people's identification: more people identify with their ethnic group more than they do with the country at large. There is also a decline in the level of generalised inter-personal trust in society. The level of inter-personal trust in the society was not high to begin with, but it is declining as people are experiencing pervasive conflicts and as the state's capacity to uphold rule of law and ensure citizens security is declining. In contrast, the data analysis shows that people do not have aversion to people of different ethnicity. This implies that at an individual level, tolerance has not been eroded.

As discussed so far in this chapter and previous chapter, the findings from the primary data have offered explanation as to what role the federalism system has played in the increase in conflicts and in shifting the social cohesion indicators. The federalism system was put in place with the stated assertion to protect, promote and advance the rights of ethnic groups, their culture, language and history. The findings from the primary data have shown those objectives have somewhat been achieved. This is acknowledged by all of the respondents. Respondent E1 mentioned that it gave cultural and political visibility to ethnic groups. However, as the literature has clarified, it is imperative that a country's political system balances enhancing national identity while giving space to group rights so as to promote inter-group cohesion (Leininger et al., 2021). The findings have revealed that the Ethiopian federalism system has not done this balancing act, it focused too much on enhancing the rights of ethnic groups and eroding bonds in the process. The institutional response to respect the rights of ethnicities was not proportionate to the issue to be addressed. The primary data analysis has shown that it would have been possible to respect those rights with an inclusive system while keeping common identity and bonds between people intact.

While it is important for a country's institution to promote common identities and to weaken exclusive identities in order to promote inter-group cohesion, the federalism system's design and implementation does not promote inclusive/common identity, unity and integration of different ethnic groups. The primary data has depicted that regional demarcation, political representation, political party organisation, power, position, resource distribution, and etc are all based on ethnic differences. The structure created under the system encourages exclusive identities. It recognises only ethnic identity ignoring layered and cross-cutting identities that communities share and renders citizens to choose one ethnic identity over another where communities embrace multiple ethnic identities. As a result, it made ethnic identity politicised, institutionalised, and rigid. The restructuring of the country along ethnic lines does not encourage integration of ethnic groups which impedes organic solidarity between them. The system incentivises ethnic elites to focus and mobilise on differences/distinctiveness and in the process erode bonds between communities created over a long time.

The system also incentivises conflicts over border and territories, as ethnic groups' settlement does not necessarily align with the geographical borders created under the system. The findings have shown that the system does not have the means to resolve conflicts sustainably. It gave ethnic groups self-administration rights including Secession. That possibility creates ambitions to ethnic elites to imagine having an independent nation someday and thus attempt to occupy as much territory violently. Moreover, region's having military power has created an opportunity for it to be used by regional elites to advance their interests to the extent of creating armed conflicts between regions and with central government. Consequently, conflicts have proliferated. However, there are other factors, other than the federalism that contributed to the proliferation of conflicts, including the grievances created during the transition, the mismanagement of the transition process, the weakness of the current government, foreign interest involvement.

Even though there are clear institutional design and implementation problems in the system, no effort has been made to introduce constitutional amendments and other reforms over the last three decades. The system has not gone through any revisions and improvements and as a result it has not grown and evolved. The need for revisions and improvements however is recognised by the respondents representing

different social groups and political views. What seems to stall the process of discussion and negotiation is the polarisation, the extreme views on the issue, each threatening the other. The zero-sum aspect of the political culture has also played a part in this.

In a nutshell, the findings show that there is a decline in social cohesion indicators and an increase in inter-ethnic tensions and violent conflicts. The system, through its narratives, structures and implementation, has eroded bonds between ethnic groups that was created over a long period of time and it incentivised inter-ethnic conflicts. Hence, in conclusion, this study has shown that there is a relationship between the ethnic federalism system and the decline in social cohesion.

Chapter 7 Conclusion and Recommendation

7.1. Conclusion

As an ethnically diverse country of more than eighty ethnic groups, Ethiopia adopted an ethnic-federalism system in 1995. This ethnic federalism was purported to advance the cultural and political rights of these diverse ethnic groups. However, ever since its adoption, the federalism has been the most hotly contested issue in the country. It has ardent supporters and oppositions to it. After the 2018 transition that was followed by the dissolution of the dominant party behind the creation of the ethnic federalism system, the country has been in crisis, experiencing violent inter-ethnic conflicts and a bloody civil war which has been causing millions of internal displacements. The discourse on the role the ethnic federalism system has played in creating the inter-ethnic conflicts and in changing inter-ethnic group relations has been very polarised. This study endeavoured to contribute to the discourse with empirical evidence and analysis, and to narrow the research gap. It aimed to answer the question: what is the relationship between federalism system and social cohesion in Ethiopia?

Consequently, I have reviewed the literature on the concept of social cohesion and on ethnic federalism. More specifically, the literature explained the relationship between ethnic diversity, conflict, institutions, ethnic-federalism and social cohesion. Ethnic diversity in and of itself does not lead to conflict. Rather, it is the political system and institutions put in place to manage this diversity that can have consequences for social cohesion and conflict. The existence of conflicts in a society indicates a decline in social cohesion. However, social cohesion is still a developing concept and most of the published research on the topic of social cohesion are concentrated in the western countries. Generally, social cohesion is understood to be the bond in societies that enables them to work together for a common good and resolve differences peacefully. To assess the level of social cohesion in societies different indicators are measured including identification, trust and tolerance. Moreover, there is consensus in the literature that this inter-group cohesion is influenced by a country's institutions, political systems and policies. That is why, there is an overt attempt by governments around the world to ensure that their institutions and policies promote social cohesion or at least do not impact it negatively. The literature review has brought forward an understanding on how

ethnic-federalism systems in general and the Ethiopian federalism in particular can affect inter-group social cohesion and conflict. And hence, the literature review enabled a derivation of conceptual and analytical map highlighting the possible relationship between ethnic federalism, social cohesion, and inter-ethnic conflict.

Chapter three describes the methodology used to explore the actual relationship between ethnic federalism and social cohesion in the Ethiopian context. I have sourced secondary data on the trend of social cohesion indicators from Afrobarometer, World Values Survey and from Fragile States Index (the Peace Fund). I have also obtained data on the prevalence and impact of inter-ethnic conflicts from ACCLED and iDMC. To understand the link between the institution of ethnic federalism and the decline in social cohesion, and increase in inter-ethnic conflicts, five experts and four political actors were interviewed. Non-probability purposive sampling was used to choose the interviewees. The political actors are of different political affiliation, ethnicities, and with differing views on the issues. The experts chosen have extensive experience and knowledge about the ethnic federalism system, the country's politics and conflict trends in the country. Thematic analysis was done to analyse the interview data obtained. The secondary data and the primary data were triangulated and analysed together to obtain the findings.

Accordingly, chapter four presented and analysed the secondary data on the level and impact of inter-ethnic conflicts, and on social cohesion indicators. The analysis has demonstrated that inter-ethnic conflicts and violence have increased significantly within the past five years and they have caused millions of internal displacements. It has also shown that social cohesion is declining. The percentage of people identifying more with their ethnic group than with the country have increased. Generalised inter-personal trust level has been low in the country and it is declining. Even though the data on trust does not measure inter-ethnic trust, the generalised inter-personal trust being low itself shows a decline in social cohesion. With conflicts increasing, and state's capacity to protect citizens getting weaker, inter-personal trust is declining. But tolerance for different ethnic groups is still high which shows that tolerance at an individual level has not been affected negatively. Apart from the survey data, aggregate indicators measuring vulnerability to conflict and state fragility showed increasing divisions in state institutions, increasing grievance

between groups and decreasing capacity of the security apparatus to deal with increasing conflicts.

Chapter five presented and analysed the interview data to understand the role the ethnic federalism system might have played in the declining of social cohesion and increase in inter-ethnic conflicts. The data confirmed the secondary data findings, that conflicts have indeed increased, and that there are conflicts in all regions in the country. The interviewees also explained that the nature of conflicts has evolved into identity conflicts over the past three decades after the federalism system was put in place. This is because the system's narrative, structure and implementation strengthened exclusive identities and created conflicts. The discussion also covers what aspects of the system strengthen exclusive identity and incentivise conflicts. Since regional demarcation, representation, political party organisation, and power are all based on ethnic differences, exclusive identities are strengthened, common/inclusive identity is weakened and bonds and solidarity between groups are eroded. One way the system creates conflicts is, for instance, that the border demarcations of ethnic regions presuppose that ethnic groups settlement is aligned with the geographical boundaries drawn. But, in reality, people have historically intermingled for a long time and ethnic groups can live in two regions. That has created border and territorial disputes between neighbouring regions.

But for the past three decades, up to the 2018 transition, the previous EPRDF government was able to manage and suppress the conflicts without necessarily addressing the root causes. Conflicts began to proliferate once the law enforcement capabilities of the central government became weaker after the 2018 transition. However, there are a lot of other factors that have added to the complexity of the recent conflicts including the mismanagement of the transition process, the underlying political culture, foreign interventions, geopolitical context, arms proliferations.

In chapter six, all of the data analysis are triangulated together. The findings have revealed that the system's narratives, structures and implementations strengthened exclusive identities; eroded bonds between ethnic groups; incentivised behaviours and created ambitions that lead to conflicts and violence; and it does not have the means of resolving the conflicts created. The literature shows that conflicts and

violence erode social cohesion further. The secondary data has shown that the already low level of inter-personal trust in the society is declining, group grievance and divisions within state institutions is increasing and the country is vulnerable to further conflicts. Hence this study has shown that there is a relationship between the ethnic federalism system and the decline in inter-ethnic cohesion and the increase in inter-ethnic tensions and conflicts.

7.2. Recommendations

This study has shown that the ethnic federalism system tends to incentivise conflict; it does not have conflict resolution mechanisms; it does not promote common identity; encourages exclusive identity; takes ethnicity as the only identity and considers it to be fixed; it does not give people living outside of their ethnic regions equal rights and legal safeguards based on citizenship. The findings have illustrated that conflicts and violence have significantly increased and social cohesion is declining.

There is an acknowledgment on the part of all the respondents that the system needs to be improved so to avoid further damage to social cohesion and even disintegration of the country. However, as the system has been implemented for three decades, exclusive identities are being entrenched; the secondary data analysis has demonstrated that the percentage of people identifying more with their ethnic group than the country has increased. The interview data analysis has explicated that this pertains to people being socialised through the narratives, symbols, institutions and practices of the system. There are interests that are entrenched: positions, salaries, civil service positions, political appointments, as analysis of the interview data indicated. As both interests and identities are entrenched, any attempt to change the system would be met with huge opposition.

Respondents have mentioned that noticing signs of the government's willingness to discuss about changing change the system has led to divisions within government and caused political actors to resort to violence. Thus, attempting to change the system, can lead to more chaos. Hence, it is better to focus on reforms, on amending the constitution rather than changing the constitution or considering alternative forms of federalism. Reforms should be introduced and implemented

incrementally. The gradual improvement of the system can help in socialising people towards promoting bonds between them.

As the findings have shown, there are two extremes in the national discourse: for one extreme the constitution is not up for negotiation while the other extreme advocates for throwing away of the constitution. These two extremes, although relatively small in size, have contributed to much of the polarisation in the country. Moreover, the “zero-sum game” aspect of the political culture together with the ethnicisation of politics and the decline in social cohesion is stalling the discussion and negotiation process.

Hence, the process of reforming the system, the discussion and negotiation process need to be handled with the utmost caution to avoid making the extremes feel threatened and to bring the polarised debates closer. It should be inclusive, accommodative of the different interests and attempt to find sustainable solutions.

In light of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made. These recommendations should be implemented together and should not be seen as separate list of recommendations.

- While being cognisant of the need to exercise caution throughout the process, national dialogues on reforming the ethnic federalism system should begin. The dialogues should be held with genuine interest in finding mutually agreeable solutions between different groups. They should be inclusive of all the grieved groups within and outside the government.
- Practical steps should be taken to strengthen bonds between ethnic groups that have been eroded through promoting inclusive common identity and unity.
- As part of the effort to strengthen bonds between ethnic groups, encouraging the formation of multi-ethnic civil society organisations can help promote cross-ethnic cooperation and civic citizenship.
- Addressing the conflict incentivising elements of the system should be also be given attention as it threatens the long-term stability of the country.
- One way to address the conflict incentivising elements should be to make effort to tame ethnic mobilisation, disincentivise ethnic elites from ethnic mobilisation and

creating conflicts. Learning from other countries experiences of taming ethnic nationalism would be beneficial.

- Together with this, the lack of conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms in the system should be addressed. Formulating peace policies would also be beneficial.
- Addressing the problem of minority rights in the system should be given a priority since they are the most vulnerable to violence and displacements. The focus should be both on long term systemic solutions and short-term security provision.
- To ensure citizens' security, and in light of the country's vulnerability to further conflict, creating monopoly of violence is essential. Thus, strengthening the state's capacity to ensure rule of law and stop violent conflicts should be a priority. The process should be credible so as not to threaten any group.
- Monopoly of violence would be sustainable if the central government is more representative. Thus, effort should be made to make the central government more representative rather than it being dominated by a single group and different ethnic groups taking turns dominating it.
- And finally, there is a need to pursue social cohesion policies since social cohesion has been eroded and an erosion of social cohesion increases the risk of state fragility. More research in the Ethiopian context should be encouraged, with research institutes and universities taking the lead.

List of References

Aalen, L. (2006). Ethnic Federalism and Self-Determination for Nationalities in a Semi-Authoritarian State : the Case of Ethiopia. *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights*, *13*(2), 243–261.

Abbink, J. (2006). Ethnicity and conflict generation in Ethiopia: Some problems and prospects of ethno-regional federalism. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, *24*(3), 389–413. https://doi.org/10.1080/02589000600976729

ACLED. (2019). *Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook*. www.acleddata.com

ACLED. (2022). *Armed Conflict Location and Events Data*. https://acleddata.com/

Adeno, A. (2022). The Unbearable Thinness of National Citizenship in a Country Organised as a “Nation of Nations”: The Case of Ethiopia. In A. Ibrahim & K. Wolde (Eds.), *Between Failure and Redemption The Future of the Ethiopian Social Contract, Proceedings of a convening of scholars on Ethiopia’s constitutional future* (pp. 191–155). https://doi.org/10.21985/n2-e9nm-ge22

Adeto, Y. A. (2020). Violent Ethnic Extremism in Ethiopia: Implications for the Stability of the Horn of Africa. *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*, *20*(2), 10–36.

Afrobarometer. (2013). *Data, [Ethiopia], [Round 5]*. www.afrobarometer.org

Afrobarometer. (2020). *Data, [Ethiopia], [Round 8]*. http://www.afrobarometer.org

Alesina, A., Devleeschauwer, A., Easterly, W., Kurlat, S., & Wacziarg, R. (2003). Fractionalisation. *Journal of Economic Growth*, *8*(2), 155–194.

Anderson, L. (2014). Ethnofederalism. *International Security*, *39*(1), 165–204. https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC

Ayele, Z., Fuller, B., & Raleigh, C. (2023). Ethno-Federalism and Subnational Conflicts in Ethiopia. *Civil Wars*. https://doi.org/10.1080/13698249.2023.2214500

Babajanian, B. (2012). *Social Protection and its Contribution to Social Cohesion and State-Building*.

Bayeh, E. (2022). Post-2018 Ethiopia: State Fragility, Failure, or Collapse? *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, *9*(1). https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-022-01490-0

Bayu, T. (2021). Ethnic Conflict in Ethiopia: Federalism as a Cause and Solution. *Religación*, *6*(30), e210832. https://doi.org/10.46652/rgn.v6i30.832

Bayu, T. (2022). Is Federalism the Source of Ethnic Identity-Based Conflict in Ethiopia? *Insight on Africa*, *14*(1), 104–125. https://doi.org/10.1177/09750878211057125

Beauvais, C., & Jenson, J. (2002). Social Cohesion: Updating the State of the Research. In *Canadian Policy Research Networks*.

Benard, S., & Doan, L. (2011). The Conflict–Cohesion Hypothesis: Past, Present, and Possible Futures. In S. R. Thye & E. J. Lawler (Eds.), *Advances in Group Processes (Advances in Group Processes* (Vol. 28, pp. 189–225).

Bereketeab, R. (2011). The Ethnic and Civic Foundations of Citizenship and Identity in the Horn of Africa. *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, *11*(1), 63–81. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1754-9469.2011.01103.x

Berman, B. (2010). *Ethnicity and Democracy in Africa* (22). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/241760948

Berman, B., & Takahashi, M. (2019). Ethnicity, Development, and Social Cohesion in Africa. *From Divided Pasts to Cohesive Futures*, 161–190. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108645195.006

Bonotti, M. (2017). Partisanship and Political Liberalism in Diverse Societies. In *Oxford University Press*. Oxford University Press.

Capshaw, N. C. (2005). The social cohesion role of the public sector. *Peabody Journal of Education*, *80*(4), 53–77. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327930pje8004_5

Chan, J., To, H. P., & Chan, E. (2006). Reconsidering social cohesion: Developing a definition and analytical framework for empirical research. *Social Indicators Research*, *75*(2), 273–302. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-005-2118-1

Colletta, N. J., & Cullen, M. L. (2000). *Violent Conflict and the Transformation of Social Capital : Lessons from Rwanda, Somalia, Cambodia, and Guatemala*. World Bank.

Cox, F. D., Orsborn, C. R., & Sisk, T. D. (2014). Religion, Peacebuilding, and Social Cohesion in Conflict-Affected Countries Research Report Contents. In *du.edu*.

Cox, F. D., & Sisk, T. D. (2017). Peacebuilding: A Social Cohesion Approach. In F. D. Cox & T. D. Sisk (Eds.), *Peacebuilding in Deeply Divided Societies* (pp. 13–31). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-50715-6_2

CSA Central Statistical Agency. (2007). *The 2007 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia: Statistical Report at Country Level*.

Dobbernack, J. (2010). “Things fall apart”: Social imaginaries and the politics of cohesion. *Critical Policy Studies*, *4*(2), 146–163. https://doi.org/10.1080/19460171.2010.490637

Easterly, W. (2001). Can institutions resolve ethnic conflict? *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, *49*(4), 687–706. https://doi.org/10.1086/452521

Easterly, W., Ritzen, J., & Woolcock, M. (2006). Social Cohesion, Institutions, and Growth. *Economics and Politics*, *18*(2), 103–120. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0343.2006.00165.x

ENA. (2023). *Council of Ministers Passes Decision for Declarations of State of Emergency in Amhara Region*. https://www.ena.et/web/eng/w/eng_3163440?p_l_back_url=%2Fweb%2Feng%2Fsearch%3Fq%3Dstate%2Bof%2Bemergency%2Bamhara

Fearon, J. D., & Laitin, D. D. L. (2003). Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War. *The American Political Science Review,* , *97*(1), 75–90.

Fessha, Y. T. (2017). The Original Sin of Ethiopian Federalism. *Ethnopolitics*, *16*(3), 232–245. https://doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2016.1254410

Fiedler, C., & Rohles, C. (2021). *Social Cohesion After Armed Conflict: A Literature Review* (7).

Foa, R., & Tanner, J. C. (2012). *Methodology of the Indices of Social Development*.

Frank, M. (2009). *Effects of Ethnic Federalism in Ethiopia: Holding Together or Splitting Apart?*

Gebeye, B. A. (2022). The Four Faces of Ethiopian Federalism. In A. Ibrahim & K. Wolde (Eds.), *Between Failure and Redemption: The Future of The Ethiopian Social Contract* (pp. 157–190). Northwestern Roberta Buffett Institute for Global Affairs and Northwestern University Libraries, Evanston.

Green, A., & Janmaat, J. G. (2011). *Regimes of Social Cohesion: Societies and the Crisis of Globalisation*.

Green, A., Janmaat, J. G., & Han, C. (2009). Regimes of Social Cohesion. *Regimes of Social Cohesion*. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230308633

Gudina, M. (2015). The State, Competing Ethnic Nationalisms and Democratisation in Ethiopia. *African Journal of Political Science*, *9*(1), 27–50.

Gurr, T. R. (1994). Peoples Against States: Ethnopolitical Conflict and the Changing World System: 1994 Presidential Address. In *Quarterly* (Vol. 38, Issue 3). https://about.jstor.org/terms

Habtu, A. (2003). *Ethnic Federalism in Ethiopia: Background, Present Conditions Ethnic Federalism in Ethiopia: Background, Present Conditions and Future Prospects and Future Prospects* (Vol. 57). https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/africancenter_icad_archive/57

Haerpfer, C. , Inglehart, R. , Moreno, A. , Welzel, C. , Kizilova, K. , Diez-Medrano J., M. Lagos, P. Norris, E. Ponarin, & B. Puranen et al. (eds). (2020). *World Values Survey: Round Seven – Country-Pooled Datafile*. Madrid, Spain & Vienna, Austria: JD Systems Institute & WVSA Secretariat. https://doi.org/doi.org/10.14281/18241.1

Hale, H. E. (2004). Divided We Stand: Institutional Sources of Ethnofederal State Survival and Collapse. *World Politics*, *56*(2), 165–193.

Harell, A., & Stolle, D. (2011). Reconciling Diversity and Community? Defining Social Cohesion in Diverse Democracies. In M. Hooghe (Ed.), *Contemporary*

Theoretical Perspectives on the Study of Social Cohesion and Social Capital (pp. 15–46). Royal Academy of Belgium.

Hino, H., Langer, A., Lonsdale, J., & Stewart, F. (2019). Introduction: Understanding Processes of Change in Social Cohesion: Learning from Comparative History. In Hiroyuki Hino, A. Langer, J. Lonsdale, & F. Stewart (Eds.), *From Divided Pasts to Cohesive Futures: Reflections on Africa* (pp. 1–12). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hooghe, M. (2011). Social Cohesion in Contemporary Societies: An Update of Theoretical Approaches. In M. Hooghe (Ed.), *Contemporary Theoretical Perspectives on the Study of Social Cohesion and Social Capital* (pp. 7–13). Royal Academy of Belgium.

Horowitz, D. L. (1985). *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. University of California Press. http://books.google.co.uk/books/about/Ethnic_Groups_in_Conflict_Updated_Edition.html?id=1nC8htP6SE4C&pgis=1

Human Rights Watch. (2019). *Ethiopia: Abiy's First Year as Prime Minister, Review of Conflict and Internally Displaced Persons*.

iDMC. (2018). *Internal Displacement in 2018. Mid-Year Figures*. www.internal-displacement.org

iDMC. (2023). *Global Report on Internal Displacement*.

Inglehart, R. , C. Haerpfer, A. Moreno, C. Welzel, K. Kizilova, J. Diez-Medrano, M. Lagos, P. Norris, E. Ponarin, & B. Puranen et al. (eds.). (2018). *World Values Survey: Round Five - Country-Pooled Datafile*. Madrid, Spain & Vienna, Austria: JD Systems Institute & WVSA Secretariat. https://doi.org/doi.org/10.14281/18241.7

Inman, R. P., & Rubinfeld, D. L. (2013). Understanding the Democratic Transition in South Africa. *American Law and Economics Review*, *15*(1), 1–38.

International Crisis Group. (2009). *ETHIOPIA: ETHNIC FEDERALISM AND ITS DISCONTENTS, Africa Report No 153*. https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/ethiopia/avoiding-abyss-war-resumes-northern-ethiopia

International Crisis Group. (2020). *Crisis Alert Ethiopia's Clash with Tigray: Getting to a Ceasefire and National Dialogue*. https://icg-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/ethiopia-tigray-crisis-alert_0.pdf

Jenson, Jane. (2010). *Defining and Measuring Social Cohesion*. Commonwealth Secretariat and United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.

Kaplan, S. (2009). Identity in Fragile States: Social Cohesion and State Building. *Development*, *52*(4), 466–472. https://doi.org/10.1057/dev.2009.57

Kawachi, I., & Berkman, L. (2000). Social Cohesion, Social Capital, and Health. In L. F. BERKMAN & I. KAWACHI (Eds.), *Social Epidemiology* (pp. 174–190). Oxford University Press.

Kefale, A. (2010). Federal restructuring in Ethiopia: Renegotiating identity and borders along the Oromo-Somali Ethnic Frontiers. *Development and Change*, *41*(4), 615–635. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.2010.01654.x

Kefale, A. (2013). *Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Ethiopia: A Comparative Regional Study*. Routledge.

Kelecha, M. (2021). Oromo Protests, Repression, and Political Change in Ethiopia, 2014–2020. Northeast African Studies, 21 (2): 183–226. *Northeast African Studies*, *21*(2), 183–226.

Koonce, K. A. (2011). Social Cohesion as the Goal: Can Social Cohesion Be Directly Pursued? *Peabody Journal of Education*, *86*(2), 144–154. https://doi.org/10.2307/26150966

Langer, A., Stewart, F., Smedts, K., & Demarest, L. (2017). Conceptualising and Measuring Social Cohesion in Africa : Towards a Perceptions-Based Index. *Social Indicators Research*, *131*(1), 321–343. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-016-1250-4

Larsen, C. A. (2014). Social cohesion: Definition, measurement and developments. *Centre for Comparative Welfare Studies*, 45.

Leininger, J. 1976-, Burchi, F., Fiedler, C., Mross, K., Nowack, D., Schiller, A. von, Sommer, C., Strupat, C. 1983-, & Ziaja, S. (2021). *Social cohesion a new*

definition and a proposal for its measurement in Africa. https://doi.org/DOI:10.23661/dp31.2021.v1.1

Logan, C., Seydou, A., & Katenda, L. M. (2020). *Ties that bind? Evidence of both unity and division in 18 African countries. Afrobarometer Dispatch No 412*. https://www.afrobarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/ad412-unity_and_division_in_18_african_countries-afrobarometer_dispatch-16dec20.pdf

Mamdani, M. (2019, January 3). The Trouble With Ethiopia's Ethnic Federalism. *The New York Times*. https://nyti.ms/2GTbST4

Manca, A. R. (2014). Social Cohesion. In A. C. Michalos (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Quality of Life and Well-Being Research* (pp. 6026–6028). Springer Netherlands. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-0753-5_2739

Marc, A., Willman, A., Aslam, G., Rebosio, M., & Balasuriya, K. (2013). *Societal Dynamics and Fragility Engaging Societies in Responding to Fragile Situations*. World Bank.

McAll, C. (1990). *Class, Ethnicity, and Social Inequality*. McGill-Queen's University Press.

McCandless, E. (2018). *Forging Resilient Social Contracts: A Pathway to Preventing Violent Conflict and Sustaining Peace*.

McCandless, E. (2020). Resilient Social Contracts and Peace: Towards a Needed Reconceptualisation. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, *14*(1), 1–21. https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2019.1682925

McCoy, J., Rahman, T., & Somer, M. (2018). Polarisation and the Global Crisis of Democracy: Common Patterns, Dynamics, and Pernicious Consequences for Democratic Polities. *American Behavioral Scientist, 62(1), 16–42.*, *62*(1), 16–42.

McGarry, J., & O'Leary, B. (1993). The Macro Political Regulation of Ethnic Conflicts. In J. McGarry & B. O'Leary (Eds.), *The Politics of Ethnic Conflict Regulation* (1st ed.). Routledge.

Molnar, G. (1967). Deviant Case Analysis in Social Science. *Politics*, *2*(1), 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1080/00323266708401093

Montalvo, J. G., & Reynal-Querol, M. (2005). Ethnic Polarisation, Potential Conflict, and Civil Wars. *The American Economic Review*, *95*(3), 796–816.

Moustakas, L. (2022). A Bibliometric Analysis of Research on Social Cohesion from 1994–2020. *Publications*, *10*(1). https://doi.org/10.3390/publications10010005

Oxoby, R. (2009). Understanding Social Inclusion, Social Cohesion, and Social Capital. *Journal of Social Economics*, *36*(12), 1133–1152.

Penn, E. M. (2008). Citizenship versus Ethnicity: The Role of Institutions in Shaping Identity Choice. *Journal of Politics*, *70*(4), 956–973.

Peralta, E. (2020, November 13). What To Know About Ethiopia's Tigray Conflict _ NPR. *NPR*.

Putnam, R. D. (1995). Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital. *Journal of Democracy*, *6*(1), 65–78.

Reynolds, A. (1995). Constitutional Engineering in Southern Africa. *Journal of Democracy*, *6*(2), 86–99.

Rhys Andrews, & Sebastian Jilke. (2016). Welfare States and Social Cohesion in Europe: Does Social Service Quality Matter? *Journal of Social Policy*, *45*(1), 119–140.

Roeder, P. G. (2009). Ethnofederalism and the Mismanagement of Conflicting Nationalisms,. *Regional & Federal Studies*, *19*(2), 203–219.

Selassie, A. G. (2003). Ethnic Federalism: Its Promise and Pitfalls for Africa. *Yale Journal of International Law*, *28*, 51. http://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/yjil28&id=61&div=&collection=journals%5Cnhttp://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/yjil28&div=9&g_sent=1&collection=journals#61%5Cnhttp://www.heinonline.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/HOL/Page?p

Sherif, M., Harvey, O. J., White, B. J., Hood, W. R., & Sherif, C. W. (1961). *Intergroup Conflict and Cooperation: The Robbers Cave Experiment*. https://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Sherif/preface1961.htm

Shewadeg, B. (2019). Ethnic Conflict Under Ethnic Federalism: A Critical Appraisal. *Conflict Trends*, 22–28. https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/ethnic-conflict-under-ethnic-federalism/

Siddique, S. (2001). Social Cohesion and Conflict Prevention in Asia: Managing Diversity through Development. In N. J. Colletta, T. G. Lim, & A. Kelles-Viitanen (Eds.), *Social Cohesion and Conflict Prevention in Asia: Managing Diversity through Development* (pp. 17–42). The World Bank.

Staveren, I. van, Webbink, E., de Haan, A., & Foa, R. (2014). The Last Mile in Analysing Wellbeing and Poverty: Indices of Social Development. *Forum for Social Economics*, *43*(1), 8–26. https://doi.org/10.1080/07360932.2013.780980

Tamir, Y. (2019). Not So Civic: Is There a Difference Between Ethnic and Civic Nationalism? *Annual Review of Political Science*, *22*, 419–434.

Taye, B. A. (2017). Ethnic Federalism and Conflict in Ethiopia. *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*, *17*(2), 41–66.

The Fund for Peace. (2022). *Fragile States Index*. https://fragilestatesindex.org/

UNDP. (2020). *Strengthening Social Cohesion: Conceptual Framing and Programming Implications*.

United Nations, & World Bank. (2018). *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*. World Bank. https://doi.org/10.1596/978-1-4648-1162-3

von Beyme, K. (1975). A Comparative View of Democratic Centralism. *Government and Opposition*, *10*(3), 259–277. https://www.jstor.org/stable/44483301

Woldesenbet, E., Gebreluel, G., & Bedasso, B. (2022). *Economic Development and Political Violence in Ethiopia*.

Yibeltal, K. (2019, November 22). Ethiopia's Abiy Ahmed Gets a New Ruling Party - BBC News. *BBC*. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-50515636

Yusuf, S. (2019). *What is Driving Ethiopia's Ethnic Conflicts? East Africa Report 28 Institute of Security Studies*. https://issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/ear-28.pdf

Appendices

Interview Questions

These questions only served as a checklist to guide the interview. The interviews were semi-structured to enable the interviewees to talk freely, and then follow up questions were asked to clarify answers. This is the appropriate approach as the research is exploratory; and since the interviewees have in-depth knowledge while the researcher's knowledge is limited.

The following questions were used but not all of the respondents were asked each of the questions. The specific respondents that were asked some of the questions are mentioned in parenthesis.

1. ACLED's data on conflicts in Ethiopia collected over a long time show that inter-ethnic conflicts, that is conflicts between ethnic militia forces or ethnic rebels from different ethnic groups, conflict between ethnic forces and the state and violent conflicts involving ethnic forces have increased substantially within the last four years. According to these data both the number of violent conflicts and the number of ethnic forces being involved in these conflicts have increased substantially. In your expert opinion is that accurate? (to the experts)
2. Beyond the conflicts captured in the ACLED data, how is the effect of ethnic tensions manifested? What is the extent of violent inter-conflicts and ethnic tensions in the country? (to the experts)
3. What is causing these inter-ethnic conflicts to increase in different regions?
4. Why has the number of ethnic forces involved in violent conflicts increased in recent years?
5. How has the nature of conflicts changed over the past three decades?
6. Does ethnic federalism system have a role in creating these inter-ethnic conflicts? If so, what role has the ethnic federalism system played?
7. Is ethnic federalism system contributing factor to the start of the civil war (with Tigray regional state) as well? If so, how has it contributed?

8. Do you see the Tigray war as part of this increase in conflicts in the country? what differentiates the Tigray way from the overall prevalence of conflicts in the country? (for the respondent from Tigray Defence Force)
9. The data shows that the prevalence of inter-ethnic conflicts increased greatly after the 2018 transition. Until the transition the country was relatively more stable. In your expert opinion, why have inter-ethnic conflicts increased after the transition?
10. How much are minorities in different regions affected by these conflicts? (to the experts)
11. How do you describe Ethiopia's ethnic federalism system, briefly? (to the two experts on federalism)
12. What are the ethnic federalism system's implications for inter-ethnic relations in the country? (to the two experts on federalism)
13. Afrobarometer's data show that compared to 2013 the percentage of people identifying more with their ethnic group than with their country has substantially increased in 2020. Can that be attributed to the ethnic federalism system?
14. Since some respondents mentioned that the conflicts are complex and difficult to resolve, as an expert in conflict resolution, is that really the case? Does the system have conflict resolution mechanisms? (to the conflict resolution expert)
15. Do you think your party can evolve into a multi-ethnic party representing different ethnic groups? (to the ethnic based party members)
16. As the country progresses, is it necessary that the form of political organisation should change from ethnic-based to civic, class or ideology-based political organisation? (to the politicians)
17. Should the country continue being an ethnic federation or consider adopting alternative forms of federal arrangement? Why?