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AMHARA, OROMO, AND TIGRAY POLITICAL CULTURES AND CHALLENGES OF POLITICAL STABILITY IN ETHIOPIA: 1991–2017

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Declaration

I declare that *Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political cultures and challenges of political stability in Ethiopia: 1991–2017* is my own original work, it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Solomon Hailemariam Erba

Signature: SOLOMON HAILEMARIAM ERBA

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Abstract

Ethiopia has experienced recurrent ethnic conflicts, especially during the last three decades, since the introduction of a governance structure of ethnic federalism in 1991. Attempts to bring political stability to the country have not been successful, as competing political cultures constantly struggle for hegemony. Political constituencies have fragmented, based on sub-national political cultures. This study considers the influence of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political cultures in Ethiopia and their contribution to the recurrent ethnic-based conflicts in the country.

This study contributes to our understanding of Gabriel Almond and Sydney Verba's concept of political culture in that it confirms the existence of "a particular pattern of orientations" that do not radically change over time. The political cultures of the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites consistently showed, during the study period, beliefs and aspirations that included competition for hegemonic power, the absence of political negotiations, and exercising political violence either to maintain the status quo or to unseat the status quo. The study further confirms Frantz Fanon's conceptualization of political violence over that of Hannah Arendt. The political violence exhibited by the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites has two dimensions: for the ethnic group dominating government, political violence is used to maintain the status quo, whereas other ethnic groups that aspire to hegemonic power adopt Fanon's justification of political violence to change the status quo. As a result, there is constant political violence in Ethiopia.

The political history of Ethiopia has shown struggles for dominance between the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites, and they continue to dominate current political cultures. University graduates represent the elite, who guide the formation of cultural values. The main research question driving this study is, "What are the dominant views and approaches that have influenced Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political cultures in Ethiopia from 1991 to 2017?" A comparative case study drew on multiple sources of data to answer the question. These included a survey and data from university graduates from each ethnic group, interviews with professors from each ethnic group, and documentary evidence including legislation as well as media reports of inter-ethnic conflicts. The study used the concepts of political culture and neo-patrimonialism as analytical tools to understand the differences among and between the educated people from these

ethnic groups. The findings show that members of each ethnic group are deeply entrenched in their own culture, with clear distrust of the political motives of other ethnicities. Very few participants put a national culture above their own ethnic culture. Beyond the disagreements on political history, the educated elites accuse each other when it comes to the many challenges faced by the country. They accuse each other of state capture, corruption, inciting ethnic conflicts, malpractice, poor governance, misguided policies, divide-and-rule practices, and misappropriation of the nations' economic wealth. The elites themselves do not shoulder responsibility for any failure in the country and do not show any interest in understanding other points of view, do not show sincere respect for the other's value but claim privileged political positions in present-day Ethiopia for past accomplishments. The study shows that the concept of political culture is adequate for producing an essential narrative of the approaches to the cultural values of the elites. As shown in previous studies, the deeply hegemonic ambitions of the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites have exacerbated the political violence that has ravaged the country for many decades and hindered the nation-building process. Blaming the other, engaging in a zero-sum game, eschewing political negotiation, making patronage appointments, and not taking responsibility – these behaviors and practices have generated ethnic conflicts in the country.

Keywords: political culture, neo-patrimonialism, Amhara, Oromo, Tigray, ethnic conflict, Ethiopia

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Dedication

For the millions of people who lost their lives and those who are still enduring political violence in Ethiopia.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AAPO - All-Amhara People's Organisation

ANDM - Amhara National Democratic Movement

EIASC - Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council

EPRDF - Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front

EPRP - Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party

ETA - Ethiopian Teachers Association

GERD - Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam

ISEN – Institute for the Study of Ethiopian Nationalities

MEISON -All-Ethiopia Socialist Movement

OFC - Oromo Federalist Congress

OLF - Oromo Liberation Front

OPDO - Oromo People's Democratic Organisation

SEPDM - Southern Ethiopia Peoples Democratic Movement

TPLF - Tigray People's Liberation Front

UDF - United Ethiopian Democratic Front

WPE – Workers' Party of Ethiopia

WAIC – Wolkiet Amhara Identity Committee

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background

Recurrent ethnic conflicts have been seen in Ethiopia and predominated for the last three decades. Attempts to bring political stability to the country have not been successful, as competing political cultures in the country have constantly struggled for hegemony. Political constituencies have fragmented based on sub-national political cultures. Ethnic conflict is not a new phenomenon in Ethiopia. It has been happening throughout its long history (Levine, 1972: 20-21). However, after 1991, a new ethnic narrative and discourse was introduced to the country. The new "ethnic policy" eroded state nationalism, which had been built over previous consecutive regimes. It provoked ethnic conflict and forceful confrontations. Although ethnic federalism was officially introduced in the country in 1991, strong ethnic sentiment had existed in Ethiopia long before 1991 (ibid.: 21).

To understand the complex nature of ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia, one has to have a deep understanding of the political cultures of at least some of the major ethnic groups such as the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray. Modern democratic institutions were set in motion after the collapse of the military regime in 1991, yet such establishments existed in form only. In essence, the traditional way of governing the country (i.e., authoritarian political culture) persevered (Abbink, 2006: 177).

Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan ethnic groups constitute approximately 67% of the country's population: Amhara (27%), Oromo (34%), and Tigrayan (6%) according to the latest Ethiopian Population Census conducted in 2007. There has been long-standing distrust among and between these groups.

The Oromo elites believed that the Oromo land and people had been subjugated by the northern warrior, that is, mostly the Amhara, since the time of Emperor Menelik II, (1889-1913). They were dehumanized, sold as slaves, and not permitted to promote their language in particular and their culture in general for over a century by consecutive northern establishments. Some Oromo elites went so far as to call it "colonialism" and to refer to the Northerners as "colonialists"

(Mekuria,[1] 2011: 379-405). Because of this, Oromo elites have been struggling to implant this consciousness among the wider Oromo people and to mobilize them to fight back against the northern highlanders. The Oromo elites claimed that they have their own civilization – the *Gadda* system – and the system had been broken or at least interrupted by the power exercised by those from the north (Ezekiel, 2009: 149-161).

The Amhara elites believed that what Emperor Menelik II accomplished during his expansioin (1870-1897) and what successive Amharic-speaking ruling classes participated in were natural state-formation processes. They strongly argued that some of Emperor Menelik II's generals were Oromos (Levine, 1972: 2-3; Andargachew, 2019: 157) and it was not just the Amharas who participated in the Ethiopian state formation but all Ethiopians across the board, including the Oromos. Even if, as Andargachew (2018) notes, there might have been violence and treacherous acts during this time of state-building, it was nothing unusual, as state-building in many parts of the world followed similar trajectories and approaches. They provided the example of Otto von Bismarck (1815-1898), known as the "Iron Chancellor" who unified Germany by force between 1862 and 1890. Hence, the Shewan Amhara elites considered themselves as modern, progressive, and statesmanlike (Andargachew, 2019: 56-82).

The Tigrayan political elites, on the other hand, considered themselves as the originators of Ethiopian civilization by referencing their direct ties to the Axumite kingdom. These elites told the story that Emperor Yohannes IV (1872-1889) of the Tigray region was killed in a conspiracy by Amhara nobles. Since then, the Tigrayan supremacy in the Ethiopian political domain had been intentionally suppressed by the succeeding Shewan rulers (Amhara) (Kahsay, 2005: 32-50). Political and cultural progress in the region of Tigray was inhibited for a century; as a result, war and drought left the region in dire poverty. Consequently, the elites mobilized the Tigrayan people against Amhara power by highlighting the extreme poverty and backward economy of the region (Aregawi, 2009: 111-151).

[1] All Ethiopian writers are named both in the text and in the references according to the Ethiopian system: first name and then last name.

The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political cultures fundamentally emanate from the aforementioned competing political perceptions of the three major ethnic groups in relation to their roles and position within Ethiopia. As the three ethnic groups represent more than 67% of the population, the struggle between these three political cultures has throughout modern Ethiopian history been shaking the foundation of the country's political settings.

This study was inspired by the intense competition for political hegemony, continuous ethnic conflicts, unabated political instability, and competing interpretation of Ethiopia's past history among the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites. The research seeks to understand the elites' political cultures of the three ethnic groups and considers that knowledge as important to achieving change and development.

The study asserts that the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites' aspiration for hegemonic power is a pattern of behavior embedded in their political cultures, which manifests in violence and neo-patrimonial practices. The study also reveals that such a "pattern of behavior" did not just develop during the study period, but has existed since the beginning of the *Zemene Mesafint* or "Era of the Princes." Such a disclosure indicates that the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites' political cultures are "pattern-maintaining": political violence and neo-patrimonial practices continue to exist despite regime changes.

The literature review, the survey data, and the interviews all show that there is a great deal of agreement when it comes to the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). Over 90% of the survey respondents said that they contributed money voluntarily to the GERD.

There is also major agreement on the absence of meritocracy and equitability in the country's institutions. The elites agree that there is no political culture of negotiation and compromise in the country, and that this leads to ethnic conflicts and political instability.

However, there is no agreement on the political history of Ethiopia among the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites. Beyond the disagreements on history, the educated elites accuse each other regarding the many challenges faced by the country. They accuse each other of state capture, corruption, inciting ethnic conflicts, malpractice, poor governance, misguided policies, divide-and-rule practices, and misappropriation of the nations' economic wealth. Each ethnic

elite aspires to be the dominant political force in the country. The deeply hegemonic ambitions of the elites have exacerbated the political violence that has ravaged the country for ages and hindered the nation-building process.

1.2 The concept of political culture

The work of Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba's "The Civic Culture," which was published in 1963 and that compared five countries – the United States (US), Germany, Italy, Mexico, and the United Kingdom (UK) – has been considered as the foundation for political culture research. This work has been criticized for concluding that "the only way for democratic institutions to take root is via the cultural diffusion of Anglo-Saxon political values" (Pavone, 2014: 27). Further, critics of this concept of political culture have questioned its capacity to explain political measures (Jackman and Miller, 1996: 651) or "predict novel facts" (Laitin, 1995: 170).

Almond and Verba's comparative project had been questioned extensively for failing to define "instability" and failing to set a standard for "stability and instability" when they compared the five countries in their political culture research (Welch, 1993: 24). Indeed, Stephen Welch in his book, *The Theory of Political Culture*, has argued eloquently that "political culture as a concept may not explain social conduct, but it can be used by an informed political observer to devise intelligent questions about what the likely or the unlikely consequences of political action will be" (Welch, 2013 :1). He is particularly critical of the link between political culture and nationalist identity.

For a country like Ethiopia where poverty, insecurity, mistrust, violence, and political intolerance have been embedded in the political system for more than a century (Abbink, 1998: 69), understanding the political cultures may help to unravel the root cause of ethnic conflict in the country. For Swedlow (2013: 624), political culture is "the shared values and beliefs of a group or society regarding political relationships and public policy." Brian Girvin (1989), accepting the importance of identity, argues that political culture can be divided into three levels: "macro, meso-level and micro-level." National and sub-national identities are macro-level, whereas the meso-level represents the constitution of a given country and the micro-level refers to the regular political activities, such as elections (Girvin, 1989: 34).

Arend Lijphart and Markus Crepaz (1991), in their study comparing 18 countries in Europe, present six classifications of political culture: mass, elites, coalitional, contradictive, homogeneous, and heterogeneous. They believe that the most stable democracy is the coalition democracy, which is primarily found in the Scandinavian countries. Whereas Lehmbruch (2003) and Lijphart (1991) are concerned with how political culture affects the stability of the well-established US and European democracies, the study at hand focuses on whether the political culture of sub-nationalities in Ethiopia weakens the Ethiopian political system. Political culture research conducted in Europe and the US, as well as the current study at hand, use the same concept – political culture – but study different political systems.

The concept of political culture is complex. What makes it complex is that it studies attitudes, values, and opinions, which are very hard to quantify and measure. To make it even more difficult, it changes through time. As it is the foundation of any political system and affects the political action directly, it is necessary to study some of the elements of the political culture that directs its course. To understand a political culture, it is imperative to identify and analyze some of the key features in a given political culture, including attitudes, symbols, rituals, political beliefs, and opinions (Welch, 1993). In particular, it is the political beliefs of the people being studied that are expected to indicate stability or instability in the political system and to suggest the existence of democracy. Hence, this study employs and takes into consideration the above indicated aspects of political culture, namely Almond and Verba's model and Lehmbruch's and Lijphart's classification of political culture, as its frame of reference in presenting the entire research.

1.3 Constant struggle of state nationalism and sub-nationalism

Ethnic identity has always been an important element of Ethiopian nationalism. Successive Ethiopian rulers from the mid-19th century to the latter part of the 20th century, including Emperor Haile Selassie (1930-1974), played a vital role in state nationalism in Ethiopia (Levine, 1972: 20-21). From its early days, the military Derg regime was challenged by many national liberation groups and insurgencies opposing its state nationalism.

In 1991 the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), the previous ruling coalition in Ethiopia, brought dramatic measures to bear on the Ethiopian political landscape:

ethnic federalism. Even if this political system was not entirely new to Ethiopia, considering the Zemene Mesafint from 1769 to 1855, it was unprecedented in the 20th century. Since 1991 state nationalism has weakened while sub-nationalism has flourished. According to Markakis (2011: 230-242), Ethiopia has become a playground for competing political cultures of various ethnic groups, particularly the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayans, as each vies for hegemony.

1.4 Political cultures of violence, insecurity, and intolerance

The legacy of violence goes back to the very foundation of the Ethiopian state in the 19th century (Abbink, 1998: 71). Despite the existence of a great deal of evidence to reveal and confirm the violence and brutality of consecutive rulers in Ethiopia during nation-building, the northern elites constantly glorified past emperors. Such glorification has been the source of tension among other ethnic groups, such as the Oromos (Mekuria, 2011: 323). The country has been unable to create national heroes, instead presenting the ethnicity of its leaders as a hallmark of nationalism. As the result, the past political cultures of various ethnic groups have affected the present efforts to create a shared political destiny and nation-building activity (Merera, 2007: 88). But, what constitutes a hero for one of the ethnic groups in Ethiopia conjures images of a villain for the others. Thus, Ethiopia's past has become a battleground for different ethnic groups blaming one another. Menelik II, for instance, was a hero for those of Amhara ethnic origins whereas the Oromos largely showed resentment to this assertion (Merera, 2016: 211).

1.5 Personal loyalty over institutionalized relations

Emperor Menelik II (1889-1913) introduced modern bureaucracy in Ethiopia. Despite such a long history of bureaucratization, personal loyalties have prevailed over institutionalized relations in Ethiopia. The existence of such a circumstance has weakened government institutions and the legal frame work. "The dynastic foundations of Haile Selassie's regime were viewed as an exemplary case of what Max Weber meant by patrimonial rule" (Jackson and Rosberg, 1982: 120-26).

The long history of Ethiopia showed that governments controlled access to provisions and used such power to appease or punish their subjects. The military regime (1974-1991) punished the opposition's ethnic or regionally-based political movements by using famine as a weapon of war. The regime refused access to international aid groups to enter drought-affected regions (Mesfin,

2017: 166-173). The EPRDF employed aid as a tool of repression by denying food, seed, and fertilizer to regions, it declined to provide basic supplies for those who voted against the ruling party or refused to cooperate with it (Pausewang and Aalen, 2002: 179-187).

Patronage politics resulted in public disgust arising from a sentiment that one region or ethnic group was gaining political power and economic benefits at the expense of others. Such feelings eventually led to ethnic confrontations and conflicts. To make matters worse, since the introduction of ethnic federalism, a new political discourse emerged that identified one ethnic group (notably the Amhara) as the historical enemy of others. The Amhara was identified as the beneficial and historical colonizer of the other ethnic groups. This manipulation created resentment and strained relationships among ethnic groups. Consequently, the suppressed conflict between Amhara and Oromo enabled the ruling party to sustain the domination of the minority Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) over others by implementing divide-and-rule tactics (Abbink, 2006: 389-413).

1.6 Preliminary literature assessment

The purpose of the literature review is to introduce the state of current research on the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political cultures and highlight the debates pertinent to them. The point of the review is to provide context for the research problem and research question(s). The review seeks to highlight concepts that lead to a better understanding of the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political cultures, present the knowledge gained in the process, and identify gaps in the scholarly literature. To this end, the review explores the concepts of political culture, neo-patrimonialism, state nationalism, and ethnic federalism.

Political culture is a social construct that takes a long time to take root. Similarly, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to change a political culture in a reasonably short period of time. (Welch, 1993: 53-54; Weisband and Thomas, 2015: 5) In order to identify the political cultures of the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray, it is essential to go back in history and look at how the Ethiopian nation-building process unfolded and what role each of these three major ethnic groups played in the process. What transpired in the process of nation-building in Ethiopia created the roots of competing political cultures of the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray.

1.6.1 Nation-building and its implications for Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political cultures

Most of the Amhara elites considered themselves as the architects of the Ethiopian state (Levine, 1972: 3). The majority of the Amhara elites want all other ethnic groups in Ethiopia to follow the history and culture of their Amhara forefathers so that nation-building will be cemented and the unity of the country re-established (ibid.).

To this end, students had been learning the history of Amhara and Tigrayan royalties until 1974 popular revolution. The history consists mainly of the actions of Emperor Tewodros II, Emperor Yohannes IV, Emperor Menelik II, and Emperor Haile Selassie (Merera, 2002: 65-69). Oromo and Tigrayan elites largely reject the emperors' history, as they consider it a history of subjugation and repression. Therefore, the Tigrayan and Oromo elites do not accept the Ethiopian history as their own history (Merera, 2016: 13). Despite the existence of several languages in the country, the Amharic language is Ethiopia's national language. Until 1973, the Ethiopian Orthodox Christian Church was considered the official state religion. However, Islam and other indigenous belief systems exist in the country. Orthodox Christianity is still a very influential religion in the country. Since the 1974 popular revolution, state and religion have been separated. The government of Ethiopia, at all levels and structures, encouraged all ethnic groups to reflect the Amhara culture, as it is considered the state culture. In order to enroll at university, students must pass a test in the Amharic language. This has proved to be very difficult for many students whose mother tongue is not Amharic. All of this had been done in the name of nation-building and pan-Ethiopian nationalism (*Ethiopiawinet*). Behind the façade of pan-Ethiopian nationalism, the Amhara political culture openly advocated and imposed its culture on others (Markakis, 2011: 34-34). Slowly but surely, such impositions faced resistance across Ethiopian society.

1.6.2 The Amhara identity

The concept "Amhara" is very controversial in Ethiopia and can similarly cause confusion in the literature. For some, "Amhara" represents the Ethiopian Orthodox Christian religion, as opposed to Islam. For others, "Amhara" represents people living all over Ethiopia who speak the Amharic language. Still others view the word "Amhara" as representing people living in Gonder, Gojjam, central Shewa, and Wello (Lyons, 2019: 115-116). This study uses the concept "Amhara" based

on the interpretation of the 1995 Ethiopian Constitution, Article 47 sub-article 3, which identifies the state of Amhara as a "Region Member state of the Federal Democratic Republic: the state of Amhara." Therefore, any reference to the Amhara elite in the research has bearing on elites living in the state of Amhara and Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia.

The intent behind the imposition of the Amhara culture on other ethnic groups was to build national unity; however, as it failed to consider the needs and histories of the other competing cultures, it had adverse consequences. Those of Oromo and Tigrayan ethnic origins resisted the imposition in an organized manner, where the TPLF and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), two radical political parties, were established (Lyons, 2019: 20-35).

Scholars who have studied Ethiopian political history for a long time and produced many academic works, such as John Markakis and Donald Levine, considered the Ethiopian style of assimilation/nation-building as unwise and problematic. In a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural country like Ethiopia, different groups strongly identify themselves with their language and traditions. Scholars believed it unwise, as there would be resistance to abandoning their languages and cultures in general and problematic, as struggles to retain these rights could exhaust valuable resources rather than focusing on nation-building.

The Amhara elites believed that their tradition, culture, and belief systems were more pure, original and to some extent superior to others (Abera, 2010: 61). The Amhara elites openly showed a disdain for other ethnic groups and labeled them with all sorts of derogatory names like *Gala* (slave) for Oromo and *Agame* for Tigray (Markakis, 2011: 35-39). University students in the 1960s and 1970s responded with significant contempt by organizing and uniting against the Amhara elites.

1.6.3 Role of literary and performing arts in shaping the elites' political cultures in Ethiopia

The songs, literature, art, and fine arts primarily reflected the Amhara elite's political culture. Such systemic imposition of a single culture widened the rift between the Amhara elites and other ethnic origins. Unless one spoke fluent Amharic, humiliation by Amhara elites was common. The Amhara elites, rather than encouraging non-Amharic-speaking ethnic groups to speak Amharic, constantly discouraged them or became overly fastidious in how the other ethnic groups spoke Amharic (Andargachew, 2018: 158). Hence, even the assimilation process was not

well thought out and organized. The Amhara political culture was exclusionary, pushing rather than pulling other cultural groups. Many non-Amhara ethnic origins were forced to change their names so that they fit into the Amhara political culture. Even today, some of the Amhara popular songs brag that they are superior, the best, the heroes, warriors, victors, beautiful, and unique (Markakis, 2011: 133, 145, 164). The implication of such songs is that the others are not what the Amhara elites claimed to be. The dilemma was that the Amhara elites wanted other ethnic origins to accept their political culture as the Ethiopian national political culture and were convinced that by doing so, they were contributing to the nation-building endeavors.

1.6.4 Language use in Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites' political cultures

After the establishment of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia in 1991, the Oromo in the Oromo region, spearheaded by the Oromo Libration Front (OLF) decided not to use the Amharic alphabet called Ge'ez to demonstrate their disapproval for the cultural imposition that had been forced on them for years (Markakis, 2011: 244). Such radical action made the Amhara elites, who thought that they contributed the language and the alphabet to the Ethiopian civilization, felt betrayed by the Oromo elites. Most Amhara elites considered that Amharic was one of the elements and instruments to forge unity among different ethnic groups in Ethiopia. The Oromo elites, however, considered it otherwise and used it as a rationale to use the Latin alphabet instead of the indigenous and home-grown Ge'ez alphabet. According to the Oromo elites, the Ge'ez alphabet did not express some of the words in Afan Oromo/Oromiffa (Oromo language) appropriately. The move was encouraged and nurtured by the EPRDF, where the TPLF was the core decision-maker. A new Oromo and Tigrigna languages department was initiated at the Addis Ababa University and started providing degrees in the Afan Oromo language. Previously there had only been Amharic and English language departments in operation since the establishment of Addis Ababa University. Similarly, a new Oromiffa and a Tigrigna television program was started and a Tigrayan and Oromo mass media agency was established. Such moves further aggravated the tension between the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites.

The Amhara elites were clearly not impressed by the new developments and registered their disapproval openly in many newspapers and wherever they had the opportunity to express their views. Their argument was that allowing ethnic groups to use a Latin alphabet would lead to division and weaken the Amharic language and, by association the unity of the country. They

blamed the ethnic federalism and the new federal arrangement. However, the Oromo and Tigrayan elites considered the move as a step forward in claiming their cultural identity.

Introducing the Latin alphabet was a political action from the Oromo elites (Markakis, 2011: 244). The Amhara elites argued that the Ge'ez alphabet was indigenous and unique to Ethiopia and should get a chance to flourish. The assertion of using *Qubee* (using the Latin alphabet) to write Afan Oromo created further tension between the Amhara and Oromo elites.

The Oromo, during the previous regimes, were not able to use their language, and justice was administered in the Amharic language where people spoke predominantly the Oromo language. One of the Oromo political cultures revolves around the use of language arguments and counter-arguments. Language has many aspects and can be used as a political instrument to achieve political objectives. For instance, people who speak the Amharic language could get employment and other opportunities in the government civil services. Currently, in Ethiopia the 12 major eployers in the country are government-related and, as Amharic is the official language of the country, speaking Amharic is mandatory to procure a government job (Markakis, 2011: 13). Therefore, Amharic speakers can easily get the government jobs and prospects for promotion are foreseeable (Mekuria, 2011: 600-605).

1.6.5 Struggle for hegemony

The Tigrayan elites share most of the Amhara elites' understanding of pan-Ethiopian nationalism (*Ethiopiawinet*). However, they themselves thought that Axum, a historical region located in the Tigray region, was considered as the origin of Ethiopia and Ethiopian history. The Axum civilization was the base for the current Ethiopian civilization and the foundation of Ethiopian nation-building. Nevertheless, the Tigrayan elites felt that the Amhara elites disregarded the Axumite civilization and its contributions. The Tigrayan elites considered that their historical and geographical boundaries and their contribution were disregarded or distorted. They thought that they had been marginalized and manipulated. Their language, Tigrigna, was sidelined and became second-rated. The Tigrayan elites shared most of the Amhara political cultures but they always felt that they were special and that their language, Tigrigna was superior. When the Amhara elites decided that Amharic was the national language of the country and anyone who wished to enter university must pass an Amharic language exam, the position triggered stiff

opposition and the TPLF was established (Markakis, 2011; Aregawi, 2009; Gebru, 1991; Lyons, 2019; Kahsay, 2005; Merera, 2016).

The Tigrayan elites coined a powerful narrative that the Amhara elites were responsible for the poverty and economic backwardness in their region. Emperor Yohannes IV was the only king from the Tigray region (he ruled Ethiopia from 1872-1889). The Tigrayan elites believed profoundly that since then, the glory of the Tigray diminished substantially because of the Amhara elites' conspiracy and the discontinuation of a Tigrayan king (Markakis, 2011: 188-189).

Tigrayan elites have always displayed hegemonic interests and whenever opportunities arose, they used them (Merera, 2002). This was demonstrated when fascist Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1935. The rulers of Tigray were accused of collaborating with the invading forces. When Emperor Haile Selassie returned from exile in 1941, he was determined to punish the people of the province and introduced many severe measures. These included the appointment of senior Amhara government officials and the introduction of heavy taxation. Moreover, the act of further dividing the province (Raya and Azebo Oromo, Wajirat) was unacceptable to the Tigrayan political leaders (Prunier, G. & E.Ficquet, eds, (2015). They opposed the measures and revolted; the revolt was known as the Woyane revolt. Although the objective of the revolt was to gain more concessions from the emperor, some Tigrayan leaders threatened to separate Tigray from the rest of the country (Kahsay, 2005). Emperor Haile Selassie, with the help of the British air force, suppressed the uprising (Aregawi, 2009). Since then, the Tigrayan elites have shown their resentment toward the central authority in general and Showan Amhara rule in particular (Markakis, 1987). The Tigrayan elites political culture of 1991-2017 in some ways has its origins in the Woyane revolt. However, there is significant evidence to support the argument that the political culture of the Tigrayan elites stems from the ambition to reclaim the hegemonic power in Ethiopia that they had lost to the Amhara elites after the death of Emperor Yohannes IV in 1889 (Merera, 2002; Aregawi, 2009; Markakis, 1987; Adhana, 1994, 1995; Young, 1997).

In 1991, when the TPLF seized power in Ethiopia and introduced ethnic federalism, its objectives were, directly or indirectly, to regain the lost glory of Tigray. It ensured that all major positions in the government were occupied by Tigrayan elites. Individuals and groups were given

political positions based on their loyalty to the TPLF. Since then, there has been open resistance, but most of it has been crushed by the TPLF coercive mechanisms (ibid.). As soon as the TPLF came to power, it disbanded the former ruling party, the Workers' Party of Ethiopia (WPE) – a Marxist-Leninist political party – and demobilized the age-old national army, replacing it with its guerrilla fighters (Lyons, 2019: 56-57). The entire state apparatus was controlled by Tigrayan elites. Forty-five university professors, mostly ethnic Amharas, were dismissed from Addis Ababa University (Markakis, 2011: 271). After rising to political power, the TPLF seized many traditionally Amhara-inhabited fertile territories in the north and northwest Ethiopian highlands and included them into Tigray's administrative borders without due legal process, without a referendum, and without political dialogue. Such drastic actions had become significant points of contention between the Amhara and Tigrayan elites (ibid.: 146).

The Tigrayan elites had been manipulating different ethnic groups, and by doing so, expanded their hegemony in Ethiopia since their seizure of power in 1991. In 1992, due to US diplomatic pressure, the OLF and the TPLF agreed to combine all their fighters in the designated barracks and to establish a national defense force after the disbanding of the national army. The OLF complied, but the TPLF did not. Instead, the TPLF attacked the OLF army in the barracks and destroyed them, paving the way for the TPLF fighters to build the Ethiopian national army. The OLF was caught by surprise and consequently withdrew from the transitional government in 1992. To make matters worse, the TPLF recruited, using its own criteria, loyal Oromo individuals to form a new ethnic party in the Oromo region, the OPDO (Markakis, 2011: 282-283).

Many Amhara elites believed that Ethiopia was a melting pot where the Oromo also ruled Ethiopia during the Oromo expansion 1769-1855, citing the Yeju Dynasty, who ruled Gonder, the capital of Ethiopia at that time. They provided further evidence that most of Menilik's generals were Oromo, referring to Wole Betule, Ras Mekael (Mohammed Ali), Gebeyehu Gebo, Ras Mekonnen, King Teklehaymanot of Gojjam, Balcha Aba Nefso, and Fitawrari Habtegiorgis Denegde (Merera, 2015: 16-20). However, the Oromo elites rejected the assumption that a handful of Oromo elites who surrendered to the Amhara elites were representative of the Oromo majority. Besides, the handful of elites identified above were not powerful enough to stop the humiliation and suppression of the Oromo. They further contended that during those times, the

Amhara elites were considered first citizens whereas the Oromo elites were considered secondary citizens.

Gadda is supposedly a traditional democratic system; however, women are excluded from the system (Asmerom, 1973: 8-15; Pausewang and Aalen, 2002: 4). In the *Gadda* system, the new Luba (leader/government) is expected to wage a war every eight years and emerge victorious (Getachew, 2002). Such a warrior system created fear and suspicion among the people who lived in the neighboring regions.

After the TPLF seizure of political power, the mass media glorified the TPLF rulers and regularly broadcasted the victorious guerrilla fighters' bravery. The media, in general, demonized the regime that preceded the TPLF and profusely praised the new system. The media's positions created a feeling of defeat for the Amhara elites in particular, and the previous regime's supporters in general. The national broadcasting media and Tigrayan mass media agency had consistently highlighted the glory of the victor through songs, drama, poetry, and film footage, thereby fomenting resentment and eventually fostering conflict rather than cooperation (Merera, 2016: 10-12; Andargachew, 2018: 171).

There had always been mistrust, conspiracy, and intense competition for power between and among the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites. As the Tigrayan elites were a minority, they believed that the only way to regain their historical glory was through conspiracy and a divide-and-rule strategy. Getachew Reda, a TPLF central committee member and former minister, explicitly stated on Radio Fana (EPRDF-run radio station) that "Oromo and Amhara are like hay and fire" (Getachew, 2016), clearly indicating that they could not exist together. That statement revealed the divisive strategy the TPLF used toward Amhara and Oromo. When Emperor Tewodros II faced the Napier expedition,[2] the Tigrayan elites led the way to Emperor Tewodros

[2] The Napier expedition was a rescue mission carried out in 1868 by the armed forces of the British Empire against Ethiopia. Tewodros II, Emperor of Ethiopia (1855-1868), imprisoned several missionaries and two representatives of the British government in an attempt to force the British government to comply with his requests for military assistance. The expedition launched by the British in response required the transportation of a sizable military force hundreds of miles across mountainous terrain lacking any road system. It was mainly with the Tigray rulers' support that the formidable obstacles to the action were overcome. The mission was led by General Robert Napier, against the troops of Tewodros II, who was captured in Magdala, Gondar, at that time the Ethiopian capital. The expedition was largely successful because the emperor introduced many unpopular political measures and radical ideas (Bahru, 1991; Levine, 1965).

II's headquarters, resulting in his death and the ascendancy of Emperor Yohannes IV (1872-1889). There are many cases of such conspiracy between the Tigrayan and Amhara elites (Merera, 2016: 16-19).

The ascendancy of the TPLF to power in 1991 showed a dramatic increase in ethnic-based conflicts throughout the country. Most of the ethnic conflicts boiled down to the eviction of a particular ethnic group from a region claimed by certain other ethnic groups. Ethnic groups that had lived together for many decades, if not for a century or so, suddenly became alien in their own country and were forced to leave overnight. In particular, in the Oromia region, severe human rights abuses and acts of violence were committed against Amharas and followers of Ethiopian Orthodox Church in areas such as Arba-Gugu and Bedeno (Pausewang and Aalen, 2002: 42). For example, the OPDO, one of the ruling party wings in Oromia, erected "the Anole statue," which depicted killings and chopping off of women's breasts by Emperor Menelik II's soldiers. Such actions further aggravated the ethnic conflicts, as politicians contextualized the then socio-economic problems by directly linking them to the past historical memory (Lyons, 2019: 59-60).

The Oromo social structure was egalitarian, whereas the Tigrayan and Amhara social structures were hierarchal and authoritarian (Markakis, 2011: 33-37). The *Gadda* system, however, was no longer practiced seriously, but the Oromo elites repeatedly blamed King Menelik II and *neftegna* (his solders) for harming the Oromo people 100 years ago when the Gadda system was in place (Mekuria, 2011: 322-323). Similarly, under the *Gadda* system, when it was active and alive, the new Luba used to wage wars and subjugate the conquered tribes and communities every eight years. After 1991, the OLF was accused of killing many Amharas who had been living in Oromia regions for decades and followers of Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The Arba-Gugu and Bedeno killings were a case in point. The TPLF, which has been the dominant political force in Ethiopia since 1991, stated in its declaration of formation that Amharas were the number one enemy of the Tigrayans (TPLF, 1976: 1). Based on such a philosophy, they unlawfully controlled several regions where Amhara had conventionally lived for a century and annexed them to the Tigray region. Between 1991 and 2017, the Amhara elites organized themselves and fought back against the TPLF rule (Abbink, 1998: 57,77). Hence, it is safe to conclude that whether it was hierarchical or egalitarian, the elites' political cultures of Oromo, Tigray, and

Amhara were violent, and invited confrontation and conflict rather than collaboration (Kahsay, 2005: 29-32).

1.6.6 Religion in Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray regions

Political power had been influenced by religion, particularly by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church for over a thousand years (Taddesse, 1972). However, since the 1974 popular revolution, religion has lost its significant influence. When the EPRDF seized power in 1991, the power of religious organizations plummeted. The ruling party began assigning hand-picked religious leaders for both the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council (EIASC) (Haustein and Ostebo, 2011: 2-8).

Although the 1995 Ethiopian Constitution, Article 11 clearly stated that the government could not interfere in religious affairs, the EPRDF government intruded heavily. Such interference proved to work to the advantage of the government. For instance, in the 2005 election – an election which was highly contested and where all opposition leaders and supporters were jailed and over 300 people were killed, religion played a role. Most religious leaders endorsed the government's actions, except the Catholic Church Cardinal who condemned the killings (Haustein and Ostebo, 2011: 10).

The influence and action of religious organizations in Ethiopia have been complex. In recent Ethiopian history – apart from Emperor Tewodros II's rule (1855-1868) – governments used religion for their own political objectives. In 1878, Emperor Yohannes IV (1872-1889), who believed that if all Ethiopians practiced the same religion, it would be easier to rule the united country, resultantly forcefully Christianized Wollo, one of the Amhara provinces. The legitimate heir to the throne of Emperor Menelik II (1889-1913), Lej Eyasu, was denied the throne by the powerful Shewan (Amhara) nobilities on the false pretext that he attempted to Islamize Ethiopia. It was under these circumstances that Emperor Haile Selassie (1930-1974) came to power (Bahru, 1991).

Christianity and Islam co-existed side by side in Ethiopia for over a thousand years. They are the two major religions in the country. One of the prominent writers on Oromo politics indicated that most Oromos became Muslim in opposition to the Ethiopian Orthodox Christian religion

domination. However, the claim had been contested widely as Islam expanded not only in Oromia but in all parts of Ethiopia after the Ottoman Empire.

The Oromo had its own traditional belief system called *Waaqeffanna*. Its system, however, was not able to expand in the same way as Islam and Christianity had in the region. It was because of the geographical proximity to Shewan Amhara and consequent social interaction that the Shewan Oromos are mostly Orthodox Christian. The Bale and Harar Oromos are closer to Somalia, where Islam is practiced widely. The Arsi Oromo might be converted to Islam in opposition to Ethiopian Christian Church domination. The Wellega Oromos are predominantly Protestant Christians, as missionaries originally penetrated the region while expanding educational and health facilities. The Borena Oromos are still practising the traditional Oromo belief system, *Waaqeffanna*, but the Protestant Church continues to expand.

The EPRDF tried to corrupt the traditional *Gadda* leaders, particularly the spiritual parts responsible to conduct the *Gadda* leaders' choice.

In the period under study, 1991–2017, one can see religious coercion was an instrument of government. In fact, the regime during this period used religion as an instrument for implementing its policy, and some of the religious leaders served as a mouthpiece of the government. Patriarch Abune Paulos (1992-2012), who was the open advocate of TPLF and was from the Tigray region, supported and defended the EPRDF government in many instances, including during the 2005 election controversy. Patriarch Paulos had distributed the wealth of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church to like-minded supporters, particularly people from Tigray. It was a typical example of neo-patrimonialism in action in Ethiopia. Therefore, religion, in the study period, had been manipulated by the government and used as an instrument of power.

The action of the government to manipulate and interfere in the affairs of the religions in the country gained short-term results. However, during the study period, followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Islam expressed their dissatisfaction with the government action. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church congregants were divided along ethnic lines. The Ethiopian Muslim community conducted endless demonstrations confronting the government (Haustein and Ostebo, 2011: 20). The manipulation and interference of the government in religion created conflict and division in religious followers in the country.

From the preliminary literature review, one can decode the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political culture elements succinctly as a zero-sum game – the Amhara and Tigrayan elites wanted to have it all when they got the opportunity to rule the country. Menilik expansion, TPLF ascendancy to power, and the Oromo expansion in the 16th century serve as the case in point.

1.7 Research problem

Competing Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political cultures in Ethiopia have contributed to ethnic conflict and political instability in the country. The concept of political culture identifies elements of modern and traditional political cultures. Modern political cultures mostly rely on institutional strength and rule of law, whereas traditional political cultures count on personal loyalty, trust, honor, and shame (Welch, 1993: 30-40). Ethiopia in general, Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray in particular, believe in a traditional political arrangement where loyalty and honor to one's individual and ethnic origin is more important than respecting rules and regulations or following constitutional order (Merera, 2002: 58-89). The traditional political culture, coupled with ethnic federalism in Ethiopia created a fertile ground for competition for resources where Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political elites vied for political hegemony. Such competition created incessant conflict among the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political elites. Therefore, the ethnic federalism introduced in 1991 exacerbated the prevailing conflict due to competing political cultures.

Ethnic federalism, introduced in 1991 as an approach to minimize conflict, only served to exacerbate the tensions among competing political cultures. The competition for power and resources has created incessant conflict among the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political elites. The competing political cultures, which constantly incited conflict in Ethiopia, made it impossible to break the vicious cycle of poverty and economic backwardness in the country. Moreover, it becomes problematic to achieve political stability in the country and peace becomes an expensive commodity. Hence, the cause of the constant cycle of competing political cultures is the research problem.

The research seeks to discover how the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites' political cultures affected the Ethiopian political culture in the process, revealing the conundrum of sustained conflicts in Ethiopia. Although there are over 80 ethnic groups in Ethiopia (Ethiopian Population

Census, 2007), the three regions have been significantly influenced and shaped by the country's political system at large. Understanding the three regions' political cultures, means discerning the political cultures of Ethiopia and recognizing the fundamental political problems of the country. For over a century, the political cultures of the Amhara and Tigray regions have been heralded as the political culture of Ethiopia, but have disregarded the intense demand for hegemonic power of the Oromo. Such an imposition has created the enduring political struggle, which resulted in uninterrupted political conflict in Ethiopia, particularly after the introduction of ethnic federalism in 1991.

Some of the elements of the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political cultures have been problematic and fostered conflict in the country. Winners in any conflict situation take all. Compromise was unheard of in Ethiopian politics. Victors always bragged about their triumph until the overpowered were ready for revenge. The zero-sum game tendency, the authoritarian nature, and blaming of others for all failures in many of the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political cultures, generate conflict. This research seeks to interrogate this puzzle.

1.7.1 Significance of the research

The research project is intended to generate a new understanding of Ethiopian political discourse for policymakers, academics, and all those who are concerned with the political stability of Ethiopia.

The research findings are intended to help policymakers and academics recommend appropriate courses of action rather than continuing to misdiagnose symptoms.

1.7.2 Scope of the research and limitations

The scope of the research is restricted to elite political cultures in Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray as opposed to mass political cultures. One of the major obstacles the research project anticipated, was maintaining objectivity. As the Ethiopian people have been divided along ethnic lines for the last 27 years, people are very circumspect in answering questions related to their ethnic origins; therefore, utmost care was taken in upholding impartiality. The research time line was between 1991 and 2017, as this period represents dramatic changes in the Ethiopian political landscape:

from unitary political system to federal political system; from regional political structural arrangements to ethnic political structural arrangements.

The time period 2016-2017 was the height of the youth-dominated protests and a milestone in Ethiopian political history. It was an important juncture where the TPLF, which governed the country for over 25 years, lost its significance (Yohannes, 2021: 82). On 9 October 2016 a state of emergency was declared, the first in 25 years in Ethiopia. In March 2017, it was extended for another four months. In August 2017 the state of emergency was lifted after hundreds of people were killed in anti-government protests demanding wider political reforms (US Department of State, 2019). Following the death of Meles Zenawi in 2012, the deputy Prime Minister, Hailemariam Desalegn, was appointed as the country's prime minister. In 2014 the Oromo elites opposed the new Addis Ababa Master Plan which would encroach on Oromia land. The country was rocked by waves of sustained violence in Oromia. Hundreds of Oromos were killed and tens of thousands displaced. Protest in the Oromia region expanded to Amhara region in 2016; the immediate cause of the protest in the Amhara region was the detention of the Wolkait Amhara Identity Committee (WAIC) (Yohannes, 2021: 177). The government attempted to crackdown on the protests by detaining or killing insurgents and eventually by declaring a state of emergency. None of these measures were successful and change had to come. Abiy Ahmed Ali was elected as the OPDO party chair in February 2018 and the House of Peoples' Representatives swore him in as prime minister on April 2, 2018 (Awol, 2016). This was a time of high expectations from all political groups. The OLF hoped to separate Oromia from Ethiopia while the TPLF assumed business would continue as usual. The pro-Ethiopia unity groups expected the constitution to be declared null and void. Indeed, right after Abiy was elected he took radical measures in domestic reform such as the release of tens of thousands of prisoners and the return of banned opposition groups once labeled terrorist organizations such as the Ginbot 7 and the OLF. He also made a peace deal with a longtime arch-enemy Eritrea and for this he was awarded a Nobel peace prize in 2019 (Awol, 2016). These measures and others signaled a shift to the nation and world, one that lies beyond the scope of this thesis.

1.7.3 Ethnic, national, subnational cultures in Ethiopia

Ethnic culture is a culture with similar beliefs, behaviour, language, religion, values, and other characteristics that is transmitted from one generation to another (Weisband and Thomas, 2015: 126-127).National or civic culture are common values, practices, customs, beliefs, languages and religions shared by the general population of a nation and promulgated or supported by the ruling government. Subnational cultures are cultures existing in a nation underneath the national political culture (ibid).In the Ethiopian situation, the Amhara and Tigrayan cultures gave shape to a national culture over centuries and all other cultures were considered inferior (Tibebu, 1995: 124). Elite political culture is the beliefs, values and habits of the elites, Putnam put it, "most highly involved and influential participants in a political system" (Putnam, 1971: 652). The paper refers to the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites' political culture which is specific to the elites not the general population.

1.8 Research question(s), aims, and objectives

1.8.1 Research question(s)

Main question:

- What are the dominant views and approaches that have influenced Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites' political cultures in Ethiopia from 1991 to 2017?

Sub-questions:

- What approaches that relate to the definition of the nation have been used by Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites' political cultures?
- What approaches that relate to language have been used by Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites' political cultures?
- In what ways do these approaches generate ethnic conflicts in the country?

1.8.2 Research aim and objectives

There were two main aims of this research:

a) The first was to fill a gap in the literature on politics in Ethiopia by developing an understanding of the elites' political cultures of the Amhara, Tigray, and Oromo, through an assessment and survey of the opinions and attitudes of political elites of these three groups. Such an understanding will pave the way for finding solutions to an age-old conflict that has for many years threatened the political stability of the country.
b) The second aim was to contribute to the literature on political culture, especially in the African context.

The objectives of the research were as follows:

a) to investigate and identify what the elites' political cultures of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray are;
b) to rationalize how the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites' political cultures influence Ethiopian culture overall.
c) to identify who represents the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites' political cultures and how they operated from 1991 to 2017;
d) to identify the strategies used by Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political elites to promote their political culture between 1991 and 2017;
e) to analyze the possibilities of the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites' political cultures surviving side by side in harmony with each other.

1.9 Theoretical framework

The research uses the concepts of political culture and neo-patrimonialism theory to explain and analyze the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political cultures. The concept of political culture provides the research with a frame of reference and direction. The theory of neo-patrimonialism relates to the topic directly, as the political structures in at least two of the regions are hierarchical and authoritarian. Jean-Francois Medard (1982: 191) argues that "neo-patrimonialism is characterized by arbitrary rule, authoritarianism, the privatization of power, clientelism and above all, confusion of the public and private sphere."

Between 1991 and 2017, there were many examples that showed that the EPRDF, which has been dominated by the TPLF (Aregawi, 2009: 329-345), used government offices to promote its self-interest. Politicians took advantage of their official positions to get re-elected or amass

wealth (Pausewang and Aalen, 2002: 83-116). Bratton and Van de Walle (1994: 458) elaborated that "leaders occupy bureaucratic offices less to perform public service than to acquire personal wealth and status. The essence of neo-patrimonialism is the award by public officials of personal favors, both within the state and society."

The research uses the theory of neo-patrimonialism to show how neo-patrimonialism had been practiced consistently throughout the study period and became the political culture of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political elites. Neo-patrimonialism manifested in the ethnic federal arrangement in these ethnic groups and ignited conflict and developed it as the source of political instability in the country at large.

In the study period (1991-2017), the official state institutions were simply present in form; the party structures were more powerful and active in the state (Hagmann and Abbink, 2011: 585). State institutions such as the judiciary, religious institutions, the election board, the military, and many others suffered egregious interferences by the ruling party (ibid., 586-587). The ruling party used the state institutions as if they were their private property. If it suited the party officials, they even disregarded the country's constitution (ibid.). Party and government structures had been merged, contrary to the principles of federalism. Many scholars agree that such practices are distinctive features of neo-patrimonialism (Bratton and Van de Walle, 1997: 63; Chabal, 2005: 21; Van de Walle, 2001a: 16; Englebert, 2000: 1, 5-6; Chabal and Daloz, 1999: xix; Bayart, 1993[1989]: xiv; Medard, 1982: 165).

Neo-patrimonialism is the practice of using government offices for private purposes (Medard 1982: 165). Meles Zenawi, president (1991-1995) and prime minister (1995-2012) of Ethiopia had demoted the Oromiya regional president in contravention of both the regional and federal constitutions. The former Defense Minister, Seye Abraha, had been imprisoned; when a judge freed him from jail, the prime minster prepared a new law that he instructed parliament, one day later, to enact. Based on the new law, the defense minister was returned to jail (Yohannes, 2021: 167). Weber called such system "patrimonial and legal rational/bureaucratic" (Erdmann and Engel, 2007: 105) given that the government supported the prime minister's intrusion into the existing law of the land.

In a similar example, one of the most famous athletes in Ethiopia, Derartu Tulu, had had a domestic conflict with her husband. Instead of going to court to resolve the issue, she went directly to the prime minister's office to speak to Meles Zenawi, the then prime minister (Yohannes, 2021: 292). This was a typical instance of how individuals and groups were more trusted and influential than the institutions in the country.

The examples above, which illustrate the prime minister's disregard for governmental institutions and the constitution of the land, created confusion. As a result, people trusted only their individuals/ethnic connections rather than relying on the law or state institutions.

According to Yohannes (2021) there were unjustifiable economic advantages established in Ethiopia during the study period as the result of a neo-patrimonial tendency within the system. The one illustration of such practice can be seen in the incident outlined below.

During the study period, importers of commodities of high demand had been complaining that their items had been held unfairly processed in the customs office for inspection. In effect, imported items that belonged to those who were not connected in the system, would be held in the customs warehouses indefinitely under the pretext of inspection. By contrast, those who were connected to the system, would get their item inspected expeditiously. The merchants for whom imported items were released, would quickly sell their imported items first, thereby controlling the market. By the time the imported items belonging to those without connections were released, the market resulted in either heavy loss or bankruptcy (Yohannes, 2021: 224). It is to be expected that those merchants who lost their businesses blamed the system and, in the long run, were embittered by the ethnic group in power. Such malpractice clearly fueled frustration, anger, and eventually conflict.

The Ethiopian political system was organized along ethnic lines. Major and key government positions were held by one ethnic group; hence, neo-patrimonialism emerged in the form of undue economic benefit in Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray regions. Such political cultures provoked antagonism in the society.

Sindzingre (2007) and Van de Walle (1997), who studied the theory, classified different sub-types of neo-patrimonialism in specific regions. They assigned cronyism to East Asia and

patrimonialism to Africa. However, in Ethiopia, during the study period, almost all sub-types of neo-patrimonial elements were used at different time for specific motives. Systematic clientelism, particularistic use of state resources, and corruption were used to consolidate the regime power base and increase loyalty. Therefore, this study used all neo-patrimonialism sub-types in analyzing the political culture of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political elites in the appropriate context.

1.10 Chapter outline

Chapter Two contains a literature review. It discusses the concepts of political culture, neo-patrimonialism, and political violence in general. The literature is demarcated to review the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political cultures from 1991 to 2017. However, the literature from before the study period, particularly literature on the Ethiopian nation-building process, has also proven to be essential to providing a background to the nation's political cultures. Not a single source was found that deals explicitly with Ethiopian political culture or with Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites' political cultures. Consequently, it was imperative to review diverse books, articles, and any text dealing directly or indirectly with political cultures in general.

Chapter Three outlines the research methodology. The chapter describes the research design and why the study used a survey method. This chapter clarifies the sample design and discusses the sampling technique used. The chapter also provides justification for the survey sample and explains the problems confronted during data collection and mitigating strategies.

Chapter Four contains the data presentation. The survey data collected was converted into charts and tables using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The data is presented consistently in table format to facilitate easy reading.

Chapter Five analyzes the main results focusing on the political culture, using the literature review as a background and supplementing it with explanatory comments. Relationships between data results – both positive and negative developments – and other findings are presented and analyzed. The patterns identified using a variety of sources led to recognition of relationships and divergences among the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites' political cultures.

Chapter Six Chapter six elaborates on the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites' perception of neo-patrimonial practices in Ethiopia. In this section, the elites' aspiration for hegemonic power and their rivalry are revealed.

Chapter Seven presents the conclusion. Here, the chapter details and underscores significant features of the study. The chapter briefly summarizes the research questions and answers and then emphasizes the contributions made by the study: its contributions to knowledge about violence in Ethiopian political cultures. This is followed by a discussion of the implications for practice and suggestions for further research.

Chapter Two: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a literature review that unpacks current research in political culture in the broad spectrum in Africa, then in Ethiopia by focusing on the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political cultures and highlighting the debates pertinent to them.

The review of literature investigates what has been written so far with regard to Ethiopian political culture in general but specifically the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political cultures.

The study fills a gap in the literature on politics in Ethiopia by developing an understanding of the political cultures of the Amhara, Tigray, and Oromo and by assessing and contributing to the literature on political culture, especially in the African context.

This study centers the debate between Abbink and Hagmann (2006) to discuss the importance of the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political cultures in understanding Ethiopian political systems. These writings form part of the core literature and this study expands this debate with additional arguments.

The study considers aspects of political culture, using Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba's model and Gerhard Lehmbruch's and Arend Lijphart's classification of political culture, as its frame of reference in presenting the literature review.

2.2 Major debates in political culture

It has been over half a century since Almond and Verba (1983) introduced the term "political culture" into the arena of political studies in 1963. Subsequently, the concept has been heavily debated and many critics and scholars, both moderate and radical, have contributed their share.

Critics challenged the notion of political culture as an independent variable or as a cause and effect, and even the very definition of it. Many of them questioned whether values, attitudes, feelings, and beliefs can be properly measured by popularly known standard methods of quantitative methodology (Johnson, 2003).

Despite its many controversies and critics, the concept continues to grow, and many scholars continue to write about it. For example, in 1968, Lucian Pye, president of the American Political

Science Association, encouraged political scientists to conduct more studies in political culture and in 1972 he wrote that political culture has become a common term among political scientists and intellectuals in general (Pye, 1991).

During the same period, Robert Putnam (1993: 44) wrote that "patterns of behavior in participation cannot be significantly changed," confirming the importance of research into the continuity of political culture. In 1977, another defender of political culture, Lowell Dittmer, pointed out that the critique of political culture was fundamentally conservative and that the concept is more interlaced with "systemic stability." Such a view invited more diverse research (Putnam, 1993).

Research into political culture was originally inspired by an attempt to solve Anglo-American problems identified by Almond and Verba (1983: 10), who were concerned about diminishing democratic practices in the Anglo-American world. However, through time this unique approach to research expanded and now we find many analyses of political culture in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America that attempt to solve various challenges in those countries (Rotberg, 1999). These are a clear indication that the examination of political culture, despite so many critics, continues to expand. In the process, research into political culture is becoming sophisticated, learning from the past mistakes and inaccuracies of previous researchers. For example, Almond (1983: 23) stated that, as the political cultures in communist countries in the 1970s were undergoing "total political and economic transformation," they constituted a "natural experiment" in attitude change.

The debate whether political culture is a dependent or independent variable still continues. Robert Tucker (1973: 62) considered political culture "as the central subject of the discipline, not as an explanatory variable but as what needs to be explained. David Elkins and Richard Simeon (1979), in their provocative essay, "A Cause in Search of an Effect, or What Does Political Culture Explain?" labeled the concept "popular and seductive." They even went further, calling it "controversial and confused." Such tagging did not stop scholars from additional research and writings. The concept of political culture was revived, and some even regarded the 1980s and the 1990s as political culture's "renaissance years." Scholars who conducted extensive research into political cultures, such as Merelman (1989), Lane and Ersson (1994), and Welch (1993, 2013), advocated that political culture could serve as an intermediate variable, while acknowledging

some of the concept's weaknesses, such as its inability to draw firm conclusions (Elkins and Simeon, 1979: 127-139).

Almond (1988) wrote that political culture is now an established field of study in political science. Many books have been written and thousands of citations form part of the literature. Aaron Wildavsky, 1987 president of the American Political Science Association, defended the concept of political culture not as an "alternative to rational" Aaron Wildavsky (1987: 19) but as a "cultural rationality."(ibid). Even Christian Welzel and Ronald Inglehart (2009: 126-132), openly critical of political culture, defended Almond and Verba, writing that "political culture has significant political consequences." Werlin and Eckstein (1990: 249-259) as well, in their essay "Political Culture and Political Change" agreed that "politics and culture affected one another, but ultimately politics is more powerful than culture." In his book, *The Concept of Political Culture*, Welch (1993) endorsed a phenomenological approach to the process of meaning construction and interpretivism in the study of political culture. He suggested using survey methodologies to fulfill political culture's aspirations".

The debate about political culture as a concept, as a theory, and as a legitimate focus of study, still continues. However, many researchers still employ the concept and, in the process, its calibrations improve and the field is refined slowly. In his attempt to find more precise meaning, Merelman (1989: 465-470), for instance, indicates that political culture uncovers "deep structures … inaccessible to direct observation." Huang (2004: 147) also supports the idea that "the continuing popularity of *The Civic Culture* in the academic community is evidence of its groundbreaking quality and subtlety in treating culture as an independent variable." The concept of political culture has also been contested as it relates to Africa.

2.3 Political culture in Africa

There are 54 independent countries in Africa and there are many sub-cultures in these 54 countries. Therefore, it is impossible to speak about African political culture as a single phenomenon. However, in comparing concepts of political culture and studies about political culture in specific contexts, it may be observed that languages, regions, religions, and identities play a significant role in identifying and defining political cultures in Africa. Political culture in Africa is associated with national boundaries and ethnic identities (Masolo, 2002). The boundaries were drawn by colonial powers and are still a point of discussion and contention.

Boundaries are important, as identity is related to geographic locations and regions. Contemporary writers on the subject, mostly European writers (including Bratton and Van de Walle, 1994; Levine, 2000; Tangri, 1999) associated African political cultures with neo-patrimonialism.

2.3.1 Neo-patrimonialism

Neo-patrimonialism is a system where powerholders distribute state resources to buy support, increase constituency, and maintain power (Taylor and Williams, 2008). Van de Walle (2001b: 51) further supports the idea by stating that "political authority is often based on the giving and gaining of favors in an endless series of dyadic exchanges that go from the village level to the highest reaches of the central state." Van de Walle goes on to claim that power in countries that exercise neo-patrimonialism evolves around the prime minister or the president and most power rests in the capital city. A clear indication of the existence of neo-patrimonialism is the difficulty in identifying which spheres of power are private and which ones are public.

2.3.2 How other African cases compare to Ethiopia in terms of neo-patrimonialism

Max Weber's analysis of patrimonial authority and the separation of traditional society structure from the private sphere introduced the concept of *patrimonialism*. Medard (1979: 62) used the term *neo-patrimonialism* to explain the style of government in Cameroon, where there were no state institutions. Since then, the term neo-patrimonialism has been applied mostly to different African countries to rationalize their political cultures (Olayode, 2005: 30).

There are different forms of neo-patrimonialism, depending on a government's structures and its policies: predatory, regulated, or hybrid. A predatory state is one where there are no differences between private and public spheres. Examples of predatory states include Angola, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Sudan (Omeja, 2010: 7-11). In a regulated neo-patrimonial state, there are semblances of centralized public policy but informal use of the public sphere for individual gain is rampant. Typical examples of regulated neo-patrimonial states are Houphouet Boigny's Côte d'Ivoire and Jomo Kenyatta's Kenya (Olivier, 1999: 25-52). The hybrid form of neo-patrimonialism is a mixture of both predatory and regulated practices (Cammack, 2007: 599-614). The study at hand indicates that Ethiopia may fall into the hybrid category.

Van de Walle (2007: 3-7) elaborates on neo-patrimonialism according to the nature of its patron-client relationship: tribute clientelism, elite clientelism, and mass clientelism. Tribute clientelism occurs in traditional states where a patron provides offerings to buy friendship and alliances, whereas elite clientelism (Van de Walle has also used the term *prependalism* to refer to a similar concept) is "a strategic political allocation of public offices to key elites." Mass clientelism is mostly practiced in modern politics where a political party promises ~~a~~ new or better policies which would provide improved services and job opportunities for supporters if elected."

Neo-patrimonialism may manifest in African nations as a traditional form of resource exchange among community leaders, as an ethically suspect system of favoritism and disenfranchisement, or, most commonly, as an instrument in building a cult of personality (Berman, 1998 : 305-341). In Cameroon, for instance, the former president Ahmadou Ahidjo, reiterated that he was the father of the nation and his leadership was "supreme." He had close patron-client relationships with every ethnic group's leaders, in a manner that brought no benefit to the nation at large (200 ethnic groups comprising various types of Bantus, Fulbes, and Kiedis) (ibid.).

Claiming to be the father of the nation and ruling the country in an authoritarian manner is not exclusive to Cameroon: in Botswana, Seretse Khama negotiated friendly relations with local chiefs, tribal circles of relatives, and cattle owners. By doing so, they established a neo-patrimonial relationship between the central government and the privileged few (Bach and Gazibo, 2012: 52).

Sierra Leone is not different from Cameroon and Botswana. There, Siaka Stevens pretended to be part of the big Sierra Leonean family and attempted to connect with all major ethnic groups. He gave himself the title, "Pa Siakie" meaning "father of the nation" (Boas, 2001: 702).

In Uganda, Yoweri Museveni and the National Resistance Movement formed "vertical linkages of dependency and patronage" (Pitcher et al., 2009: 125-156) by supporting certain groups over others, thus enabling the military to become the only source of power. The country's particularly profitable assets and developmental resources went to mainly family members, friends, and companies close to the system (ibid.).

In Kenya, government appointments, contracts, licenses, and land were distributed to community leaders. In return, the community leaders had to demonstrate loyalty to Presidents Kenyatta and

Daniel arap Moi by participating in the election. There were similar neo-patrimonial practices in Zaire, Nigeria, Togo, DRC, and Angola. In these countries, community leaders and their followers voted not because they supported the ideas of a political party but because of what they would get from the winning party or a potential patron (Matter, 2010: 67-88).

The nature of neo-patrimonialism in Ethiopia is more or less similar to most of the African countries indicated above, particularly when it comes to using national resources to buy loyalty from leaders of ethnic groups. What is unique though, in the study period 1991 to 2017, is that although Meles Zenawi was powerful, it was not the individual, president, or prime minister who distributed the national assets to seek political control; rather, as seen in many parts in this paper, it was an ethnically organized group, namely the TPLF, which acted and adopted the honorific of "father of the nation." The TPLF believed that if it did not lead the country, the country would no longer exist in its current form. The TPLF believed that it created ethnic federalism in Ethiopia and that it had the "password" for the country's existence or extinction; therefore, all ethnic groups should depend on the TPLF's guidance and provisions to survive (Yohannes, 2021: 129-140).

Bratton and Van de Walle (1997: 63-68) list the existence of three neo-patrimonial practices in Africa, including concentration of political power, systematic clientelism, and particularistic use of state resources. During the period under study in this thesis, Ethiopia had a federal parliament, regional parliament, federal institutions, and regional institutions, but all of them were there in form only; the real power resided with the TPLF in general and in Prime Minister Meles Zenawi in particular. The real power structure was in the client-patron relationships, and the resources used to achieve the TPLF's goals were state resources. During the study period, most of the political elites who served as clients were recruited from high schools and colleges. The educated elites were given power and positions in their respective regions, only to end up as TPLF clients (Yohannes, 2021: 122-151).

During the study period, power circled around Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. One can see clearly that the TPLF was a core party inside the EPRDF. Whatever decision was made in the TPLF would be adopted by the entire EPRDF. It was primarily Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, as leader of the TPLF, who initiated policy, guided, gave, and denied privileges (Ledetu, 2020: 73-138).

Although there are relatively few studies on neo-patrimonialism in Ethiopia, an exception is the work of Merera (2012). According to Merera, the TPLF enacted neo-patrimonial domination to ensure that ethnic representatives in the EPRDF served its objectives (to impose Tigrayan political hegemony in Ethiopia, if not to declare independence in Tigray). The neo-patrimonial strategy was a carrot-and-stick approach. When the carrot did not work, the TPLF used its sticks. The "sticks" were accusing ethnic representatives of corruption or blackmailing them. Although the Ethiopian political system was a federal structure, the TPLF, against the constitutional mandate, removed regional presidents time and again. Oromia and Ethiopian Somali regional presidents are cases in point. If the regional leaders and key politicians were cooperative with the TPLF agenda, even if they were corrupt, the TPLF security forces turned a blind eye to them, but kept the evidence of corruption on file to use against them in the future. Therefore, the TPLF was the patron and ethnic representatives (regional state political officials) were the clients (Merera, 2012: 143-161).

The material and symbolic benefits of the neo-patrimonial system were seen during the study period. The material benefit was land, and the symbolic benefit was investment. The regional states or ethnic representatives served as purveyors of resources to the TPLF. For example, if a TPLF representative wanted to invest outside their region – outside Tigray regional state – the regional state in question would facilitate negotiations, providing unfair and unlawful privileges and protecting the investments even if they were illegal. Some of the investment lands given to the TPLF in Gambella, Beneshangul and Southern States were lands already earmarked for investment by the regional states. But because TPLF agents wanted the land, the regional state plan was instantly canceled. Investments in many parts of the country by TPLF ex-guerilla fighters, retired generals, and Meles Zenawi's wife are cases in point (Aklog, 2012).

The benefits were distributed among the elites in different ways. Those who were in the top political positions were obliged to collaborate with the TPLF plan and agents if they wished to maintain their privileged positions. No matter how important they were in their regional states, including the regional presidents, if they did not cooperate with the TPLF, they would lose their positions. Collaborating with the TPLF served as a guarantor or insurance for their privileged political positions. Regional dignitaries or political powerholders in turn distributed privileges to urban and middle-class operatives in the same manner. They distributed privileges such as

inflated salaries and other fringe benefits, including government vehicles, accommodation, etc. The rural masses who supported the ruling elites would gain unlimited fertilizer and other material benefits and would lose those privileges if they were found cooperating with the opposition (ibid.).

2.4 Political culture in Ethiopia

Ethiopia is one of the most diverse countries in the world. In terms of religion, Christianity, Islam, and Judaism existed side by side or intermingled with each other for thousands of years (Lapiso, 2020: 12). The people of Daamat-Aksumite, Beja, Agew, Samen (the Falasha), and Amhara live in the northern highlands and the people of Hadiya, Harla, and the Oromo live in the south-eastern highlands and central Rift Valley. In the central-western mainland, there are the people of Gonga, while in the south-western mainland, there are the peoples of Gamo-Wolyta. All these people are native Cushitic, Semetic, and Omotic lingua-genetic and geolinguistic peoples, communities, and societies. There are over 75 different lingua-political communities in Ethiopia (Lapiso, 2020: 89-101). They all have more or less their own political systems and are in various stages of social and economic development. In the long political history of Ethiopia, there has always been an attempt to impose the conqueror's political culture over the conquered. The northern alliance was to some extent able to effectively impose its political culture on the newly annexed territories and people. Despite serious attempts to build one nation, using the Amharic language and the Ethiopian Orthodox church as instruments of nation-building, the process has currently not been completed (Merera, 2012).

2.4.1 Abbink vs Hagmann on Ethiopian political culture

Following the highly disputed 2005 elections in Ethiopia, Jon Abbink wrote the article, "Discomfiture of Democracy? The 2005 Election Crisis in Ethiopia and Aftermath" in *African Affairs* where he made a serious attempt to explore "Ethiopian political culture." In a rejoinder to this article, Tobias Hagmann (2006) questioned whether there exists an "Ethiopian political culture." Hagmann asked," Does Abbink assume a common political culture of all Ethiopians … irrespective of … ethnic … diversity?" (2006: 606). It is true that in Ethiopia it is the political culture of one or the other major ethnic group that has been reflected in the country. Perhaps that is why there have been endless conflict and political instability in the country.

Abbink, in the abstract of the article, stresses the importance of analyzing African politics – and specifically Ethiopian politics – "in more cultural and historical terms away from the formal political science approach" (2006: 173). He points out how formal political structures in Ethiopia are misleading, as they were designed to impress Western donors who made significant financial contributions to government operations. According to Abbink, the parliament, the executive, and the judiciary are there just in appearance: what happens in parliament, in government ministries, and in the judiciary is decided elsewhere.

Abbink brought up the existence of an invisible power structure in Ethiopian politics and his critics accused him of not elaborating further; however, neither of them describe this invisible structure. Throughout Ethiopian political history, there is a pattern where one region or ethnic group subjugated another. During Emperor Yohannes IV's rule, the Tigrayans brutally conquered the provinces of Wollo and Gojjam, which are located in the current Amhara region. During Emperor Menelik II's rule, the Shewa Amhara harshly subjugated most of the Oromo land and its people (Mekuria, 2011). Ethiopia has a political history of repeated domination of one ethnic group against the other. What happened during 2005, was an adaptation to the contemporary world by instituting "storefront" political institutions acceptable to Western donors while existing political practices continued in the background. Hagmann (2006: 610) disagrees with Abbink's notion of "continuity of Ethiopian history," saying that "those who equate human existence to a Greek drama, might feel comforted by such a fatalistic conclusion."

The long history of Ethiopia shows us an ongoing political tradition, whereby one ethnic group subjugates the other – to borrow the political culture trailblazers, Almond and Verba's concept that one can find ethnic domination "embedded in the political culture" of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray.

Abbink made an astute observation when he stated that the TPLF could not create democracy and could not be accepted by all ethnic groups in Ethiopia, despite its rule in Ethiopia for over a decade (2006: 179). This is an important point because the TPLF's intention, according to Merera (2012: 172-180), from the outset, was never to bring about democracy or gain acceptance in Ethiopia. Its intention was to become a hegemonic power in Ethiopia.

Next, this section explores the writings of Abbink and his interlocutor Hagmann in more detail. This debate forms the core of the literature review. What makes this debate even more relevant to this study, is that it was written during the study period and fits well with the research at hand.

Abbink touches on some of the most important elements of Ethiopian political culture: the zero-sum game, political violence, character assassinations, how seizing political power has been a matter of survival, the neo-patrimonial nature of Ethiopian political culture, how the political institutions are there just in form to impress Western donors so that they continue providing aid, and how the TPLF-EPRDF generated policy and ruled the country with a heavy hand. In his analysis of the 2005 general election, Abbink (2006: 193) describes the aftermath of mass violence by government forces:

> It was the start of a longer phase of tension and instability. Not to be neglected, are the psychological effects of the crisis: malaise, fear, and cynicism among the public, perceiving politics again as dangerous business and as a closed elite affair. This included the deep shock about the police and army people prepared to use indiscriminate force against their countrymen.

Abbink fails, however, to indicate that violent political culture is not something new that emerged during that specific time; rather it was embedded in the political system for a long time. Such violence has been deeply rooted, for instance, in the Tigrayan political culture, as the TPLF, in many instances, settled political differences using summary executions. In 1973, the TPLF was asked by elders and priests to reconcile with an opposition party in Tigray, the Tigray Liberation Front (TLF-*GEGEHAT*) The TPLF agreed to the reconciliation and prepared a feast for the occasion at *Zegebla* (the location is found North West of Zalambessa). After the dinner feast, the TPLF ordered its members to stay with each TLF-*GEGEHAT* representative who came for the reconciliation and in a shocking abuse of power, had them all killed or surrendered (Gebru, 2015: 50; Dima, 2021; Fasika, 2021; Lencho, 2021). In the aftermath of the 2005 election in Addis Ababa and Gonder, the Agazi – the TPLF's paramilitary death squad – killed over 300 members of the opposition party, the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) (Yohannes, 2021).

Abbink clearly establishes the fact that the TPLF was the prime power holder in Ethiopia when he refers to "the ruling party – that emanated from the successful TPLF insurgent movement" (2006: 177).

He also notes that the TPLF/EPRDF introduced ethnicity as an issue in politics. "The current government has done a lot to make ethnicity the discourse of politics in Ethiopia" (Abbink, 2006: 194). What Abbink does not mention, however, is that the TPLF itself is a minority ethnic group, and its survival is dependent on a divide-and-rule policy. Nor does he mention the political interests of the Amhara and Oromo. These are missing aspects in Abbink's analysis of Ethiopian political culture. These aspects are key to studying Ethiopian political culture and to grasping and understanding Ethiopian political problems.

Abbink repeatedly states that the Ethiopian political institutions are there just as a front. "The new federal system and its constitution … the two chambers of parliament … These formal institutions and actors are precarious and embedded in other power contexts, dependent on forceful personal action and informal power networks behind the façade" (Abbink, 2006: 177). According to him, at the time of the 2005 elections, the real decisions were made in an informal manner and setting. Abbink does not specifically indicate where these decisions were made but, according to Merera (2012), they were decided by the TPLF central committee and sometimes by the then prime minister himself. What is most problematic here, is that Abbink appears to contradict himself when he writes, "a study of the electoral process is crucial in revealing the problems of Ethiopian politics" (2006: 180). If Ethiopian political institutions are a "façade," then how can you study them to find the problem?

Elections are a new phenomenon for Ethiopia. Ethiopians have never believed that elections would bring about change in the country (Ledetu, 2020: 73-138). Elections have always been seen as a symbolic approval of the incumbent government. There has never been trust in elections and it is not clear why Abbink chose to study Ethiopian political problems through an analysis of the election process in Ethiopia.

The political history of the TPLF shows it to be dictatorial in nature, seizing power and achieving its political objectives violently. The TPLF has never shown a semblance of democracy and clearly could not conduct free and fair elections.

Abbink (2006: 177) eloquently states why the TPLF would not surrender power through the process of election:

> The ruling party – that emanated from the successful TPLF insurgent movement – came to power with the force of arms, its members sacrificing a lot during the insurgency (1975-91). Their political-economic stakes are now great. Many people in positions of power from the federal level in Addis Ababa to the *k'ebele* (local community) level are appointed because of loyalty to the party; they have income, privileges, and jobs to lose and will not voluntarily give them up, because unemployment, insecurity, or poverty is waiting. … there is a deep economic, if not survival, logic behind the political process in Ethiopia.

The TPLF did not prepare what to do with its members and political loyalists in the event that it lost an election. It was apparent that the TPLF had not even considered the possibility of a loss. Therefore, the election was not real to the TPLF, in the sense that it was not a real threat to its power. In a country where there are serious economic problems, where maintaining political power is a matter of survival, as observed by Abbink himself, it is not clear how an analysis of a modern election can provide adequate interpretation of age-old Ethiopian political problems.

The other weakness in Abbink's article, as pointed out in Hagmann's, is that Abbink addresses Ethiopian political culture as a monolithic political culture. There is no single Ethiopian political culture that most ethnic groups wholeheartedly accept as their own. The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan groups have specific political cultures visible from inside and outside.

While acknowledging Abbink's general identification of characteristics of the political cultures in Ethiopia, such as the widespread use of political violence, the literature review is oriented more toward specific elements of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political culture and fills the literature gap left by Abbink. The study at hand argues that the major political problems in Ethiopia can be revealed not only by the inauthentic and untraditional election processes, but also through the specific regional political cultures, historical memories, traditions, values, and neo-patrimonial practices in the country.

Hagmann (2006) heavily criticized Abbink's writing for three main shortcomings:

- for using the "catch-all concept political culture and neo-patrimonialism";
- for methodological inconsistency; and

- for Abbink's teleological view of Ethiopian political problems and the African political system in general in light of a deterministic tradition and culture rather than the formal political science method.

Hagmann objected to Abbink's generalized application of political culture and neo-patrimonial concepts in investigating the 2005 general election. His argument was that political culture must be studied ontologically and empirically by comparing different units of analysis. Hagmann rightly criticized Abbink's writing for referring to an Ethiopian political culture. "The author's depiction of Ethiopian political culture evokes a conception of a national Ethiopian character that does not exist" (Hagmann, 2006: 606). On the same page, Hagmann raised a very important question: "The reader would like to know which social entity is supposed to embody 'Ethiopian political culture' and, ultimately, responsible for blockading democratization." This weakness in Abbink's writings is precisely what the study at hand, in its examination of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political cultures, seeks to address. Hagmann attacks Abbink for reducing the concept of political culture to a "set of fixed attitudes such as ... authoritarianism, elite rule and patronage" rather than "a repertoire that offers a range of acceptable alternatives from which groups or individuals … choose a course of action" (ibid.).

Hagmann's critique of the concept of political culture is not new. Most opponents of political culture, including Johnson (2003), Tucker (1973), and Elkins and Simeon (1979) challenged the notion of political culture as an independent variable or as a cause and effect. Many of them questioned whether values, attitudes, feelings, and beliefs can be properly measured by standard quantitative methods.

Hagmann was correct to indicate that political culture research must be based on comparative analysis and that there is no such thing as a unified Ethiopian political culture, as in many aspects Ethiopia is a diverse country. Abbink wrote as if there were a monolithic Ethiopian political culture but did not demonstrate that. The research at hand, however, compares the political cultures of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray and establishes clearly how these three competing ethnic groups created political instability in the country.

Hagmann also questioned Abbink's interpretation of neo-patrimonialism. He accused him of presenting the concept as a "self-explanatory and all-encompassing fact" and of not elaborating

the distinctive patterns of neo-patrimonial rule, stating, “It is not sufficient to refer to ‘circles and networks’ of a neo-patrimonialist nature.”

Hagmann continued to push for specificity by asking the following questions: Who enacted neo-patrimonial power, by which means, and with which outcomes? Who were the patrons and the clients: How were material benefits distributed?

He also accused Abbink of lacking empirical evidence to support his widespread claims. The study at hand strongly asserts that concepts of political culture and neo-patrimonialism can demonstrate and create an understanding of Ethiopian political problems, specifically the age-old political instability. Hagmann, however, declined to accept wholeheartedly neo-patrimonialism and political culture as concepts able to explain Ethiopian political problems, such as authoritarianism and the use of violence to achieve political objectives.

Hagmann was right when he stated that one cannot explain Ethiopian political problems by studying one year. Abbink’s article concentrated on events before, during, and after the 2005 parliamentary elections, a time span too short to adequately analyze political developments in the country regarding neo-patrimonialism (Hagmann, 2006: 608).

Abbink’s article, on the 2005 election crisis is an important contribution to the study of Ethiopian political culture as is the rejoinder article by Hagmann (2006) which questions Abbink’s conceptualization of an Ethiopian “political culture”.The current study’s contribution to this debate can be summarized as follows: Abbink uses the 2005 election process as a yardstick to study Ethiopian political culture. He does not mention the existence of competing ethnic groups vying for power and their specific interests in Ethiopia. In particular, he does not consider the decisive role played by the Amhara, Tigrayan, and Oromo political cultures in the nation’s politics. These are missing aspects in Abbink’s analysis which are answered by this study. These are key to grasping and understanding Ethiopian political problems. Abbink assumed a blended Ethiopian political culture, which is not the case, there are multiple competing political cultures. The research at hand, compares the political cultures of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray and establishes clearly how these three competing ethnic groups have contributed to political instability in the country. The study argues that the major political problems in Ethiopia can be revealed not only by the inauthentic and untraditional election processes, but also through the

specific regional political cultures, historical memories, traditions, values, and neopatrimonial practices in the country.

In his response to Abbink's article, Hagmann pushed for specificity by asking the following questions: Who enacted neopatrimonial power, by which means, and with which outcomes? Who were the patrons and the clients? How were material benefits distributed? Such specific questions have not been answered by Abbink, but this study attempts to answer them as well as relating other relevant elements such as conflicting interpretations of Ethiopian political history, ethnic rivalry, and zero-sum politics. Abbink attempts to create an understanding of Ethiopian political culture based on the 2005 parliamentary elections, a time span too short to explain the political cultures of Ethiopia's elites and neopatrimonial practices in Ethiopia, but this current study considers 27 years of the political cultures of Ethiopia's elites and neopatrimonial practices.

Finally, Hagmann is skeptical about using the concepts of political culture and neopatrimonialism to explain Ethiopian political problems. However, the research at hand shows that it is possible to do so.

2.4.2 Political cultures of the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites

The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political cultures can be characterized as positioning themselves around the narrative of presenting the other side in a bad light to galvanize support from their respective ethnic groups. Raising past grievances is a common justification for Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites to substantiate their claims and to use political violence as an instrument for achieving their political objectives. Within the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political culture, each party believes it is victimized and not willing to see another's perspective, making it difficult to reach a negotiated agreement when conflict arises. The political culture also includes fomenting and orchestrating conflict in the other ethnic groups to provide one's own ethnic group a fertile ground to rule.

The political cultures of the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray also involve the exhibition of political superiority at the expense of the other. Each political group claims to be better than the other in terms of its statesmanship and manner of governance, often by referring to examples from history. By disseminating a narrative of superior leadership, a group justifies its claim to

rule the country and to occupy a better position in the political structure. Such discourse creates heroes and villains or winners, losers, and victims.

The unsubstantiated and broadly generalized claims and counter-claims are aimed at maintaining the status quo while also dehumanizing and belittling the other ethnic groups. Such a polarizing discourse creates anger and hatred, resistance, and dissent, and leads to political instability.

2.4.3 Elites and their influence on political culture

Education influences the formation of individuals' values, opinions, and attitudes. Educated individuals develop curiosity and participate in the day-to-day activities of their community and in their regions. The more individuals are educated, the higher the likelihood of their participation in community affairs. In many cases, it is the educated elites who fill the political institutions and who develop, articulate, and guide the ideology, principles, and theory of governing their community (Agger, 2012). The elites, therefore, are powerful and influential in relation to the masses. "Because of their regular involvement in public affairs, elites are generally more knowledgeable about politics than non-elites (or the general public). This is due to their greater interest in public affairs, their regular interactions with the elites of other organizations, and their involvement in elites bargaining over the public policies" (Hoffmann-Lang, 2008: 2).

Elites masquerade as the true representatives of their respective communities, but in reality, their actions ensure their individual interests are maintained. However, they cannot survive without the support of the masses. Lydia Summerlee (2011: 4-5) points out that if the elites declined to balance their interest with those of the masses and disregard cultural norms, they are doomed to lose in a "high-risk political game."(Summerlee, 2011: 4-5).

2.5 Impact of state- and nation-building on the development of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political cultures

This section deals with state- and nation-building in Ethiopia since the end of the 19th century and highlights how the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political cultures developed and how they influenced the process. It uses Teshale Tibebu's *The Making of Modern Ethiopia 1896-1974* (1995), Mekuria Bulcha's *Contours of the Emergent and Ancient Oromo Nation: Dilemmas in the Ethiopian Politics of State and Nation-Building* (2011), Merera Gudina's *Ethiopia:*

Competing Ethnic Nationalisms and the Quest for Democracy, 1960-2000 (2002), Kahsay Berhe's *Ethiopia: Democratization and Unity – The Role of the Tigray People's Liberation Front* (2005), and Yohannes Gedamu's *The Politics of Contemporary Ethiopia: Ethnic Federalism and Authoritarian Survival* (2022). These books present Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political narratives from the authors' respective perspectives. Kahsay was one of the founders of the TPLF, Mekuria and Merera are well known for writing from an Oromo standpoint, whereas Teshale and Yohannes represent the Amhara position.

2.5.1 The imperial states

During Menelik II's expansion (1870-1897) in the current western and eastern Ethiopia, according to Teshale (1995: 42), independent kingdoms, traditions, and communities were destroyed. Those who resisted the Menelik expansion were treated badly, and Amhara leaders were assigned to govern them (ibid.: 45-52). Mekuria (2011: 279-282) takes it one step further and calls these appointments an imposition of colonial rule. Teshale describes the expansion as the beginning of a centralization process in Ethiopia: he believes that during the Menelik expansion, the Amhara and Tigrayan elites operated as senior and junior partners and collaborated in implementing imperial objectives (1995: 37-52). Teshale also states that Oromo generals, particularly the Shoa Oromo, served Menelik II with great loyalty. However, many writers, including Mekuria, consider the participation of the Oromo generals as a betrayal of the Oromo people and the Amhara-Tigray collaboration as a destroyer of Oromo traditions and culture (Mekuria, 2011: 279-321).

Teshale, Mekuria, and Kahsay agree that Emperor Haile Selassie continued what had been started by Menelik II. These writers share the opinion that Menelik II allowed the regional lords to have more autonomy than Emperor Haile Selassie. When the emperor returned from exile in 1941, the regional lords gradually lost most of their autonomy. Regional administrations were centralized and this centralization, according to Kahsay (2005: 39-40), created fault lines between the Tigrayan and Amhara elites. However, Teshale disagrees with Kahsay: based on his own analysis, the fault lines between Tigrayan and Amhara elites appeared when Emperor Haile Selassie declared that Amharic would be the national language of Ethiopia (Teshale, 1995: 175). Indeed, declaring Amharic the imperial national language enraged the Tigrayan elites and generated lasting resentment. Similarly, Mekuria (2011: 321-344) asserts that the absolute

disregard for the Oromo language, as exemplified by the killing of General Tadesse Biru, whose attempt to introduce a literacy campaign promoting Affan Oromo as a mother tongue, was a landmark in developing Oromo political consciousness and resentment. The Haile Selassie government policy was a form of assimilation, using Amharic and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church as instruments of nation-building (Teshale, 1995: 105-133). However, the very policy that was designed to cement the nation-building process, became instrumental in eroding it, as it bred resentment, and overt and covert opposition movements flourished. The establishment of the TPLF and the OLF are cases in point.

2.5.2 Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political culture narratives

The Tigrayan elites share most of the Amhara elites' understanding of pan-Ethiopian nationalism. Axum, an historical town located in the Tigray region, is widely considered the birthplace of Ethiopia. The Axum civilization was the basis of the current Ethiopian civilization and one of the foundations of Ethiopian nation-building (Markakis, 2011; Aregawi, 2009; Gebru, 1991; Lyons, 2019; Kahsay, 2005; Merera, 2016). Nevertheless, the Tigrayan elites felt that Amhara elites disregarded the Axumite civilization and its contributions. The Tigrayan elites considered that their contribution to Ethiopian history and their historical geographical boundaries were disregarded or distorted (Kahsay, 2005: Aregawi, 2009; Teshale,1995). They felt marginalized and manipulated. They believed that their language, Tigrigna, was sidelined and made secondary (Kahsay, 2005; Aregawi, 2008; Teshale, 1995). While Tigrayan elites shared most of the Amhara culture, they always felt that they were special and that their language, Tigrigna, was superior (Teshale, 1995: 174). When the Amhara-controlled government decided that Amharic would be the national language of the country and that anyone who wished to study at university must first pass an Amharic language exam, the policy triggered strong opposition and led to the establishment of the TPLF (Markakis, 2011; Aregawi, 2009; Gebru, 1991; Lyons, 2019; Kahsay, 2005; Merera, 2016).

During Menelik II's expansion (1870-1897) to the west and the east, there was collaboration between the Amhara and Tigray and participation by Oromo generals. However, during Haile Selassie's regime, the Tigrayan and Oromo elites began to distance themselves from the nation-building process, as their languages and cultures were openly disregarded. Although there were many resentments against the Haile Selassie regime, including the domination of Shoan Amharas

in the bureaucracy, as Mekuria (2011) and Kahsay (2005) remarked, the major points of contention for the Oromo and Tigrayans were language exclusion and cultural alienation.

Apart from their language grievance, another element of Tigrayan political culture was the inflammatory narrative that the Amhara elites were responsible for the poverty and economic backwardness of their region. Yohannes IV (1872-1889) was the only emperor to originate from the Tigray region. The Tigrayan elites believed profoundly that after his reign, the glory of Tigray diminished substantially because of machinations by the Amhara elites and the discontinuation of a Tigrayan royal descendancy (Markakis, 2011: 188-189).

Tigrayan elites have always displayed hegemonic interests, and whenever opportunities arose, they acted on them (Merera, 2002; Teshale,1995). This was demonstrated when fascist Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1935. When Emperor Haile Selassie returned from exile in 1941, he was determined to punish the people of the province for collaborating with the invading forces. He introduced many severe measures, including the appointment of Amhara senior government officials to positions in Tigray and the introduction of heavy taxation. The act of further splitting the province (Raya and Azebo Oromo, Wajirat) was unacceptable to Tigrayan political leaders (Prunier & Ficquet, 2015). They opposed the measures and revolted in 1943.The revolt, known as the Woyane rebellion, aimed to gain more concessions from the emperor, although some Tigrayan leaders also threatened to separate Tigray from the rest of the country (Kahsay, 2005). Emperor Haile Selassie, with the help of the British air force, subdued the uprising (Aregawi, 2009). Since then, the Tigrayan elites showed their resentment against central authority in general and Shewan Amhara rule in particular (Markakis, 1987).

Tigrayan elites'political culture, in some ways, has its origins in the Woyane revolt. However, there is significant evidence (Merera, 2002; Aregawi, 2009; Teshale, 1995; Markakis, 1987; Adhana, 1994, 1995; Young, 1997) to support the argument that the political culture of the Tigrayan elites was formed much earlier, from the ambition to reclaim the hegemony in Ethiopia that they lost to the Amhara after the death of Emperor Yohannes IV in 1889.

Kahsay and Mekuria attribute two peasant rebellions to helping further shape Tigrayan and Oromo political consciousness: the Woyane rebellion in 1943 opposing Haile Selassie's centralization of power and the appointment of Amhara rulers in Tigray; and the Bale peasant

rebellion in Oromia (1963-1970). In Bale, the peasants refused to pay the heavy taxes imposed on them by the imperial government and denied Ethiopian government officials access to their land until their leader, Waqo Gutu, surrendered to government forces. These rebellions mobilized Oromo and Tigrayan elites and enhanced the narrative of repressed ethnicity in their political cultures.

2.5.3 The military regime

The Ethiopian popular revolution that toppled the reign of Haile Selassie involved many actors and was driven by many causes. The international oil price hike and strikes by taxi drivers and military officers were some of the immediate causes that helped bring down the regime. Kahsay and Teshale identified the major actors as student political parties such as the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) and the All-Ethiopia Socialist Movement (MEISON), as well as ethnically organized political parties like the TPLF, OLF, Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), and many others.

The nation-building processes followed by the military regime were not different in substance from that of the Haile Selassie regime (Teshale, 1995). The military regime was more nationalistic, pro-union, and promoted an even more centralized political system, as Khasay has emphasized. Teshale has highlighted how the regime used extreme force to eliminate most of the actors who played major roles in toppling the Haile Selassie regime, and who appeared to be opponents of the military regime. According to Merera, the use of excessive force by the military regime drove the ethnically organized political groups like the OLF and TPLF to promote radical nationalism and self-determination. In recognition of the diversity of the country, the military regime introduced an Institute for the Study of Ethiopian Nationalism in 1983 (Tesfaye, 2016: 35). However, there was no noticeable policy shift toward decentralization. While some writers such as Teshale commend the military regime for being "ethnic-blind," the regime failed to introduce even the slightest semblance of democracy or to consider and implement the Oromo and Tigrayan elites' campaign for language rights and cultural freedom.

According to Teshale and Kahsay, the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union were some of the world events precipitating the end of the military regime; without military support from the former Soviet Union, the military regime could not continue waging war

against the EPLF and TPLF in the north. Along with the demise of the military regime, the long-standing centralization policy of the Ethiopian state also came to an end.

2.5.4 The EPRDF/TPLF

The ascendancy to power of the TPLF in 1991 opened a new chapter in Ethiopian history. The unifying form of nation-building in Ethiopia was abandoned and ethnic federalism was introduced (Merera, 2002). Scholars who studied Ethiopia closely after 1991, criticized the TPLF ethnic federalism for devoting too many resources, directly or indirectly, to regaining the lost glory of Tigray (Teshale, 1995; Yohannes, 2021; Markakis, 2011; Merera, 2002). The TPLF ensured, according to these writers, that all major positions in the government were held by Tigrayans. Individuals and groups were given political positions based on their loyalty to the TPLF. Since then, there has been open resistance, but most of it has been crushed by the TPLF's coercive mechanisms (Merera, 2002; Aregawi, 2009; Markakis, 1987; Adhana, 1994, 1995; Young, 1997). As soon as the TPLF came to power, it disbanded the former ruling party, the Workers' Party of Ethiopia (WPE) – a Marxist-Leninist political party – and demobilized the age-old national army, replacing it with its own guerrilla fighters (Lyons, 2019: 56-57). The entire state apparatus was controlled by Tigrayans. Forty-five university professors, mostly ethnic Amharas, were dismissed from Addis Ababa University (Markakis, 2011: 271). After rising to political power, the TPLF seized many traditionally Amhara-inhabited fertile territories in the north and northwest Ethiopian highlands and remapped them within Tigray's administrative borders, without due process of law, referendum, or political dialogue. Such drastic actions have become significant points of contention between the Amhara and Tigrayan elites (ibid.: 146).

Yohannes (2021: 5) clearly describes the TPLF exclusion of the Amhara elites from the political landscape:

> These institutional designs and programs [the ethnic federalism] created political and economic winners and losers. Those who were perceived as historically powerful political groups, mostly Amhara, would be penalized for their past "perceived" successes. Meanwhile, the political groups that replaced them, especially the most dominant ones in the post-1991 transition, would become winners.

What Yohannes calls "past successes" can be taken as the nation-building efforts of past imperial regimes. Many Amhara elites believe that during its imperial regimes, Ethiopia was a melting pot

where Amhara and Tigrayans actively participated and where the Oromo had also ruled (Teshale, 1995; Markakis, 2011; Andargachew, 2018). To illustrate this, the elites cite the Zemene Mesafint (1769-1855), when the Oromo *Yejju* dynasty ruled much of the Ethiopian empire and attempted to make Afan Oromo the official language of the court of Gondar, capital of Ethiopia at that time. They further provide evidence that most of Menelik II's generals were Oromo, referring to Wole Betule, Ras Mekael (Mohammed Ali), Gebeyehu Gebo, Ras Mekonnen, King Teklehaymanot of Gojjam, Balcha Aba Nefso, and Fitawrari Habtegiorgis Denegde (Merera, 2015: 16-20). However, Mekuria and Mohammed reject the assumption that a handful of Oromo generals who presided over the Amhara elites were representative of the Oromo majority. Besides, the handfuls of elites identified above were not powerful enough to stop the humiliation and suppression of the Oromo. They further contend that during those times, the Amhara elites were still considered first-class citizens, whereas the Oromo elites were considered second-class citizens (Mekuria, 2011; Mohammed, 1990).

Merera and Yohannes have accused the TPLF of manipulating different ethnic groups, and by doing so, expanding its hegemony in Ethiopia since its seizure of power in 1991. During the transitional government period, the OLF was one of the principal coalition partners along with the TPLF; the OLF and the TPLF agreed to pool all their fighters together in common barracks and establish a national defense force to replace the national army. The OLF complied, but the TPLF did not. Instead, the TPLF attacked the OLF army in the barracks and expelled them, paving the way for TPLF fighters to build the Ethiopian national army. The OLF was caught by surprise and subsequently pulled out of the transitional government. To make matters even worse, the TPLF, by its own admission, recruited Oromo individuals loyal to the TPLF to form a new ethnic party in the Oromo region – the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO) (Markakis, 2011: 282-283; Gebru, 1991: 122). Merera and Mekuria, as well as many other Oromo writers, argue that the TPLF treachery led to discord and mistrust between the OLF and the TPLF in particular and between Oromo elites and Tigrayan elites in general. The radical difference between the TPLF regime and past regimes was the introduction of ethnic federalism and its apparent advocation of a decentralized government. What happened in reality, Yohannes (2021: 122-185) argues, was a concentration of power in the hands of Tigrayan elites. As expected, resentment was growing among Amhara and Oromo elites every time the TPLF

increased its power and continued undoing the nation-building efforts of past regimes. The Amhara elites were enraged, not only by the TPLF encroachments on territories but also by the ethnic federalism that eroded their values, such as the belief in Ethiopian unity. The Oromo elites were dispirited by the removal of the OLF from the TPLF government. According to Mekuria (2011) the TPLF proved to be no different from the previous regimes that had rendered the Oromo people second-class citizens in their own country.

The TPLF concentration of power in Ethiopia was strengthened by the introduction of a national development policy (Merera, 2002; Yohannes, 2021). The EPRDF/TPLF regime announced that it would follow the Northeast Asian development model, specifically naming Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan. Birhanu Bitew (2021) in his article, *Matrimony of Discordant: Developmental State in Ethiopia and Ethnic Federalism, 2001-2018* declared that the TPLF's developmental state model and ethnic federalism were "incompatible." Deliberately or inadvertently, by introducing development state policy, the TPLF perpetuated an outmoded process of nation-building, namely centralizing power, which did not work for previous regimes (Merera, 2012).

2.5.5 Absence of cooperative efforts at state-building

Since Emperor Yohannes IV's rule, one can see an unbroken pattern of rulership where one ethnic group dominated the other. Either Amhara or Tigrayan royalties ruled the country for over a century. There is no record showing that Tigrayans and Amhara ever willingly created a coalition to rule the county. Apart from a brief period when the Oromo, particularly the Yejju Oromo, ruled the country (Teshale, 1995; Merera, 2012), there is no evidence to show that the Oromo dominated Ethiopian politics.

No sincere attempt, Merera (2012) argued, to rule the country in cooperation or in coalition has been seen in the country's political history. Attempts at state-building through military or civil alliances or by means of coalitions across ethnic lines have ultimately been unsuccessful and often led to bloodshed. Cooperation and coalitions could not be sustained because negotiation and compromise are not commonly part of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political cultures (Levine, 1972: 247).

As Merera (2012: 218) puts it eloquently,

> The determination to play a zero-sum game politics, the lack of wisdom in the art of compromise, a blurred vision of the future regarding the larger societal goals, the propensity for hegemony and the failure to learn from past mistakes are all the hallmark of the succeeding generations of Ethiopian elites.

Merera (ibid.) adds that during the time frame of this study, "no credible evidence … shows the Tigrayan elite is liberated from such a political culture."

In summary, during the time of imperial Ethiopia, state-building was mostly spearheaded by the Amhara and Tigrayan elites and characterized by territorial expansion and domination of the Oromo. Under the extremely centralized and authoritarian regime of the Derg (1974-1988), the military repressed all ethnic groups in the country. The brutality of the military and failures in the government's policies helped ethnic-based political parties, including the TPLF and OLF, to broaden their constituencies and emerge victorious. However, after the introduction of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia, the TPLF ruled the country without meaningfully embracing the Amhara and Oromo elites. Their use of political violence perpetuated an age-old vicious cycle of political instability in Ethiopia.

According to Teshale (1995: 17), "The history of Ethiopia of the last 400 years is essentially the history of the relationship – at times of bloody conflict, at other times of conciliation and assimilation – between Amhara and Oromo." However, the TPLF-led regime declined to consider Teshale's point of view and refused to engage the two dominant ethnic groups in a manner that strengthens the nation-building process (Yohannes, 2021: 96-99).

2.6 Understanding political violence

There is no agreement among political scientists on the definition of political violence. Political violence is an instrument of power to achieve political objectives. It has various forms of justification. Those in power claim they use political violence to maintain law and order, whereas those who are in opposition justify the use of violence as the way to stop domination and exploitation. Each definition of political violence emanates from the particular understanding of politics. For Frantz Fanon (1961), for instance, politics is about domination of territory and people; therefore, violence is part and parcel of politics. For Hannah Arendt (1969), politics is about administration, policy, and lawmaking; therefore, politics has nothing to do with violence.

Defining political violence is problematic, as it is very difficult to distinguish it from general violence, as the following two definitions show. E.V. Walter (1964) defines violence as

"destructive harm" or "destructive force," which includes "not only physical assaults that cause damage to a person, but also magic, sorcery, and the many techniques of inflicting harm by mental or emotional means (Walter, 1964: 354). On the other hand, Nieburg (1969: 13), defines political violence as:

> Acts of disruption, destruction, injury whose purpose, choice of targets or victims, surrounding circumstances, implementation, and/or effects have political significance, that is, tend to modify the behavior of others in a bargaining situation that has consequences for the social system.

Nieburg's definition was criticized by Perry Mars (1975) for being too general and unclear. Mars further pointed out that the definition failed to differentiate between political violence employed by the state apparatus and political violence by opposition groups. Edward N. Muller (1972) presents a definition that addresses the weakness of Nieburg's. According to Muller, political violence is violence directed against the structure of political authority and against particular authorities occupying positions in the regime (1972: 928). Although Muller's definition of political violence is specific, it is not impartial, as it considers violence initiated by government authorities as an appropriate and acceptable aspect of political violence.

One of the major sticking points in arriving at an agreed definition, is the nature of violence. Is there a particular violence that is "political" as opposed to different types of violence? Douglas Bwy, in his work "Political Instability in Latin America" (1972), introduced the dichotomy of favorable and unfavorable political violence. Political violence is considered favorable when its end result is "necessary and beneficial" for the larger society, and unfavorable when it negatively affects the masses. This is a vague description of the concept, but Frantz Fanon clarified it in his work, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). According to Fanon, national liberation requires a "necessary and beneficial" political violence in order for liberation fighters to replace colonizers with the colonized. Long before Fanon and Bwy, Georges Sorel (1950: 27) supported the concept of favorable violence on the grounds that "every relevant act of violence seeds the necessary revolutionary transformation of human society."

Harry Eckstein (1972: 32), on the other hand, is against the concept of favorable political violence. For him, political violence represents "a breakdown of some dimension in legitimate political order" with the result that society is profoundly affected psychologically. Political violence causes a particular society to become divided and stay apart indefinitely. Ted R. Gurr

(1972: 83) supports the same school of thought: political violence, or, as he calls it,“ civil strife,” implies not only a breach of the legitimacy of governmental authority but also a breakdown in the stable equilibrium of the political system as a whole.”

One can see that the context of those who support the use of political violence to alter the status quo is colonialism, revolution, and change. These scholars blame the status quo for inhumane treatment of its subjects through policies of discrimination and subjugation. Sorel (1950) and Fanon (1961), for example, believe that the only way to bring change and justice is to engage in political violence. “Whatever the name used, whatever the latest expression, decolonization is always a violent event.” Fanon went on to examine the nature of violence and wrote, “For the last can be the first only after a murderous and decisive confrontation between the two protagonists” (Fanon, 1961: 3).

Eckstein (1972) and Gurr (1972), on the other hand, are concerned about the stability of the status quo. They are alarmed that political violence can permanently divide a social order and deeply scar the society. Those who regard political violence as unfavorable, characterize “insurgents” or popular movements as misguided rebellious elements engaging in destruction of the social order and damaging the social harmony. In other words, they see the status quo as legitimate. Fanon, however, does not believe in the legitimacy of colonial power. He thinks that colonizers secure their power in an illegitimate and violent manner, then introduce law and order to protect their acquired land and resources and institutionalize their legitimacy. Challenging this imposed law and order is a natural response by the oppressed: “Deep down the colonized subject acknowledges no authority. He is dominated but not domesticated. He is made to feel inferior, but by no means convinced of his inferiority” (Fanon, 1961: 16). Similarly, Chalmers Johnson (1966), in his work “Revolutionary Change,” states that when a particular system reaches a level unacceptable to a large number of people, violence is imminent. He not only endorses violence but gives legitimacy to violence when he writes, “political violence is usually a needed response to an already disequilibrated social system” (1966: 13).

Galtung (1968) maintains that any government, illegitimate or legitimate, will use force, coercion, or exploitation in the name of law and order; therefore, counter-violence is inevitable on the part of the oppressed people. The opposing view in this regard is that subversive elements, instead of initiating political violence, can find fitting resolutions through discussion and

negotiation; otherwise, the governing regime should reinforce its strong arm and ensure that law and order are maintained at any cost.

One of the scholars who attempted to balance the two schools of thoughts of political violence, both favorable and unfavorable, is Charles Tilly (1972) who, in his article "Collective Violence in European Perspective," attempts to establish a middle ground where both viewpoints can find agreement. According to him, political violence is the result of interaction and interdependence between individuals and between groups. Both groups – the governing authority and the subversive elements – can benefit by avoiding political violence. He believes that the solution to political violence can only be found within the existing political system where the subversive elements and the governing authority agree by making necessary systemic changes (1972: 342). However, Fanon (1961) and other revolutionaries do not find this idea valid as they believe that there is an irreconcilable difference between the governing authority and the rebellious elements. According to Fanon, the colonizers attempt to introduce "value, culture and technology" to legitimize their rule and to mute the colonized. "For the colonized, to be a moralist quite plainly means silencing the arrogance of the colonist, breaking his spiral of violence" (1973: 8-9).

As reaching consensus on a definition of political violence remains difficult, political violence theorists engage in classifying this concept. Feierabend (1972), Gurr (1972), Markus (1972), Nesvold (1972), and Bwy (1972) consider riots and strikes as overt types of political violence. Galtung (1968) and Walter (1964) consider non-cooperation, passive resistance, or threat of force as covert political violence. Armed struggle (guerilla war, rebellion, revolution) and similar undertakings are categorized by Snyder and Tilly (1972) and Einsinger (1973) as extreme forms of political violence, as such activities involve material loss, property damage, and harm to persons. Tanter (1968), Rummel (1969), and Markus and Nesvold (1972) broadened the category of extreme political violence by including protests, demonstrations, and sabotage. Overt, covert, or extreme forms of political violence, usually undertaken by popular resistance, will eventually face government control measures, which is another type of political violence enacted in other ways. Government-imposed political violence includes the imposition of martial law, the suspension or elimination of fundamental civil rights, purges or deliberate attempts to eliminate opposition forces, and repression involving mass arrests and imprisonment. Some of the proponents of political violence who tend to justify government measures as appropriate, include

Tilly and Rule (1965), Tanter (1968), Rummel (1969), and Muller (1972), who refuse to call government action political violence.

Scholars who engage in the study of political violence have delineated three levels of analysis to explore the nature of political violence: psychological (reductionist approach), collectivity (group), and systemic (holistic) approaches. Fanon (1961), Gurr (1972), and Feierabend (1972) focus their study of political violence on psychological analysis. According to these scholars, political violence is the result of private motivations and expectations of the individual and should be understood in terms of "relative deprivation" and "frustration." Fanon (1961: 16-17), for instance, regards political violence as connected with the psychological needs of the colonized person in the sense that it transforms a dependent personality into an independent and liberated individual.

According to Tilly (1972), political violence is concerned with group action more than personal action. Political violence "is rarely a solo performance" (1972: 35). It usually occurs as the result of the cooperation of rivals vying for power within the political system. Consequently, political violence commonly happens when an organized group challenges the legitimacy of the governing authority.

Generally, according to the reductionist approach, individuals are free to enact political violence, whereas proponents of the collectivity and systemic approaches believe that individuals have little choice but to act according to the will of the group. They believe individuals are dependent on, or determined by, objective conditions within the social system as a whole.

Debates and disagreement between Fanon and Hannah Arendt are well known. Fanon asserts that political violence is a necessary instrument to fight and overcome colonialism (1961: 48). Arendt (1969), on the other hand, in one of her prominent essays, "On Violence," argues that Fanon misunderstands the nature of politics and of violence and the relation between them. Arendt argues that politics is an action in the public sphere and the action is not predictable in its outcomes. Therefore, she asks how we can achieve an objective by political violence, when it is not predictable (1969: 142) Arendt continues that all human action, including political action, is unpredictable, but to this unpredictability violence brings a significant additional element of arbitrariness. The most probable change it will bring about is the change to a more violent world

(ibid.: 80). For Arendt, politics is obedience to bureaucratic procedures. Power, according to Arendt, is the human ability not just to act but to act in concert (ibid.: 4). To say that someone is in power, is to acknowledge that someone is empowered by a certain number of people (ibid.: 44). Power, unlike strength and unlike violence, cannot be thought of instrumentally. It is not a means to an end. Power is the essence of all government, and violence is not (ibid.: 50). Violence can never be legitimate but can be justified. Arendt insists that violence can never generate power (ibid.: 56). The problems with violence lie in the discrepancies between its intended and actual outcomes or effects. Indeed, many African countries fought colonialism violently; but after independence, instead of enjoying a hard-earned peace, they carried out political violence themselves by turning against their own people (Meredith, 2005).

Arendt (1969) rejects Fanon's identification of violence with organic, libidinal energy. She calls it "fabrication, mistaken and glorification of violence" (1969: 56). She avers that Fanon's explanation of political violence is based on a fundamental confusion between political action and fabrication. Arendt, however, justified violence on two grounds: extreme injustice and to open up space for politics (1969: 64).

As pointed out by Arendt, violence can neither be legitimate nor generate power (1969: 520). Political violence in Ethiopia appears to be a living example. Since imperial times, Ethiopian rulers have used different forms of political violence but have not been able to get legitimizing recognition from all ethnic groups, nor have they been able to generate power to lead the country to democracy, peace, and development.

The following sections show how the confrontational strategies of the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political cultures, such as playing a zero-sum game, dehumanizing opponents, and refusing to negotiate political settlements, seem to be the by-products of political violence witnessed as the result of their historical interactions and aspirations for political hegemony.

2.7 Political violence in Ethiopia

To understand the sources of political violence between the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayans, it is imperative to have some knowledge of the political history of Ethiopia since the Zemene Mesafint, a period of religious conflict between Muslims and Christians, between ethnic groups and power-seeking feudal lords. Below is a brief summary of the interactions of Amhara,

Oromo, and Tigrayans over the last 400 years and their impact on Ethiopia's nation-building processes.

The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayans have been competing for power and hegemony since at least the beginning of the 16th century, coinciding with the introduction of firearms into Ethiopia. (Adejumobi, 2007: 22) Following the invasion of Ethiopia by the Ottoman Turks (Ethiopian-Adal War, 1527 to 1543), the Oromo expansion, plagued by drought and driven by the need for land, expanded their territory northward from far southern Ethiopia. This expansive and predatory migration polarized and weakened the power of both Christian and Muslim populations and fragmented the Ethiopian state, already weakened by war (Teshale, 1995). Many writers blamed the Oromo expansion for damaging the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in general and its sacrosanct artifacts in particular (Tekletsadik, 1990; Zewdie, 1975; Bahru, 1991). Teshale (1995) and Getachew (2002) depict the Oromo expansion as an invasion that destroyed Amhara society. "The Oromo were perceived as the Mongolian 'hordes' of Ethiopia, as the destroyers of Christianity and civilization. They were seen as the killers of the Amhara…" (Teshale, 1995: 16). Over decades, the Oromo assimilated, and integrated into, local populations, becoming central actors in many bloody battles for political power. The Oromo eventually settled in Gondar, establishing the Yejju dynasty until its last ruler, Ras Ali II, was defeated by Emperor Tewodros II in the battle of Ayshal in 1853.

2.7.1 *Zemene Mesafint* – the "era of the princes" (1769–1855)

During the Zemene Mesafint, power shifted from the monarchy to feudal warlords and nobles who fought among each other for increased territory and hegemony. In Gondar, established in 1636 as the imperial capital and a thriving commercial hub, the embattled Emperor Iyoas called upon Ras ("duke") Mikael Suhul to help oust Ras Ali I, a member of the Yejju dynasty and ruler of Wollo, an Oromo province. Ras Mikael Suhul of Tigray (1692-1784) was the most powerful noble of his time in Ethiopia. Emboldened by the firearms support he received from the Ottoman Turks, he had been able to subjugate many provinces in Tigray. Ras Mikael accepted the invitation, but when he realized that he was in a strong position among all Gondar leaders, he killed Emperor Iyoas in 1769. It was the first time an emperor had lost his throne other than through natural death, death in battle, or voluntary abdication. The incident marked the

beginning of the Zemene Mesafint, when henceforth power lay openly in the hands of feudal lords and military commanders and the emperor was a symbolic figurehead confined to Gondar. The Gondar Amhara nobles, with the help of the Oromo, eventually defeated Ras Mikael Suhul. This episode shows that short-lived political and military alliances were formed among the Oromo, Amhara, and Tigrayans at critical points in history to defeat each other in political or military conflict (Tekletsadik, 1990; Zewdie, 1975; Bahru, 1991).

After a victorious war campaign in 1855 against the powerful Tigrayan warlord Dejazmach ("commander") Wube, Kassa Hailu, not a member of the nobilities, was crowned as Emperor Tewodros II. With that victory, the era of the princes was over.

2.7.2 Emperor Tewodros II (1855-1868)

Many historians in Ethiopia (Tekletsadik, 1990; Zewdie, 1975; Bahru, 1991) consider Emperor Tewodros II) the first emperor to seriously start nation-building. Emperor Tewodros II attempted to introduce many reforms, including a centralized administration and the creation of a loyal national army, which for the first time received salaries, clothes, modern firearms, and artillery. He also began domestic production of weapons, increasing his armory in Tigray (Adejumobi, 2007: 27). Tewodros II's attempt to centralize power faced stiff resistance, as it eroded the regional lords' power. After his coronation, he conquered the Kingdom of Shewa and the province of Gojjam. "He crushed the many lords and princes of Wollo and Tigray and brought recalcitrant regions of Begemder and Simien under his direct rule" (Pankhurst, Rita, 1973: 15-24).

However, it was the church that challenged him the most. He proposed that each church should retain land that could maintain no more than two priests and three deacons and that the extra land should be handed over to peasant cultivators. He also ordered that religious men who crowded the church should work for their own upkeep and pay taxes. The church revolt against Tewodros II was led by the head of the church, Abune Selama. Using its powerful platform, the church promulgated false propaganda against the emperor. Church leaders labeled the emperor a Protestant who favored Islam rather than the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. In 1864, Emperor Tewodros II imprisoned Abune Selama, who died in prison (Tekletsadik, 1990; Zewdie, 1975; Bahru, 1991).

The hateful propaganda against Tewodros II and the regional nobles' refusal to submit to this ruler, resulted in his downfall. Rebellion after rebellion erupted as the nobles tried to maintain their power and privileges. The more the rebellions multiplied, the harsher the retaliatory measures of the emperor (Bahru, 1991).

Emperor Tewodros II was succeeded for a brief period by one of the rival feudal princes of Ethiopia, Wagshum Gobesie of Lasta, who took the title Emperor Tekle Giorgis (1868-1871). But Emperor Tekle Giorgis's authority was challenged by other feudal princes of Gojjam, Shewa, and Tigray and in 1887 he was defeated and captured by Dejazmach Kassa Marcha of Tigray. In 1872, Dejazmach Kassa declared himself Emperor Yohannes IV of Ethiopia and ruled until 1889 (Tekletsadik, 1990; Zewdie, 1975; Bahru, 1991).

2.7.3 Emperor Yohannes IV (1872-1889)

Emperor Yohannes IV emerged victorious because of the modern arms he received from General Napier after the evacuation of the British Expedition, in return for helping the British soldiers against Emperor Tewodros II. During his reign, he continued to accumulate large amounts of weaponry, which enabled him to subdue northern Wollo, Begemder, and Gojjam. Many writers stated that during Emperor Yohannes IV's mission to incorporate the current Amhara provinces – Wollo, Begemder, and Gojjam – he used extreme force, killing women, children, and the elderly indiscriminately and plundering the region. After defeating the regions, the emperor himself realized the barbarity of his actions and asked his God for forgiveness (Dagnachew, 2022).

2.7.4 Emperor Menelik II (1889 – 1913)

Emperor Yohannes IV was mortally wounded in an otherwise successful battle at Metema in 1889. His death gave rise to a Menelik ascendancy. Menelik II had been the King of Shewa over twenty years from 1865 to 1889 and then ruled as emperor of Ethiopia for roughly two decades (1889-1913). Like his predecessors, he greatly expanded his army with quantities of arms acquired through trade with the Italians and French (Adejumobi, 2007: 28-29). In 1893, when war with Italy seemed imminent, Menelik II issued an appeal to the nation and mobilized a force of 100,000 Ethiopians who defeated the Italians at the Battle of Adwa. Apart from the international stature thus acquired, it meant that not only the regular army but also the farmers of

northern Ethiopia were then equipped with modern weapons and ammunition (Adejumobi, 2007: 30).

One of the main features of the reign of Menelik II is the incorporation of vast areas in the south, southwest, and southeast (Bahru, 1991), resulting in the borders of current Ethiopia. The conquest of the western Oromo, Sidama, Gurage, Wolayta, and other groups crushed independent kingdoms, principalities, and traditional communities (Tessema, 1986: 122). This was a time of forced assimilation into new social groups, such as the "Amharization" of the Oromo in Amhara (Adejumobi, 2007: 32).

Writers (such as Tekletsadik, 1990; Zewdie, 1975; Bahru, 1991) believed that what Menelik II did in his expansion in the 19th century was to recover what had been taken during the Oromo expansion. However, writers like Tesema Ta'a (1986) contested the notion of "reconquista." He wrote, "Menelik II's conquest of the independent entities in the south, southwest and southeast in the last decades of the 19th century does not at all qualify for the 'reunification' or the 'reconquista' rhetoric" (Tesema, 1986: 123). What made the Menelik expansion different, was the way the conquered people were treated and Menelik II's serious attempt at nation-building by incorporating the conquered as subjects. Teshale points out that the Oromo expansion was in search of grazing land and resources, whereas Menelik II's expansion sought to overpower the populace, for his aim was "tribute exaction" (Teshale, 1995: 39).

"Tribute exaction" implies violent renforcement. If people resisted, the punishment was harsh. The overriding aim in all Menelik II's war campaigns was eradicating resistance. Some of the Oromo provinces, such as Arsi, resisted the invasion and sustained massive losses against the invading army. Harshness was particularly noticeable when a long series of campaigns had been waged where armed resistance had taken a heavy toll on Menelik II's troops, or where the King's prior demand for submission had been rejected. Examples of this kind of treatment could be seen in many parts of Oromia. Extensive lands were confiscated. The power and status of ruling classes were reduced. The common people were ruthlessly suppressed and exploited, and in some cases, enslaved (Tekletsadik, 1990; Zewdie, 1975; Bahru, 1991).

> Menelik II's drive south unleashed the second-round defeat of the Oromo. This time, it was Menelik II's turn to be the intruder in Oromo land. The Oromo, soon to be conquered in a massive campaign of terror and intimidation, were located outside the domain of the Ge'ez civilization (Teshale, 1995: 39).

Once crushed, the defeated inhabitants were treated as less than human beings. Until recently, Amhara elites gave the Oromo extremely derogatory names such as *gala* (meaning slave, pagan, uncivilized) (Teshale, 1995). As Gebru Tareke (1991: 71) put it:

> Paternalistic and arrogant Abyssinians looked upon and treated the indigenous people as backward, heathen, filthy, deceitful, lazy, and even stupid – stereotypes that European colonialists commonly ascribed to their African subjects. Both literally and symbolically, southerners became the object of scorn and ridicule.

During the reigns of Emperors Tewodros II, Yohannes IV, and Menelik II, and even earlier, Ethiopian soldiers did not receive any salary or remuneration – looting was their source of livelihood (Pankhurst, 1968: 551). During Emperor Yohannes IV's war against Wollo, Begemder, and Gojjam (currently the province of Amhara), his soldiers plundered farms, robbed the local population, and left them destitute. The following quote illustrates the severity of the plunder:

> Big companies of men, soldiers and lords bringing many servants come daily to quarter themselves in small villages. Each one goes to the house he likes best and turns the owner into the street, or occupies it with him. Sometimes it is a widow or married woman whose husband is away, and then by force he gets at not only food and her property, but her honor (Beckingham and Huntingford, 1961: 80).

Some Oromo historians such as Mohammed (1990), consider Menelik II's expansion and modernization efforts as colonialism. However, what makes the Ethiopian situation different from European colonialism, according to Teshale (1995), was the long-standing practice of political intermarriage among the Oromo, Amhara, and Tigrayan nobility and, as long as the defeated were willing to convert to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and were willing to speak Amharic, they could intermingle with the invaders and be one of them (1995: 40-52).This was not true of the Amhara elites whose arrogant attitude toward the Oromo people created stiff resistance and continues to factor into the country's political culture.

2.8 Political violence under a "modernizing" imperial regime

2.8.1 Haile Selassie (1930-1974)

Emperor Menelik II died a natural death. His legitimate heir was his grandson, Lej Iyasu. However, after a coup in 1916, Shoan nobles installed their favored successor, Ras Tafari, who in 1930 became Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia.

While the emperor was a skillful diplomat, building Ethiopia's stature in the international community, his policy of centralizing authority and weakening the power of the regional nobles and elites made him unpopular domestically. Despite foreign aid, the country's economic development lagged and he failed to reform the outdated and oppressive feudal land tenure system. In health and education there was some progress, particularly the expansion of the school system and the establishment of colleges and a university in Addis Ababa. It was from these institutions that a new educated generation spearheaded the call for reform (Tesfaye, 2016: 8-9)

2.8.2 The Woyane rebellion (May-November 1943)

Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1935 and the emperor fled in exile to London. After Haile Selassie's return to Ethiopia in 1941, his government introduced a new regional administration that effectively centralized his authority and control over Ethiopia's traditional aristocracy. It provided for 14 provinces, around 100 counties, and 600 districts. The provision reduced the many provinces of Tigray into eight counties: Raya Azebo, Enderta, Tembien, Kilete Awla'lo, Agame, Adowa, Axum, and Shiere, along with many districts under each of the counties' jurisdictions (Zewdie, 1975).

2.9 Revolutionary violence: Ethiopian revolution and the military regime (1974-1991)

On November 17, 1969, one of the members of the then Haile Selassie University, Walleligne Mekonnen (1969: 2), wrote for the first time a very provocative and controversial article called "On the Question of Nationalities in Ethiopia." In the five-page article, he raised the following points:

> What is this fake nationalism? Is it not simply Amhara and to a certain extent Amhara-Tigre supremacy? Ask anybody what Ethiopian culture is? Ask anybody what Ethiopian language is? Ask anybody what Ethiopian music is? Ask anybody what the "national dress" is? It is either Amhara or Amhara-Tigre!! To be a "genuine Ethiopian" one has to speak Amharic, to listen to Amharic music, to accept the Amhara-Tigre religion,

> Orthodox Christianity and to wear the Amhara-Tigre Shamma in international conferences. In some cases, to be an "Ethiopian," you will even have to change your name. In short, to be an Ethiopian, you will have to wear an Amhara mask (to use Fanon's expression). Start asserting your national identity and you are automatically a tribalist, that is, if you are not blessed to be born an Amhara. According to the constitution, you will need Amharic to go to school, to get a job, to read books (however few) and even to listen to the news on Radio "Ethiopia" unless you are a Somali or an Eritrean in Asmara for obvious reasons.

Mekonnen's solution to the "national question" in Ethiopia was "mass-based revolution." Indeed, soon after in 1974, the Ethiopian popular revolution erupted, spearheaded by a military junta named the Derg (a Ge'ez word meaning committee). The 120 members of the Derg were mostly junior military officers, drawn from all provinces of Ethiopia; its Chairman was Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam. At the outset of the revolution on November 24, 1974, the Derg executed by firing squad 60 former cabinet ministers and government officials (Hiwot, 2014). Emperor Haile Selassie and later the Patriarch of the Orthodox Church were also secretly killed (Teshale, 1995).

The Derg renamed itself the Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC) and established a Marxist-Leninist state. The PMAC implemented many of the changes demanded by the radical civilian left: widespread nationalizations; rural and urban land reform; establishment of peasant and urban (*kebele*) neighborhood associations; a mass army; reorganized trade unions and other mass organizations (Hiwot, 2014).

Prior to the revolution, Ethiopia had no organized political parties. During the time of the revolution, several emerged, of which, apart from the ruling military Derg, the two main ones were the EPRP and MEISON. Although the EPRP and MEISON were not organized along ethnic lines, and their founders denied the existence of ethnic affiliation in the organizations at that time, there was Tigrayan influence in the EPRP leadership and Oromo influence in the MEISON leadership (Fasika, 2021; Melaku, 2019). Both the EPRP and MEISON were established around the same time in the early 1970s (Melaku, 2019: 166-178). Both were student parties, and both were very much concerned about the economic backwardness of Ethiopia. Their objectives were to bring about socio-economic development, democracy, and social justice in Ethiopia (Melaku, 2019; Hiwot, 2014; Andargachew, 2020). However, they were not able to work together or indeed tolerate each other. In fact, they ended up in violent confrontation and finally destroyed each other.

The EPRP believed that "objective conditions" (i.e., it was the right time to establish a political party) had been fulfilled and they should establish a political party led by the factory workers, whereas MEISON believed that "subjective conditions" (i.e., society must be educated and prepared before establishing a political party) must be met before moving to establish a political party. The political party that MEISON had in mind, would be led by farmers. However, Melaku (2019) accused MEISON of manipulation. He claimed that they had already established a political party and wanted to prevent the EPRP political movement from forming a competing political party that MEISON could not control (2019: 212). MEISON worked as an intellectual arm of the military regime and was accused of being instrumental in the assassination of EPRP members (2019: 214), while the EPRP was accused of launching an urban armed struggle against the well-armed military that led to the massacre of thousands of young people (Hiwot, 2014). The EPRP exercised violence even among its own ranks: it mercilessly killed its own leaders when some of them developed a different set of ideas or expressed their dissent (Melaku, 2019; Hiwot, 2014).

Setting aside accusations and counter-accusations, what becomes transparently clear here is that the EPRP and MEISON were not able to settle their political differences peacefully and work together, even though they had similar political objectives. In the modern political history of Ethiopia, the pattern of dehumanizing and violently eliminating political opponents began in the early 1970s with the EPRP and MEISON (Hiwot, 2014), marking the resumption of violent political culture in Ethiopian politics.

Under the leadership of Major Mengistu Haile Mariam, the military Derg regime was brutal and openly dictatorial. The Derg leaders used to announce the names of those they killed without due process of law in the state media and openly indicated whom they were going to kill next. Teshale (1995: 179) comments on this truth in a satirical way: "The Red Terror" was perhaps the most ethnic-blind campaign the Mengistu regime ever accomplished so "successfully." During their time in power, the EPRDF/TPLF were equally brutal and killed their opponents; however, they did not openly admit to their actions. They tried to hide their criminal behavior and contrived false excuses for their extrajudicial killings (Pausewang and Aalen, 2002: 235).

By 1977, insurgencies existed in all 14 of the country's administrative regions (the provinces were officially changed to regions in 1974 after the revolution) (Adejumobi, 2007: 125). In contrast to the "ethnic-blind" violence of the Derg regime, many political parties organized along ethnic lines and raised arms against the military regime, in particular, the OLF and the TPLF. After fighting the military regime covertly and overtly for over 17 years, the TPLF, with the help of Amhara elites, who were frustrated by the brutality of the regime, finally defeated the Derg in 1991 (Yohannes, 2021).

2.10 Violence under the "democratic" ethnic federal state (TPLF/EPRDF 1991-2017)

The TPLF/EPRDF captured Addis Ababa. They established a transitional government composed of many political organizations, with the TPLF leader, Meles Zenawi, as interim president. A new constitution called for the election of 550 members to a national council representing all electoral districts based on population size. "Although Ethiopia had no prior experience with a popularly elected democratic government or legislature, over 60 ethnically organized parties emerged to contest in regional elections held in 1992" (Adejumobi, 2007: 134).

The transitional government was set up with the OLF having the second highest number of seats after the EPRDF. Nevertheless, suspicions that the EPRDF was trying to usurp its power and influence caused the OLF to withdraw from the government. The EPRDF responded by raiding the camps of Oromo Liberation soldiers. Twenty thousand fighters were arrested, and thousands were killed, greatly reducing the OLF's power. Many of their leaders fled the country and their land was seized by the EPRDF. Civilians suspected of supporting the OLF were arrested, killed, or driven from Ethiopia (Mekuria, 2011; Mohammed, 1996; Merera, 2002).

A new constitution in 1994 established a federal structure that allowed autonomy for nine major regional entities, which could evolve new constitutions and budgets and levy taxes. Opponents charged the government with administrative corruption, nepotism, and regional favoritism, particularly toward Tigray, despite the region's higher level of poverty (Adejumobi, 2007: 135). The introduction of ethnic federalism continues to be a contentious political issue in Ethiopia.

In 1991 when the TPLF, in control of the EPRDF, seized power in Ethiopia and introduced ethnic federalism, their objectives were, directly or indirectly, to regain the lost glory of Tigray (Merera, 2002). However, the TPLF, in its political document, claimed to have an objective of

bringing peace, democracy, and development to the entire nation (EPRDF, 1995: 64). Nevertheless, the TPLF ensured that all major positions in the government were held by Tigrayan elites, and individuals and groups were given political positions based on their loyalty to the TPLF. There was open resistance, but most of it was crushed by the TPLF's coercive mechanisms (Merera, 2002; Aregawi, 2009; Markakis, 1987; Adhana, 1994, 1995; Young, 1997). As soon as the TPLF came to power, it disbanded the former ruling party, the Workers' Party of Ethiopia (WPE) – a Marxist-Leninist political party – and demobilized the age-old national army, replacing it with its own guerrilla fighters (Lyons, 2019: 56-57).

In 1991, during the transitional period,[3] the TPLF promised to conduct extensive dialogue with all political forces to create a new government but reneged on its promise; instead, it forcefully eliminated them one by one and by 1992 emerged as the only political force in power (ibid.). Even the OLF, which was one of the collaborators in the transitional period, was eventually discarded. Its military wing was forced to disarm and was subsequently destroyed (Dima, 2021; Lencho, 2021; Fasika, 2021). In 2005, after the momentous general election, the opposing CUD won a substantial number of seats in parliament. However, the government, dominated by the TPLF, declared that it was the winner, even before the national election board announced the results (Yohannes, 2021; Merera, 2012). Following the much-contested election, the CUD declined to join parliament, as it felt that the election had been rigged. International election observers and the European Union (EU) confirmed that the election had not been free and fair (Pausewang and Aalen, 2002).

The registered opposition parties that participated in the 2005 election had a constructive and progressive political agenda that won them an increased number of seats. Despite enormous pressure to acknowledge the opposition's gains in the election, the TPLF-dominated EPRDF proceeded to take over parliament (ibid.). When the CUD threatened to organize a nationwide political demonstration, Meles Zenawi, the then prime minister, stated that his party would negotiate with the opposition about any issue they wished, if they would wait until the African Union's (AU) annual assembly ended without incident. The CUD and other opposition parties

[3] In July 1991, right after the TPLF/EPRDF seizure of power in Ethiopia following 17 years of guerrilla fighting, a conference was held to adopt a "Transitional Period Charter of Ethiopia" and officially establish a transitional government. The TPLF handpicked participants in the transitional conference. These participants eventually gained seats in the transitional parliament, ensuring that the TPLF was one of the parties represented in the transitional parliament.

trusted the prime minister's word and canceled their scheduled nationwide demonstrations. Once the AU's annual assembly was over, the prime minister rounded up and imprisoned all the opposition party members who had won the election – including the United Ethiopian Democratic Front (UDF) leader, Ms Birtukan Mideqsa, who was imprisoned for life in 2009 – but had declined to join the new parliament (Miheret, 2005).

The violent actions and treachery of the TPLF have made it difficult for trust to develop between the TPLF and its opponents. In light of past political history, it has become impossible for opposing political parties to sit down and negotiate issues. Ethiopian society, having witnessed the brutality and authoritarian policies of its political parties, does not expect that democracy and the rule of law will prevail in Ethiopia in the near future (Abbink, 2010: 3).

2.11 Relations of the Oromo, Amhara and Tigrayans after 1991

During the study period, lack of trust and an absence of sincere political negotiation were clearly apparent. The political culture of mistrust and the settling of political differences through violence rather than negotiation have been manifested time and time again. "Political violence and mass brutalities result whenever nation and nation-building or nationality and nationalism do not align with state and state-building" (Courtney and Thomas, 2015: 181).

The Oromo have always insisted that they settle their political differences in discussion and negotiation (Mekuria, 2011; Lencho, 2021). However, the track record of the OLF does not show that. Yohannes (2021) and Dagnachew (2022) argue that perhaps they settled their political differences peacefully among themselves but not with the Amhara and others. After 1991, the OLF and other political parties such as the Islamic Oromo Front for the Liberation of Oromia (IFLO) were accused of killing many Amharas who had been living for decades in Oromia regions. The Arba-Gugu and Bedeno killings of 1992 were a case in point (ibid.).

There is overwhelming evidence that supports the existence of a violent political rivalry between Amhara and Tigrayans (Mesfin, 2017). The TPLF, which has been the dominant political force in Ethiopia since 1991, stated in its declaration of formation that Amharas were the number one enemy of the Tigrayans (TPLF, 1976: 1). Based on such a standpoint, they unlawfully seized several regions where Amhara had lived continuously for centuries and annexed them to Tigray

region. Between 1991 and 2017, the Amhara elites organized themselves and fought back against the TPLF (Abbink, 1995: 57-77).

The long-standing political conflicts between the Oromo, Amhara, and Tigrayans can be traced back to two important elements. The first one is regionalism. Most of Ethiopia's successive rulers emanated from one of the three main ethnic groups: Amhara, Oromo, or Tigray. A conquering ruler, after ensuring that his defeated opponent agreed to pay tribute and submitted to his leadership, would in most cases return to his region (except the Yejju Oromos who remained in Gondar while in power). The Tigrayan rulers returned to Tigray, the Amhara rulers returned to Amhara, and the Oromo rulers (in the case of the Yejju Oromos) were forced to leave Gondar.Thus, political leaders are conscious and protective of their ethnic origins, and their own region has always been their priority. When Emperor Tewodros II conquered Tigray, the rhetoric was that Amhara had conquered Tigray; when Emperor Yohannes IV subjugated Wollo and Gojjam, the rhetoric was that Tigray had conquered Amhara. When Ras Mikael Suhul of Tigray stayed in Gondar, he was always recognized as Tigrayan, not as one of the Gondars/Amharas. Similarly, when the Wollo Oromo conquered the Amhara and seized power, they were always recognized as Oromo and as outsiders. There were attempts to assimilate subjugated ethnic groups,[4] and create political alliances through intermarriage. For instance, Emperor Haile Selassie gave his teenage daughter in marriage to the hereditary prince of Tigray. However, these arrangements often exacerbated tensions and ended in violence – poisonings, imprisonment, assassinations, and so on.

The second element is predation. During the time of the empire, military campaigns were mostly conducted by a regional lord whose soldiers were from his own region. As noted earlier, soldiers at that time did not receive proper salaries and had to resort to looting and plundering their enemy's land and population in order to survive. Although there are many cases where the Tigrayan leader was called upon to support Amhara princes and vice versa, or the Oromo chieftains allied with Amhara rulers, nevertheless, the military campaigns conducted by successive Ethiopian nobles created a predatory state and that impacted the political cultures of

[4] "Tewodros's military engagements in Gojjam were against the assimilated Oromo chieftains of that region" (Teshale, 1995: 38).

Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray for generations (Gebru, 1991; Pankhurst, 1968; Teshale, 1995; Tekletsadik, 1990).

2.12 The idea of state-sanctioned violence

The history of state-building in Ethiopia is one of continual political violence, as noted by Teshale (1995). As in many countries around the world, political violence is a common phenomenon during state-building. Charles Tilly, in "The Formation of National States in Western Europe," stated that "war made the state and the state made war" (1975: 48). From the point of view of a government in power, as long as it achieves its intended nation-building objectives, using visible or invisible coercive forces or implementing discriminatory measures regarding language or culture may seem necessary. On the other hand, those who support the use of political violence to alter the status quo, claim that their situation was tantamount to colonialism. They blame the status quo for inhumane treatment of its subjects through policies of discrimination and subjugation. Fanon (1961: 3-5) believed that the only way to bring about change and justice was to engage in political violence. "Whatever the name used, whatever the latest expression, decolonization is always a violent event." Fanon went on to examine the nature of violence and wrote, "For the last can be the first only after a murderous and decisive confrontation between the two protagonists" (ibid.: 3).

Applying this argument in the case of Ethiopia, state-sanctioned violence may be justified as nation-building, but opponents of the state reject it as colonialism and claim that violent confrontation is inevitable and necessary.

After the fall of the Haile Selassie monarchy, the TPLF and OLF opposed the military Derg regime's monopoly on power and its brutal use of violence. They raised arms, fought the military regime for over two decades and defeated it. However, once in power, they perpetuated the very violence they had formerly deplored, and the vicious cycle continued. One may conclude that the justifiability of political violence is a dependent variable based on who holds power.

Ethiopian political violence involves the domination of one ethnic group over others or a combination of ethnic groups against another. The political violence aimed at forcing an ethnic group into complete surrender, includes armed conflict, dishonoring women, looting, land dispossession and property destruction, punitive taxation, disempowerment or elimination of

targeted elites, slavery, and forced assimilation. When, over time, the victorious ethnic group weakens, subjugated ethnic group(s) will carry out their revenge. Political violence in Ethiopia was mostly initiated by competing provincial warlords and nobles, imperial armies, rival dynasties, as well as student movements and an ethnic group elite with long-standing grievances.

Fanon (1961) believes in countering violent repression with political violence. Arendt (1969), however, argues that all human action, including political action, is unpredictable, and to this unpredictability, violence brings a significant additional element of arbitrariness. The most probable change it will bring about, is the change to a more violent world (1969: 80). Such was the case with the TPLF in 2011. When the TPLF were guerilla fighters, they were great admirers of Fanon: one of their mottos was that, according to Mao, power grows out of the barrel of a gun (Kahsay, 2005; Aregawi, 2009). The TPLF intended to lead the country to democracy, peace, and development, but once they took control of the central government, they designated the OLF – once their ally – and other political parties as "terrorist organizations."

2.13 Chapter summary

The literature review outlined major debates concerning the concept of political culture as formulated by Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba in 1963. Stephen Welch (1993), Gerhard Lehmbruch (2003), Arend Lijphart and Markus Crepaz (1991), Lucian Pye (1991), Jon Abbink (2006), Tobias Hagmann (2006), Maria Eugenia Vazquez Semadeni (2010), Weisband and Thomas (2015) and many others explained the difficulty in finding an independent variable in political culture and the lack of an operational definition, as well as the difficulty in measuring values and attitudes. The review briefly noted that there is no such thing as "African political culture," although a number of writers refer to an "African political culture" and associate it with neo-patrimonialism. Neo-patrimonialism is the use of state resources to procure loyalty from individuals or groups to those in power. The literature review showed the existence of such a system of clientelism during the TPLF rule in Ethiopia.

The review used Jon Abbink's work on Ethiopian political culture and Tobias Hagmann's critique of Abbink's writing as a starting point to focus attention on the distinctive political cultures of the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray. Abbink assumed the existence of an Ethiopian political culture, whereas Hagmann questioned whether Abbink's use of the term of Ethiopian political culture and, in particular, neo-patrimonialism adequately explained the Ethiopian 2005

general election. Abbink clearly indicated that Ethiopian political institutions are there just in form, not in substance, in order to impress Western donors so that they continue their aid to Ethiopia. The review indicated that election in Ethiopia was a new event and people did not trust election results. Based on Abbink's observation that the political institutions in Ethiopia are facades, the literature review rejects Abbink's use of the 2005 parliamentary election as a subject of analysis that can sufficiently explain the complexity of political culture in Ethiopia.

As in other African nations, there is no such a thing as a homogeneous national political culture in Ethiopia. Rather, there are Amhara, Oromo, Tigrayan, and other ethnic political cultures. The review focused on the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political cultures, as they are the major ethnic groups that influence the direction and action of the Ethiopian political system.

The main literature review succinctly decoded a key element of the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political cultures: political violence and a zero-sum game. The Amhara and Tigrayan elites wanted exclusive power when they got the opportunity to rule the country. Menelik II's expansion, the TPLF ascendancy to power, and the Oromo expansion in the 16th century were the cases in point.

Apart from presenting the major literature on political culture in general and political cultures in Ethiopia in particular, the review shows the literature gap and indicates where the study can contribute to fill the gap. The review has laid the foundation for data presentation and analysis built on the following notions:

- *There has never been democratic decision-making in Ethiopia*: During the introduction of ethnic federalism, no consultation was made, and during the demobilization of the national army, no discussion was undertaken. An authoritarian political culture has characterized TPLF rule since 1991. When the TPLF seized power in 1991, Tigrayan elites took control of almost all political positions and the state apparatus. This created immediate resistance from the competing ethnic groups, particularly the Amhara and Oromo elites. Similar policies of exclusivity were widely demonstrated throughout Ethiopian political history.

- *A political culture of demonizing political opponents*: It is a common political tradition in Ethiopia to see political opponents demonized and dehumanized by state media.

- *A political culture of violence*: Violence is deeply rooted in Ethiopian political culture. Political opponents were harassed, imprisoned, tortured, and killed during the study period.
- *Absence of negotiation to settle political differences*: As political parties and politicians regard their opponents as enemies and existential threats, the political party in power first demonizes and then dehumanizes their opponents. Once the opponents are dehumanized and demonized, the avenues to negotiation are sealed off.

The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political culture elements identified in the literature review such as political violence, absence of negotiation, zero-sum game, absence of common heroes or shared historical memories, and demonizing or dehumanizing the other ethnic group or opponent were used in this study as the baseline for the survey questionnaires. The following chapter outlines the methodology and research design of this study. Furthermore, it presents the survey and explains and graphically analyzes the findings.

Chapter Three: Research design and methodology

3.1 Introduction

The legitimacy of political culture as a branch of political science has frequently been challenged on the grounds that it has weak explanatory power, an indistinct philosophical background, and limited methodological resources (Welch, 2013: 65). Welch further criticizes political culture as not having its own ontological and epistemological foundation. According to Welch, political culture engages in measuring and evaluating attitude to find out how attitude impacts political behavior without knowing how to operationalize attitude. Fuchs (2007: 34), on the other hand, argues that political culture produces attitude surveys that can be used to operationalize norms and values. He argues that advances in information technology have helped political culture develop refined and relevant research methodology and that the ontological and epistemological foundation will "pull alongside."

This study used a qualitative research approach. A survey was the main data collection method. The survey questionnaire was semi-structured. The intention behind the use of a qualitative survey was to determine the opinions, attitudes, and behaviors within particular sections of society (Berg, 2004: 127-134). This was done in order to compare and analyze the three main political cultures in Ethiopia. The study also used secondary data, such as documentary evidence, to supplement the results of the qualitative survey.

The researcher collected and used documentary evidence such as newspaper clippings, government policies and legislation, constitutional and court cases, radio, television, and YouTube interviews as supporting resources. The research findings are now sound because of the use of multiple sources of data.

The study took a case study approach, making a comparative case study among the three main political cultures. It helped to create a deep understanding of what motivates the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites to resort to violent political contestation.

3.2 Data collection and analysis

During the period of data collection, tensions were high between the Tigrayans and the federal government's forces. The Tigrayans invaded and occupied some of the Amhara territories neighboring Tigray. Extrajudicial killings, looting, destruction, rape, and even genocide were

attributed to both parties during the war. Did the existence of war between the Tigrayans and federal government during the data collection period affect the data collection and the quality of the data? The answer is "no." In fact, as ethnic tension reached its highest point, Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayans revealed their true nature as they responded to the survey questions, despite the risk of political repression. The researcher collected data from Tigrayan educated elites who live and work in Addis Ababa, such as university professors, non-governmental organization (NGO) leaders, United Nations (UN) employees, and business leaders who identify themselves as Tigrayans.

The method of data collection included questionnaires as well as the analysis of historical and archival documents that have shaped political cultures in the regions for over a century. Historical facts and figures used to supplement the survey results reveal the source of some of the issues raised in the survey questionnaire.

The researcher made every effort to limit bias and enhance the quality of the data collection. To this end, a multiple data-source approach was used. The research aims were to distribute survey questionnaires, conduct archival research, and produce a thematic analysis to increase the validity of the data. Using multiple data sources ensured the quality of data collected, tested the validity of the study, and helped to create an understanding of how theories fit in or deviate from the research problem. The multiple-source approach enhanced the diversity and quality of data collected and the final analysis of the research (Blaikie, 1991: 115-136).

The research project used a survey and interviews as data-collecting tools. The plan was to conduct qualitative research in Amhara, Oromia, and Tigray regions using a questionnaire, supplemented by historical-document analysis. This was almost achieved. The only limitation of the plan was that it was difficult to travel to Mekele because of the armed conflict. Resultantly, the researcher distributed questionnaires to 150 individuals in Oromia, 150 in Amhara, and 50 Tigrayan educated elites living in Addis Ababa. The reason why the research plan distributed only 50 questionnaires to Tigrayan educated elites was because the region represents only 6% of Ethiopia's population, whereas Amhara holds 27%, and Oromo holds 34% of the population. The researcher weighted surveys to ensure proportionality across the three groups when

reporting on full sample results. The research team distributed pilot surveys and, based on feedback and comments, revised and corrected the survey questionnaire.

The research project selected stratified sampling, as it is an efficient data-collecting tool to gain unique insight into members of a large population by ensuring adequate representation.

Furthermore, the research project used stratified random sampling to approach the target population. The target population was college-educated men and women of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan ethnic origin. The researcher formed strata, based on education and ethnicity, i.e., those who strongly identify themselves as Amhara, Oromo, or Tigrayan, whether they live in the specific region or anywhere else, and specifically:

- male college graduates working in different government ministries, universities, schools, private organizations, and NGOs in Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray;
- women college graduates working in different government ministries, universities, schools, private organizations, and NGOs in Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray.

A large sample size would have been statistically more significant and representative but was not feasible in the current circumstances. A proportionate sampling approach was used, whereby the sample size of each stratum was based on population size. Amhara and Oromo would therefore have a bigger sample size compared to that of Tigray, as their populations were comparatively larger. The sample size (Amhara and Oromo 150 each and Tigray 50) was realistic and achieved successfully. The researcher made efforts to make the sample size statistically representative. The plan was to ensure a balance between government employees, teachers, NGO staff, and businesspeople. The study aimed to have equal numbers of men and women participants, without success: the number of female Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites was substantially lower than the male number.

Stratified sampling offers greater understanding of a group's attitudes and behaviors. Dividing the population into subgroups identifies multiple distinct characteristics among the target population. Stratified random samples reveal meaningful insights that give the research a more in-depth understanding of the opinions and behaviors that may be unique to those groups (Del Balso and Lewis, 2005: 73).

Another advantage of stratified random sampling, according to Del Balso and Lewis (2005), is that the tool helps to proportionately represent and accurately reflect the population being studied. Stratified sampling provides greater accuracy with smaller samples than many other methods. A stratified sample can guard against unrelated samples (Adler and Clark, 2003: 142). According to Nassiuma (2001: 40), stratified sampling can be time-consuming, as finding and selecting an exhaustive and definitive list of the sample population takes time and focus.

3.3 Questionnaire distribution

The researcher distributed the survey questionnaires primarily in major cities in Amhara, Oromia, and Tigray regions, where there is a higher concentration of educated elites, higher institutions, NGOs, and major businesses. Most Ethiopian elites live in cities and urban areas (Bahru, 1991: 230) and the research is focused primarily on elite political culture, as opposed to mass political culture. The study collected data from educated elites in Amhara, Oromia, and Tigrayan regional universities.

- In Amhara, surveys were distributed in Bahirdar, Dessie, and Addis Ababa.
- In Oromia, surveys were distributed in Adama, Arsi, and Addis Ababa.
- For Tigray, surveys were distributed in Addis Ababa only.

3.4 Questionnaire design

The researcher developed most of the survey questions from the literature review. The questionnaire sought to answer the fundamental research questions, that included:

- What are the elements of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political cultures that characterize the political elites and why?
- Do some aspects of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political cultures generate ethnic conflicts in the country?

3.5 Interviews

To contextualize and triangulate the collected data, the researcher conducted interviews. The interviews answer the "why" questions raised after the survey respondents' results. The researcher conducted separate interviews with three professors who teach at Addis Ababa University, in March, April, and May 2022. The professors identified themselves as an Amhara,

an Oromo and a Tigrayan. The interviews took place in Addis Ababa. During the interview period, there was serious fighting, and war propaganda proliferated between the federal government and the TPLF forces. Hence, there were strong emotions expressed by all three professors, but in particular by the Tigrayan professor because the war particularly affected his home region. The interview with the Amhara professor lasted five hours over two different days; the interview with the Tigrayan professor lasted seven hours over three different days; and the interview with the Oromo professor lasted six hours over three different days. The three professors did not want their names to be disclosed. They were afraid that they might be singled out and intimidated by individuals, different parties, and other ethnic groups.

3.6 Why educated elites?

The concept of the elite goes back to ancient Greece where "distinguished minorities" were chosen to rule because of their superior wisdom or virtue. Plato's "guardian" and the "philosopher king" are cases in point (Durant, 1963: 28-29).

An elite or clique is a small group of people who possess a disproportionate amount of wealth, privilege, political power, or education in a larger group or population. Political elites occupy positions in powerful institutions, organizations, and movements that enable them to shape or influence political outcomes, often assertively. There are also elites who enjoy a high status and influence in nonpolitical spheres such as arts and literature, not-for-profit organizations, professions, and civic families (Mariotti, 2020: 1-5).

During the Italian occupation of Ethiopia (1935-1941) the invading force made sure that all educated Ethiopians were captured and killed. Education was limited to Grade 4 (Sbacchi, 1971: 122). After the restoration of independence, Emperor Haile Selassie built as many schools as possible and sent young Ethiopians abroad for higher education. Those who received their degrees abroad were appointed to key government positions and led privileged lives. Since then it has been a norm in Ethiopia that educated elites fill the civil service and hold privileged positions in government. The role of the educated elites in shaping Ethiopian politics is paramount in Ethiopia (Zewde, 2002: 20-34). The 1974 revolution was initiated and led by young educated elites. Most prominent political parties such as the EPRP, MEISON, TPLF, OLF were founded by university students or university graduates. Educated elites in Ethiopia, due to their social status and their competence, represent the segment of the population which has the

best capability to become active agents in changing and transforming the political process (Merera, 2002: 57-70).

Conventional assumptions that political power is associated with land ownership, commerce, relationship with religious institutions, political ideology, foreign interference, or traditional sources of power, no longer exist in Ethiopia. One cannot sell or buy land in Ethiopia since the 1974 Ethiopian revolution, because all land belongs to the state. After the 1974 popular revolution and the removal of the last emperor, Haile Selassie (1930-1974), the feudal system was abolished once and for all. Land was confiscated by force from landowners and distributed to poor farmers, and with that, the power relations between landowners and farmers disappeared. The Christian Orthodox Church used to own one-third of the land in the country, but most of this was confiscated after the revolution (Lyons, 2019: 17-18).

Article 40 Sub-article 3 of the 1995 Constitution of Ethiopia states the following:

> The right of ownership of rural and urban land, as well as all natural resources, is exclusively vested in the State and in the people of Ethiopia. Land is a common property of the Nations, Nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia and shall not be subject to sales or to other means of exchange.

Therefore, in Ethiopia there are no elites associated with land and its ownership. The church lost its power with the fall of the last emperor and the rupture of the link between church and state, so that there is no longer an elite associated with religion, as might exist in other countries (ibid.).

The financial industry in Ethiopia is still dependent on the government. There are no multinational banks in Ethiopia, as the financial sector is exclusively controlled by the government. There are a handful of local banks, but these are not powerful enough to challenge authority in the country. As a result, minimal power exists within the finance industry or commerce.

To understand the notion of elites in Ethiopia, it is necessary to revisit the 1974 revolution. This was initiated and spearheaded by students across the country. Addis Ababa University, the only university at the time, played a vital role in laying the ideological foundation and mobilizing the students and all stakeholders in the country. The student movement toppled the age-old monarchy in Ethiopia. Since then, it has been those with a university education who have been politically powerful. Both the TPLF and the OLF, which are ethnically based, were established

by university students. Political power was seen to emerge from ethnic origins rather than from ideology. If one aligned strongly with one's ethnicity and demonstrated one's loyalty in the strongest terms, then one could be a party member of the OLF or TPLF (Lyons, 2019: 5).

During the period of this study, 1991-2017, the educated elites who have been associated with the ethnic political parties have been powerful in Ethiopia. The TPLF continuously recruited university and high school students and at one point, one of the Oromo wings of the ruling party, the OPDO, recruited over 10,000 university students. They now govern Oromia. To further show the link between education and power in the country, one can consider the teaching profession. During the TPLF regime, the government recruited thousands of high school teachers in urban areas and, after a short period of training, appointed them as judges to replace those who were politically independent and tended to be Amhara. Most regional presidents are former teachers.

The educated elites who were also members of political parties swiftly moved up in the political power echelons. Such a trend encouraged and motivated university students to actively seek membership in their ethnic political parties.

3.7 Stratified random sampling

The research study selected stratified sampling, as it is an efficient data-collecting tool that yields unique insight into members of a large population by ensuring adequate representation. The researcher conducted stratified random sampling on the target population. The target population was college-educated men and women of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan ethnic origin. Strata were formed based on education and ethnicity. The study included those who identified themselves as being Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan, whether they lived in the specific region or anywhere else, and specifically:

- male college graduates working in different government ministries, universities, schools, private organizations, and NGOs in Amhara and Oromia, and Tigrayans in Addis Ababa;
- female college graduates working in different government ministries, universities, schools, private organizations, and NGOs in Amhara and Oromia, and Tigrayans in Addis Ababa.

3.8 Proportional sample size

A larger sample size would have generated more significant and representative results. Instead, the survey utilized a proportionate sampling approach, which means the sample size of each stratum was based on its relative population size. The Amhara and Oromo would therefore have a bigger sample size compared to that of the Tigrayans, as their populations are comparatively larger. The sample size (Amhara and Oromia 150 each and Tigray 50) was statistically representative and successfully achieved. Regarding the survey questionnaires, 100% of those distributed were completed and returned. Although the original plan was to ensure a balance between government employees, teachers, NGO staff, and businesspeople, most government employees declined to participate in the data collection for fear that the government might act against them. During the data collection period, the research team made attempts to survey an equal number of men and women; however, it was very difficult to find enough educated women; therefore, the plan did not succeed in this regard. The researcher made efforts to find female educated elites and to survey members of Addis Ababa University's Gender Studies Department but only three women responded, including the head of the department.

3.9 Reflexivity

Reflexivity starts from the premise that we are all embedded in a context and that we all come to research with assumptions (Johnson and Duberley, 2003: 15). Acknowledging our assumptions gives our research strength (Dodgson, 2019: 7). That is to say, reflexivity acknowledges that it is impossible to be objective (Finlay, 1998: 453-456).

Since the introduction of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia in 1991, the Ethiopian political landscape has been polarized. One has to contend with ethnic nationalism everywhere – in educational institutions, on shop floors and even in places of worship (Merera, 2002: 123). The author of this research study is not immune from the effects of ethnic nationalism. I was born and raised in Addis Ababa, where people from all corners of Ethiopia live in harmony. My father is from Oromo and my mother is from Amhara. My brother and sister married Tigrayans. I used to be a journalist and had a chance to travel all over the country. I would say that my cultural identity is pro-unity. Cognizant of this fact, I have taken every attempt to mitigate potential conflict as I am an Ethiopian and belong to one or two of the ethnic groups under investigation.

Some of the mitigating strategies used were as follows:

a) Questioning the motive behind every assertion made in the study and verifying it with incontrovertible evidence.
b) Using open, diverse, and credible sources as much as possible.
c) Avoiding assumptions that lacked evidence.
d) Ensuring that diverse opinions were represented throughout the research process.
e) Ensuring that the development and distribution of the questionnaire addressed and confirmed the neutrality of the study.

3.10 Research ethics

To get ethical clearance for the research at hand, the researcher followed a number of procedures. The researcher submitted an ethical clearance application to the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) at the University of the Western Cape. The application includes a description of the research methods, location, aims and objectives, and addressing ethicial issues that might arise. It explains why the research is needed; gives details of the research approach, data collection methods, and work plan; identifies which data requires ethical and legal clearance; and clarifies how to deal with particularly sensitive issues. The HSSREC also thoroughly scrutinized the source of funding for the research: whether the funding source(s) would in any way impact the design, outcome, and dissemination of the research.

Before getting approval, the researcher took a short course on the ethical clearance application process and also signed an undertaking to comply with the university's "Code of Conduct for Research." As the HSSREC was satisfied by the application, it approved the launch of the research project and monitored progress annually to ensure that the code of conduct for the research was followed.

Based on the HSSREC guidance, any potential conflict of interest was averted. A copy of the consent form and the information sheet were attached to each questionnaire and completed for each interview during the data collection period.

Chapter Four: Research findings presentation

4.1 Introduction

The survey results show trends, patterns, and connections in the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political cultures. The chapter's tables are organized by major historical, political, cultural, and ethnic thematic areas. The historical section presents tables that include elements of political history of the country. In the political section the tables include demographic matters such as identity and nation-building. The cultural section encompasses languages, heroes, popular singers, and the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites' views and opinions of their own and each other's ethnic groups. The ethnic thematic area presents all ethnic-related questions such as the cause of ethnic conflicts and who the elites hold responsible for the ethnic conflict in the country.

For each survey question, the researcher gave each ethnic group under study the opportunity to respond and organized the data collected using the SPSS software.

4.2 Historical factors

4.2.1 Significance of Ethiopian political history: 16th to 19th centuries

The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites agreed strongly that the past – particularly the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries – currently matters. Tables 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3 show that 94% of Tigrayans, 74% of Amhara, and 83.3% of Oromo agreed with the survey statement that "The political history of Ethiopia in the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries matters now."

Table 1.1: Ethiopian political history – Amhara respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**Yes**	111	74.0	74.0	74.0
	No	39	26.0	26.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 1.2: Ethiopian political history – Oromo respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	125	83.3	83.3	83.3
No	25	16.7	16.7	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 1.3: Ethiopian political history – Tigrayan respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**Yes**	47	94.0	94.0	94.0
	No	3	6.0	6.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

4.2.2 Saddest aspect of Ethiopian history

For the survey question, "What is the saddest aspect for you in Ethiopian history?" 48.7% of the Amhara, 14% of Tigrayan, and 12% of Oromo educated elites answered that it is the continuous ethnic conflict – see Tables 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3.

Table 2.1: Saddest aspect of Ethiopian history – Amhara respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Its poverty	33	22.0	22.0	22.0
Continuous ethnic conflict	73	48.7	48.7	70.7

Continuous domination of one by the other	13	8.7	8.7	79.3
Political instability	17	11.3	11.3	90.7
All of them	11	7.3	7.3	98.0
Prefer not to say	3	2.0	2.0	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 2.2: Saddest aspect of Ethiopian history – Oromo respondents

	Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Its poverty	70	46.7	46.7	46.7
Continuous ethnic conflict	18	12.0	12.0	58.7
Continuous domination of one by the other	22	14.7	14.7	73.3
Political instability	31	20.7	20.7	94.0
All of them	4	2.7	2.7	96.7
Prefer not to say	5	3.3	3.3	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 2.3: Saddest aspect of Ethiopian history – Tigrayan respondents

	Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Its poverty	8	16.0	16.0	16.0

Continuous ethnic conflict	7	14.0	14.0	30.0
Continuous domination of one by the other	12	24.0	24.0	54.0
Political instability	5	10.0	10.0	64.0
All of them	7	14.0	14.0	78.0
Prefer not to say	11	22.0	22.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

4.2.3 Opinion of Meles Zenawi's rule

Among Tigrayan educated elites who were asked what they thought about former Prime Minister Meles Zenawi's rule, 90% of them responded positively, 64% rated it excellent, 18% rated it best, and 8% rated it good. Meles was from Tigray region; he was head of the TPLF and was one of the founders of the TPLF. Seventy-six percent of the Amhara educated elites responded that Meles' rule was bad and 15.3% of them preferred not to say. Thirty-one percent of Oromo educated elites stated that Meles's rule was bad, and 25% of them preferred not to say. Forty-three percent of them rated Meles as the best – see Tables 3.1, 3,2, and 3.3.

Table 3.1: Opinion of Meles Zenawi's rule – Tigrayan respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**Prefer not to say**	3	6.0	6.0	6.0
	Excellent	32	64.0	64.0	70.0
	Best	9	18.0	18.0	88.0
	Good	4	8.0	8.0	96.0

	Bad	2	4.0	4.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 3.2: Opinion of Meles Zenawi's rule – Amhara respondents

Opinion about Meles Zenawi's Ruling Style	**Frequency**	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Prefer not to say	23	15.3	15.3	15.3
Excellent	3	2.0	2.0	17.3
Best	10	6.7	6.7	24.0
Good	15	10.0	10.0	34.0
Bad	99	66.0	66.0	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 3.3: Opinion of Meles Zenawi's rule – Oromo respondents

		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	**Prefer not to say**	38	25.3	25.3	25.3
	Excellent	24	16.0	16.0	41.3
	Best	8	5.3	5.3	46.7
	Good	33	22.0	22.0	68.7
	Bad	47	31.3	31.3	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

4.2.4 Opinion of Mengistu Hailemariam's rule

When Tigrayan educated elites were asked what they thought about Mengistu Hailemariam, Meles Zenawi's predecessor, 76% of the same elites responded bad and 16% of them declined to comment or preferred not to say. Thirty-nine percent of the Oromo respondents rated Mengistu

Hailemariam's rule as the best. Of the Oromo educated elites, 36.7% responded that Mengistu Hailemariam's rule was bad and 26% of them preferred not to say. Over 66% of Amhara expressed their approval for Mengistu Hailemariam's rule – see Tables 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3.

Table 4.1: Opinion of Mengistu Hailemariam's rule – Tigrayan respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Prefer not to say	8	16.0	16.0	16.0
	Excellent	1	2.0	2.0	18.0
	Good	3	6.0	6.0	24.0
	Bad	38	76.0	76.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.2: Opinion of Mengistu Hailemariam's rule – Oromo respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Prefer not to say	39	26.0	26.0	26.0
	Excellent	26	17.3	17.3	43.3
	Best	10	6.7	6.7	50.0
	Good	23	15.3	15.3	65.3
	Bad	52	34.7	34.7	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.3: Opinion of Mengistu Hailemariam's rule – Amhara respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Prefer not to say	17	11.3	11.3	11.3
Excellent	16	10.7	10.7	22.0
Best	19	12.7	12.7	34.7
Good	64	42.7	42.7	77.3
Bad	34	22.7	22.7	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

4.2.5 Opinion of Emperor Haile Selassie's rule

Tigrayan educated elites were asked the same question with regard to the rule of Emperor Haile Selassie – 62% of Tigrayan elites responded bad and 22% of them said prefer not to say. Over 70% of Amhara approved Emperor Haile Selassie's rule, while 48.7% of Oromo respondents said Haile Selassie's rule was bad, and 24.7% preferred not to say. Only 26.6% rated Ethiopia's last emperor as the best – see Tables 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3.

Table 5.1: Opinion of Haile Selassie's rule – Tigrayan respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**Prefer not to say**	11	22.0	22.0	22.0
	Best	1	2.0	2.0	24.0

	Good	7	14.0	14.0	38.0
	Bad	31	62.0	62.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 5.2: Opinion of Haile Selassie's rule – Amara respondents

	Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Prefer not to say	30	20.0	20.0	20.0
Excellent	23	15.3	15.3	35.3
Best	33	22.0	22.0	57.3
Good	50	33.3	33.3	90.7
Bad	14	9.3	9.3	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 5.3: Opinion of Haile Selassie's rule – Oromo respondents

		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	**Prefer not to say**	37	24.7	24.7	24.7
	Excellent	20	13.3	13.3	38.0
	Best	5	3.3	3.3	41.3
	Good	15	10.0	10.0	51.3
	Bad	73	48.7	48.7	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

4.3 Political (state formation and policy) factors

4.3.1 Political self-identification

For the demographic question, "How would you like to be identified?" 66% of the Oromo respondents preferred to be called "Oromo" rather than "Ethiopian." For the same question, 31% of the Oromo educated elites would like to be called "Ethiopian." During the study period, an Oromo prime minister was selected from the ruling party. This might be one of the reasons why over 31% of Oromo educated elites chose to be called "Ethiopian." Alternatively, Oromo nationalism may have reached its peak during the study period. Although the strength and weakness of their political position have changed from time to time, and although not all Oromo political parties agree with the notion, popular Oromo political parties such as the OLF have been promoting the establishment of an independent Oromo nation for a while (Merera, 2002: 104).

Seventy-two percent of the Tigrayan respondents would like to be called "Tigrayan" and 20% of them would like to be called "Ethiopian." It is interesting that the very ethnic group that claimed to be the foundation or birthplace of Ethiopia that ruled the nation for centuries and most recently governed the country through a multi-party coalition for over 27 years, declined to be called "Ethiopian" – see Tables 6.1, 6.2, and 6.3.

Table 6.1: Self-identification – Amhara respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Ethiopian	134	89.3	89.3	89.3
Amhara	9	6.0	6.0	95.3
Oromo	1	.7	.7	96.0
Other	1	.7	.7	96.7

Table 6.2: Self-identification – Oromo respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Ethiopian	47	31.3	31.3	31.3
Amhara	1	.7	.7	32.0
Oromo	99	66.0	66.0	98.0
Other	2	1.3	1.3	99.3
Prefer not to say	1	.7	.7	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 6.3: Self-identification – Tigrayan respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**Ethiopian**	10	20.0	20.0	20.0
	Oromo	1	2.0	2.0	22.0
	Tigrayan	36	72.0	72.0	94.0
	Prefer not to say	3	6.0	6.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 7.1: – Amhara respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	19	12.7	12.7	12.7
No	131	87.3	87.3	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 7.2: – Oromo respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**Yes**	8	5.3	5.3	5.3
	No	142	94.7	94.7	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 7.3: – Tigrayan respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**Yes**	6	12.0	12.0	12.0
	No	44	88.0	88.0	100.0

	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

4.3.2 Views on a future Ethiopia: Strong and united, or divided?

The Amhara and Oromo educated elites seem to be optimistic about the future of Ethiopia or do not want to see Ethiopia further divided in the future. Seventy percent of the Oromo and 70.7% of Amhara respondents to this survey question replied "No" – see Tables 8.1, 8.2, and 8.3, as well as Tables 9.1, 9.2, and 9.3.

Table 8.1: A united Ethiopia – Amhara respondents

	Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Yes	55	36.7	36.7	36.7
No	95	62.3	62.3	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 8.2: A united Ethiopia – Oromo respondents

		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	**Yes**	101	67.3	67.3	67.3
	No	49	32.7	32.7	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 8.3: A united Ethiopia – Tigrayan respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**Yes**	7	14.0	14.0	14.0
	No	43	86.0	86.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 9.1: A divided Ethiopia – Amhara respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	44	29.3	29.3	29.3
No	106	70.7	70.7	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 9.2: A divided Ethiopia – Oromo respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**Yes**	45	30.0	30.0	30.0
	No	105	70.0	70.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 9.3: A divided Ethiopia – Tigrayan respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**Yes**	38	76.0	76.0	76.0
	No	12	24.0	24.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

4.3.3 Ethiopians taking responsibility for their actions

Contrary to the above data, for the survey statement, "People take responsibility for their actions in Ethiopia," the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites responded almost unanimously that people do not take responsibility in Ethiopia. Of the Amhara respondents, 52.7% strongly disagreed, 27.3% disagreed, and in total, over 80% of the Amhara respondents disagreed. Over 80% of Oromo respondents disagreed and 90% of Tigrayan educated elites disagreed that people in Ethiopia take responsibility – see Tables 10.1, 10.2, and 10.3. As the data shows, respondents blamed each other for ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia and yet, they did not think that people take responsibility for their action. This is a dilemma that Ethiopia needs to work on. The data revealed the need for the educated elites in Ethiopia to look toward themselves before blaming each other.

Table 10.1: Ethiopians taking responsibility – Amhara respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	12	8.0	8.0	8.0
Agree	18	12.0	12.0	20.0

Disagree	79	52.7	52.7	72.7
Strongly disagree	41	27.3	27.3	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 10.2: Ethiopians taking responsibility – Oromo respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**Strongly agree**	9	6.0	6.0	6.0
	Agree	23	15.3	15.3	21.3
	Disagree	44	29.3	29.3	50.7
	Strongly disagree	74	49.3	49.3	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 10.3: Ethiopians taking responsibility – Tigrayan respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Agree	5	10.0	10.0	10.0
Disagree	14	28.0	28.0	38.0
Strongly disagree	31	62.0	62.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

4.3.4 Merit-based recognition

For the survey question, "Is recognition in Ethiopia merit-based?" the educated elites collectively agreed that there is no merit-based recognition in Ethiopia. Of the Tigrayan educated elite respondents, 84% said "No." For the same survey question, 85.3% of Oromo educated elite respondents said "No." Of the Amhara educated elites, 88.7% also agreed with their Tigrayan and Oromo counterparts – see Tables 11.1, 11.2, and 11.3.

Table 11.1: Merit-based recognition – Amhara respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	17	11.3	11.3	11.3
	No	133	88.7	88.7	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 11.2: Merit-based recognition – Oromo respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	22	14.7	14.7	14.7
	No	128	85.3	85.3	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 11.3: Merit-based recognition – Tigrayan respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent

Valid	**Yes**	8	16.0	16.0	16.0
	No	42	84.0	84.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

4.3.5 Does the Ethiopian government bureaucracy employ people fairly?

The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites do not believe that there is merit-based recognition in Ethiopia nor do they believe that the Ethiopian government bureaucracy employs people fairly. Of the Oromo, 90.7%, 93.3 % of Amhara, and 88% of Tigrayan respondents agreed that the Ethiopian government bureaucracy does not employ people fairly – see Tables 12.1, 12.2, and 12.3.

Table 12.1: Fair government employment practices – Amhara respondents

		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	**Yes**	10	6.7	6.7	6.7
	No	140	93.3	93.3	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 12.2: Fair government employment practices – Oromo respondents

	Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**

Valid	**Yes**	14	9.3	9.3	9.3
	No	136	90.7	90.7	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 12.3: Fair government employment practices – Tigrayan respondents

		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	**Yes**	6	12.0	12.0	12.0
	No	44	88.0	88.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

4.3.6 Who has political power in Ethiopia?

For the survey question, "Who has political power in Ethiopia?" 46% of Amhara, 70% of Tigrayans, and 63.3% of Oromo educated elites, said "the ruling party." However, for the survey question," If you were asked to choose the most important institution in Ethiopia, which one would you choose?" political parties are given the lowest percentile: 6.7% Amhara, 4% Tigrayans, and 5.3% Oromo – see Tables 13.1, 13.2, and 13.2.

Table 13.1: Who has political power – Amhara respondents

	Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
The ruling party	69	46.0	46.0	46.0

Regional parties	15	10.0	10.0	56.0
Well-connected individuals	7	4.7	4.7	60.7
Certain ethnic groups	47	31.3	31.3	92.0
No answer	12	8.0	8.0	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 13.2: Who has political power – Oromo respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
The ruling party	95	63.3	63.3	63.3
Regional parties	14	9.3	9.3	72.7
Well-connected individuals	13	8.7	8.7	81.3
Certain ethnic groups	12	8.0	8.0	89.3
No answer	16	10.7	10.7	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 13.3: Who has political power – Tigrayan respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**The ruling party**	35	70.0	70.0	70.0
	Regional parties	3	6.0	6.0	76.0

	Well-connected individuals	6	12.0	12.0	88.0
	Certain ethnic groups	2	4.0	4.0	92.0
	No answer	4	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

4.3.7 How the federal government runs the country

The following survey question responses support the above argument. For the question, "Are you happy with the way the federal government runs the country?" 94% of Tigrayan respondents, 90.7% of Amhara respondents, and 62% of Oromo respondents do not believe that the ruling party that runs the federal government is doing a good job. For the survey question, "Are you happy with the way regional states govern their regions?" 22% of Tigrayan respondents answered "Yes" and 22.3% of Oromo respondents expressed their approval. Only 9.3% of the Amhara respondents expressed satisfaction with the way regional leaders governed their states.

For the survey question, "Do you want to see strong local governments?" 62% of the Amhara, 84% of Tigray, and 67.3% of Oromo educated elites answered "Yes" – see Tables 14.1, 14.2, and 14.3.

Table 14.1: Satisfaction with how the country is run – Amhara respondents

	Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Yes	14	9.3	9.3	9.3
No	136	90.7	90.7	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 14.2: Satisfaction with how the country is run – Oromo respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	57	38.0	38.0	38.0
No	93	62.0	62.0	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 14.3: Satisfaction with how the country is run – Tigrayan respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**Yes**	3	6.0	6.0	6.0
	No	47	94.0	94.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

4.3.8 Preference of political parties

For the survey question, "Which political parties do you think will best promote your political interests?" 62% of Amhara, 40.7% of Oromo, and 28% of Tigrayan educated elites responded "none of them" – see Tables 15.1, 15.2, and 15.3. All the political parties listed in the survey question are the major political parties in the country, including the ruling party. Of the Tigrayan educated elites, 56% responded that the TPLF promotes their best interests.

Table 15.1: Political party preference – Amhara respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent

OPDO, now Oromo Prosperity Party (OPP)	1	.7	.7	.7
OLF	1	.7	.7	1.3
TPLF	1	.7	.7	2.0
Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), now Prosperity Party	20	13.3	13.3	15.3
Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM) (now Amhara Prosperity Party)	9	6.0	6.0	21.3
National Moment of Amhara (NMA)	25	16.7	16.7	38.0
None of them	93	62.0	62.0	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 15.2: Political party preference – Oromo respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
OPDO, now Oromo Prosperity Party (OPP)	42	28.0	28.0	28.0
OLF	34	22.7	22.7	50.7
Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF)	1	.7	.7	51.3
Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), now Prosperity Party	12	8.0	8.0	59.3
None of them	61	40.7	40.7	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 15.3: Political party preference – Tigrayan respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	OLF	2	4.0	4.0	4.0
	Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF)	28	56.0	56.0	60.0
	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), now Prosperity Party	2	4.0	4.0	64.0
	Baytona Tigray	4	8.0	8.0	72.0
	None of them	14	28.0	28.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

4.3.9 Civilian financial contribution to the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam

In response to the survey question, "Did you contribute money to the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam?" it emerged that over 90% of the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan respondents contributed money to the GERD, and what is more promising, is that over 85% of them contributed voluntarily – see Tables 16.1, 16.2, and 16.3.

Table 16.1: Financial contribution to GERD – Amhara respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	147	98.0	98.0	98.0
	No	3	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 16.2: Financial contribution to GERD – Oromo respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	140	93.3	93.3	93.3
	No	10	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 16.3: Financial contribution to GERD – Tigrayan respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	45	90.0	90.0	90.0
	No	5	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

4.3.10 Voluntary civilian contribrutions

The following survey question asked respondents who contributed, if they had done so voluntarily – see their responses in Tables 17.1, 17.2, and 17.3.

Table 17.1: Voluntary contribution to GERD – Amhara respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	135	90.0	90.0	90.0
	No	15	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 17.2: Voluntary contribution to GERD – Oromo respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	130	86.7	86.7	86.7
No	20	13.3	13.3	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 17.3: Voluntary contribution to GERD – Tigrayan respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	44	88.0	88.0	88.0
No	6	12.0	12.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

4.4 Cultural factors

4.4.1 Heroes in Ethiopian history

The tables below show that 82% of Tigrayan respondents believed that Meles Zenawi, who ruled Ethiopia from 1991-1995 until his death, is their hero. Similarly, 82% of the Amhara respondents stated that Emperor Menelik II is their hero. For the same question, 73% of Oromo respondents stated that General Tadesse Biru is their hero – see Tables 18.1, 18.2, and 18.3.

The survey results show that less than 15% of the respondents accept all the prominent political leaders as their leaders (Amhara and Oromo respondents 13%; and Tigrayan respondents 10%).

Table 18.1: Hero in Ethiopian history – Amhara respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Emperor Menelik II	123	82.0	82.0	82.0
Emperor Haile Selassie	7	4.7	4.7	86.7
Meles Zenawi	0	0	0	0
General Tadesse Biru	1	.7	.7	87.3
All of them	19	12.7	12.7	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 18.2: Hero in Ethiopian history – Oromo respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Emperor Menelik II	7	4.7	4.7	4.7
Emperor Haile Selassie	7	4.7	4.7	9.3

Meles Zenawi	6	4.0	4.0	13.3
General Tadesse Biru	110	73.3	73.3	86.7
All of them	20	13.3	13.3	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 18.3: Hero in Ethiopian history – Tigrayan respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**Emperor Menelik II**	1	2.0	2.0	2.0
	Emperor Haile Selassie	1	2.0	2.0	4.0
	Meles Zenawi	41	82.0	82.0	86.0
	General Tadesse Biru	1	2.0	2.0	88.0
	All of them	5	10.0	10.0	98.0
	None of them	1	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

4.4.2 Ethiopians's mutual respect for each other

Tables 19.1, 19.2, and 19.3 show the responses to the question whether Ethiopians have respect for each other.

Table 19.1: Ethiopians have respect for each other – Amhara respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent

Strongly agree	14	9.3	9.3	9.3
Agree	43	28.7	28.7	38.0
Disagree	59	39.3	39.3	77.3
Strongly disagree	34	22.7	22.7	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 19.2: Ethiopians have respect for each other – Oromo respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	14	9.3	9.3	9.3
Agree	45	30.0	30.0	39.3
Disagree	25	16.7	16.7	56.0
Strongly disagree	66	44.0	44.0	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 19.3: Ethiopians have respect for each other – Tigrayan respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**Strongly agree**	1	2.0	2.0	2.0
	Agree	5	10.0	10.0	12.0
	Disagree	15	30.0	30.0	42.0

	Strongly disagree	29	58.0	58.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

4.4.3 Responses to musicians from other ethnic groups

Below are the Oromo responses to non-Oromo singers Teddy Afro and Abraham Gebremedhin – see Tables 20.1 and 20.2.

Table 20.1: Opinions of Teddy Afro's music – Oromo respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Prefer not to say	51	34.0	34.0	34.0
Excellent	43	28.7	28.7	62.7
Best	21	14.0	14.0	76.7
Good	24	16.0	16.0	92.7
Bad	11	7.3	7.3	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 20.2: Opinions of Abraham Gebremedhin's music – Oromo respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**Prefer not to say**	57	38.0	38.0	38.0
	Excellent	42	28.0	28.0	66.0
	Best	16	10.7	10.7	76.7
	Good	28	18.7	18.7	95.3
	Bad	7	4.7	4.7	100.0

	Total	150	100.0	100.0

Below are Amhara responses to the non-Amhara songs of Hachalu Hundessa and Abraham Gebremedhin – see Tables 21.1 and 21.2.

Table 21.1: Opinions of Hachalu Hundessa's music – Amhara respondents

	Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Prefer not to say	77	51.3	51.3	51.3
Excellent	14	9.3	9.3	60.7
Best	20	13.3	13.3	74.0
Good	34	22.7	22.7	96.7
Bad	5	3.3	3.3	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 21.2: Opinions about Abraham Gebremedhin's music – Amhara respondents

	Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Prefer not to say	75	50.0	50.0	50.0
Excellent	22	14.7	14.7	64.7
Best	19	12.7	12.7	77.3

Good	32	21.3	21.3	98.7
Bad	2	1.3	1.3	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Below are Tigrayan responses to the non-Tigrayan songs of Hachalu Hundessa and Teddy Afro – see Tables 22.1 and 22.2.

Table 22.1: Opinions of Hachalu Hundessa's music – Tigrayan respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**Prefer not to say**	17	34.0	34.0	34.0
	Excellent	16	32.0	32.0	66.0
	Best	5	10.0	10.0	76.0
	Good	9	18.0	18.0	94.0
	Bad	3	6.0	6.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 22.2: Opinions about Teddy Afro's music – Tigrayan respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**Prefer not to say**	16	32.0	32.0	32.0

	Excellent	6	12.0	12.0	44.0
	Best	6	12.0	12.0	56.0
	Good	8	16.0	16.0	72.0
	Bad	14	28.0	28.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

4.4.4 Pride in Ethiopian symbols, culture, and traditions

Respondents were asked to name one thing that makes them proud about their country – see Tables 23.1, 23.2, and 23.3 for their responses.

Table 23.1: One thing that makes you proud about Ethiopia – Amhara respondents

	Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
The national flag	76	50.7	50.7	50.7
The music	2	1.3	1.3	52.0
The food	5	3.3	3.3	55.3
The traditional clothes	7	4.7	4.7	60.0
All of them	24	16.0	16.0	76.0
Prefer not to say	26	17.3	17.3	93.3
Other	10	6.7	6.7	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 23.2: One thing that makes you proud about Ethiopia – Oromo respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	The national flag	61	40.7	40.7	40.7
	The music	5	3.3	3.3	44.0
	The food	15	10.0	10.0	54.0
	The traditional clothes	19	12.7	12.7	66.7
	All of them	3	2.0	2.0	68.7
	Prefer not to say	35	23.3	23.3	92.0
	Other	12	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 23.3: One thing that makes you proud about Ethiopia – Tigrayan respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Prefer not to say	30	60.0	60.0	60.0
	The national flag	4	8.0	8.0	68.0
	The music	2	4.0	4.0	72.0
	The food	1	2.0	2.0	74.0
	The traditional clothes	3	6.0	6.0	80.0

	All of them	2	4.0	4.0	84.0
	Other	8	16.0	16.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

4.4.5 Status of Amharic language in schools

Language is one of the contentious issues among the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayans. Seventy-six percent of the Amhara educated elites who responded to the survey believe that Amharic should be the one language taught in all schools in Ethiopia, whereas 70% of the Tigrayans responded that Amharic should not be taught in all schools in Ethiopia. Seventy-five percent of the Oromo educated elites agree with the Tigrayan respondents that it should not be taught in all schools in Ethiopia – see Tables 24.1, 24.2, and 24.3.

Table 24.1: Should Amharic language be compulsory in all Ethiopian schools – Amhara respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	114	76.0	76.0	76.0
No	36	24.0	24.0	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 24.2: Should Amharic language be compulsory in all Ethiopian schools – Oromo respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	38	25.3	25.3	25.3

No	112	74.7	74.7	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 24.3: Should Amharic language be compulsory in all Ethiopian schools – Tigrayan respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	15	30.0	30.0	30.0
No	35	70.0	70.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

4.4.6 Importance of other languages in Ethiopian government

In another related survey question, "How important is it to have several official languages in Ethiopia's government?" 40% of Tigrayan respondents say it is extremely important, 38% say it is very important, and 10% say it is important – see Tables 25.1, 25.2, and 25.3. In general, 88% of them agreed that it is necessary to have several official languages in Ethiopia. Sixty-seven percent of Amhara educated elites also agreed on the importance of having several official languages. Ninety-one percent of Oromo respondents emphasized the importance of having several official languages in Ethiopia's government.

The survey respondents substantially agreed to have several official languages as a solution to the language challenges in Ethiopia. Thirty-three percent of the Amhara educated elites do not believe in having several official languages in Ethiopia.

Table 25.1: Importance of several official languages in Ethiopia's government – Amhara respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No comment	11	7.3	7.3	7.3
Extremely important	16	10.7	10.7	18.0
Very important	36	24.0	24.0	42.0
Important	48	32.0	32.0	74.0
Not important	39	26.0	26.0	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 25.2: Importance of several official languages in Ethiopia's government – Oromo respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No comment	7	4.7	4.7	4.7
Extremely important	107	71.3	71.3	76.0
Very important	19	12.7	12.7	88.7
Important	11	7.3	7.3	96.0
Not important	6	4.0	4.0	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 25.3: Importance of several official languages in Ethiopia's government – Tigrayan respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No comment	6	12.0	12.0	12.0
Extremely important	20	40.0	40.0	52.0
Very important	19	38.0	38.0	90.0
Important	5	10.0	10.0	100.0
Not important	0	0.0	0.0	00.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

4.4.7 Experience of corporal punishment at home or in school

For the survey question "Have you ever faced corporal punishment at home or in school?" 40.7% of Amhara, 60% of Oromo, and 58% of Tigrayan educated elites answered "Yes" – see Tables 26.1, 26.2, and 26.3

Table 26.1: Experience of corporal punishment at home or in school – Amhara respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Prefer not to say	11	7.3	7.3	7.3
Yes	61	40.7	40.7	48.0
No	78	52.0	52.0	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 26.2: Experience of corporal punishment at home or in school – Oromo respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Prefer not to say	13	8.7	8.7	8.7
Yes	90	60.0	60.0	68.7
No	47	31.3	31.3	100.0
Total	150	100	100	

Table 26.3: Experience of corporal punishment at home or in school – Tigrayan respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Prefer not to say	3	6.0	6.0	6.0
Yes	29	58.0	58.0	64.0
No	18	36.0	36.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

4.4.8 Parents' attitudes toward their children's decision to change their religion

For the survey question, "If your son/daughter wanted to change their religion, would you respect his/her decision?" 72% of Tigray's respondents, 58% of Amhara respondents, and 53% of Oromo respondents say "No" – see Tables 27.1, 27.2, and 27.3.

Table 27.1: Will parents respect their child's decision to change their religion – Amhara respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	21	42.0	42.0	42.0
No	29	58.0	58.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 27.2: Will parents respect their child's decision to change their religion – Oromo respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**Yes**	70	46.7	46.7	46.7
	No	80	53.3	53.3	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 27.3: Will parents respect their child's decision to change their religion – Tigrayan respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**Yes**	14	28.0	28.0	28.0
	No	36	72.0	72.0	100.0

	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

4.4.9 On being religious or spiritual

The survey results also reveal that the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites are religious. For the survey question, "Are you religious or spiritual?" 78% of Amhara's respondents, 77% of Oromo respondents, and 64% of Tigrayan respondents say "Yes" – see Tables 28.1, 28.2, and 28.3.

Table 28.1: Are you religious or spiritual – Amhara respondents

		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	**Yes**	117	78.0	78.0	78.0
	No	6	4.0	4.0	82.0
	Prefer not to say	27	18.0	18.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 28.2: Are you religious or spiritual – Oromo respondents

		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	**Yes**	115	76.7	76.7	76.7
	No	18	12.0	12.0	88.7
	Prefer not to say	17	11.3	11.3	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 28.3: Are you religious or spiritual – Tigrayan respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	32	64.0	64.0	64.0
	No	7	14.0	14.0	78.0
	Prefer not to say	11	22.0	22.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

4.5 Ethnicity

4.5.1 Quota system/affirmative action governing employment practices

In response to the question "Should there be a quota system/affirmative action in Ethiopia so that potential federal employees are hired on the basis of their ethnicity?" the responses, as captured in Tables 29.1, 29.2, and 29.3 varied as follows:

Table 29.1: Quota system/affirmative action in employment practices – Amhara respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Unsure	45	30.0	30.0	30.0
	Yes	33	22.0	22.0	52.0
	No	72	48.0	48.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 29.2: Quota system/affirmative action in employment practices – Oromo respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Unsure	32	21.3	21.3	21.3
Yes	39	26.0	26.0	47.3
No	79	52.7	52.7	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 29.3: Quota system/affirmative action in employment practices – Tigrayan respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**Unsure**	14	28.0	28.0	28.0
	Yes	23	46.0	46.0	74.0
	No	13	26.0	26.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

4.5.2 Cause of ethnic conflict in Ethiopia

Perhaps that is the reason why 46% of the Amhara elites responded that it is hate that created the ethnic conflict in the country. In comparison, only 21.3% of the Amhara respondents think that economic interests are the cause of ethnic conflict in the country. Forty-six percent of the Oromo educated elites believe that it is economic interests that initiated ethnic conflict in Ethiopia. Only 16% of them think that it was hate that caused the ethnic conflict in the country – see Tables 30.1, 30.2, and 30.3.

Table 30.1: Cause of internal ethnic conflict – Amhara respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Greed	17	11.3	11.3	11.3
Economic interest	32	21.3	21.3	32.7
Hate	69	46.0	46.0	78.7
Prefer not to say	8	5.3	5.3	84.0
Other	24	16.0	16.0	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 30.2: Cause of internal ethnic conflict – Oromo respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**Greed**	20	13.3	13.3	13.3
	Economic interest	69	46.0	46.0	59.3
	Hate	24	16.0	16.0	75.3
	Prefer no to say	19	12.7	12.7	88.0
	Other	18	12.0	12.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 30.3: Cause of internal ethnic conflict – Tigrayan respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**Greed**	4	8.0	8.0	8.0
	Economic interest	6	12.0	12.0	20.0
	Hate	29	58.0	58.0	78.0
	Prefer no to say	4	8.0	8.0	86.0
	Other	7	14.0	14.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

4.5.3 Rewards for standing up for ethnic cause vs education and experience

The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites seem to agree on some of the important norms that may bring sustainability and lead the country in the right direction when it comes to nation-building. Sixty-two percent of the Amhara, 96% of Oromo, and 44% of Tigrayan educated elites said "No" to the survey question, "Should someone be rewarded because they stood up for their ethnic cause rather than their education and experience?" – see Tables 31.1, 31.2, and 31.3.

Table 31.1: Rewards for defence of ethnic cause rather than education and experience – Amhara respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	35	23.3	23.3	23.3

No	93	62.0	62.0	85.3
No answer	22	14.7	14.7	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 31.2: Rewards for defence of ethnic cause rather than education and experience – Oromo respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**Yes**	25	16.7	16.7	16.7
	No	96	64.0	64.0	80.7
	No answer	29	19.3	19.3	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 31.3: Rewards for defence of ethnic cause rather than education and experience – Tigrayan respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**Yes**	18	36.0	36.0	36.0
	No	22	44.0	44.0	80.0
	No answer	10	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

4.5.4 Ethnic conflicts are the result of lack of negotiation/compromise

Most educated elites of Amhara, Oromia, and Tigray agreed that there are many ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia because people do not negotiate/compromise. Over 65% of Amhara, 72% of Oromo and 76% of Tigrayan respondents agreed that "there are many ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia because people do not negotiate/compromise" – see Tables 32.1, 32.2, and 32.3.

Table 32.1: Ethnic conflicts due to lack of negotiation/compromise – Amhara respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	44	29.3	29.3	29.3
Agree	54	36.0	36.0	65.3
Disagree	22	14.7	14.7	80.0
Strongly disagree	30	20.0	20.0	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 32.2: Ethnic conflicts due to lack of negotiation/compromise – Oromo respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	82	54.7	54.7	54.7
Agree	26	17.3	17.3	72.0
Disagree	22	14.7	14.7	86.7
Strongly disagree	20	13.3	13.3	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 32.3: Ethnic conflicts due to lack of negotiation/compromise – Tigrayan respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	28	56.0	56.0	56.0
Agree	10	20.0	20.0	76.0
Disagree	5	10.0	10.0	86.0
Strongly disagree	7	14.0	14.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

4.5.5 Instigators of ethnic conflict

For the survey question, "Who instigates ethnic conflict in Ethiopia?" 50.7% of Amhara respondents, 39% of Oromo, and 42% of Tigrayan respondents admitted that it is the elites that instigate ethnic conflict in Ethiopia – see Tables 33.1, 33.2, and 33.3.

Table 33.1: Instigators of ethnic conflict – Amhara respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Amhara rulers	1	.7	.7	.7
TPLF	28	18.7	18.7	19.3
Poor governance	29	19.3	19.3	38.7
The ethnic federal system	74	49.3	49.3	88.0
Backward economic system	3	2.0	2.0	90.0

The nation-building process	4	2.7	2.7	92.7
Other	11	7.3	7.3	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 33.2: Instigators of ethnic conflict – Oromo respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**Amhara rulers**	18	12.0	12.0	12.0
	TPLF	44	29.3	29.3	41.3
	Poor governance	33	22.0	22.0	63.3
	The ethnic federal system	20	13.3	13.3	76.7
	Backward economic system	4	2.7	2.7	79.3
	The nation-building process	19	12.7	12.7	92.0
	Other	12	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 33.3: Instigators of ethnic conflict – Tigrayan respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**Amhara rulers**	28	56.0	56.0	56.0

	Poor governance	11	22.0	22.0	78.0
	The ethnic federal system	3	6.0	6.0	84.0
	Backward economic system	1	2.0	2.0	86.0
	The nation-building process	5	10.0	10.0	96.0
	Other	2	4.0	4.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Chapter Five: Political culture of the Amhara, Oromo and Tigrayan elites

5.1 Introduction

The research conducted for this study corroborates Robert Putnam's (1993: 25) observation that "patterns of behavior cannot be significantly changed" over a period of time. The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political cultures have clearly established unambiguous patterns of behavior embedded in the Ethiopian political system since the time of the Zemene Mesafint. The concepts of political culture, together with Fanon's (1961) and Arendt's (1969) conceptualizations of political violence have been used as guiding principles in the analysis elaborated in this chapter. The analysis indicates that both power holders and power seekers employed Fanon's conceptualization of political violence rather than that of Arendt. However, as pointed out by Arendt, violence can neither be legitimate nor generate power (1969: 520). Since the time of the Zemene Mesafint, consecutive Ethiopian rulers have used different forms of political violence but have not been able to get legitimizing recognition from all ethnic groups, nor have they been able to generate power to lead the country to democracy, peace, and development.

The study reveals that the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites agreed on issues such as the inefficiency of government bureaucracy, the absence of negotiation and compromise in Ethiopian political culture(s), and on the value of national landmark projects.

The survey results and the interviews indicate that the Ethiopian nation-building process created a fault line among the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites. According to the survey results the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries of Ethiopian political history still greatly influence current political narratives. The current political rhetoric of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites directly emanates from conflicting interpretations of past political history. The period between the 16th and 19th centuries of Ethiopian political history was characterized by territorial expansion, severe political violence, and domination of one ethnic group by another. The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites pick elements from the past and interpret them in a way that promotes their current political agenda. Such interpretation leads to political instability and unabated conflict in the country.

The educated elites, however, disagreed on many important issues. There are divergent views on past political history and there is no common recognition of national heroes. The educated elites do not take responsibility for their failures in the political realm. They claim uniqueness and deny or ignore what all Ethiopians share in common. Each elite cares only about its own ethnic group and does not consider the challenges of other ethnic groups.

The chapter emphasizes in political culture concept and its manifestation among the Amhara, Oromo and Tigrayan elites.

5.2 The dominant elites' political culture

Political culture is a deliberate elite construct, according to Stephen Welch (1993: 121): "The imagining of the national community is not a spontaneous act of the whole population; it is to some extent initiated and controlled by certain sectors of the population, specifically the intellectual and political elite." As elaborated further by Maria Vazquez Semadeni (2010: 54), the construct can be a "set of discourses and symbolic practices by means of which both individuals and groups articulate their relationship to power." The construction of "symbolic practices" in political culture, if done positively, can bind peoples together, irrespective of their ethnic groups. The survey results indicated that the GERD, as a symbol of the "national community," has helped to bring the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites together.

The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites who responded to the survey mostly showed sharp polarization and disagreement on many issues, but there is a consensus of opinion when it comes to the GERD. Over 90% of the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan respondents financially contributed to the GERD, and what is more promising is that over 85% of them contributed voluntarily. It is a great hope for the country, as it may indicate the trajectory of nation-building. Mega development projects such as the GERD, which has been built with public funds, might lay a new foundation or strengthen existing nation-building tools and create a new political culture based on common economic advantages and shared destiny as an Ethiopian nation. The data may also reflect that despite much divergent rhetoric, the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites all care about Ethiopia.

The GERD appears to be one of the outstanding points of convergence among the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites. Biruk Terrefe (2022: 22), who wrote on the subject of

grand national projects, specifically Ethiopian ones, reminds us that "visuals of roads, railways and dams allow governments to entangle immediate political objectives with tangible imagined futures of modernity and renaissance." Policymakers and politicians hope that undertaking more such projects will continue the nation-building process and unite the disgruntled elites in Ethiopia. However, as Biruk (2020: 16) further suggests, what is needed, is "unyielding determinism to implement these grand plans toward inclusive and incremental planning."

The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites consistently agreed that the Ethiopian government is not fair. Of the Amhara, 93.3%, 90.7% of Oromo, and 88% of Tigrayan educated elites responded "No" to the survey question, "Does the Ethiopian government bureaucracy employ people fairly?" In a country where diverse ethnic groups exist, and only one ethnic power visibly and exclusively controls state power, how can there be fairness? Here again, in an ethnic federal system, when citizens do not believe they are being treated fairly and reasonably when applying to get a government job, they immediately associate their exclusion with their ethnic background. It gives them cause to believe that they should go back to their ethnic community to be treated fairly. Absence of fairness in the Ethiopian bureaucracy in particular, and in the entire government system in general, pushes the educated elites to polarization. When people seek fairness and justice within their ethnic community, they reject the ethnic group in power for being unfair. Perhaps the predicaments and Achilles heels of ethnic federalism are endless political instability and unhealthy political competition. If the competition were strictly economic, it might improve the economy, but when the competition is aimed at capturing political power over limited economic resources, then it is detrimental. The violent inter-ethnic competition for power in Ethiopia during the study period made it difficult to predict the level of negative outcome. Many people were killed, displaced, and harassed just because they belonged to one or another ethnic group, ethnic tension increased dramatically, and political instability became a norm in the country (Yohannes, 2021: 223).

For the survey question, "Is recognition in Ethiopia merit-based?" the educated elites collectively agreed that there is no merit-based recognition in Ethiopia. Of the Tigrayan educated elite respondents, 84% said "No," 85.3% of the Oromo educated elite respondents said "No," and 88.7% of the Amhara educated elites also agreed with their Tigrayan and Oromo counterparts. The current trend to fill the bureaucracy based on political loyalty disregards well-educated

people who are not party members or loyal to a certain political party. During the study period, there were 42 universities in Ethiopia. Except for Addis Ababa University, all university presidents and most university officials were from the region where the university is located. This means that no matter how qualified and competent you are, you cannot be the president of a particular regional university in Ethiopia unless you were born in that region and speak the regional language. Besides, the university boards of directors are composed of government officials and thus, the academic institutions are politicized and controlled by the government. Mengistu Hailu (2018: 46) in his article, "Models of Higher Education Governance: Rethinking the Ethiopian Experience" confirms that "Academic officers are appointed, in fact, based on their affiliation to the local government and politics." This is an example of how ethnically-centered politics discourage merit-based competition among aspiring Ethiopians.

Over 80% of the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan respondents to the survey believe that in Ethiopia recognition is not based on merit. Similarly, the respondents stated that in Ethiopia there is no respect among or between people. The survey showed that major structural problems where absence of meritocracy means lack of government efficiency, and lack of respect means lack of understanding of each other, and in the extreme case, a breeding ground for conflict. The ethnic federal system exacerbated the already existing political cultures of competition for resources and political power based on ethnic origins.

The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites do not believe that there is merit-based recognition in Ethiopia nor do they believe that the Ethiopian government bureaucracy employs people fairly. More than 90% of Oromo, 93.3% of Amhara, and 88% of Tigrayan respondents agreed that the Ethiopian government bureaucracy does not employ people fairly.

People would like to believe that their government is treating them fairly, regardless of their social position, ethnicity, and place of birth. Otherwise, they will take undesirable actions; they may group against the system. Perhaps Ethiopia is afflicted by polarized ethnic politics because of the absence of meritocracy and fairness in the government. If there is no meritocracy, if there is no fairness in employing people, then how can Ethiopians trust the government? In a political culture of mistrust, according to Michael Ignatieff (1993: 9), when people do not trust the system, they will find trust elsewhere:

> In the fear and panic which swept the ruins of the Communist states, people began to ask: So who will protect me now? Faced with a situation of political and economic chaos, people wanted to know whom to trust, and whom to call their own. Ethnic nationalism provided an answer that was intuitively obvious: Only trust those of your own blood.

5.3 Absence of negotiated settlement

Most educated elites of Amhara, Oromia, and Tigray agreed that there are many ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia because people do not negotiate or compromise. Over 65% of Amhara, 72% of Oromo, and 76% of Tigrayan respondents agreed that "there are many ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia because people do not negotiate/compromise."

When one investigates the TPLF's political history, one can find a long-standing tradition of not negotiating but settling political differences violently (Dima, 2021; Lencho, 2021; Fasika, 2021; Pausewang and Aalen, 2002). Of the many cases that could be discussed, here are some of the major incidents. During its establishment, the TPLF invited TLF delegates to a meeting ostensibly for negotiations, then massacred them. In the 1980s, the EPRP army was forced into retreat by the military Derg regime and tried to establish a military base in Asimba. However, the EPRP had political differences with the TPLF and, as a result, its members were ambushed and killed in Tigray (Dima, 2021; Lencho, 2021; Fasika, 2021). In 1991, during the transitional period, the TPLF promised to conduct extensive dialogue with all political forces to create a new government but reneged on its promise; instead, it forcefully eliminated them one by one and by 1992 emerged as the only political force in power (ibid.). Even the OLF, which was one of the collaborators in the transitional period,[5] was eventually discarded. Its military wing was forced to disarm and was subsequently destroyed (Dima, 2021; Lencho, 2021; Fasika, 2021). In 2005, after the momentous general election, the opposing CUD won a substantial number of seats in parliament. However, the governing party, dominated by the TPLF, declared that it was the winner even before the national election board announced the winner (HRW, 2005). Following the much-contested election, the CUD declined to join parliament, as it felt that the election had been rigged. Even the international election observer and the European Union confirmed that the

[5] In July 1991, right after the TPLF seizure of power in Ethiopia following 17 years of guerrilla fighting, a conference was held to adopt a "Transitional Period Charter of Ethiopia" and officially establish a transitional government. The TPLF handpicked participants in the transitional conference. These participants eventually gained seats in the transitional parliament, ensuring that the TPLF was one of the parties represented in the transitional parliament.

election had not been free and fair (Pausewang and Aalen, 2002). Despite enormous pressure to acknowledge the oppositions' gains in the election, the TPLF-dominated party proceeded to take over parliament (ibid.). When the CUD threatened to organize a nationwide political demonstration, Meles Zenawi, the then prime minister, stated that his party would negotiate with the opposition about any issue they wished if they waited until the African Union's annual assembly ended without incident. The CUD and other opposition parties trusted the prime minister's word and canceled their scheduled nationwide demonstrations. Once the African Union's annual assembly was over, the prime minister rounded up and imprisoned all the opposition party members who had won the election but had declined to join the new parliament (Miheret, 2005).

Although registered opposition political parties that participated in the 2005 election had a constructive and progressive political agenda, the political party in power chose to intimidate and imprison the opposition, including the UDF leader, Ms Birtukan Mideqsa, who was imprisoned for life in 2009. Ethiopian society, having witnessed the brutality and authoritarian policies of consecutive rulers, has never expected that democracy and the rule of law will prevail in Ethiopia in the near future (Abbink, 2010: 3).

Such political drama and the violent history of the TPLF have made it difficult to develop trust between the TPLF and its opponents. In light of past political history, it has become impossible for opposing political parties to sit down and negotiate political issues. During the study period, lack of trust and an absence of sincere political negotiation were clearly apparent. The political culture of mistrust and the settling of political differences through violence rather than negotiation have been manifested time and time again.

The military Derg regime was brutal and openly dictatorial. The Derg leaders used to announce the names of those they killed in the state media, without due process of law and openly indicated whom they were going to kill next. During their time in power, the EPRDF/TPLF were equally brutal and killed their opponents; however, they did not openly admit to their actions. They tried to hide their criminal behavior and contrived false excuses for their extrajudicial killings (Pausewang and Aalen, 2002: 235).

Such accusations and counter-accusations, whether denied or confirmed, demonstrate that violence has become an integral part of the political cultures of Amhara, Oromia, and Tigray.

One of the reasons politicians do not often negotiate in Ethiopia is because of pride. In Ethiopia negotiation is viewed as a transaction between opponents, one (or more) of whom will win and the other(s) who will lose. The winners demand an unacceptable set of preconditions and accept what is considered as a defeat and humiliation from the other side. This political culture is highly prevalent in Amhara and Tigrayan political cultures (Levine, 1972: 1-2). People regard the party that accepts the negotiated terms as a failure and weak, and therefore do not show them any respect.

Amharas and Tigrayans regard the party that accepted the terms of the negotiation as defeated. The reason why such a political culture is predominant in Amhara and Tigray regions, is because their society is organized in a hierarchical structure (Teshale, 1995: 39). Those who live in these regions view politics as a spectrum from losers to winners. In a hierarchical society, its members are ranked at the top, middle, bottom or in-between. In such a structure, it is inconceivable that members from the highest echelons would sit and negotiate on equal terms with those of the lowest stratum.

Such a deeply-rooted hierarchical political culture makes it very difficult to negotiate to solve a specific political problem by means of discussion and compromise. As a result, parties in conflict tend to solve their problems with violence, which gives rise to backlash, thus engendering a cycle of violence and resulting in political instability and economic backwardness.

The Oromo social structure is egalitarian and inclusive in comparison with the Tigrayan and Amhara hierarchical political cultures, and accommodates the defeated party (Mekuria, 2011: 417). However, even in the case of the Oromo's egalitarian system, the defeated parties have fewer opportunities to gain a favorable outcome once they are defeated in battle and must accept what is given to them – that is, accept the terms given to them in the traditional system (Markakis, 2011: 37-38).

As discussed above, the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites agreed that consecutive Ethiopian governments have not acted ethically. There is no meritocracy, and politicians and

different power groups never negotiate or compromise to reach consensus and to rule the country peacefully. Rather than uniting in common cause to rectify the situation, the educated close ranks with their respective ethnic groups to demand fairness, peace, and recognition. Although the elites all deplore the absence of fair and efficient bureaucracy and a political system lacking negotiation and compromise, their reasoning for these deficiencies is divergent. This divergence reflects and demonstrates three patterns of behavior typical of the political cultures of the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites.

The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites agreed on a few important political issues but disagreed on many others. For the survey question," What is the saddest aspect for you in Ethiopia history?" 48.7% of the Amhara, 14% of Tigrayan, and 12% of Oromo educated elites answered that it is the continuous ethnic conflict. Here one can see that the Amhara educated elites are more concerned than others. Perhaps there are more Amharas living outside their region and indeed many ethnic Amharas were killed, displaced, and harassed – mostly in the Arba-Gugu area of Oromia region (Yohannes, 2021: 179). The elites are concerned by the continuous domination of one ethnic group by the other, the poverty of the country, as well as the political instability of the country. Elite consensus is indispensable to bring nation-building back on the right track. If there is no elite consensus, if the educated elites fail to agree on issues that require reasoning and empirical evidence, then who else is going to agree and create consensus?

The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites seemed to agree on some of the important norms that may bring sustainability and lead the country in the right direction when it comes to nation-building. More than 60% of the Amhara, 96% of Oromo, and 44% of Tigrayan educated elites said "No" to the survey question, "Should someone be rewarded because he/she stood up for his/her ethnic cause rather than his/her education and experience?" Such agreement among the elites gives hope that they see political issues independent of ethnicity. Here, one can observe that the Oromo educated elites are even more ambitious and positive about promoting an individual based on merit, rather than ethnicity. Why the Tigrayan elites are less enthusiastic in supporting meritocracy against ethnicity, might again be because during the data collection period, the Tigrayan educated elites were heavily affected by the war in Tigray, their relatives were fighting, people were dying, and they felt targeted for being Tigrayan. Nevertheless, the

majority of them support meritocracy and this is a positive trend in support of the nation-building process.

The survey results also show that, if the Ethiopian government were a meritocracy, the elites might be contented and develop trust in the system, and as a result there might be less political tension and ethnic conflict in the country. When the elites feel there is a relatively just system, a fair chance of promotion based on merit, they might not have reason to reject a political system that works for all. Most of all, there could be a stable political system and continuity in the nation-building process.

In Ethiopia, where there is strong ethnic sentiment, wherever and whenever there is no fairness, people may automatically believe that they are treated unfairly because of their ethnic origin. That is why ensuring that citizens believe that there is a semblance of fairness in the government bureaucracy is a necessary condition for the nation-building process. As Ignatieff (1993: 243) points out:

> The only reliable antidote to ethnic nationalism turns out to be civic nationalism, because the only guarantee that ethnic groups will live side by side in peace is shared loyalty to a state strong enough, fair enough, equitable enough to command their obedience.

One can assume that the current ethnic polarization may be the result of absence of fairness in the government bureaucracy, among other things. Absence of fairness may push people to seek a community where they imagine they will be treated fairly. In an ethnically diverse country like Ethiopia, whenever there is unfairness, people tend to find fairness in their own ethnic groups.

Although political culture changes over time, there are elements that do not change in the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political cultures. The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites think they can rule the country without meaningfully sharing power with other competing ethnic groups. There is also the view that the ethnic group in power can acquire legitimacy and bring peace and development by employing excessive political violence.

Accordingly, regimes change in Ethiopia, but the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites' views and attitudes appear to remain the same. It seems their ambition is to replace the previous suppressive regime's political elites but not to change the repressive political system. This was demonstrated when the Haile Selassie empire was violently toppled by the military junta. When

Haile Selassie was overthrown, indeed, there was radical change, from a monarchical system to a military junta; however, although the royal families were no longer in a governing position, the military junta was as repressive as the previous system. Then, the military junta was ousted by the TPLF, but the TPLF rule was as bad as the military rule. All of them were replaced violently and remained authoritarian, repressive, and anti-democratic. Hence, even if regimes change, in Ethiopia, the political culture, which is violent, repressive, and authoritarian, remains.

There was an invisible struggle for hegemonic power among the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites during the time of imperial rule and the military junta. This struggle became visible during the study period from 1991 to 2017. During the data collection period for this study, because of the war between the federal forces and the TPLF, the Tigrayan educated elite's aspirations for political hegemony, which under normal circumstances would not be shown, were exposed. The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayans have always hidden their true aspirations; but when there are serious conflicts, these hidden motives are revealed.

Eckstein (1988: 794-795) conceptualizes three types of change in political culture that may apply to Ethiopia: "pattern-maintaining change, social trauma and political transformation." In pattern-maintaining change, the change is in form rather than in content. In "social trauma," the change is "ritual conformity to the new experience." The political transformation change is resocialization (ibid.). The change happening in Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political cultures, according to Eckstein, seems to be "pattern-maintaining change" where the struggle for political hegemony and patterns of violence continue while the political system changes form. In Ethiopia, the form of government changed from a monarchy to a military junta; but the pattern of political violence and repressive rule has remained the same since the time of the Zemene Mesafint.

The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites' political cultures may bring transformation and maintain the unity of the country if the three elites are able to pause and reflect on these patterns and change, if for good. An ethnic group or a group of ethnic groups aspiring for political hegemony using political violence and repressive rule in the short term may sustain the country without bringing significant change in the socio-economic condition of the country. To the extreme case, such cycle may dismantle the country once and for all.

The Amhara have always been pro-unity for various reasons; one of the major reasons is that there are many ethnic Amhara living outside their region. They left their region during the Menelik II expansion to the southern and western parts of current Ethiopia to settle permanently in the newly annexed regions (Merera, 2002: 174). From 1983 to 1985 there was severe famine in Ethiopia, particularly in the Amhara and Tigray regions. The military government's solution was to introduce a resettlement program: it was a forced resettling of the drought-affected people from the northern regions to the current Oromia and Benshangul Gumuz regions[6] (Pankhurst, 1992: 232).

For a long period of time, the OLF, one of the popular political parties in Oromia regions, promoted the establishment of an independent state called "Oromia." The OLF believed that the Oromo people suffered under the political domination of the "Abyssinian Empire" and were subjected to a system of "colonialism." The OLF rhetoric posed a serious danger to national unity (Merera, 2002: 123). This study shows that the Oromo educated elites still support the OLF; however, the OLF has been weakened and over the years has split into many factions (ibid.). Nevertheless, the fact that 70% of the Oromo educated elites stood against separation may signal a big change of heart and could be a new beginning for the country's unity and nation-building process. Whether such a change of mind on the part of the Oromo educated elite is the result of the election of an Oromo prime minister or not, only time will tell.

The Tigrayan educated elites made it abundantly clear that they are very dissatisfied with the current political setup and would like to see it changed. In response to the survey question, "What one thing makes you proud about Ethiopia?" only 8% of them said the national flag, 4% the music, 2% the food, 6% the traditional clothes, 8% other, and 4% all of these. Interestingly, 60% of the Tigrayan educated elites preferred not to say. In comparison, the Amhara and Oromo educated elites expressed their pride over the national flag: Oromo 40.7% and Amhara 50.7%. In

[6] According to Richard Pankhurst (1992), between 1982 and 1986, the military regime in Ethiopia forcefully resettled over 1.5 million people mostly from the drought-affected regions of the north, which were Amhara and Tigrayan regions, and to the south, mostly to Oromia and Benishangul regions.

comparison with the Tigrayan educated elites, the Amhara and Oromo seem to be contented with the status quo. During the data collection period, the TPLF was losing power and the Oromo and Amhara appeared to be gaining political power after a long struggle against TPLF rule. The TPLF had been in power for over 27 years and controlled almost all government offices and the entire state apparatus, either directly through its members or indirectly through its loyal supporters. In fact, it was during the TPLF regime that the national flag was redesigned to include a star in the centre, representing unity and equality. Here again, the data proves that it is only when an ethnic group dominates politics in Ethiopia, that it admires and embraces the country's symbols, such as its national flag. Perhaps it indicates a zero-sum game. That is to say, when my ethnic group is in power, I embrace everything the nation has to offer, but if my ethnic group is not in power, I reject everything that the nation has to offer. The data may also indicate that the nation-building process is either going in the wrong direction or is seriously challenged. Why does one ethnic group feel at home when in power and feel alienated when not in power? Ethiopian political history has shown that the Amhara and Tigrayans have worked together as junior and senior partners. However, the Tigrayans have never accepted their junior partnership and always waited for an opportunity to express their resentment (Teshale, 1995: 174-175). The killing of King Iyoas by the Tigrayan Ras Michael Sehul in 1769 heralded the era of princes (Zemene Mesafint), a long period of political instability, and lack of central government in Ethiopia. The 1943 Woyane rebellion, also known as the Raya Azebo rebellion, is an instance where the Tigrayans fought for political hegemony.

In *The Civic Culture*, Almond and Verba (1983: 47-48) make it clear that national identity is the central element of political culture. Brian Girvin (1989: 34) identifies three levels of political culture: a macro-level, a meso-level and a micro-level. He views the macro-level, consisting of a "core" of national identity, as indispensable in national unity. According to Maria Vazquez Semadeni's (2010) concept of political culture, "discourses and symbolic practices" must be carefully and deliberately constructed in order to mold national unity. The national flag, music, food, traditional clothes, and similar national symbols are representations of the national identity. These and other similar cultural signifiers should be "carefully and deliberately" propagated so that they all contribute to "the imagining of the national community." Such national symbols should not be used as propaganda by members of an ethnic group when its leaders are in power,

nor should they be rejected when the leaders are in opposition. Clearly, there is work to be done in Ethiopia's nation-building to bring it to the point where common cultural signifiers are accepted by all ethnic groups.

5.4 The zero-sum game

The zero-sum game is a fundamental problem in political culture and structures. In Ethiopia when one group is in power, it retains every privilege, and all the resources of the state will be under its command. Political dissent is not accommodated, and any opposition will be forcefully eliminated. To access state resources and privileges, one has to be a member of the group or show complete obedience and loyalty to the group's leaders. In this scenario, an individual is forced to either disregard their true political inclinations or revolt against the political system. Those who choose to access power by hiding their ethnicity and collaborating with the political group in power are generally considered as traitors in the eyes of their ethnic community. Those who revolt against the system may infiltrate it for the purpose of sabotage. During the military regime, a number of Tigrayan elites who held important political positions in the military regime were later found to have been members of the TPLF who were sabotaging the military regime from within. When opposing forces succeed in overthrowing the political group in power, those who collaborated with the former regime will be punished harshly. Hence, for an Ethiopian, loyalty to one's ethnic origin is a stronger motivation than loyalty to the state. Such a political culture makes continuity in governance very difficult: whenever a new government is ushered into the Ethiopian political landscape, an attempt will be made to create a new state apparatus, while totally eliminating the old one. Once in power, the new (ethnic) governing body will exclusively maximize its members' benefits without sharing. The governing leadership will do its best to retain power, for once it loses political power, the governing elite will be physically eliminated, exiled, imprisoned, or left destitute. If we consider the recent political history of Ethiopia, we learn that the entire cabinet of Haile Selassie was killed, imprisoned, or exiled. The TPLF, after overthrowing the military regime, imprisoned, executed, or exiled the entire cabinet. The age-old Ethiopian defense forces were demobilized and the entire state apparatus was taken over by TPLF members and loyalists (Mesfin, 2017: 153).

When individuals believe that their ethnic group is in power, they feel secure and embrace the existing political system; but when their ethnic leaders are not in power, they stand in opposition.

This is a pattern of behavior embedded in the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political cultures. This was evident during the study period and throughout Ethiopia's long political history.

5.5 How history influences the perception of the elites in the present

This section analyzes elements of the political history of Ethiopia on which the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites disagree, the cause of their disagreement, and its implication for the development of their political cultures. It presents the discourses and practices of the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites, linking back to the concepts and theories of political culture, political violence, and neo-patrimonialism. Furthermore, it illustrates the narrative of each ethnic group, their nation-building efforts, and their claim to contributing to state-building. Moreover, it contextualizes the survey results based on the selected elites' interview responses.

The survey results and the interviews indicate that the Ethiopian nation-building process created a fault line among the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites. According to the survey results, the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries of Ethiopian political history still greatly influence current political narratives. The current political rhetoric of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites directly emanates from conflicting interpretations of past political history. The 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries of Ethiopian political history were characterized by territorial expansion, severe political violence, and domination of one ethnic group by another. The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites pick elements from the past and interpret them in a way that promotes their current political agenda. Such interpretation leads to political instability and unabated conflict in the country. However, the survey results and interviews also show not just sharp differences but also consensus, as presented in the preceding section.

The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites agreed strongly that the past – particularly the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries – currently matters. It is noteworthy that 94% of Tigrayans, 74% of Amhara, and 83.3% of Oromo agreed with the survey statement that "The political history of Ethiopia in the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries matters now." What does this signify? For Tigrayans, it is not just the 16th century but even the Axumite kingdom that matters now. Over the last 27 years, many Tigrayans have written that the glory of the Tigrayans was taken away by Amhara rulers. Aregawi Berhie (2009), one of the founders of the TPLF, maintained that the Tigrayan quest for nationalism is deep-rooted in the historical fact that the

central Ethiopian political power shifted to Amhara rulers through internal conspiracy and external interference. The Tigrayan rulers started to incite Tigrayan nationalism as they were pushed out from their central political positions. Many Tigrayans still believe that Ethiopia's central political power should move from Amhara to Tigrayan leadership (Aregawi, 2009: 45). What Aregawi wrote was fundamental in explaining Tigrayan political culture: because the Axumite civilization emerged in Tigray, because the Orthodox Church was introduced to Ethiopia in 327 AD when the Axumite King Ezana converted to Christianity, because Islam came to Ethiopia via Tigray – for these and other historical reasons, including the development of the Ge'ez alphabet, which Ethiopians embraced as their own, Tigrayans deserve to be rulers of Ethiopia. According to Aregawi, centralized power should not have been moved from Tigrayan to Amhara leaders. What Aregawi means by internal conspiracy, is that Tigrayan hegemonic power was taken unlawfully by Amhara rulers. However, there is no single incident where power transfer from one emperor or king in Ethiopia occurred peacefully or legally. According to the official chronicle of Emperor Yohannes IV, Tigray's last king was killed while fighting the Sudanese Dervish (Bahru, 2002: 140). However, after the ascendancy of the TPLF to power, many Tigrayan writers were adamant that he was not killed by the Sudanese Dervish but rather by Emperor Menelik II's spy (Gebrekidan, 2018: 63).

Nationalists are criticized for omitting the truth or skewing it to help their rhetoric. The Tigrayans are no different. The exact ethnic make-up of the Axumite civilization is not 100% clear as there is a likelihood that neighboring ethnic groups mixed together. Ignatieff (1993: 244-245) describes the distorting effect of nationalism:

> There was a bewildering insincerity and inauthenticity to nationalist rhetoric everywhere I went, as if the people who mouthed nationalist slogans were aware, somewhere inside, of the implausibility of their own words. Serbs who, in one breath, would tell you that all Croats were *Ustaša* beasts would, in the next, recall the happy days when they lived with them in peace. In this divided consciousness, the plane of abstract fantasy and the plane of direct experience were never allowed to intersect. Nationalism's chief function as a system of moral rhetoric is to ensure this compartmentalization and in so doing to deaden the conscience.

What Aregawi (2009) means by external interference is the arming of Emperor Menelik II by European powers, namely the British and the French. However, Emperor Yohannes IV emerged victorious because of the modern arms he received from General Napier after the evacuation of

the British Expedition, in return for helping the British soldiers against Emperor Tewodros II. During Yohannes IV's reign, he continued to accumulate large amounts of weaponry, which enabled him to subdue northern Wollo, Begemder, and Gojjam (Tekletsadik, 1990: 45). Claiming that one ethnic group deserves special status because of past glory is simply not logical and cannot bring peace, democracy, and development, as the TPLF claimed to have brought to Ethiopia. Tigrayans claiming political power in the existing Ethiopian political landscape because of the contribution of the Axumite civilization, is tantamount to Italians claiming European supremacy because of their historical heritage from the Roman Empire. "Political violence and mass brutalities result whenever nation and nation-building or nationality and nationalism do not align with state and state-building" (Courtney and Thomas, 2015: 181).

Tigrayan authors not only claim political power in the present Ethiopian government, they also engage in tarnishing the efforts and glory of past Amhara rulers. One of the glories of Menelik II's reign was his ability to galvanize many ethnic groups against the Italian Fascists and defeat the European power in the Battle of Adwa in Tigray region. Tigrayan authors, including Gebrekidan (2018: 66), asserted that it was the Tigrayan military leader, General Alula, also known as Ras Alula, who defeated the Italians and not Menelik II. However, the fact is that General Alula had only 3,000 soldiers as compared to the over 100,000 well-organized soldiers of Menelik II's army (Bahru, 1991: 76).

This type of ethnocentric narrative on the part of Tigrayan intellectuals is part of their political culture, but it is not limited to the Tigrayans. The Oromo educated elites also omit the fact that in the past the Oromo were involved in Ethiopian nation-building directly or indirectly. Maimire Mennasemay (2023), for instance, posits that the Oromo expansion in the 16th and 17th centuries contributed to Ethiopian nation-building, but the Oromo educated elites decline to mention such contributions as it does not support their claim of victimization.

Here, I would like to reintroduce a previous description of the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political cultures to support this point.

The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political cultures can be characterized as positioning themselves around the narrative of presenting the other side in a bad light to galvanize support from their respective ethnic groups. Raising past grievances is a common justification for

Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites to substantiate their claims and to use violence as an instrument for achieving their political objectives. Within the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political cultures, each party believes it is victimized and is not willing to see another perspective, making it difficult to reach a negotiated agreement when conflict arises. The political cultures also include fomenting and orchestrating conflict in the other ethnic groups to provide one's own ethnic group a fertile ground to rule.

The political cultures of the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray also involve the exhibition of political superiority at the expense of the other. Each political group claims to be better than the other in terms of its statesmanship and manner of governance, often by referring to examples from history. By disseminating a narrative of superior leadership, a group justifies its claim to rule the country and to occupy a better position in the political structure. Such discourse creates heroes and villains, or winners and losers, and victims.

The unsubstantiated and broadly generalized claims and counter-claims are aimed at maintaining the status quo, while also dehumanizing and belittling the other ethnic groups. Such a polarizing discourse creates anger and hatred, resistance, and dissent, and leads to political instability.

When the Oromo educated elites claim that the political history of Ethiopia in the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries currently matters, what they mean is that they were subjugated by Tigrayan and Amhara rulers during the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. According to Sissay (2022: 271-272), ethnic cleansing was conducted against the Raya Oromos during Emperor Yohannes IV's rule. Sissay (2022) adds that the Muslim Oromos were forcibly converted to Christianity. In 1878, Yohannes IV convened a council of the church at Borumeda in Wollo. There he told all Christians and Muslims to support the *Tewahido* doctrine, in which he himself believed and threatened to banish those who refused to obey. The Borumeda Council was not just a forcible conversion of Oromo Muslims to Christianity – all Amhara were forced to accept the Tigrayan *Kara Tewahido* Ethiopian Orthodox Church (ibid.), with sects such as the *Kibat* in Gojjam province and the *Tsega* in Gonder and Shewa regions banned. Luckily, it did not create an ecclesiastical split in the country at the time; however, the Amhara and Tigrayan political cultures retain a religious sectarian dimension.

Emperor Yohannes IV of Tigray was blamed by the Oromo for forcibly converting the Wollo Oromos from Islam to Christianity. According to Sissay (2022: 270), those who refused to convert to Christianity were mercilessly massacred by Emperor Yohannes IV's soldiers. In a similar vein, the Oromo blamed Emperor Menelik II for forcibly taking their ancestral lands and humiliating, subjugating, and colonizing them for over a century.

According to Teshale (1995: 37-38):

> The process of state centralization in the domain of Ge'ez civilization was intended by Kassa Hailu, later *Atse* (Emperor) Tewodros II, who put an end to the *Zemene Mesafint*, after defeating the Tigrayan notable Dejjazmach Wube at the Battle of Darasge on February 8, 1855. Dejjach Kassa Hailu was crowned *Atse* Tewodros II, supposedly based on a prophesy that a man with that name would reign over Ethiopia and return her to her former glory. Baharu Zewdie wrote: "Soon after the Battle of *Darasge*, he [Tewodros II] turned his attention to the south – to Wollo and Shewa. With that action, he brought an end to the northern focus of the *Zemene Mesafint*" (1991: 30). When we discuss how Kassa Hailu-Tewodros brought about the end of *Zemene Mesafint,* it is seldom noted that the struggle against the *Zemene Mesafint* was not just one of creating centralized power, but also that it was a struggle against the Oromo dominance at Debra Tabor, which was the epicenter of an Oromo arc of rule running throughout North-Western Wollo, Southern Gondar, Damot, and Gojjam.

In 2014, the ODP erected a statue called *Aanolee*, in Hetosa Arsi Zone of Oromia. The statue was meant to commemorate the "barbaric acts of the Menelik II's soldiers." After defeating the Wollo Oromo, Tulama, and other Oromo tribes and incorporating them into existing Ethiopian territory, Menelik II's army faced fierce resistance from the Arsi. According to Oromo narratives (Mekuria, 2011: 188-204) Menelik II's army aimed to terrorize and discourage the Arsi Oromo fighters by cutting off women's breasts.

Teshale (1995: 43) noted the defeat of Arsi Oromo as follows:

> The most fierce resistance of all was put up by the Arsi Oromo. Facing guns with spears and arrows, the Arsi stood up against Menelik for four years, 1882-86. In December 1883, Menelik himself barely managed to escape alive. The final assault on the Arsi Oromo was led by *Ras* Darge Sahle Selassie, Menelik II's paternal uncle. At the Battle of Azule, in September 1886, the Arsi Oromo were finally silenced. No wonder then that the Arsi Oromo came to be the most hated, the most feared, and the most despised in the whole country, while the Wallage Oromo were not only respected, but became part of the ruling elite though intermarriage with the royal family.

The Oromo authors wrote extensively how savagely and brutally the Amhara rulers dominated the Oromo. What they omitted or declined to mention, were historical incidents when the *Gadda* system was alive and active. According to Getachew Haile (2002) and Asmerom Legesse (1973), who studied the *Gadda* system in detail, each Luba[7] wages war: "All are trained in warfare, from the small to the big. For this reason, they destroy us and kill us" (Getachew, 2002: 210). Each Luba expanded Oromo territory and occupied land, destroying the lives of the defeated people and looting resources. Therefore, the Oromo cannot be differentiated from the Amhara and Tigrayans when carrying out violence against other ethnic groups. Violence is typical of the political cultures of the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayans where one ethnic group claims to be innocent while blaming the others.

To briefly revisit the characteristics and nature of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political violence, it involves the domination of one ethnic group over others or a combination of ethnic groups against another. The types of domination aimed at forcing an ethnic group into complete surrender include armed conflict, violating women, looting, land dispossession and property destruction, punitive taxation, cultural and linguistic repression, censorship and media control, disempowerment or elimination of targeted elites, slavery, and forced assimilation. When, over time, the victorious ethnic group weakens, subjugated ethnic groups will carry out their revenge.

The Amhara blame the Oromo, the Oromo blame the Amhara and Tigrayan leadership, and the Tigrayans blame the Amhara leadership. None of the groups criticize their own ethnic community or hold their leaders responsible for the misery, economic backwardness, and political instability of the country. Ethiopia is nothing without the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayans. For these three ethnic groups to live in peace and harmony, the unfair political competition, the desire to dominate others, and the criminalization of other ethnic groups based on past history must stop. Tigrayans have the right to show their pride in past glory but without harming, underestimating, or belittling other ethnic groups. The Amhara have the right to take credit for their efforts in building the Ethiopian nation but without dehumanizing and insulting other ethnic groups. The Oromo should equally have the right to be proud of their identity and the *Gadda* system while documenting historical incidents with credible evidence and without

[7] "The meaning of *Luba* is those who are circumcised at the same time. One generation of Oromo men was circumcised together to lead the nation. The generation as army and its head had the same name. *Muddena, Kilole, Bifole,* and *Mesle* are some of the names of the *Luba*" (Getachew, 2002: 202-203).

exaggeration. The rhetoric and narratives of the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites' political cultures have always been about making others responsible for the challenges faced collectively or individually. Such political cultures will have to change in order to bring about political stability, democracy, and peace to the country. To change the narratives does not mean to hide or eliminate past history; rather, historical incidents should be studied by independent scholars and should remain in history books as lessons for future generations so that they do not repeat mistakes. The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites should work together to bring about democracy, economic development, political stability, and peace to present and future generations, rather than digging up past history and making it a bone of contention. If we read world history, we realize that there is no single country in the world without a reprehensible past history of shameful historical incidents. The Spanish inquisition, colonialism, fascism, nazism, racism, and apartheid are some of the curses and scars of world history. Many countries that faced such brutalities and miseries in the past, currently attempt to establish a peaceful and civilized lifestyle. The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites have an opportunity to learn from them.

The literature review and the survey question results showed that there are sharp differences among the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites about the political history of Ethiopia. To find out more about the sources of their disagreements, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with three professors who identified themselves as Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan. According to the Amhara professor, the Oromo and Tigrayan elites tarnish the accomplishments of his Amhara forefathers by writing a new history based on false narratives. Although Menelik II's effort to unite the country and his achievements in the Adwa victory are well known, the Tigrayan elites deny that. The Oromo elites want to demolish Menelik II's statue in Addis Ababa. The Amhara professor felt an obligation to set the facts straight, stating that the TPLF from its inception hated the Amhara people, perhaps because the founders of the TPLF were sons and daughters of collaborators during the Italo-Ethiopian war. The professor cited evidence that supported this statement. For instance, the father of Meles Zenawi was a collaborator with fascist Italy. The traitors were punished or humiliated during the Haile Selassie administration, and they might have borne some kind of personal grudge against the Amhara rulers. The professor added that this was an assumption because, apart from this political issue, there is no difference

between Amhara and Tigrayan peasants in terms of lifestyle or income. For example, there is no modern road or industrial infrastructure in Amhara; although the TPLF depict the Amhara people as if they have benefited more than other ethnic groups. If past Amhara rulers had unfairly ruled the country, then Amhara regions would be better off in terms of infrastructure or should have a well-developed economy, but this is not the case. In contrast, the TPLF built modern roads and industrial infrastructure in Tigray region over the past 27 years, while neglecting all the other regions. The TPLF created a false narrative to ensure that the Amhara people were hated by other ethnic groups and were made targets of hate speech and violence. During the TPLF administration, many Amhara were killed in Oromo and Southern regions, as a direct consequence of false TPLF narratives.

The TPLF originally borrowed their anti-Amhara discourse from fascist Italy. When the Italian military planned to invade Ethiopia, it realized that it was the Amharic-speaking people who organized and led Ethiopian patriots to resist the invading army; therefore, it targeted Amharic-speaking people as its number one enemy. The Italians divided Ethiopians according to language and bribed local chiefs to rise up against Amhara-speaking leaders. They bribed Tigrayans, Oromo, and other tribal chiefs of the time. For fascist Italy, isolating the Amhara was a war strategy; for the TPLF and others who wanted to weaken Ethiopia, it was a tactic to achieve hegemony. Before 1991, most Tigrayans identified themselves as being from Adwa, Shire, Temben, etc.; it was rare to find Ethiopians who identified themselves as Tigrayan. The Oromo also used to identify themselves as being from Wolega, Ambo, Bale, Harari, etc. It was no different for the Amharic-speaking people. It was not natural to identify oneself with one's ethnic group rather than with one's locality or village. This artificial distinction was created by the fascists and adopted by the TPLF to fulfill its hegemonic ambition. Following the fascist Italian system of "divide-and-conquer," attacking the Amharic-speaking people, the Eritrean separatists, and the Somali irredentists, the TPLF and the OLF used the same discourse. They equated those who stood for Ethiopian unity, independence, and territorial integrity with the Amhara. The TPLF classified the predominantly Amhara-speaking provinces as Amhara, the predominantly Tigrigna-speaking provinces as Tigray, and the predominantly Oromo-speaking provinces as Oromo. That was the biggest mistake committed by the TPLF, because as the

demonization, harassment, and attacks reached their peak, the Amharic-speaking elites came together and created an Amhara ethnic political party.

In his book *Empire and Revolution in Ethiopia: A New perspective*, Worku Gebeyehu (2018: 268) reveals interesting information about the introduction of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia. Worku states that the US government, under the policy of containment known as the Truman Doctrine, which sought to stop the expansion of communism worldwide, designed a policy of dividing Ethiopia along ethnic lines and "the 1995 Ethiopian Constitution of Ethnic Federalism marks the conclusion of the (US) project."

Furthermore, Worku (2018: 266) elaborates:

> The idea was first formulated by the NSA in 1972, from the then Henry Kissinger, as a top-secret memo to the President of the United States. It sadly reported that there was no other way of keeping the Horn of Africa safe for the US, except by using methods of ethnic, religious, linguistic, and racial conflicts among the countries and peoples of the region, primarily countries like Ethiopia, to keep them preoccupied.

The Amhara forefathers worked hard to unite the country, but their efforts and achievements have been minimized by TPLF rhetoric. Apart from that, the Amhara and Tigrayan people lived as good neighbors for centuries. Tigrayans and Amhara intermarried, and they shared many cultural elements. The majority of Amhara and Tigrayans are followers of Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity. The priests in both regions speak the same language, Ge'ez. In the fertile regions of Raya, Wolkayit, and Humera, Amhara and Tigrayans lived for ages side by side, respecting each other, speaking both languages. Historians have enough evidence to show that these agriculturally fertile regions were administered by Amhara princes for thousands of years. The TPLF was determined to break such age-old cultural bridges. In 1991, the party annexed Raya, Wolkayit, and Humera by force, under Tigrayan administration. The Amhara people in Humera were harassed and dispossessed; thousands of them were evicted from their ancestral land. Every year thousands of Tigrayans migrated to Humera as daily laborers during the sesame harvest season. Gradually they started settling there and at first lived in harmony with the local Amhara. Since all inhabitants were Ethiopian, there was no problem; but then, compelled by TPLF policy, the settlers evicted the Amhara, who originally owned the area, and confiscated their land. Many

native Wolkayite and Humera residents were killed or exiled. It was a shocking and tragic part of history that the Amhara elites need to bring to light.

The Amhara professor then turned his attention to the Oromo. He said that the Oromo and Amhara also lived side by side for centuries; but again, because of false narratives from the TPLF, the Oromo parties attacked many Amhara ethnic communities in Oromia and the southern regions.

The TPLF incorporated an article in the 1995 Constitution that stated that the Oromo regional state had a special interest in Addis Ababa. This article is ambiguous and open to contention. People from all parts of the country moved to Addis Ababa. It is the capital city of Ethiopia and associating this city with a particular region was a mistake. Historically, Addis Ababa was founded in 1886 by Empress Taytu, who was the wife of Emperor Menelik II. If Addis Ababa were to be claimed, it should be by her.

The 1995 Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE), Article 49, under "Capital City" – Sub-article 5 reads as follows:

> The special interest of the State of Oromia in Addis Ababa, regarding the provision of social services or the utilization of natural resources and other similar matters, as well as joint administrative matters arising from the location of Addis Ababa, within the State of Oromia, shall be respected. Particulars shall be determined by law (The Constitution of the FDRE, 1995: 18).

Ethiopia existed as a nation for more than 3,000 years, but the Oromo elites would like to reduce this to only 100 years. The Oromo elites do not recognize the long history of Ethiopia. They consider Ethiopian unity to be a form of colonialism. However, the Oromo are integral to Ethiopian political history. Starting from the 16th century, their population expanded into all parts of Ethiopia and took over many Amhara lands. Menelik II also expanded his rule into new territories and occupied traditionally Oromo and other ethnic groups' territories, while restoring to the Oromo some of the territories originally held by the Amhara. World history has shown that such expansions are a common pattern in nation-building not unique to Ethiopia.[8]

[8] Author's note: After the introduction of ethnic federalism in 1991, each ethnic group started administering its own region. As a result, Oromia became a regional state for the Oromo but is still home to millions of Amhara residents.

One of the great contributions of Ethiopian forefathers was the Amharic language. It is one of the very few languages in Africa that has its own alphabet and is well-developed. Ethiopians should be proud of it, rather than restricting it to one locality. The Oromo elites rejected the Amharic alphabet and language, which existed for thousands of years. In every part of Ethiopia, Amharic is spoken, but instead of nurturing such an indigenous language, ethnic communities, led by the TPLF, attacked the language, with the Oromo elites replacing the Amharic alphabet with the Latin alphabet. The Amharic language contributed immensely to the nation-building process of Ethiopia, but the TPLF would like to write a new history, which diminishes the Amhara contribution to this country. The TPLF and its affiliate parties have not recognized the past contribution of Amhara elites, they have not shown respect for Amhara notables, and they have not given credit to Ethiopian collective achievements. It is exactly here that the past has become a battleground. The TPLF wanted to dismantle Ethiopia and create an independent Tigray republic. To achieve such a scheme, the TPLF ensured that the Amhara were regarded as enemies of Ethiopia's nations and nationalities. They took over the fertile lands of Amhara, fabricated false narratives that tarnished past Amhara achievements, and redirected the nation-building process. This is where the clash arose and will continue until the TPLF and other radical elites review their troublesome stance.

The interviewer asked respondents what must be done for all nations and nationalities to live in peace in Ethiopia. The Amharan professor stated that the major problem of Ethiopia, is the 1995 Constitution. To replace the 1995 Constitution, in the professor's opinion, a presidential system should be introduced, where the president would have real power and be elected by all people in the country. Additionally, the president should have the power to appoint the prime minister and should be commander-in-chief of the army. He felt that a presidential system might unify Ethiopia, and that the present parliamentary system, where each region elects its representatives, may continue. According to the professor, a presidential system would ensure unity and continuity. Furthermore, in the professor's view, the present system of ethnic federalism will destroy Ethiopia and should be dismantled. While he believes that federalism is the best political structure for Ethiopia, he suggested that the federalism should be based on geography, economy, or some other factor, not ethnicity. He further suggested that the practice of organizing a political

party based on ethnicity, should be constitutionally banned. Only then will there be rule of law, democracy, a free press, and regular free and fair elections.

The Amharan professor further stated that there should be some kind of compromise between the Amhara and Oromo elites with regard to the national language. The two elites should discuss what is best for the country. The Amhara students should learn Affan Oromo, and the Oromo students should learn Amharic. He argued that if Oromo students used the Amharic alphabet instead of the Latin alphabet, it would create a sense of unity. He indicated that he personally respects the Oromo language but prefers the Amharic alphabet to the Latin one.

The Tigrayan professor was also asked why Ethiopian political history became the battleground for the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites.[9] He said it depended on who answered this question, as there are some misconceptions and misunderstandings about past political history. Ethiopian political history was written by the victors and mostly by Amhara historians. Hence, the national history was written as if it were only the Amhara who had built the country from scratch. The contribution of the other ethnic groups has been ignored or in some cases, depicted in an unacceptably degrading manner. The history of Ethiopia as written by the Amhara elites portrays the Amhara as royalty and other nations and nationalities as their subjects. One of the achievements of the 1995 Constitution was that nations and nationalities in Ethiopia were given the chance to write their own history. When the defeated nations and nationalities started to write their own history, they found many inconsistencies and inaccuracies. When they attempted to correct the record, there was stiff resistance from the Amhara elites. For instance, the Amhara elites wanted to believe that it was only Emperor Menelik II's military expedition that defeated fascist Italy, but the truth is that Ras Alula and other Tigrayan generals were already resisting the fascists; the Amhara elites either diminished the contribution of the Tigrayan generals or never mentioned them at all. Another example: Emperor Yohannes IV was killed by the Shewan Amhara conspiracy, but the Amhara elites claim that he was killed while fighting the Sudanese Dervish along the Ethiopian and Sudanese borders. The narrative of Menelik's colonization/expansion into southern and western Ethiopia is represented by Amhara historians as the reclaiming of past Amhara territories, but there is no evidence that supports this claim. The

[9] Author's note: The professor referred to Tigrayans as "Tegaru," but for consistency purposes, we use "Tigrayan" in this paper.

new territories and independent cultures conquered by Menelik II were different in many ways from those of the Amhara.

The immense contribution of Tigrayans to the development of Ethiopia was deliberately overlooked in Amhara versions of history. The Axumite civilization did not get appropriate credit. Tigrayans are responsible for the introduction of Christianity and Islam in Ethiopia and the origins of the Ge'ez language; but no Amhara historian mentions this, perhaps only as a footnote.

The interviewer asked why the Amhara elites deliberately manipulate history. The Tigrayan professor's view was that the Amhara elites did not want to face the truth, because it exposed past Amhara rulers' wrongdoings and even crimes. Because of past Amhara rulers, the Tigrayan people were exposed to poverty and maladministration, and their culture and languages were diminished and disregarded. The Amhara elites do not want to hear about such facts. Instead of correcting past misdeeds, they engage in tarnishing the reputation of the Tigrayan people.

The interviewer stated that in 1991, the TPLF was accused of annexing the fertile agricultural lands traditionally administered by the Amhara, and asked if the professor viewed it as one of the conflicting issues between the two neighboring regions.

The Tigrayan professor answered that Raya, Humera, and Wolkait belonged to the Tigray regions; their people speak Tigrigna and their culture was more closely related to the Tigrayans than to the Amhara. These fertile and resource-rich areas were taken over by Amhara administrators after the death of Emperor Yohannes IV but were left undeveloped and in poor condition. This is not a unique incident in Tigray; whatever was useful, was taken away by past Amhara rulers; not just in Tigray, but in all parts of Ethiopia.

The interviewer asked: What must be done to bring peace in Ethiopia? The professor answered that the 1995 Ethiopian Constitution was the solution to the current challenges, in particular Article 39. The Tigrayan people want their traditional territory returned by the Amhara radicals. Their right to self-determination should be respected, and they should be given a chance to say whether or not they want to remain in the federation. The Tigrayan people should be judged not based on their numbers but by their contribution to Ethiopian nation-building. Tigrayans have

not received the respect they deserve, despite their contributions. The professor blamed this on the Amhara elites.

The interviewer asked the professor whether, if Tigray had indeed contributed immensely to the current state of Ethiopia, he thought invoking Article 39 of the 1995 Constitution was helpful for the country's unity and peace. The professor in return questioned why the Tigrayans stayed in the federation if their contribution was not acknowledged and recognized properly. He stated that one of the reasons why the people who drafted the 1995 Constitution included Article 39, was for it to be used precisely at a time when a nation or regional state did not feel that its rights were being respected or its interests supported by the federation. If the Tigrayan people decided that their rights were not being respected in the federation, they had a constitutional right to secede. This did not mean that Tigray should separate from Ethiopia, but presently there is a constitutional right to self-determination in Ethiopia and secession is an option.

The Tigrayan professor was asked to explain the phrase, "if their contribution was not acknowledged and recognized properly." He emphasized that the Tigrayan people had built the country over centuries and their contributions should be considered, not their numbers. Most of the civilization Ethiopia claims to have today, is the result of Tigrayan endeavors. This does not mean that others did not contribute, only that the Tigrayan people need to get what they deserve in the federation.

The question presented to the Amhara and Tigrayan professors was presented to the Oromo professor as well: Does the political history of Ethiopia matter now? The Oromo professor responded that it always matters. What is currently going on, is the result of history. Had past Ethiopian rulers allowed the Oromo to exercise their culture, by now the Oromo would be talking about other issues. The Oromo people have been treated like second-class citizens. Nothing meaningful about the Oromo people has been written in Ethiopian history books. The Oromo heroes and heroines who contributed to Ethiopia's nation-building have not been recognized, as if they did not exist. Only a handful of individuals are mentioned here and there, as an appendix. The truth is that the Oromo people fought fascist Italy side by side with other ethnic groups and performed many heroic deeds, but this is not documented in Ethiopian history books.

The Oromo language, history, and culture have been considered backward, and the Amhara elites despise them. When Oromo intellectuals attempted to develop their language and culture, the Amhara elites not only discouraged them but also actively destroyed their efforts. General Taddesse Biru is a case in point. He tried to introduce a literacy campaign for the Oromo people, but the Haile Selassie government considered him a danger to the state. Many Oromo intellectuals were imprisoned or killed just because they attempted to help develop the Oromo culture. The past Amhara rulers thought that Amharic should be the lingua franca of Ethiopia and all other languages should be diminished or suppressed. Their assimilation policy was very harsh and punitive, to the extent that Oromos were forced to change their names. Additionally, Amhara administrators replaced Oromo region's place names. For example, Finfine was renamed, Addis Ababa, Bisheftu was renamed Debrezeit, Adama was renamed Nazareth, and so on. The objective of changing place names was to annex the land to Amhara territory. In the name of expanding its faith, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, accompanied by Menelik II's soldiers, took control of vast Oromo territories and destroyed the local belief system. The *Gadda* system, which was the Oromo indigenous administrative system, was destroyed and replaced by Amhara rule. That is why many Oromo intellectuals assert that past Amhara rule was equivalent to colonialism. The Amhara rulers expropriated natural resources, took all the Oromo fertile lands, and named the areas after themselves. This was all done in the name of Ethiopian unity. Under the guise of Ethiopian unity, the Amhara promoted Amhara interests without mentioning them per se. These are some of the historical issues that need to be corrected. As the Oromo and other ethnic groups have identified and unmasked the Amhara elite's tactics and strategy, Amhara nationalism is on the rise. If the Amhara elites are sincerely interested in democratizing the Ethiopian state, they will need to engage in discussions with the Oromo to conclude acceptable terms for all. Perhaps that is the only way to unify Ethiopia. In the current situation, one can no longer promote Amhara, Tigrayan, or Oromo interests under the guise of Ethiopian unity, as all nations and nationalities are safeguarding their own interests.

The Oromo professor continued to question Amhara motives, namely that the Amhara elites would like the Oromo people to accept the history of Menelik II as their own, but, as Menelik II and his soldiers had forced the Oromo people into servitude, why would the Oromo accept such a ruler as their own? Amhara versions of Ethiopian history portrayed Emperor Menelik II as a

"saint." However, the fact is that Menelik II and his soldiers destroyed the Oromo people and their culture during his territorial expansion. The Oromo elites refuse to accept the political history of Ethiopia, which is the history of Amhara kings and princes, which excludes other nations and nationalities, and which degrades and demonizes the Oromo. The professor emphasized that, if the Amhara elites were to acknowledge the existence of nations and nationalities in this country, if they were to acknowledge that the Oromo, like all other ethnic groups, have a history, language, and culture, then the Oromo people would not have any reason to fight with them. The Oromo people need respect and recognition, he said. Oromo natural resources have been exploited unfairly for centuries but should benefit the local people. The Oromo people should be able to control and manage their natural resources.

The Oromo professor noted that the Amhara elites do not want to recognize the special interest of Oromia in Addis Ababa, which is a constitutional right. Addis Ababa was called Finfine in Affan Oromo and it was Oromo land until Menelik II evicted the Oromo people. The Amhara gave it a different name and settled there. Thanks to the 1995 Constitution, at least one of the Oromo grievances was rectified constitutionally.

The interviewer asked what must be done to face the past and build the future. For the Oromo professor, the most important point was to acknowledge past mistakes and take corrective measures. It is true that such historical challenges exist all over the world, but Ethiopians need to be brave enough to confront past crimes and take remedial actions, such as to conduct transitional justice, to produce a revised history of Ethiopia where the Oromo people, their heroes and heroines, are properly acknowledged, and their culture is fittingly reflected. The Oromo people lived together with other nations and nationalities for centuries. If Ethiopia is to continue, the Oromo culture and language must be respected, and the current federation should be democratized. The Oromo do not want someone at the center to make decisions about their own political affairs. The current Ethiopian Constitution is not the problem; the problem is in its implementation. The TPLF did not implement the current constitution, it just showed the world – especially Western donors – that Ethiopia has a superior constitution that incorporates most articles of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). If the TPLF had implemented the 1995 Ethiopian Constitution, all the current challenges would not be happening.

The researcher asked the Oromo professor if the controversial Article 39 of the 1995 Constitution that allows nations and nationalities to stage self-determination, including secession, was helpful for the country's unity.

In reply, the professor queried, if there were democracy and freedom, and if all ethnic groups respected each other, why would a regional state choose to separate from the federation? It is known that the process to invoke Article 39 is long and very complex; a regional state would be in real difficulty to use the Article. If domination of one ethnic group by another were to end, and if there were justice, equality, recognition, and respect in Ethiopia, it would be "technically impossible" to invoke Article 39, according to the Oromo professor.

5.6 The collective memory of the Battle of Adwa – a tool in nation-building work

This section interrogates why the elites failed to use the Battle of Adwa as a nation-building tool.

On March 1, 1896, the Ethiopian army of professional soldiers and volunteer fighters from all parts of Ethiopia gathered in Adwa in present-day Tigray and defeated the invading army of fascist Italy. The victory became a symbol of freedom and independence, not just for Ethiopia but for all those African countries that were suffering under European colonial rule at the time. The entire Black race considered it a hope for liberty. Menelik II was the emperor at the time and he and his generals were responsible for organizing and leading the Ethiopian army. However, the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites, instead of viewing the landmark victory as an important advance in nation-building, try to claim the victory exclusively for their own ethnic community or hero. One of the Tigrayan authors, Gebrekidan (2018: 45), stated that it was one of Menelik II's generals, Ras Alula, who defeated the invading Italians. However, Ras Alula had only 3,000 soldiers as compared to the over 100,000 well-organized soldiers of Menelik II's army (Sissay, 2022: 134). By the same token, Oromo generals fought heroically but felt that they did not get the recognition they deserved. Lencho (2021), one of the founders of the OLF, lamented that out of the 12 generals who fought in Adwa, nine of them were Oromo generals and yet did not get the recognition they deserved. He added that had they received the recognition they deserved, it would not have been necessary to establish the OLF. In addition, the Oromo resented how Menelik II's army invaded Oromo lands, appointed Amhara administrators, and subjugated its people; therefore, they did not regard Menelik II with the same sentiment as the

Amhara (Mekuria, 2011: 231). The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites seem to engage in hair-splitting doctrine. When it comes to the victory at Adwa, the Amhara tend to claim the victory exclusively in the name of Menelik II. The Tigrayans would choose to discredit Menelik II's achievement, and the Oromo would like to be recognized for their role in the victory. Why do the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites decline to find a middle ground; why do they choose to polarize rather than cooperate? What is the advantage of polarizing rather than cooperating, and why choose to turn opportunity into challenges?

The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan understanding and experience of Ethiopian history and their attitudes and values associated with it indicate that they engage in the recreation of history to serve their specific aspirations for political hegemony. The recreation of a new history is intended to impose what Welch (1993) calls "a new boundary" between "we and they." According to Welch, "That a historical fact has a certain meaning in current politics does not mean … that all contemporaneous historical facts are equally well remembered …" (1993: 78). It is the strategy of the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites to revise history as a way to create a new national identity by selectively denying the heroic figures, landmark places, and pivotal events that built the nation – what Welch refers to as the "selective perception" of historical experiences. Indeed, "selective perception" has been seen in Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites'political cultures as a continuous pattern of behavior embedded in the political system they promote at different times in their history.

5.7 Absence of elite consensus

This section illustrates how the political culture of blaming others eventually led the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites to disagreement and divergence. It then explores best practices from around the world, such as transitional justice, to address the challenges.

Thomas Baylis (2012: 90-106) stresses that absence of elite consensus is detrimental to democratic consolidation, legitimacy, and political stability in general. The zero-sum game political cultures of the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayans cost the country so much. When in power, each of them ruled the country in the name of *Ethiopiawinet* (one Ethiopia), even though they are the only ethnic group in control of the state. One of the indications of the zero-sum game is that, whenever the status quo changes, or whenever one ethnic group is removed from

power – in almost all cases of Ethiopian political history regimes lose power under duress – they immediately start conspiring against those who have assumed power. The last 100 years of Ethiopian political history illustrates this point. Emperor Menelik II's rightful heir, Lej Eyasu, was forcibly removed by Lej Teferri, who was crowned as Emperor Haile Selassie. The emperor in turn was forcibly removed from power by the military junta; the military junta was removed by TPLF guerrilla fighters; and the TPLF was also replaced. Every time a regime changed, war happened, people died, and resources were destroyed. This vicious cycle is still happening. Because the TPLF lost power, Tigrayans now think that Ethiopia will soon collapse. In response to the survey question," Do you see Ethiopia further divided in the near future? 76% of the Tigrayan educated elites answered "Yes" (see Tables 8 and 9). Clearly, if the TPLF were in power, they would not respond the same way. The Amhara and Oromo educated elites this time round felt more Ethiopian than their Tigrayan counterparts. Only 29.3% of the Amhara and 30% of the Oromo educated elites thought that Ethiopia would soon undergo further division. The question here is, why does an ethnic group want to rule the country exclusively in the name of *Ethiopiawinet* without meaningfully and genuinely participating together with the other ethnic groups? When one ethnic group is in power and rules the country in the name of *Ethiopiawinet*, why can they not continue to live in harmony and in peace when another ethnic group takes power? Why is there always a violent political transition? These questions are critical, as they reveal the core of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites'political cultures. If the ethnic group in power, genuinely and in a meaningful manner shared power and jointly planned for future nation-building with other ethnic groups, such violent transitions might not happen and the animosity after losing power might be much lower than in the present circumstances. Each of the ethnic groups that ruled the country under the banner of *Ethiopiawinet*, think they are able to rule the country alone and they naively believe that the other ethnic groups will cooperate. However, this has never happened; rather, the ethnic group that has lost power will wait for opportunities for revenge (Mesfin, 1997: 45) and will continue to prolong the zero-sum game.

What can be done to break the vicious cycle of violence? Transitional justice seeks to redress systematic or massive violations of human rights. It includes a framework of judicial and non-judicial strategies that involve prosecuting perpetrators, establishing a truth commission, or any other mechanism that exposes past conflicts, grievances, repression, and injustice. The objectives

of transitional justice should be reconciliation, reparation, and institutional reform. Transitional justice preserves society's remembrance of victims, forgives those who can be forgiven through amnesty, and finds approaches to compensate those who were affected in the past (Teitel, 2000: 3-8).

According to Rajeev Bhargava (2000: 54), transitional justice may help to avoid repeating past horrors, prevent potential destruction, and restore the dignity of citizens victimized by atrocity. "Without a proper engagement with the past and the institutionalization of remembrance, societies are condemned to repeat, reenact, and relive the horror. Forgetting is not a good strategy for societies transiting to a minimally decent condition" (ibid.).

Transitional justice was first experimented with in South America in the 1980s and was globally accepted after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of South Africa in the 1990s. Many countries in the world went through transitional justice, including in Latin America – Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay, and in some of the African countries, namely South Africa, Sierra Leone, Liberia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Uganda, and Gambia. In most countries it worked. It did not work in some countries for various reasons, including heavy involvement of foreign influences, exclusion of relevant parties in all steps of the transitional justice process, including the initial stages, and disregard for the local context (Teitel, 2000: 6-7).

Since many countries mentioned above confronted past injustices using transitional justice as an instrument, it may be valuable to test it in Ethiopia while considering the local context and learning from other countries' best practices.

In Ethiopia, whenever a new regime came to power, it demonized the past and ousted most of the previous government officials in punitive and humiliating ways. In 1974 the Military Derg set up an "Inquiry Commission" to investigate Haile Selassie's former officials. The concept of transitional justice did not exist at that time and critics wrote that it was merely a public relations exercise. The officials were already incarcerated and were interviewed while in prison. The "Inquiry Commission" was about to establish the grounds for charging the former officials when 60 of the former top ministers and officials of the Haile Selassie government were executed overnight (Mesfin, 1997: 20-22).

In 1994, the TPLF appointed a "Special Prosecutor" to conduct the trial of former officials of the Military Derg. The trial was on a massive scale: the entire former leadership of the country was under prosecution for genocide and crimes against humanity. In 2004, over 2,000 of those who had been detained in 1991 in connection with the Derg regime still remained in prison; 33 died in jail. Mesfin (1997), among other critics of the TPLF regime, stated that the crimes committed under the Derg's rule were more or less repeated under the TPLF rule, and the TPLF continued the culture of impunity in Ethiopia. Therefore, the TPLF special prosecutor did not bring transitional justice, but rather continued the culture of impunity (ibid.).

To manage five centuries of injustice and human rights violations, it may be necessary to set up a transitional justice process like that of South Africa, but based on Ethiopian reality and political history. Contextualized, participatory and inclusive transitional justice may be a solution to long-standing enmity among the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites. The process of transitional justice should be conducted by an independent body and should consider international and local legal instruments.

Political willingness may be the most important factor in conducting transitional justice in Ethiopia. In most cases when the issue concerns government accountability or holding responsible some of the important actors in the government, the government tends to ignore the efforts. If the transitional justice process and its end result question some of the institutions in Ethiopian government, particularly the coercive institutions such as the government security forces, there may be less political willingness from the government's side. However, transitional justice may be the best instrument available to reduce ethnic tensions and the current ethnic polarization in Ethiopia.

Some ethnic groups may consider certain issues taboo, such as those involving prominent individuals, or controversial actions and activities at certain periods of time. If they are unwilling to address certain past issues, then the transitional justice process will face challenges. Hence, no subject should be taboo.

According to Leigh Payne, Tricia Olsen, and Andrew Reiter (2008: 2), "Despite the proliferation of mechanisms, country cases, and scholarship, we have found no study that examines the

success of transitional justice in achieving its democracy, peace, and human rights, and rule of law goals."

To know if a transitional justice process will work in Ethiopia, it has to be implemented and tested. There is no doubt about the presence of many questions and doubts as to whom to hold responsible because of the passage of time since the human rights abuses happened and the economic capability of the Ethiopian government to compensate victims. However, it may be a worthwhile endeavor. The transitional justice process may not immediately bring change, but will begin to heal Ethiopian society, as victims may speak out and perpetrators may ask for forgiveness or be prosecuted, depending on the gravity of their actions. Although Payne et al. (2008) are doubtful about its workability, a genuine transitional justice framework accompanied by political willingness may bring a way out for the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites who believe that the political history of Ethiopia matters and affects current politics.

5.8 Cultural factors influencing the perceptions of the elite

This section analyzes the views and opinions of the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites toward their own and others' ethnic languages, religions, heroes, and most popular singers, to show how they molded their political cultures. It also debates how the elites developed an authoritarian political culture and what it means to the stability, peace, and continuity of the country.

5.8.1 How political culture affects the language policy in Ethiopia

Language is one of the contentious issues among the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayans. Seventy-six percent of the Amhara educated elites who responded to the survey believe that Amharic should be the one language taught in all schools in Ethiopia, whereas 70% of the Tigrayans responded that Amharic should not be taught in all schools in Ethiopia. Seventy-five percent of the Oromo educated elites agree with the 70% of Tigrayan respondents that it should not be taught in all schools in Ethiopia.

The survey data clearly indicates how language is still a divisive subject. Amharic has been the official language of Ethiopia since the time of Emperor Haile Selassie's rule. Article 5 of the 1995 Ethiopian Constitution clearly states that "Amharic shall be the working language of the Federal Government" (1995: 78).

Language is fundamental to culture and can be used as a political instrument to achieve political objectives. In Ethiopia, until the present, the major employer in the country has always been the government and, as Amharic is the official language of the country, speaking Amharic is mandatory to procure a government job (Markakis, 2011: 13). Therefore, Amharic speakers can easily attain government jobs and prospects for promotion are foreseeable (Mekuria, 2011: 600-605).

One factor in the development of Oromo political culture revolves around language rights. As already noted, it was not just the Tigrayans who felt that Amharic was becoming dominant; the Oromo educated elites felt that way as well. Tigrigna and Amharic are similar to each other: both use the Sabean alphabet and Geʿez is the mother of both languages. For Amharic speakers it is not very difficult to understand Tigrigna and vice versa. The Oromo educated elites' choice to use the Latin alphabet clearly was not taken lightly by Amhara elites. As a compromise, many of them suggested that Affan Oromo be written using the Sabean alphabet (Baye, 1992: 27). However, the Oromo educated elites rejected this idea for practical reasons. For instance, Tilahun (1993) states that the Sabean alphabet has roughly 250 characters. It is too clumsy to adapt to Afan Oromo. Furthermore, the Sabean alphabet does not indicate vowel length and gemination and slows down a writer's speed, since each symbol that cannot be written cursively must be printed (1993: 37). The Amhara educated elites did not agree with the technical explanation and considered it a political decision by radical Oromo nationalists.

In another related survey question, "How important is it to have several official languages in Ethiopia's government?" 40% of Tigrayan respondents said it is extremely important, 38% said it is very important, and 10% said it is important. In general, 88% of them agreed that it is necessary to have several official languages in Ethiopia. Sixty-seven percent of Amhara educated elites also agreed on the importance of having several official languages. More than 90% of Oromo respondents emphasized the importance of having several official languages in Ethiopia's government.

The survey respondents substantially agreed to have several official languages as a solution to the language challenges in Ethiopia. Thirty-three percent of the Amhara educated elites do not believe in having several official languages in Ethiopia. It is not surprising that the Amhara

educated elites resist the idea of having several official languages, considering the comparative socio-economic advantages they have enjoyed since theirs gained exclusive official status.

The fact that a substantial number of the survey respondents agreed in giving several languages official status is indeed a feasible solution to address the issue of language in Ethiopia.

5.8.2 Common heroes

The survey results show that less than 15% of the respondents accept all the prominent political leaders as their leaders (Amhara and Oromo respondents 13%; Tigrayan respondents 10%).

The Amhara educated elites who responded to the survey not only completely declined to acknowledge that Meles Zenawi, who happened to be Tigrayan, is a hero of Ethiopia, but also 66% of them considered his rule as "bad" and 15.3% of them preferred not to say. The Tigrayan educated elites did not consider Haile Selassie, who is perceived to be Amhara, their hero either. When asked "What do you think of Emperor Haile Selassie's rule?" 62% of them considered Haile Selassie's rule as "bad" and 22% of them preferred not to say. In a similar vein, 48.7% of the Oromo educated elites who responded to the survey questions considered Haile Selassie's rule as "bad" and 24.7% preferred not to say. In the same manner, 82% of the Amhara respondents stated that Emperor Menelik II is their hero. In response to a similar question, 73% of Oromo respondents stated that General Tadesse Biru is their hero. The Amhara educated elites completely declined to acknowledge General Tadesse Biru as their hero (only 0.7% of Amhara reponents considered him as their hero) and the Oromo elites also declined to acknowledge Emperor Menelik II as their hero (4,7%).

General Tadesse Biru, an Oromo champion, was one of Emperor Haile Selassie's generals. He was appointed chairman of the national literacy campaign. In one of his meetings with the then prime minister, Aklilu Habtewold, the prime minister informed him that it would be unwise to educate the Oromo, saying "Unless we keep the Oromo behind by a century, they are like an Ocean, they will inundate us" (Olana, 1993: 424-425). According to Olana, the prime minister thought that the general was of Amhara ethnic origin. Galvanized by the statement, the general became ethnically politicized. He was responsible for strengthening the Mecha and Tulema Self-Help Association in 1963 and used it as a platform for fomenting Oromo nationalism. Many

Oromos credit him as an inspiration for fighting for Oromo causes. He is seen as one of the prominent heroes of Oromo nationalism.

The three groups who responded to the question did not show interest in acknowledging the heroes of each other's ethnic group. Ethiopia has existed as a single country for centuries and yet the people who are living in the country do not have a common political hero. Perhaps this is one of the weaknesses of Ethiopian nation-building and an area where work is needed.

In a similar vein, respondents from each group showed significant support for their respective ethnic singers and declined to acknowledge positively the other ethnicities' famous singers by saying, "Prefer not to say." Teddy Afro, Abraham Gebremedhin, and Hachalu Hundessa were some of the most popular singers in Ethiopia during the study period. The Tigrayan survey respondents gave substantial support to Abraham, Oromo respondents to Hachalu, and Amhara respondents to Teddy Afro. It is clearly apparent that respondents ranked the singers based on their ethnic origin. Thus, even music is not able to unite the elites who responded to the survey. One cannot help but ask why in its long history as a nation, Ethiopia has not been able to create singers accepted by all. Although the scope of the study at hand is limited to 1991-2017, it is worth pointing out that during Emperor Haile Selassies' rule and even after, famous singers such as Tilahun Gessiese and a few others were widely popular. But during the study period, it was very hard to find a singer who is famous across the board in Ethiopia. Is this because of ethnic federalism? It is a question that requires further study.

5.8.3 Authoritarian educated elites

The survey data collected from Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites shows that, despite their educational background and experiences, their family life is still governed by authoritarianism. The government in power is a reflection of the society it governs. There is a high probability that an authoritarian society forms an authoritarian government. According to the survey results, the educated elites favor controlling the freedom of their children to make their own decisions. If this is the case, what guarantee do we have that the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites will not want to extend their mandate in their political and professional lives and exercise control and concentration of power? If they do not give their own children

decision-making power, can one conclude that they may engage in repression and exclusion of those who oppose them? Children learn from their parents and the social system is perpetuated.

The survey results also reveal that the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites are religious. For the survey question, "Are you religious or spiritual?" 78% of Amhara respondents, 77% of Oromo respondents, and 64% of Tigrayan respondents said "Yes." Being religious is not a problem by itself but a religious person in many instances is biased toward their religion, as seen from the survey results, which in turn leads to polarization, mistrust and conflict. If the educated elites are governed more by religious thought, and not by logic and evidence, no wonder there is ethnic conflict and political instability in Ethiopia. One can see that increasing secularization of the government may be one of the ways to break the cycle of political instability and polarization in Ethiopian politics.

One of the reasons why violence is widespread in Ethiopia in general and in Amhara, Oromia, and Tigray regions in particular, may be related to the existence of a high level of unemployment (Merera, 2012: 33). In fact, in Ethiopia unemployment is very high. According to a study in 1994 by the Oxford university professor Pieter Serneels, 50% of young people between the ages of 15 to 30 living in urban Ethiopia had no jobs (Serneels, 2004: 1).

Not only unemployment, but also underemployment and job insecurity are prevalent.
Such an environment is fertile ground for political actors to recruit frustrated young people for their sincere or insincere political objectives. For instance, in the aftermath of the 2005 general election, most of the people who demonstrated and were killed, across the board, were young people (Berhanu, 2006: 231). Henrik Urdal (2016: 607-629) indicates that increases in youth unemployment may generate the risk of political violence and political instability.

5.8.4 Ethnicity and ethnic federalism

As ethnicity is a major factor in the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites'political cultures, it is analyzed extensively based on the data collected, the interviews, and the literature review. The main issue in this section is how Ethiopia, which existed for centuries as a nation-state, ended up during the study period (1991-2017) in ethnic turmoil and how the political cultures of the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray contributed to such conflict.

According to Weisband and Thomas (2015), ethnic conflict emerges as a result of a political culture that contradicts or blames another ethnic group and when a particular ethnic group holds the other responsible for many of that ethnic group's economic, social, and political challenges. The claim could be true or not, as the ethnic group has no chance or means to verify the other ethnic group's claim or narrative because of one-sided, loaded information and propaganda. Verifying the other side's information and questioning the exponents of one's ethnic identity would be considered as a betrayal of the group and tantamount to treason.

In an ethnocentric state, those who represent the dominant ethnic group, control the construction of nationality: they consider their ethnic ancestry and culture as the bedrock of national identity and deliberately or inadvertently neglect the fact that nationality is a political construct and not necessarily based on ethnic identity. Ethnocentric nationalists magnify differences between ethnic groups and intentionally decline to mention common elements. They concentrate their narrative around their own uniqueness and superior position vis-à-vis the other ethnic group. They encourage their ethnic group not to tolerate the others and openly or tacitly encourage violence. They ensure that their own ethnic group feels insecure and threatened (Weisband and Thomas, 2015: 186-187). Such strategies automatically create similar attitudes among the other ethnic group(s) in question, as they will feel threatened. The other ethnic group(s) will also feel insecure and in imminent danger (ibid.: 187). Once the dominant ethnic group has been effectively manipulated and mobilized, then belligerence and violent confrontation with other ethnic groups are simply a matter of time.

To link Weisband and Thomas's (2015) assertion to the Ethiopian situation, Oromo elites accuse Amhara rulers of nationalizing Amhara symbols and traditions, including the language and flag, while devalorizing other Ethiopian cultures, notably the Oromo culture. The ethno-nationalist ideologies and policies of consecutive Amhara rulers led the country into political instability, a crisis in legitimacy, and armed conflict (Mekuria, 2011: 321-329).

Mohammed (1996: 72) argues that "There are rival Amhara, Tigray … nationalisms. Even the old Abyssinian nationalism, which was based on Christianity, the Orthodox Church, the monarchy and Amhara-Tigray solidarity is now history; ironically the Amharas and Tigrays fight among themselves in the name of Ethiopian nationalism, but in reality, for the control and domination of the Ethiopian state." Oromo elites do not feel that they are proportionally

represented in the country's state of affairs. However, during the study period, it was both the Amhara and the Oromo who complained that the Tigrayan elites completely dominated the government and state apparatus (Merera, 2012; Yohannes, 2021).

When it comes to ethnicity in Ethiopia, the intriguing question now is, after a long time of existence as a state, why has Ethiopian nation-building unraveled? Why have the majority of the Oromo and Tigrayan educated elites, according to this survey, still not transformed from "ethnic to post-ethnic" identity?

The Tigrayan and Oromo elites seem to tacitly support ethnic federalism compared to the Amhara elites. This is because ethnic federalism allowed them to exercise more political power compared to the previous Ethiopian political system. During the study period, however, the TPLF's monopoly on power pushed the Oromo elites who participated during the transitional government period to join the Amhara elites in opposition to the Tigrayan elites. Markakis (2011: 292) quotes an OLF press release addressed to the Oromo people from September 2009: "The current Oromo farmland transaction between the TPLF regime and third parties is a continuation of the serfdom you have been subjected to for more than a hundred years."

According to Maimire (2023: 7):

> Gran's[10] conquest of central and northern Ethiopia opened the door for wide-ranging and long-term demographic movements from the south to the north that led to the creation of new commercial relations, cultural interactions, and the establishment of powerful Oromo Muslim chiefdoms in Wollo, eventually leading to the Age of the Princes or the Zämänä Mäsafint (1769-1855), during which the Oromos became powerful members of the Ethiopian ruling elite in Gondar. Ultimately, these historical transformations paved the way for the move of Northerners (Tigrayans and Amharas) to the south, intensifying other trans-regional demographic movements, cultural crossovers, and new economic activities.

According to Maimire (2023), the six major events in Ethiopian history, namely the introduction of Christianity and Islam, the expansion of Gran Mohammed, the Oromo expansion, and the Zemene Mesafint transformed Ethiopia "from primary (ethnic) to secondary (post-ethnic or

[10] According to *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Ahmad Gran, also called Ahmad the Left-Handed, real name Ahmad Ibn Ibrahim al Ghazi (1506-1543), was leader of a Muslim movement that all but subjugated Ethiopia. At the height of his conquest, he held more than three-quarters of the kingdom, and, according to the chronicles, the majority of people in these conquered areas converted to Islam.

hizb)" (ibid.). identification. But why it is a regression now? A possible answer to this question is the ethnic federalism that governed the country for the last 27 years. Would this be the only reason? There is room for more interpretation and analysis. Other factors include the absence of civic democracy, the authoritarian nature of Ethiopian society in general, the vicious cycle of poverty, zero-sum politics, a political culture of violence, and lack of respect between ethnic groups. According to this survey, as seen in the previous section, the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites agreed that there was no respect in Ethiopia among and between themselves, during the study period. Maimire (2023) blames the TPLF specifically but also names the generation just before the TPLF, specifically the EPRP and the "Walleligne generation," which copied and pasted Stalin's classification of the population of the Russian Empire into "Nations, Nationalities and Peoples" into the 1995 Constitution of Ethiopia and put it into practice. Most OLF supporters also consider the Ethiopian situation as a "colonization;" therefore, Maimire also criticizes and holds responsible the OLF for the U-turn in Ethiopian nation-building. As seen in the previous section of this chapter, the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites directly or indirectly attributed the perception of "colonization" to ethnic federalism. This is borne out by Maimire (2023:26):

> Walleligne and Meles started with the correct observation that Ethiopian history is a history of political domination and economic exploitation. However, captives of Gibbonism, they caricatured Ethiopian history and jumped to the conclusion that Ethiopian history is a history of "colonization" of one group, identified by them as the "Amhara," of the territories that now form part of Ethiopia, and asserted that the ethnicities inhabiting these territories are "colonized" peoples that have the right of self-determination.

During the study period, the TPLF in particular and the Tigrayan people in general felt contented with the status quo, but wanted to speed up the pace of development to bring prosperity to their people (Fetlework, 2014). In the same period, the Amhara and Oromo felt marginalized and considered themselves as second-class citizens because of the TPLF's manipulation and political control (Merera, 2002: 206-7). The TPLF, before becoming a hegemonic power in Ethiopia, mobilized its people under the pretext that the region had been forced to live in abject poverty because of consecutive Amhara rulers' exclusive political control (Kahsay, 2002: 67). Sheafer and Shenhav (2013) have clearly articulated the vicious cycle of controlling political power exclusively for one's group. According to Sheafer and Shenhav (2013), when actors are satisfied with the status quo or feel that their aspirations are fulfilled, they tend to regard their state as

gain, and vice versa. It is interesting to see, and relevant to our study of political stability, that the importance of a reference point looms large in theories of institutional stability and violence. The argument in these theories is that violence and protests will not occur under conditions of the greatest suffering but rather when the level of material benefits, social benefits, democracy, and justice falls below expectations (Sheafer and Shenhav, 2013: 244). The Amhara elites seemed to be contented and had been supporting the status quo up until the advent of TPLF rule in 1991. The problem with the monopolizing of political power by one particular ethnic group in Ethiopia, beyond limited power sharing, economic development, or establishment of a democratic system, is that the group that controls political power uses excessive force to weaken or destroy its opponents.

The nation-building process requires collaboration to bring about peace and fairness, to achieve political and economic objectives, and, in the case of Ethiopia, a democratic federation. When one ethnic group attempts to dominate the other, directly or indirectly, it may lead to the kind of conflict that happened in Yugoslavia. In *Blood and Belonging*, Michael Ignatieff (1993) writes that Slobodan Milosevics' ambition in 1993 to build a greater Serbia, a new Yugoslavia dominated by the Serbs, underestimated or ignored the other populations in the republic. He states that, "Milosevic was prepared to incite the Serbian minorities in Kosovo, Croatia, and Bosnia-Hercegovina to rise up and demand Serbian protection" (1993: 26).

It is a good beginning for Ethiopian educated elites to realize and agree that the nation-building process is not complete and needs more work. However, for the survey question, "Do you see Ethiopia strong and united in the near future?" 86% of Tigrayans, 67.3% of Oromo, and 36.7% of Amhara educated elites answered "No." Similarly, for the survey question, "Do you see Ethiopia further divided in the near future?" 76% of Tigrayan, 30% of Oromo, and 29.3% of Amhara educated elites answered "Yes." During the data collection time, the federal government was conducting a "law enforcement operation" in Tigray. Tigrayans felt bitter for losing the war and therefore it would not be surprising to see them express their dissatisfaction regarding the nation when completing the survey. If the survey had been distributed during the TPLF's rule, one can imagine how different the reply would have been. The survey data was collected a few years after the collapse of TPLF rule. If we must hold a group or groups of political entities responsible for the Ethiopian nation-building process going in a divisive direction, the TPLF

might be one of them. However, holding a group or groups of political entities alone responsible does not accomplish the desired objective, namely, to guide the country's nation-building process in a unifying direction. Collaboration, cooperation, complementarity, and civil nationalism may be some of the approaches to redirect the country's nation-building process onto the right track.

The Amhara have always been pro-unity and pro-nation-building as they feel that they are responsible for the origin and development of the Ethiopian state, whereas the Oromo feel very hopeful, anticipating that an Oromo prime minister will fulfill their political ambitions. As different Oromo political parties express different political interests, it is very difficult to articulate a common political desire. For example, hardliner OLF members would like to see an independent Oromia, whereas the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC) would like to see a democratic Ethiopia where Oromo rights are fully protected (Merera, 2002: 206-221). In the 20 years since Merera made this pronouncement, nothing has changed.

The Tigrayan educated elites' survey responses seem to indicate that when Tigrayans are in power, they do not want to see Ethiopia divided; but when they are no longer in power, they do not seem to care. Just before the collapse of the TPLF, the Amhara and Oromo felt dominated by TPLF rule and some of the Oromo political parties were looking at the option of separation. Similarly, after the TPLF collapse, the Tigrayan elites openly expressed their wish to have their own independent nation. From such observations we learn that Tigrayans, Amhara, and Oromo are more comfortable with the state of Ethiopia when they are in power.

As the three ethnic groups are competitive and have hegemonic tendencies, political instability is unavoidable if one of them dominates. If Ethiopian nation-building is to go in the right direction, if peace and stability are to come to Ethiopia, the three ethnic groups need to cooperate and complement each other rather than attempting to benefit at the cost of the other. At one point in Ethiopian history, the Amhara were in total domination of the country, then for 27 years, the TPLF dominated Ethiopian politics. The Oromo may aspire to do the same, but such an ambition does not bring peace, political stability, or economic development. The political culture of dominating others and lionizing one's own ethnic group against the other will always breed resentment and opposition.

Ignatieff (1993: 249) concludes that:

> Wherever I went, I found a struggle going on between those who still believe that a nation should be a home to all, and race, color, religion, and creed should be no bar to belonging, and those who want their nation to be home only to their own. It is the battle between the civic and the ethnic nation. I know which side I am on. I also know which side, right now, happens to be winning.

During the study period, the Amhara educated elites strongly opposed the TPLF's narrative that Amhara rulers dominated the country for centuries. The Amhara elites do not accept the TPLF's view of history, as stated in its inaugural manifesto. According to this document, the Amhara rulers are responsible for most of the political and economic challenges of Tigray. The Tigrayan educated elites who participated in this survey also blamed the Amhara rulers for the ethnic challenges in the country. As a result, to this day, ethnic Amhara living outside the Amhara regional states face prejudice and have suffered atrocities. Perhaps that is the reason why 46% of the Amhara elites responded that it is hate that created the ethnic conflict in the country. In comparison, only 21.3% of the Amhara respondents thought that economic interests are the cause of ethnic conflict in the country. Forty-six percent of the Oromo educated elites believed that it is economic interests that initiated ethnic conflict in Ethiopia. Only 16% of them thought that it was hate that caused the ethnic conflict in the country. The logic of Oromo respondents might appear to be that if the economic challenges of the country were resolved, then the ethnic conflict would be resolved. The response of the Oromo educated elites is interesting, because the Oromo educated elites for a long period of time complained that they were treated as second-rate citizens – some of them even stated that they were colonized by the "Abyssinian elites." So, what brings such winds of change? At the end of the study period, the TPLF was out of power and an Oromo prime minister was selected. It is a common phenomenon in Ethiopian history that when one's ethnic group is in political power, one feels confident and wants to bring about development and democracy to the country under the ethnic group's leadership. The Amhara educated elites were contented up until the advent of TPLF rule in Ethiopia and the Tigrayan educated elites had the same feeling until the downfall of the TPLF. The Amhara educated elites who responded to this survey expressed their satisfaction with Menelik II, Haile Selassie, and other Amhara rulers but not with Meles Zenawi.

The Oromo consider *Qeerroo*, the youth of Oromia, largely responsible for bringing about change during the study period; there was endless demonstration and opposition to the TPLF rule, particularly in Oromia regional state. Therefore, the Oromo felt that they had brought about change in Ethiopia and deserve special credit for that even though there were many other factors behind the collapse of the TPLF regime, including widespread corruption, the death of Meles Zenawi, who was the architect of the TPLF ideology, as well as strong rejection of TPLF rule from every direction in the country. Thus, it is very difficult to give all the credit to the Oromo alone, as there were many other participants who sought to bring about change in Ethiopia, Solomon (2018: 2) elaborates:

> Qeerroo is nothing but the youth in Oromia who have been brave enough to face state terrorism, who faced live ammunition unarmed, who victoriously brought the winds of change to Ethiopia with their blood and sweat. No one can underestimate the sacrifices made by *Qeerroo* for the sake of political change. By the same token, no one can deny the long fight waged by journalists, civil society operatives, politicians, intellectuals, religious leaders and opposition parties as well. Zerma and Fano cannot be forgotten at all. Giving unnecessary credit to one or the other is equally unhelpful.

Nearly 60% of the Tigrayan educated elites in turn thought that the ethnic conflict manifested in the country during the study period was caused by hate. I would like to remind readers here that during the data collection period, the TPLF was ousted from power, and there was war going on between the federal army and the TPLF special forces and militia. Therefore, it is abundantly clear that the Tigrayan educated elites felt the hate from other ethnic groups. Had the survey been conducted during the TPLF regime, the answers would likely have been more or less similar to those of the Oromo educated elites. During the study period, one of the TPLF central committee members was heard to say that the Tigrayan youth had to work hard to accelerate economic development in Tigray as they (the TPLF), had sacrificed and paved the way for a better life for the current young generation. Such a statement makes it clear that the TPLF in particular and the Tigrayan elites in general were comfortable when the TPLF was in power.

To feel comfortable when one's ethnic group is in power, is one of the major fault lines in Ethiopian politics and it is typical of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites'political culture. The ambition by ethnic groups to monopolize power will maintain the political instability that currently exists in Ethiopia. It will bring neither democracy nor political stability, or

development to any ethnic group or to Ethiopia. In a multicultural country where ethnic groups vie for power, it appears that one of the best options is to acknowledge ethnic diversity and balance the sharing of power among ethnic groups.

5.9 Chapter summary

The study discloses that the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites' aspiration for hegemonic power is a pattern of behavior that manifests in political violence. The study also reveals that such a pattern of behavior existed not just during the study period but also since the beginning of the Zemene Mesafint. This indicates that the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites' political cultures are "pattern-maintaining change" where political violence and continue to exist despite regime changes.

The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites'political cultures have remained the same to a greater or lesser extent over the period between the 16th and 19th centuries. To achieve hegemony, the Ethiopian elites have been blaming, dehumanizing, and using political violence since the Zemene Mesafint.

However, the survey also shows a few positive results. Most educated elites of Amhara, Oromia, and Tigray agreed that there are many ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia because people do not negotiate or compromise. This recognition may give an incentive to policymakers to modify the nation-building process in the right way. There is widespread support among the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites for national landmark projects such as the GERD. Over 90% of the survey respondents of the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites said that they contributed voluntarily for the dam. The GERD and similar projects can be a basis for cooperation where the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites, wherein they feel ownership and equitably share the benefit. Such a project may transcend ethnicity and alter political cultures as well.

Chapter Six: Perception of neo-patrimonialism among the elites

6.1 Introduction

Chapter six elaborates on the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites' perception of neo-patrimonial practices in Ethiopia. In this chapter, the elites' aspiration for hegemonic power and their rivalry are revealed.

The study demonstrates that the neo-patrimonial practices that are common in other parts of Africa are also practiced in Ethiopia. What is particular to Ethiopia is their application by a group instead of an individual dictator, namely the TPLF, which awards or withholds resources based on ethnicity to achieve the partys' objectives. During the study period 1991 to 2017, the state – ruling party distinction in policy decisions and resource distribution, a typical characteristic of neo-patrimonalism, became hard to distinguish. The study revealed the patron-client network established between the TPLF and various ethnic groups in Ethiopia. In the TPLF's patron-client network, resources were distributed among their preferred ethnic elites rather than the wider community.

This section describes the concept of neo-patrimonialism and how neo-patrimonial practices during the study period (1991-2017) gradually turned the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites against each other.

6.2 Neo-patrimonial practices

The practice of neo-patrimonialism undercuts formal political institutions and uses public resources to benefit a particular party and personal use (Berman, 1988: 310-216). During the study period (1991-2017) neo-patrimonialism was a common manifestation of the political culture in Ethiopia. The ruling party members comfortably used public resources without fear of public scrutiny to promote their private or party interests. It was normal to conduct party meetings in government offices, use different ministry cars for party or private purposes, appoint party members as civil servant, all ways to benefit the ruling party members in whichever way possible including promoting them without merit and providing them unfair privileges. Political culture is "the particular pattern of orientation toward political actions in which every political system is embedded "(Almond and Verba (1983:65). Accordingly, neopatrimonialism was a trend and pattern which weakened the rule of law in the country, although the general population

and elites considered it, as Bratton calls it, a "core system" (Bratton and Mattens, 2009: 2). Neopatrimonialism is "business as usual" among the Amhara, Oromo and Tigrayan elites. In fact, Mesfin has claimed that the opposition party elites are not against neopatrimonialism, rather they are against the party which practices it and they want to replace it and use the same practices themselves (Mesfin, 2010: 103). The Amhara, Oromo and Tigrayan elites do not see neopatrimonialism as illegitimate or corrupt behaviour rather they await their opportunity to continue the practice and thus it is embedded in political culture. The nature of neopatrimonialism among the Amhara, Oromo and Tigrayan elites made it difficult to create trust and develop political tolerance between each other.

"Political tolerance" is given top priority by many scholars in the field, including Almond and Verba (1963) and Welch (2010). Trust and other measures come next after "political tolerance." Political tolerance is what gives a regime stability. As Rivero et al. (2002) note, political tolerance is directly related to the respect for civil liberties shared among adversaries. It implies a willingness to understand and work with opponents based on the rules of the game. Not accepting another's ethnic hero does not show "political tolerance," indeed, it shows intolerance. "A low level of political tolerance is an indication of a high level of political violence. The highest expression of political violence is civil war" (2002: 171). Rivero et al.'s explanation of political violence illuminates what happened in Ethiopia among the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites.

Among Tigrayan educated elites who were asked what they thought about former Prime Minister Meles Zenawi's rule, 90% responded positively, 64% rated it excellent, 18% rated it the best, and 8% rated it good. Meles was from Tigray region; he was head and one of the founders of the TPLF. When asked what they thought about Mengistu Hailemariam, the Ethiopian ruler preceding Meles, 76% of the same elites responded "bad" and 16% declined to comment or "prefer(red) not to say." Asked the same question with regard to the rule of Emperor Haile Selassie, 62% of Tigrayan elites responded "bad" and 22% said "prefer not to say."

Of the Amhara educated elites, 76% responded that Meles' rule was "bad" and 15.3% "preferred not to say." Over 66% expressed their approval of Mengistu Hailemariam's rule and over 70% approved Emperor Haile Selassie's rule.

Over 30% of Oromo educated elites stated that Meles' rule was bad, 25% preferred not to say, while 43% rated Meles as the best. Regarding Mengistu Hailemariam's rule, 36.7% responded that it was "bad," 26% preferred not to say, and 39% rated his rule as the best. In their responses to Haile Selassie's rule, 48.7% of Oromo respondents said his rule was "bad," 24.7% preferred not to say, and only 26.6% rated Ethiopia's last emperor as the best.

The Tigrayan educated elites expressed their approval for Meles without reservation but rejected Mengistu and Haile Selassie, who are assumed to be Amhara or pro-unity rulers. The Amhara educated elites in turn rejected Meles, who was from Tigray and was responsible for introducing ethnic federalism into the Ethiopian political landscape. The Amhara survey respondents, however, gave their approval for Mengistu's and Haile Selassie's rule. The Oromo educated elites seem to be divided as well. Nevertheless, 43% of Oromo educated elites approved Meles's ethnic federalism, compared to 39% for Mengistu Hailemariam and 26.6% for Haile Selassie. They clearly showed their preference for Meles Zenawi compared to the pro-unity rulers.

If the Amhara give a low rating to the Tigrayans' highest rated ruler, while the Tigrayans give a low rating to the Amhara's highest rated ruler, and the Oromo give a low rating to both of them, then who should rule Ethiopia? Who will be accepted by all across the board? What is the best formula for choosing a political leader in Ethiopia? Without acceptance by all or at least by a majority of the population, how can a political leader rule the country and be able to promote the government's policies? These are some of the important questions to be answered when it comes to selecting political leaders in Ethiopia. Yohannes (2021: 74) blames the lack of consensus on the current ethnic federal arrangement. According to Yohannes, ethnic federalism complicates governance among and between ethnic groups. The complexity of governance manifests itself in bureaucratic administrative units and during the decision-making processes, as different ethnic groups demand equal representation, irrespective of their contribution or size. That being the case, the majority of ethnic groups call for compromise, and this in turn will bring more complexity. Yohannes (2021: 74) argues that in such a system, democracy will lose its essence and not be functional. "Government efforts to build inter-ethnic alliances to meet various political, economic and social objectives will face difficult challenges; indeed, at times the government may be challenged by other groups that are not included in such an alliance."

The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites agree neither on the contributions of past Ethiopian leaders nor on the current cause of ethnic problems in Ethiopia. For the survey question," Who is responsible for the ethnic conflict in Ethiopia?" the Tigrayan educated elites responded as follows: 0% TPLF, 56% Amhara rulers, 22% poor governance, 6% ethnic federalism, and 2% backward economic system. For the same survey question, the Amhara educated elites answered as follows: 0.7% Amhara rulers, 18.7% TPLF, 19.3% poor governance, 49.3% the ethnic federal system, and 2% backward economic system. The Oromo educated elites' response to the same survey question was: 12% Amhara rulers, 29.3% TPLF, 22% poor governance, 13.3% ethnic federal system, and 2.7% backward economic system. Here again, the educated elites are accusing each other's ethnic group. During the data collection period, war was raging between Tigrayans and the Amhara militia and special forces, so there was great animosity in Tigray against the Amhara. Therefore, if the Tigrayan educated elites blame the Amhara rulers for ethnic conflict, whether real or conjectured, their answers are likely influenced by recent events. However, one interesting point here concerns ethnic federalism. Since it was the Tigrayan educated elites who introduced ethnic federalism to Ethiopia, they do not want to cite it as the cause of ethnic conflict in the country. Only 6% of them think that ethnic federalism is responsible for ethnic conflict in the country. However, 49.3% of the Amhara educated elites believe that it is ethnic federalism that caused the ethnic conflict in the country and 18.7% also blame the TPLF for the conflict. The Oromo educated elites consider that the TPLF and poor governance are more responsible for the conflict than the ethnic federal system.

The survey results show that there are many differences between the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites' opinions with regard to some of the major issues in the country, such as the cause of ethnic conflict. Such a blame game poses a big challenge to the nation-building process and to the political stability of the country. Most academics who write about educated elites believe that they tend to get involved in politics with the intention of solving societal problems. The educated elites should be the country's problem solvers, but if they keep accusing each other, who is going to find the solution? If they themselves are not role models and refuse to take responsibility, how do they expect others to act any differently? The educated elites do not need to agree on every issue that affects the country, but then why do they not agree on empirical evidence? The educated elites are expected to lead the country, guided by reason and

empirical evidence, compared to the everyday people who did not get the chance to go to school. If all levels of society are governed by emotion, how can a country get peace and stability? The Tigrayan educated elites consider that the TPLF is not the cause of ethnic conflict. Their Amhara counterparts also think that Amhara rulers are not responsible for ethnic conflict in Ethiopia: only 0.7% answered positively for the same question, while blaming the others for the problem. Interestingly, both the Amhara and Tigrayan educated elites, as seen in this survey, complained that in Ethiopia people do not take responsibility. Blaming others while considering oneself blameless, is a typical attitude in Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites'political culture. Although the Oromo are not implicated in the survey, we have seen in the literature review how the Oromo blame Amhara rulers for harm done during the Menelik expansion in the 19th century. However, they rarely mention that they, too, harmed the Amhara during the Oromo expansion in the 16th century. Taking responsibility is the beginning of healing. According to Tismaneanu (2008: 169), active, positive, revealing acts of remembering are usually seen as key means through which injustices can be redressed, victimization and responsibilities recognized, and suffering acknowledged. Reconciliation could help begin a new chapter in Ethiopian politics; but if the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites continue to blame each other and decline to take responsibility, the nation-building process may face stiff resistance. Whether the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites can stop blaming each other and cooperate to improve the life of their society, only time will tell. The trend so far, however, shows one ethnic group blaming the other, and this behavior appears to be embedded in the political culture of the educated elites.

According to Merera (2002: 79), a presidential system may solve the problem of lack of acceptance by ethnic groups. Until the habit of seeing every political action in light of ethnicity is changed, it will be very hard to get acceptance by all. Ethiopian educated elites need to judge political leaders apart from their ethnicity. Education, experience, competence, and merit should be criteria for promotion or election, not ethnicity. Ethnicity does not guarantee the development of the country; it is competence and professionalism that can institute a more equitable approach to governance that benefits all Ethiopians.

One of the professors of Addis Ababa University who would like to be identified as Amhara and who does not want his identity to be revealed, sat for an interview for this study. He was asked

why he thought that Meles was a bad leader. According to this professor, Meles was responsible for the introduction of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia. When Eritrea separated from Ethiopia, Meles deliberately allowed Eritrea to take the two ports that Ethiopia used to use for imports and exports. The UN asked Meles to make some kind of arrangement to regain the Assab port, but Meles declined the offer. In one of his speeches, Meles reiterated that the Axum civilization meant nothing to other ethnic groups in Ethiopia, and that other Ethiopian ethnic civilizations were insignificant to the Tigrayan people. In another interview, Meles said, "I am very proud to be born from the Tigrayan people who are like gold," implying that other people are not valued. His entire speech was intentionally divisive and intended to dismantle Ethiopia. The Amhara professor was asked, if Meles' intention was to "dismantle Ethiopia," why did he launch the Grand Renaissance Dam? The professor responded that the dam would generate electricity, and the TPLF planned to expand its territory to Benishangul Gumuz, where the dam was being built. Therefore, it was not intended for Ethiopia, but for Tigray. Incidentally, the blueprint was originally designed by Emperor Haile Selassie.

The Amhara professor was confronted with another question. When the Libyan government asked to move the African Union (AU) Commission's headquarters out of Addis Ababa, it was Meles Zenawi who strongly argued against it. This shows that Meles was maintaining the legacy of Haile Selassie, who worked tirelessly to establish the then Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Commission's headquarters in Ethiopia, so how can we say that he was working to dismantle Ethiopia? The professor stated that Meles had a cunning personality and wanted to confuse the Ethiopian people, and that deep down he wanted to show his wit to the Ethiopians and other African countries. Based on the interview, it appears that the professor was unforgiving of Meles, as he declined to endorse some of Meles' achievements during his leadership. The Amhara professor would like to believe that most of the miseries, ethnic conflict, and political instability in the country are the result of TPLF rule and Meles, the mastermind.

Similar questions were posed to a Tigrayan professor who happened to teach at Addis Ababa University as well. As background information, during the interview time, war was taking place between the federal government and Tigrayan forces in the northern part of Ethiopia. The professor informed the interviewer that he had recently come back from visiting some of his friends in Merkato, where Tigrayans who were members of the TPLF had been detained en

masse. The professor claimed not to be a member of the TPLF. His level of emotion was high. In response to the question, why he thought that Haile Selassie's rule was "bad," his answer was clear and simple: "Because Haile Selassie was bad for Tigrayans." He further explained that during the first Woyane rebellion, when the Tigrayans resisted non-Tigrayan administrators appointed to Tigray and opposed heavy taxation, Haile Selassie responded by bombarding innocent Tigrayans.

However, Haile Selassie was also responsible for expanding health and education institutions across the country. For instance, Meles Zenawi, the TPLF leader, was educated at an elite high school established by Haile Selassie. The professor's reply was that Meles was the son of a feudal lord who had relations with Shewa Amhara, and that was why he was selected to learn in the elite school – it had nothing to do with the expansion of education in Tigray. The Tigrayan professor continued blaming the former emperor: Haile Selassie was responsible for the death of hundreds of thousands of Tigrayans during the 1970s famine in Tigray and Wollo. The Haile Selassie government planned to starve the Tigrayan people so that it would be easier for the Shewa Amhara elites to rule the country. It was during the Haile Selassie period that the Tigrayan language, Tigrigna, became secondary and Tigrayans were forced to study Amharic. Language suppression led to Tigrayan nationalism, as explained by Teshale Tibebu (1995: 175):

> In the historical setting of the Ge'ez civilization, Tigray had acted as a regional power broker, not as a national-ethnic entity. The competition between Tigray, on the one hand, and Shewa, on the other, was not an ethnic competition between Tigrayans and Amharas. However, two main factors – the beginning of modern education, and centralization of power at Addis Ababa – led to the transformation of Tigray from a regional entity into a national-ethnic one; hence the rise of the national question in Tigray. In the modern educational system, Amharic became the language of instruction throughout Ethiopia. This was perceived as the language of the Amhara becoming dominant over that of Tigrayans … It is the usage of Amharic as the sole language of instruction in the modern educational and administrative system that unleashed other vernacular nationalisms.

The researcher also conducted an interview with a professor who would like to be identified as an Oromo and who teaches at Addis Ababa University. The Oromo professor responded to similar questions presented to the Amhara and Tigrayan professors. When answering the question, why he thought that Haile Selassie's rule was "bad," he stated stated that during Haile Selassie's rule, the Oromo were humiliated and subjugated. He said that Amhara rulers, who did not speak Affan Oromo, were appointed to predominantly Oromo-speaking areas. The Oromo

peasants' lands were taken by force and given to Amhara feudal lords and to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The Oromo peasants were left destitute or were taken into servitude. The Oromo professor noted that Haile Selassie's mother was Oromo and Haile Selassie spoke Affan Oromo very well, although never publicly. The reason was that the Shewan Amhara did not want to recognize the existence of Oromo in Ethiopia at all. If the Oromo had been recognized and treated fairly in Ethiopia's political system, there would not be so much political instability in Ethiopia. The Amhara rulers wanted the Oromo to serve them, but they did not give them appropriate credit for services rendered. They dominated the Oromo people for centuries and would like to continue to do that. According to the professor, that may be one of the reasons for the continued tension between the two elites.

Some of the prominent names in Ethiopian history are Oromo names. The Oromo professor was asked why these names were given recognition. He stated that the Amhara rulers admired Oromo eminence, as long as it helped achieve their own objectives. The Oromo heroes mentioned in Ethiopian history did not bring about equality and democracy for Oromo people; what they did was to sustain Amhara domination over the Oromo people.

Haile Selassie's rule was characterized, according to the Oromo professor, by a demeaning of the Oromo through derogatory names and by labeling the Oromo as pagan. The professor continued criticizing Haile Selassie's rule for not allowing the Oromo to practice their language and culture. It was very challenging for Oromo sons and daughters to speak Amharic fluently, as Amharic is a difficult language to learn. As documented by Bulcha Demeksa (2013), those who did not speak it well, were humiliated. In his book, Bulcha, a prominent Oromo politician who was born and raised in Gimbi, Western Wellegga, which is currently under Oromia administration, explains how the Oromo were treated during Haile Selassie's rule:

> It was in Finfinne[11] that we heard for the first time, people referring to us as *Galla* – a word which meant "heathen" in our region. Kids laughed at our accent and referred to us as "tongue-tied *Gallas*" (*Koltafa Gallas*). This was not unique to us, since all the country boys coming from non-Amharic regions faced the same daily embarrassment. We were angry when boys laughed at our Amharic, but were totally humiliated when girls laughed at our accent. In Finfinne, people who had our kind of accent did not insist on going to school, and if you were just a laborer, it was alright to have our kind of accent and nobody laughed. The officials of the Ministry of Education always looked angry when we spoke to them because they thought that

[11] *Finfinne* is an Oromo name for Addis Ababa.

> we refused to speak Amharic. I once tried to change my name, temporarily out of desperation, to an Amharic name "Kebede". But when I said my new name, I pronounced it with an Oromo accent of the Oromo from Wellegga. Now, in retrospect, I understand that the Government was very conscious of its policy of expanding the Amharic-speaking areas and did not take well to students who dared to come to Finfinne from non-Amharic-speaking areas, who kept their names and who spoke Amharic with an accent (Bulcha, 2013: 17).

According to Teshale (1995: 39-57), the Amhara elites are suspicious of the Oromo because they are worried about the Oromo potential to control Ethiopia. This is a suspicion based on historical evidence from the 16th century. So, by humiliating and degrading the Oromo, the Amhara elites hoped to ensure the Oromo are kept away from the helm of power in Ethiopia.

Teshale's book further explains the relationships between Amhara and Oromo:

> The mutual fear and respect that existed between the Amhara and the Oromo since the latter's massive expansion in the sixteenth century, a relationship understood by the former as a conflict between Christian civilization and pagan barbarism, a relationship wherein an intermittent series of military victories and defeats were experienced by both sides in the power struggles of the post-Susenyos period until they became dominant during the *Zemene Mesafint* – these relationships of equity were transformed into a lopsided relationship of dominance and subordination by the beginning of the twentieth century (Teshale, 1995: 46).

In the survey responses and the interviews with the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan professors, what becomes evident is a refusal to acknowledge the positive contribution of the other. None of the survey respondents or interviewees were willing to speak about the important contribution of each other's ethnic group. The Amhara professor was not interested in speaking about Meles Zenawi's positive contributions, such as the planning and launching of a mega project on the scale of the GERD. The Tigrayan professor was not impressed by Haile Selassie's attempt to expand education and health facilities in Tigray regions. The Oromo professor declined to give credit for Haile Selassie's rule, which brought many educated Oromos into prominent positions. Bulcha (2013), who is referenced above and who complained about speaking Amharic, in fact became a vice-minister during the Haile Selassie regime. The interviews with the three professors and the survey results indicate that the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites'political cultures are manifested not just by intense competition for hegemonic power but also by demeaning and disregarding the contribution of other ethnic groups. Such political cultures in

turn open the door to political instability and ethnic conflict in the short term and disengage the nation-building process in the long term.

In their interviews for this study, the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan professors were also asked other questions relevant to the research. One of the questions was meant to further elaborate on one of the survey questions: "Do you see Ethiopia strong and united in the near future?" The Tigrayan professor, who was very stressed during the time of the interview, because some of his friends had been detained by the federal government in relation to "law enforcement" against the TPLF, was very doubtful. He said that the Amhara and Oromo who united to defeat the Tigrayan people would eventually fight each other and there would be a bloodbath in the country. His frustration and anger were justifiable, as the modern industrial infrastructure built during the TPLF regime was being destroyed by war and thousands of people were dying on both sides. The professor also partly blamed the TPLF because he said "the TPLF was not strategic enough to win the war." The professor blamed the Amhara elites whom he deemed "warmongers and never cared about people but only the expansion of territory." The professor expressed anger toward the Amhara elites, and what he called their "expansion of territory" into Raya, Wolkayit, and Humera. The interview was conducted with the Tigrayan professor at a time when the traditionally Amhara territories of Raya, Wolkayit, and Humera, which were incorporated into Tigray region when the TPLF assumed power in 1991, were again controlled by Amhara militias and the federal defense forces. The professor declined to answer when asked, "Why do you care whether Raya, Wolkayit, and Humera are controlled by Amhara or the federal forces so long as they remain in Ethiopia?" Raya, Wolkayit, and Humera are very fertile lands and the Tigrayan elites hoped that by incorporating these areas, the region could be food self-sufficient and even generate wealth for the region through exports. Wolkayit, and Humera are strategically located corridors that serve as land ports, as the areas border Sudan and Eritrea. Hence, the long-term plan of the TPLF may be to invoke Article 39 of the 1995 Constitution of Ethiopia that allowed each regional state the right to self-determination, including secession.

The Amhara professor, in answering the question, "Do you see Ethiopia strong and united in the near future?" indicated that he was "not sure." However, according to him, once the TPLF is gone, there is a big chance that Ethiopia will be united and strong again. The professor thought that the TPLF weakened Ethiopia and that the country was on the verge of collapse. The Amhara

professor did not hide his satisfaction that the TPLF was being defeated. He considered the TPLF "an archenemy of the Amhara." His evidence for this was text from the 1976 TPLF manifesto that referred to "Amhara as the enemy of Tigray." He stated that the TPLF from the very beginning had labeled Amhara as the Tigray people's enemy and had worked for over 25 years to weaken the Amhara in particular and Ethiopia in general. He thought that the TPLF held the Tigrayan people "hostage" with propaganda that all other ethnic groups, particularly the Amhara, are coming to Tigray to conduct "genocide." Apart from that, the Amhara and Tigrayans have lived side by side for centuries and share a similar religion and similar culture. Therefore, the Amhara professor was optimistic that once the TPLF was defeated, Ethiopia would succeed. According to the professor, "Once the TPLF is defeated and the constitution which permits ethnic federalism is declared null and void, then Ethiopia will flourish again."

Interestingly, when asked "Which political party/parties do you think will best promote your political interests?" 56% of the Tigrayan educated elites who responded to the survey questions answered "the TPLF." Therefore, the TPLF has a strong base among the Tigrayan people, and perhaps the Amhara professor's assumption was not quite right. If that is the case, the Tigrayan people may not be happy with the annihilation of the TPLF.

At the time of the interview with the Oromo professor, war was taking place between the TPLF and the federal forces, and the TPLF and OLF announced a new pact. For the survey question, "Which political party/parties do you think will best promote your political interests?" 22.7% of the Oromo educated elites responded "the OLF." The Oromo professor who sat for the interview happened to be one of the supporters of the OLF. Therefore, it was not surprising to hear him answering negatively to the question, "Do you see Ethiopia strong and united in the near future?" According to him, unless the nation's ethnic federalism was democratized and domination of one ethnic group by another in the name of Ethiopian unity stopped, the Ethiopian state would remain "at high stakes."

> The term "political culture" thus refers to the specifically political orientations-attitudes toward the political system and its various parts, and attitudes toward the role of the self in the system. We speak of a political culture just as we speak of an economic culture or a religious culture. It is a set of orientations toward a special set of social objects and processes (Almond and Verba, 1963: 12).

The three interviews summarized here can be considered representative of attitudes and orientations among the three main political cultures in Ethiopia that remain deeply at odds with each other due to grievances rooted in the past. At the time of the interviews, the OLF and TPLF had forged an alliance against the predominantly federal forces. In 2022, this pact was still in force. However, more typical of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites'political cultures, is the pattern of villainizing and attacking an ethnic group through a tactical alliance with another (ethnic) group; then, when the enemy is defeated, turning on each other. The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political cultures consistently have shown a pattern where one group creates a tactical alliance with another to defeat a third ethnic group; then, once the third ethnic group is defeated, those who created the alliance start fighting each other. Since the 16th century, from the Zemene Mesafint to the present, this pattern visibly persists. Such political cultures are extremely destructive, and if their long-standing patterns and attitudes do not change, political instability and ethnic violence may continue indefinitely. How do the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites change or break such a vicious cycle? The Tigrayan and Oromo professors seemed pessimistic about Ethiopia's future, but the Amhara professor was optimistic. According to Maimire, 2023: 4-5):

> Christianity arrived in the region we now call Ethiopia circa 324 AD and the Pauline universalism that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female" (Galatians 3.28) percolated into the ambient culture with the spread of Christianity, loosening ethnic and regional identities. The second vantage point is the introduction of Islam with the first migration of Muslims – the Hijira (circa 614 AD) – to Ethiopia. Like Christianity, Islam also introduced the idea of universality into Ethiopia. It asserted that "Mankind was one single nation" (The Holy Quran, Surat I-baqarah, 2:213), and that God "made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other)" (The Holy Quran, Surat I-hujurat, 49:13). It thus fostered practices that transcended regional and ethnic identities. Both Christianity and Islam have contributed to the passage from primary to secondary identification in that both have facilitated the emergence of the understanding and self-understandings of Ethiopians as "concreate universal" beings, who have the capability to go beyond their particular determinations as Amhara, Oromo, Tigre, Sidama, Afra, Gurage, Walayita, and so forth, and participate in the appropriation and practice of the universal principles and values of freedom, equality, solidarity and justice.

During the study period, the TPLF controlled 85% of Ethiopia's top defense command as well as public entities such as the national airlines, the shipping lines, the roadways authority, and the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia. The TPLF controlled the entire state apparatus, including

strategic ministries such as the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. One of the fertile regions in Ethiopia, Gambella, had 300 investors and 299 of them were from Tigray region (Sissay, 2022: 22). The investors received the land for free from the TPLF-controlled government for the purpose of development but used the land as collateral to get loans from the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia. After receiving billions of Ethiopian *Birr*, the investors used the money to build luxury apartments in the capital and defaulted on their loans. The TPLF-controlled Commercial Bank of Ethiopia merely wrote off the debt as non-performing loans. Gambella state officials were unable to recover their land and, fearing reprisals, did not contest the TPLF's corrupt practices (ibid.).

Tigray represents only 6% of the Ethiopian population and yet, because the TPLF guerrilla fighters overthrew the military regime of the Derg, members of the TPLF in particular and the Tigrayan elite in general controlled almost the entire political machine. Such a zero-sum oligarchy created serious resistance against the Tigrayan people in general and the TPLF in particular. The TPLF felt that they could do whatever they wished to do while in power. They built four airports in their region, two of which were built within a distance of 60 km from each other, while other non-Tigrayan regions do not have even one airport (ibid.). What does such a political culture mean to other ethnic groups, particularly the competing Amhara and Oromo ethnic communities? It exacerbates the opposition against the incumbent TPLF rule, mostly in an unpeaceful way. The incumbent government will do its best to remain in power while the opposition will do its level best to overthrow the incumbent government. The incumbent government crushes its opponents, as it is not willing to share economic resources and political power fairly. The incumbent TPLF felt that it could manipulate, divide-and-rule the two major ethnic groups in Ethiopia, namely the Oromo and Amhara. If the divide-and-rule strategy did not work, since the TPLF controlled the entire coercive power in the country, they believed they could suppress any opposition by force. Such political calculations and political culture are not new in Ethiopia. The military regime and the imperial regimes attempted a similar technique but without success. The result of not drawing lessons from past governments is political instability and chaos.

The swindle in Gambella by TPLF operatives illustrates the predatory patron-client relation of neo-patrimonalism in action. It was "predatory" as it acquired all the investment opportunities in the region and left nothing for others. It can be classified as a "hybrid" form of neo-

patrimonalism because the so-called "investors" grabbed the land, borrowed money from the bank, and reinvested the money in lucrative businesses in Addis Ababa using the regulated policies intended for the benefit of the region. Again, what made the patron-client relation during the study period (1991-2017) different from most other African countries is that there was no "big man" per se. There was only the TPLF, whose members, particularly the central committee and powerful military leaders, managed the patron-client relationships. The clients mostly cooperated with their patron (the TPLF members) for fear of retribution at the expense of their people. However, there was also a "carrot" in the process. In the Gambella case mentioned above, the regional political leaders and the president remained in power with all the privileges the position allowed them. Clearly, they would be hated by their people while favored by the TPLF operatives.

Using Van de Walle's classification of neo-patrimonial practices, the TPLF patron-client relation would fall under "elite clientelism" where only the political leaders received either a reward or a threat.

As the leader of the party and prime minister of the country, Meles Zenawi was indeed very powerful inside the TPLF. However, the TPLF central committee members and military leaders were also powerful, all working toward the same objective namely, to achieve political hegemony.

As TPLF is an ethnically organized political party, the practice of neo-patrimonalism as detailed above fomented neglect, insecurity, and tension among and between the ethnic groups. This led to political instability and political violence in the country.

6.3 Ethiopian nation-building and identity creation

This section shows how nation-building and identity creation were hindered and how the hindrances in state formation ultimately strengthened the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan identities and in the long run helped them to develop their political cultures.

For the demographic question, "How would you like to be identified?" 66% of the Oromo respondents preferred to be called "Oromo" rather than "Ethiopian." For the same question, 31% of the Oromo educated elites want to be called "Ethiopian." During the study period, an Oromo

prime minister was selected from the ruling party. This might be one of the reasons why over 31% of Oromo educated elites chose to be called "Ethiopian." Alternatively, Oromo nationalism may have reached its peak during the study period. Although the strength and weakness of their political position has changed from time to time, and although not all Oromo political parties agree with the notion, popular Oromo political parties such as the OLF have been promoting the establishment of an independent Oromo nation for a while (Merera, 2002: 104).

Of the Tigrayan respondents, 72% would like to be called "Tigrayan" and 20% of them would like to be called "Ethiopian." It is interesting that the very ethnic group that claimed to be the foundation or birthplace of Ethiopia and that ruled the nation for centuries and most recently governed the country through a multi-party coalition for over 27 years, declined to be called "Ethiopian." In comparison, the Oromo educated elites who complained of being second-class citizens in their own country, who considered living in a united Ethiopia as "colonialism" and who referred to the Ethiopian state as "an empire," responded more positively in the survey than the Tigrayan educated elites. Regarding the nation-building process of Ethiopia, a work still in progress, there is no doubt that Tigrayans played a significant role in developing progressive religious, political, military, and cultural institutions and policies. There was continuous leadership and involvement of Tigrayan notables in nation-building from the 18th century, including nobleman Ras Mikael Sehul to Emperor Yohannes IV, the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, and the noted General Ras Alula in the 19th century. The history of Ethiopia is decorated with distinguished names from Tigray, Oromo, and Amhara and their contribution cannot be understated. In addition to the visible contribution of Tigrayans to Ethiopian history, Tigray has been a battleground for centuries: there have been countless battles between Ethiopian armies and Turkish, Italian, Sudanese, and Egyptian soldiers. Notable generals, including Ras Alula played a vital role in defending the territory of Ethiopia and its sovereignty. In more recent history, there was war for over 30 years between Eritrea and Ethiopia, and Tigray became the main zone of conflict. Hundreds of thousands of troops were mobilized, creating movement from the center to Tigray and leading to intermarriage and intermingling. Such historical foundations and historical memories seem to be overshadowed by the current war and disagreements between the TPLF and the federal government. The Tigrayan educated elites would like to be considered as equal partners despite their minority in number. One of the

leading scholars of Tigray, Dr. Mahari Taddele Maru, wrote for the *Addis Standard* newspaper on December 23, 2019 with regard to the feeling of being a minority as follows:

> How could the cradle of Ethiopiawinet become the "enemy" of Ethiopia? The answer lies in the inability of Ethiopian elites including from Tigray and mainly from the numerically larger cultures to properly govern diversity in the country. Unfortunately, proponents of majoritarianism may now repeat this failure of governance that led to protracted civil war and bloodshed earlier. The politics of the "tyranny of numbers" has reduced Tigray's long-standing role to almost zero, thus bringing to the forefront the second dilemma, that of numbers. The trend is worsening in that it denies any political space for present-day Tigray and its people, even to receive investors in its capital Mekelle. They are therefore fearful that majoritarian democracy will be used to permanently deprive them of any role in Ethiopia's future, or to develop their region, applying policies as they see fit. Some politicians from numerically larger communities now depict Tigray as anti-democratic despite its having fought for a democratic and federative dispensation in Ethiopia. This politics of numbers pushes Tigray and Tigrayans into a corner and stokes anger and resentment against the old absolutist, and the emerging majoritarian, elites.

One of the major fault lines between the federal government and the TPLF, which governed the country for over 27 years, was that Tigray, despite its minority in numbers, should be treated like the Oromo or Amhara regional states (Merera, 2002: 175-180).

Of the Amhara educated elites, 89% responded that they would like to be called "Ethiopian." Only 6% of them chose to be called "Amhara." The Amhara identity is a very controversial concept. For diverse reasons, the Amhara have always been supporters of Ethiopian unity. One of the reasons could be that there are many Amhara rulers in Ethiopian history compared to other ethnic groups in Ethiopia. Tigray has had one, but the Oromo have had none. However, most of the Ethiopian kings, including Emperor Haile Selassie, are believed to have Oromo blood. Another reason could be that the Amhara feel that they are mostly responsible for the creation of Ethiopia, like the Tigrayans, but as senior partners. Because of their population size and because their language, Amharic, is the federal working language, they also feel superior compared to the Tigrayans. Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan ethnic groups constitute about 67% of the country's population: Amhara 27%, Oromo 34%, and Tigrayan 6%, according to the latest Ethiopian Population Census conducted in 2007. There has been long-standing distrust among and between these groups.

Before 1991, it was very rare for Ethiopians to say that they were Amhara. In principle, anyone who spoke Amharic fluently was considered to be Amhara. Prior to 1991, people in general preferred to be identified based on their home province, such as Gojjam, Wollo, Gonder, Wollega, Tigre, Harare, Diredawa, Arsi, etc. It was also common to introduce oneself by one's place of birth, such as Yifate, Adwa, Dembidollo, Dessie, Bulga, Debrebrhan, Assela, Gaynte, Debremarkos, etc. Teshale (1995: 178) explains the complexity of Amhara identity:

> Other than Amhara meaning Christian, the "traditional" Amhara literati identified themselves along lines of *beher*. *Beher* does not mean "nation," à la Stalin. Those who thought so and translated nation as *beher* made a mistake. *Za behere* (of the *beher* of) Dima, Lasta, Syint, Bulga, Manz, etc. – this is how the "traditional" Amhara intelligentsia identified themselves. *Beher* means land. While the "traditional" Amhara intelligentsia define their identity as *beher,* the Amhara peasants refer to their *gaye* (locality) of their birth. Both *gaye* and *beher* refer to natal places and ancestral graves. This was the double identity of the Amhara, religious and natal.

According to Teshale (1995), anyone who speaks Amharic well and converted to Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, can easily be assimilated into the ruling class. However, the Tigrayan and Oromo elites do not agree with Teshale's assumption. Merera (2002), for instance, considers such assimilation as losing one's identity completely. "The defeated Oromo elite were in a far worse position. They had to change their language, culture, religion and even names as well as occupy a status disproportionate to their number" (2002: 63).

To contextualize the concept of "Amhara" within Ethiopian politics, it may be important to explain and analyze further. In 1991 the TPLF overthrew the military regime and invited political parties organized along ethnic lines to form a transitional government. Political parties based on ideology, such as the EPRP, WPE, EDU, and MEISON were not invited and not recognized by the TPLF at all. Most Amhara elites were pro-unity and belonged to ideology-based parties. Therefore, when the transitional government was established, there was no single party representing the Amhara ethnic group. The TPLF-led government, however, recruited and formed an Amhara party loyal to the TPLF called the Amhara Democratic Party (ADP), formerly known as the ANDM, which assumed governance of the Amhara regions. The ADP was loyal to the TPLF and some of the Amhara party members were labeled as Tigrayans; therefore, the party could not earn trust among the Amhara elites. In the meantime, atrocities against Amhara people intensified. As Yohannes (2021: 110) indicates:

> In the earlier phase after the introduction of the federal setting, ethnically motivated massacres were immediately evident in areas known as Bedeno and Arba-Gugu, which are located in the Oromia regional state. The ethnically motivated violence targeted the Amhara, whom the TPLF-led EPRDF considered enemies of the state.

When the Amhara ethnic communities who were living outside traditional Amhara territories such as Gojjam, Gondar, Wollo, and Shewa suffered atrocities at the hands of local residents, and the TPLF-led government turned a blind eye, the Amhara elites felt that there was a need to organize and protect the Amhara population. Although it was not a popular act among the Amhara elites to organize along ethnic lines, in 1993 Asrat Woldeyess, a medical doctor and professor, established the All-Amhara Peoples Organization (AAPO). As the new party represented the true interests of the Amhara elites and was independent of the TPLF, it faced stiff resistance from the TPLF. Eventually the professor was imprisoned and died.

The Amhara elite's opposition to the TPLF-led government emanated from two grounds. First, they were against ethnic federalism; second, they were targeted by the TPLF-led government. Prior to the introduction of ethnic federalism, the Amhara elites could easily travel, work, and become successful anywhere in Ethiopia. They had been particularly visible in government administration and government bureaucracy. More Amhara lived outside their traditional regions than other ethnic groups. This was possible because Amharic was the national language and many Amhara were already established in better positions vis-à-vis the local people, mostly in Oromia and the southern part of Ethiopia during Menelik II's expansion period. Merera (2002: 67) elaborates:

> *Ketemas* (garrison towns) sprang up everywhere to support the occupation and pacification processes by the empire builders. Furthermore, to grab the new opportunities created in the south, the elite and the surplus population from the north flocked to the south as administrators, court officials, soldiers, interpreters and priests. An alien system of rule known as a *neftegna* (settlers) system of political, military and economic control through the intermediary of the gun was imposed on the southern people.

It was, therefore, clearly advantageous to strongly support Ethiopian unity. The Amhara elites were against the TPLF-led government because the TPLF in its 1976 manifesto and in its actions made clear its antagonism against past Amhara rulers. The TPLF made it a major policy that all ethnic groups had to stand against the Amhara. Such a policy made the Amhara elites bitterly fight TPLF rule from the outset.

Yohannes (2021: 5) laments that the TPLF punished the Amhara elites for their past achievements:

> Those who were perceived as historically powerful political groups, mostly Amhara, would be penalized for their past "perceived" success, meanwhile the political groups that replaced them, especially the most dominant ones in the post-1991 transition, would become winners, viewing the wealth of the state as their reward for the struggles from the civil war era and for the sacrifices they had made during that period. Thus, the vicious cycle continued.

What Yohannes (2021) meant by "past perceived success" was Menelik II's expansion and annexing the southern and western regions to the central part of Ethiopia. For the Oromo and other ethnic groups, the so-called "past successes" amounted to "colonialism" and exploitation. Merera (2002) believes there is a chance to democratize ethnic federalism and address past grievances if the Tigrayan elites stop monopolizing all state power; if the Amhara elites quit longing for imperial rule; and if the Oromo elites relinquish their aspiration to form an independent Oromia state. According to Merera (2002: 212-217), if these conditions are not met, the vicious cycle of political instability will continue.

Both Yohannes (2021) and Merera (2002) are concerned about the cycle of violence in Ethiopia, and both suggest that democratizing ethnic federalism may be the solution to political challenges in Ethiopia. Although their conclusion is almost the same, their perspectives are different: Yohannes represents the Amhara elites and Merera represents the Oromo elites, such that there is still no consensus on past political history. As previously discussed in this thesis, the interpretation of political history is the fault line of the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites.

The literature review, the survey outcome, and the interviews with the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites clearly show that there is no trust among and between these ethnic groups. According to David Easton (1975: 443), trust is "the subjective possibility that a citizen is convinced that the political system or parts of it will be able to deliver the necessary preferred outcomes, even though that person does not participate in the production of the outcomes." He further elaborates that, in the absence of political trust, fear will prevail and citizens will not believe government institutions are serving them fairly and worst of all, citizens will feel that their rights are not protected. Eventually they will not participate in politics wholeheartedly and

civil society will not develop properly (ibid.: 447). Easton (1975) seems to explain what has been happening in Ethiopia without mentioning Ethiopia. The educated elites do not believe the government institutions are serving them properly, they do not believe that individuals in general and their ethnic group in particular have equal rights when another ethnic group is in power. Hence, they decline to participate in the political process, and consequently there is no independent, vibrant and professional bureaucracy or civil society in the country. The combination of all these lacunae may lead to political instability and a vicious cycle of political violence.

6.4 Accusation and counter-accusation

This section explains how the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites compete against each other rather than cooperating. It also demonstrates how the elites do not just strive against each other but also instigate intrigue against each other. Blaming the other became a typical behavior of the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites, as validated by the survey results and interviews in this segment.

Even if Amhara and Tigray have more or less similar religions and traditions, their major fault line is competing for political hegemony. Tigrayan elites have believed, according to Fasika (2021), that Shewa Amhara illegally seized hegemonic power from the Tigrayan Emperor Yohannes IV. This resulted, according to Tigrayan elites, in the general economic backwardness of the Tigray region (Kahsay, 2005: 123). Tigrayans lost not only their hegemonic power but also economic opportunities that could have come by controlling state power. Fasika (2021) disagrees with the Tigrayan elite's view of the power shift from the Tigrayan emperor to an Amhara emperor as a peaceful and legal transfer of power. In fact, transfer of power from one emperor/king to the other in Ethiopia has always been illegal and violent in the long history of the country (Bahru, 1991: 223).

Tigrayan elites also have accused the Oromo, particularly the Shewan Oromo, of collaborating with Amhara rulers in the subjugation of Tigrayans (Fasika, 2021). The Oromo elites, on their part, hold consecutive Amhara and Tigrayan rulers responsible for dominating the Oromo for over a century and making the Oromo people second-class citizens in their own country (Merera, 2012: 110).

Whether during Emperor Menelik II's reign (ibid.: 87) or during the Derg regime, Ethiopia's top military positions were under the control of Oromo generals and army chiefs (Fasika, 2021). The Oromo elites, however, have dismissed or downplayed the fact that Oromo generals occupied top positions in the Ethiopian army during both regimes (Mekuria, 2011: 87). They argue that the Oromo generals did not represent, or bring development to, the Oromo population; rather, they were subservient to subsequent Amhara rulers (ibid.).

The OLF has been accused in several instances of killing many innocent ethnic Amhara living in Oromia region (Yohannes, 2021: 177). Although the OLF time and again vehemently denied the accusations (Lencho, 2021), many organizations, including the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRC, 2001: 32) accused the OLF of committing atrocities. During an interview by the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation in September 2021, the founder of the OLF, Lencho Letta, denied the involvement of the OLF in the Bedeno massacre, one of the localities in Oromia region where innocent ethnic Amhara were massacred en masse in 1992 (Yohannes, 2021: 167). He stated that the massacre was conducted by the OPDO, another Oromo political party that was part of the EPRDF coalition. Dima Negewo, another founder of the OLF, stated that it was the TPLF's army that killed hundreds of innocent Amhara ethnic groups living in Oromia (Dima, 2021). He claimed that the OLF army was in Bedeno during the massacre but was chased away by the TPLF army. The reason why the TPLF army killed innocent Amhara people living in Oromia was, according to Dima, because the TPLF wanted to ensure that the two bigger ethnic groups – Amhara and Oromo – would distrust and fight each other, as it would be the only way the TPLF could survive unchallenged (ibid.). The accusations of Dima (2021) and Lencho (2021), as well as the rhetoric that one ethnic group is responsible for the other's misery, clearly show the political culture of accusation and counter-accusation.

Lencho (2021) declared that the OLF had never settled its political differences, but the northerners – Amhara and Tigrayans – have always settled their political differences with violence. During the study period, in 2014, the OPDO erected a memorial monument in Arsi depicting the cutting of women's breasts by "Emperor Menelik II's soldiers" a century ago. Although the Amhara elites vehemently denied the incident took place, many Oromo elites accused Menelik II's soldiers of having committed numerous atrocities against innocent Oromo people in Oromia region. However, the Amhara accused the Oromo of committing atrocities

even during the 16th century. Abba Bahiry, a 16th-century monk in one of the monasteries in southern Ethiopia, wrote an account about the Oromo who killed innocent ethnic Amhara and burned down churches and destroyed religious artifacts (Getachew, 2002: 123-175).

Such accusations and counter-accusations, whether denied or confirmed, demonstrate that blaming others has become an integral part of the political cultures of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites.

The survey data also supports the existence of inter-ethnic condemnations and recriminations. For the survey question, "Who is responsible for the ethnic conflict in Ethiopia?" respondents from Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray answered to a greter or lesser extent blaming one another. Of the Tigrayan respondents, 56% blame the "Amhara rulers"; 49.3% blame the ethnic federalism that was introduced by the TPLF-led regime in 1991. Of the Oromo respondents, 29% also hold the TPLF responsible for the ethnic conflicts in the country. Blaming others for unpopular action or behavior, avoids responsibility and can be an excuse to continue the current behaviors, rather than examining the challenges and finding solutions. Blaming others can also serve to avoid accountability. The survey response may call for establishing transparent institutions where those who neglect their responsibility are held accountable.

Contrary to the data presented above, for the survey statement, "People take responsibility for their actions in Ethiopia," the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites responded almost unanimously that people do not take responsibility in Ethiopia – 52.7% of the Amhara respondents strongly disagreed, 27.3% disagreed, and in total over 80% of the Amhara respondents disagreed. Over 80% of Oromo respondents disagreed and 90% of Tigrayan educated elites disagreed that people in Ethiopia take responsibility. As the above data shows, respondents blamed each other for ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia and yet, they did not think that people take responsibility for their action. This is a dilemma that Ethiopia needs to work on. The data revealed the need for the educated elites in Ethiopia to look toward themselves before blaming each other.

If the elites initiate ethnic conflict, then it is the elites who can stop the conflict, and therefore, stakeholders, policymakers, and responsible groups, including the elites themselves, need to

work on solving ethnic conflict rather than being responsible for it. Avoiding responsibility may lead to blaming others and in turn could be the recipe for another round of conflict.

To contextualize the survey results, the same interview question was posed to the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan professors: "Who is responsible for the ethnic conflict in Ethiopia?" The Amhara professor said it was "clear that it is the TPLF." He claimed that the TPLF had been organizing people based on ethnic lines, and that their rhetoric was that ethnic communities were under attack from this or that community. For instance, a TPLF operative would notify an ethnic group that Amhara settlers were coming to take control of their territory. To ensure that the Amhara settlers did indeed attack, the TPLF provided finance, training, and even advisers to instigate conflict. The TPLF added an article to the 1995 Constitution stating that the Oromo had a "special interest" in Addis Ababa. The objective of this article was to ensure that the Oromo and Amhara would fight each other endlessly, as both ethnic groups live side by side in Addis Ababa. During the military regime and before, anyone could travel anywhere in the country without risking their security. Anyone could live anywhere without question. Amharic was spoken everywhere, and the country was unified under a central government. It was only after the introduction of ethnic federalism that the population no longer traveled freely and people who used to live as neighbors since time immemorial started killing each other, because the TPLF cadres were telling the regional elites that x and y were settlers and should not be there, etc.

The Amhara professor was asked why he thought the TPLF was acting as he claimed. In his view, it was because the TPLF was a minority party; the only way the TPLF could survive was by dividing and ruling the country, by creating chaos, and then appearing to be a mediator. Moreover, it was an authoritarian party, originally Marxist and Maoist, that did not believe in democracy.

Under the TPLF, there were nine regions, each with its own president, police force, governing body, and other institutiions of governace. The interviewer asked why the regional administrations cooperated with the TPLF even when their regions were being exploited. The TPLF, according to the Amhara professor, had a system of control called *gimgema* (evaluation): they assigned party insiders to all administrative units and supervised and monitored any

meetings happening in the regions. Those assigned reported directly to the TPLF and anyone who opposed the TPLF policy or decision, would be penalized. The TPLF central committee would meet and make decisions affecting not just the party or the Tigray regional states but the entire country. Once decisions were made by the TPLF central committee, those decisions would automatically be endorsed by all ethnic parties, whether they agreed or disagreed with them. No one dared to oppose a decision. Sometimes the decision would be against the interests of a particular regional state; however, it would endorse it. The TPLF central committee would get feedback on what opinions were voiced during the endorsement of a particular policy or order originally enacted by them. That was how they controlled all regional states. Many individuals were detained, tortured, or killed because they opposed the TPLF.

Those who witnessed the intimidation, harassment, and disappearances of those who opposed TPLF policy, would start to change their behavior or resign from their positions. Most officials of the regional government were hand-picked by TPLF operatives. Without TPLF approval, it was very rare to be appointed to a regional government position. Most of these rare appointees were on file for wrongdoings and their files would be kept by the TPLF, so that if one of them opposed a TPLF policy or program, they would be blackmailed. This happened on many occasions in all regions. Even for members of regional governments or the federal parliament, if they opposed the TPLF policy or program, the TPLF would orchestrate false accusations, revoke their parliamentary immunity, and they would be convicted and jailed.

Jean-Nicolas Bach (2011: 647) describes the TPLF *gimgema* (evaluation) as follows:

> Democratic centralism reveals above all the rigid and hierarchical structure of the EPRDP coalition and is, among others, illustrated by the *gimgema*. These "politico-administrative evaluations allow the appointment and discharge of civil servants and government officials to be manipulated and subverted." "Criticism" and "self-criticism" procedure is thus presented as "an instrument used to reprimand defects and mistakes in members." This practice inherited from the TPLF internal organization during the struggle is now at the center of the administrative system in which the ruling party finds a powerful way of controlling the affiliated party members.

The Amhara professor was asked why people did not organize around ideology or common cause, rather along than ethnic lines. He explained that the TPLF encouraged and supported only ethnically based parties. If a party organized around ideology or cause, then that party would be

an archenemy of the TPLF and would not be able to recruit members or organize meetings, since the regional states were organized along ethnic lines. The Ethiopian Democratic Party (EDP) and the CUD were cases in point. It was not illegal to establish such parties, but they could not operate in regions controlled by the TPLF and its affiliates, as the intimidation was too strong. Most of them operated in Addis Ababa, where the international diplomatic community observed what was going on, and the TPLF was somewhat concerned about the diplomatic community's opinion, as it depended mostly on international aid. EDP and CUD supporters, nevertheless, were intimidated, detained, or killed and some of their leaders were exiled or imprisoned. Dr. Birhanu Nega, Birtukan Medeksa, and many others had to lead lives of exile. Hence, people were afraid to be members of such parties. Business owners would lose their business, government employees would be fired or demoted, and therefore such parties could not operate easily.

The interviewer asked, "There are individuals and groups who are blaming past Amhara rulers for the current ethnic conflicts and crisis. What is your take on this?" The Amhara professor denied that past Amhara rulers had anything to do with current ethnic conflicts and dismissed this as typical TPLF rhetoric. The TPLF in its inaugural manifesto wrote that the Amhara were enemies of the Tigrayans. The TPLF claimed that the Amhara were hated by all nations and nationalities. What happened in Bedeno and Guraferda where ethnic Amhara were massacred, was the result of the TPLF's hateful strategy. The professor added that past Amhara rulers at first did not rule the country alone: the Oromo, the Tigrayans, and other ethnic groups participated in ruling the country. Furthermore, all the development you see in Ethiopia is the result of past Amhara rulers' nation-building. They laid the foundations for the modern school system, they established the first school, the first hospital, the first postal system, the first railroad, the first electrical system, the first water system – all modern state infrastructures laid down by past Amhara rulers. Instead of admiring the past achievements of Amhara rulers, those who hate Amhara – such as the TPLF – would like to tarnish the good name of the past Amhara rulers. Had it not been for Menelik II, there would be no Ethiopia. Menelik II galvanized the entire nation and its nationalities and defended the country against fascist Italy. Ethiopia is the result of past Amhara rulers, and they should not be blamed for ethnic conflicts.

The Amhara professor was asked, "Why do you think the TPLF stood against the Amhara past rulers? Why do you think it declared the Amhara enemies in its manifesto?" The professor said it was because the TPLF knew that the Amhara elites would not let the TPLF rule the country without democracy and fairness. The TPLF knew that the Amhara elites supported unity, not division and would not support ethnic federalism. They wanted to disempower the Amhara elites and exploit the country's resources alone. Their aim was to control the country's economy, build Tigray and eventually create an independent Tigray republic. For over 25 years, the TPLF controlled every sector of the economy. They built a huge party-owned conglomerate whose businesses did not pay government taxes; they unfairly competed with independent businesspeople and exploited the country's economy. They forced many Amhara businessmen/women out of business. They knew that, as a minority, they could not rule Ethiopia unless they divided the country.

The interviewer asked the Amhara professor what he, as an educated elite, did to expose the TPLF. He said that he had written many articles and spoke openly about it. He was not able to do more than this because he was afraid for his life and had to live for his family.

The Tigrayan professor said that it was "Amhara chauvinism" that was responsible for all the chaos in Ethiopia, when asked, "Who is responsible for the ethnic conflict in Ethiopia?" He further elaborated that the Amhara elites would like to think that Ethiopia is their private property and would like to control all aspects of life in the nation. The Amhara elites controlled power for centuries but accomplished no development and left no signs of progress; the country was known for poverty and famine. Markakis (2011: 188) elaborates:

> There was scarcely any investment for economic development in the north under the imperial regime, and none at all in Tigray. There was not a single industrial establishment in the province; an abattoir in Mekelle was the largest enterprise. The province was ravaged by famine in 1958-59, claiming the lives of an estimated 100,000 people in a population of a little more than 1.5 million. Tigray was the focal point of famine in 1972-4, and before it had time to recover, the province was struck an ever-greater blow in the famine of the early 1980s. Not surprisingly, the people of Tigray were inclined to link the misfortunes of their homeland to its political emasculation and to blame Amhara domination for their plight.

When the TPLF attempted to bring development to Ethiopia, the Amhara elites accused the TPLF of usurping political power, as though political power was an Amhara hereditary privilege.

They want a monopoly. The TPLF was able to enact the 1995 Constitution, which instituted each regional state as a nation. All these nations and nationalities were allowed to run their own affairs. Power was transferred from the few Amhara elites to the people who deserve it. Hence, there was economic progress, development, and peace. Reports from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), United Nations, and World Bank will confirm how well the economy performed during TPLF rule. New city train infrastructure was built in Addis Ababa, and the old Addis Ababa city was rebuilt. All modern city infrastructure in Ethiopia was the result of TPLF rule. The Amhara elites hate the Tigrayan people because they outperformed the Amhara. The nations and nationalities supported TPLF efforts to bring development to the country. The Amhara elites do not recognize the success of the TPLF; rather, they prefer to speak about the challenges.

The Tigrayan professor was then asked, "Why do you think there was stiff opposition against the TPLF, not just in Amhara but in Oromia and other parts of the country as well?"

He replied that it was the Amhara elites and their friends who orchestrated the opposition. Ethiopia is still a poor country with many unemployed people. Poverty augmented for centuries by illiteracy, could not be solved by 27 years of TPLF interventions. More time was needed to solve such economic backwardness. But the Amhara elites did not want to give the TPLF government time to fix the country's problems. They are powermongers. The current tactical alliance between the Amhara and Oromo elites will not last much longer because they do not agree on many issues, such as the special status of Addis Ababa. The Oromo have claimed that Addis Ababa belongs to them. The Amhara elites think they built the city by themselves. The Amhara elites would like to monopolize power, because they do not think they will survive unless they control everything in the country. The Amhara elites preach unity, but in practice, this is a deception. What they really want, is to control the country's economy. Such a lust for power would take the country to the abyss.

The interviewer asked about accusations made by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and other human rights organizations concerning human rights abuses and ill treatment of the opposition perpetrated by the TPLF.

The Tigrayan professor did not deny the fact that the TPLF had a bad human rights record but clarified that it was not the TPLF as a whole but only some of its members who did not follow

the TPLF's correct policy. He defended the TPLF as a just people's party. However, when asked why the TPLF still called itself the Tigray People's Liberation Front, when in fact the TPLF controlled all of Tigray and Ethiopia, and who were the people the TPLF were trying to liberate, the professor declined to comment, saying that he was not a member of the TPLF. The professor's evasiveness reveals a degree of uncertainty among the Tigrayan elite concerning the TPLF's ultimate goals.

According to Markakis (2011: 189):

> Though the TPLF proclaimed itself a nationalist movement fighting for Tigrayan self-determination, its position on the issue of independence was carefully hedged. Self-determination, it [the TPLF] claimed, "could result in anything from autonomy, federation, confederation, up to and including independence."

Markakis (2011) continued, saying that the TPLF had been accused of dividing and ruling the country, and had been blamed for the political instability in Ethiopia. The Tigrayan professor said it must be the Amhara elites who were propagating such false narratives. In Ethiopia, ethnic conflict has been there for ages but currently, when nations and nationalities exercised their constitutional rights, these conflicts became evident and clashes occurred. For centuries during Amhara rule, there was no social media or high-speed communication, otherwise many ethnic conflicts would have been recorded. The professor stated that, according to his many friends inside the TPLF, the TPLF had no intention to divide-and-rule the country; rather, the party was attempting to manage the tensions between diverse ethnic groups. Ethiopia, he continued, is a traditional country where pastoralists fight over grazing land, water, and other resources. This happens all over Africa, not just in Ethiopia. The Amhara elites would like to blame the TPLF for all the problems in the country. In fact, the TPLF was attempting to redress challenges built up over centuries and had succeeded in registering double-digit economic growth.

The Oromo professor was asked the same question posed to the Amhara and Tigrayan professors: "Who is responsible for the ethnic conflict in Ethiopia?" The Oromo professor's answer was that it was partly the TPLF and partly past Amhara rulers. Mainly, it was the TPLF that ruthlessly suppressed any opposition, because they were a minority and feared even a minor resistance. Whenever there was a disagreement, instead of solving the problem directly, they resorted to force, with the result that many innocent civilians were detained, killed, or exiled.

The TPLF labeled many opposition groups as terrorist: the OLF was one of them. Many people in Oromia were killed because they were labeled as OLF supporters, when in actual fact they were not. One of the professor's brothers who was not an OLF member, nor even interested in politics, was killed in broad daylight in front of his house.

The TPLF created surrogate political parties and exploited Oromo resources, evicted Oromo farmers living around Addis Ababa and sold the land for their own benefit. Those who resisted eviction were detained or killed. The TPLF attempted to control everything, from the military to the economy. In order to control everything, they had to divide-and-rule the country. They created conflict everywhere. While local people were fighting each other, the TPLF operatives looted the regions. There are many small tribes in Ethiopia. The TPLF, for instance, would support one of the tribes at the expense of another; conflict would arise and then the TPLF operatives could do whatever they wanted, as the local tribes turned against each other. That happened in Oromia, Gambella, Sidama, Amhara, Ethiopian Somali region, and many other regional states.

"Why do you think the OPDO was not able to withstand the TPLF operatives"? was the other question posed to the Oromo professor. He explained that the OPDO was a surrogate political party established by the TPLF. Some of the OPDO leadership were prisoners of war captured during the Ethio-Eritrea war.[12] They were recruited and managed by the TPLF, so the Oromo people did not trust them and did not cooperate with them. The OPDO had to use force all the time to implement its policies. Some of the OPDO officials were criminals and had bad public reputations. The TPLF deliberately appointed such people because it was easy to sack them or blackmail them. The majority of parliamentarians were members of the TPLF or affiliated parties. Regional and federal parliamentarians would be removed if they did not cooperate with the TPLF. The TPLF would orchestrate false accusations and revoke their parliamentary immunity. The Oromo people trusted the OLF, but the TPLF labeled the party a terrorist organization. Many OLF soldiers were killed, imprisoned, or exiled.[13]

[12] Two of the Oromia regional presidents were prisoners of war in Eritrea: Abba Dulla Gemeda (2005-2010) and Kumma Demekssa (1995-2001).

[13] The relationships between the TPLF/EPRDF and the OLF and the formation of the OPDO are well explained by Markakis (2011: 199):

The interviewer challenged the Oromo professor about the alleged massacre of the Amhara community in Bedeno, Oromia region by the OLF, asking, "Isn't killing innocent civilians terrorism?"

The professor replied that, yes, killing innocent civilians is terrorism, but the OLF did not massacre the Amhara community in Bedeno. It was the TPLF soldiers. The Amhara community lived undisturbed in Bedeno for over a hundred years. They lived in harmony with the local community. They were killed when the TPLF came to the region because it was part of the TPLF's divide-and-rule technique. They wanted the Amhara community in Oromia and Amhara in general to rise up against the OLF and Oromo community. When the massacre happened, war was going on between the OLF and the TPLF. The TPLF used the opportunity to tarnish the OLF's reputation by massacring the Amhara community and labeling the OLF as a terrorist organization.

Such massacres happened in many localities in Ethiopia during the TPLF regime. Before the TPLF, people were living in harmony and in relative peace. It was only after the TPLF's divide-and-rule policy that such massacres and ethnic conflicts mushroomed across the country.

The TPLF did not learn from past Amhara rulers. Previous Amhara rulers also divided and ruled the country, making the Oromo people slaves in their own land. Amhara rulers appointed Amhara administrators who did not speak Affan Oromo and who despised the Oromo culture. During the Oromo expansion in the 16th century, when a community was defeated, the overpowered people were treated fairly. The conquered would have rights equal to the victors. The professor's view is supported by Teshale (1995: 39):

> The only analogy to the magnitude of the Menelikan expansion was the Oromo expansion of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But the Oromo had occupied land, for they were in search of grazing and settlement space; the Amhara "occupied" people, for their aim was tribute exaction, to enhance the life of the leisure class. While the "Oromo genius for assimilation quickly claimed any non-Oromo, defeated or

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The OLF's misgivings were confirmed at the end of April 1990 with the announcement of the birth of an Oromo Peoples' Democratic Organization (OPDO) from the womb of the EPRDF. Formed by Oromo prisoners of war, the newborn entity became a member of the EPRDF. The OLF resignedly noted this was not the first time a "subsidiary Oromo organization" had been created by the Abyssinians. In fact, this transparent ploy killed all hope that a genuine national political consensus could be reached under an EPRDF regime; and that was even before the regime had come to power.

> otherwise" (Mohammed Hassen, 1990: 21), Amhara conquerors imposed a rigid class system of ruler and ruled. The relative egalitarianism of the former and the hierarchical order of the latter led to the different results of their territorial conquests.

The Amhara exploited Oromo resources and did not bring development to the Oromo people. They gave the Oromo derogatory names and denigrated their people and culture. They dispossessed the Oromo from their land and made the Oromo farmers lead a life of servitude.

The Amhara rulers imposed their culture and their way of life on the Oromo people and other ethnic groups – this legacy is still visible. Merera (2002: 62) explains further what the Oromo professor meant by "legacy":

> Menelik brought together several dozen ethnic groups to live under one polity. But the partners in Menelik's polity were not equals. The expansion and consolidations of the empire-state correspondingly evoked a new phenomenon: elite competition and conflict in a far larger multi-ethnic polity. The seed of future conflict was sown when the victorious Amhara elite of Shewa led by Menelik and his successors began to run the country as a personal fiefdom by imposing their language, culture and, in certain cases, their religion … While the Amhara elites of Shewa were able to establish what seemed a permanent dominance, the non-Amhara elites were reduced to inferior positions with permanent grievances.

Had the Amhara rulers introduced a fair political system, such as democracy, the TPLF would not have come into the picture in the first place and the crisis would not continue.

The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan professors stated who they thought is responsible for the ethnic conflict in Ethiopia, but none of them blamed their own ethnic party or ethnic community. This is a pattern typical of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites'political cultures. The literature review, the survey results, and the interviews support the argument that the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites have exhibited a consistent pattern of blaming each other and they do not accept that their own ethnic group or party could also be responsible for any wrongdoings.

The Amhara and Tigrayan educated elites would like to justify their hegemony by claiming economic success; however, the economic success they claim brought neither economic development nor did it pull Ethiopia out of poverty. The three educated elites blame each other for capturing the state and exploiting the nation's economic resources for their own ethnic group. It appears that the economy is one of the major sources of conflict among the three ethnic groups. The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan professors labeled one another authoritarian, but

none showed signs of exercising democracy. None of them discussed human rights violations and the lack of democracy in the country. They did not wish to admit that autocratic rule jeopardized the nation-building process in Ethiopia. The Oromo professor blamed both the Amhara and Tigrayans for mismanagement and mistreatment of the Oromo people. The professor also complained that Oromo resources had been exploited by both the Amhara and Tigrayans. The professor felt that the Oromo elites were paralyzed and unable to run their region properly because of the TPLF's destructive regime.

6.5 Competing views of Ethiopian state institutions

This section discloses how inequity, corruption, and incompetence in state institutions in Ethiopia shaped the political cultures of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites in the period 1991-2017.

Political culture not only deals just with the political sphere but also refers to the "system of beliefs about patterns of political interactions and political institutions" (Pye and Verba, 1965: 516). Hence, analyzing state institutions revealed the elites' political cultures and their hegemonic ambitions.

For the survey question, "Should there be a quota system/affirmative action in Ethiopia so that potential federal employees are hired on the basis of their ethnicity?" 46% of the Tigrayan, 26% of Oromo, and 22% of Amhara respondents said "Yes." The data shows that the Tigrayans supported the quota system, unlike their Amhara and Oromo counterparts. Perhaps the Tigrayan educated elites learned a lesson from their unsuccessful and unfair TPLF governance. However, 48% of the Amhara and 52.7% of the Oromo educated elites answered "No." If their "No" means that they want to take advantage of the collapse of the TPLF as an opportunity to commandeer and occupy government positions, then the vicious cycle of instability may continue. If their "No" means they want to introduce meritocracy into the government system, then it will be the advent of a new political culture in Ethiopia. Transparent, representative, and inclusive government may break the cycle of zero-sum politics and unfairness in the Ethiopian government system, which may lead to political stability and democracy. Whether the ethnic groups or group spearheading the next Ethiopian government will learn and correct the mistakes of the TPLF and introduce a new political culture of inclusiveness, only time will tell.

The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites who responded to the survey questions collectively agreed that the Ethiopian government bureaucracy does not employ people fairly, although their reasoning differs substantially as will be seen below in the interview replies.

In response to the question, "Does the Ethiopian government bureaucracy employ people fairly?" the Amhara professor stated that during the rule of Emperor Haile Selassie and during the military regime, the Ethiopian bureaucracy used to employ people based on merit. A typical example was Addis Ababa University, which used to have the best professors in the country. In 1992, after seizing power, the first thing the TPLF did was to fire 42 of the best professors from Addis Ababa University, most of whom happened to be of Amhara ethnic origin. It was the tip of the iceberg. The TPLF did not respect academic freedom and did not care about the quality of education and the future of the country. To make matters worse, the TPLF employed people based on their loyalty and partisanship, rather than their educational background and experience. Individuals were given top positions in all government institutions and in many cases were employed without qualifications just because they were members of the TPLF or spoke Tigrigna. TPLF guerrilla fighters were given positions in almost all government departments. As some of the TPLF members did not have even a high school diploma, they had to attend afternoon high school sessions while working for the government. As a result, the government institutions were not efficient, and people struggled to get their business done through the bureaucracy. Corruption and mismanagement were rampant. In short, the TPLF captured the Ethiopian state, abused its power, hired government bureaucrats based on loyalty, and fired ethnic Amharas and anyone who opposed their policies.

The Amhara professor was asked a follow-up question, namely, why did the TPLF fire ethnic Amharas from the government bureaucracy and institutions? The professor explained that when the TPLF was a guerrilla group, sympathizers and supporters used to collaborate with them and pass sensitive information to them. The TPLF had a history of sabotaging the government and so when they assumed power, they presumed that the Amhara would retaliate in like manner. Therefore, in the name of reform, they purged most of the Amhara elites from the government bureaucracy and retained only a handful of those Amhara who were loyal to the TPLF. The TPLF fired top ethnic Amhara elites from government bureaucracy calling them "chauvinist"– at least this was the term they used when they fired the 42 professors from Addis Ababa University.

The professor's reasoning about why the TPLF fired most of the ethnic Amharas from government bureaucracy was that the TPLF was afraid the bureaucrats would not cooperate with them when they attempted to implement their ethnic agenda. A second reason, another example of neo-patrimonialism, could be that the TPLF had to reward its guerrilla fighters by providing them jobs in government. All privileges and advantages would be given to TPLF members and their supporters. For instance, the majority of international scholarships were given to TPLF members or their cohorts. TPLF officials were given free accommodations, government cars, and allowances. There was no difference between the TPLF as a party and as a government bureaucracy. TPLF party officials would issue commands to any government office at any time. This threw the various functionaries into confusion. It was a deliberate tactic to undermine confidence in their decision-making. A third possible reason could be, according to the professor, the hegemonic ambition of the TPLF: they wanted to control the bureaucracy and national resources from top-to-bottom to ensure their policy was implemented with no resistance.

The Amhara professor was asked to name the most important institution in Ethiopia. During the time of Emperor Haile Selassie and even during the military regime, most of the Ethiopian government institutions were highly functional and reputable, but when the TPLF came to power, these institutions were deliberately destroyed, their budgets reduced, and their best brains fired. The personnel of the institutions became mediocre. Most of the former civil servants had to leave government bureaucracy and either start their own business or leave the country. It was an intentional TPLF strategy to weaken the federal institutions and build up the party's power in the regions. In the early days of the TPLF, some of the federal institutions were looted by the TPLF and TPLF members even physically dismantled some valuable equipment, such as generators, and shipped them to Tigray. The TPLF demobilized and disbanded the long-standing national defense forces. The Ethiopian air force used to be the most professional and well-trained force in the country. The national defense forces had been built up since Emperor Menelik II's time. The nation continued to invest resources and energy to build the professional army and Emperor Haile Selassie modernized it. The TPLF did not care about such a national institution. The entire chain of command was taken over by TPLF guerrilla fighters. The most valuable armaments were taken to Tigray. That was why many Amhara elites asserted that it was a deliberate action by the TPLF to weaken or destroy federal institutions. The professor felt that there were no

longer any important institutions in Ethiopia. All of them had been weakened or destroyed by the TPLF. The professor added that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) used to be the most powerful institution in Ethiopia. According to the EOC canon, no matter what, a patriarch could not be replaced while alive. In 1991, after toppling the military regime, the TPLF noted that the EOC patriarch was Amhara. Breaching all church rules, the TPLF forced Patriarch Merkorios to flee the country and replaced him with Patriarch Paulose who was from Tigray and a supporter of the TPLF. When the Orthodox congregations opposed the move, the TPLF used excessive force to suppress the opposition. The TPLF had respect neither for federal institutions nor for the constitution itself. Recently, in September 2020, Tigray regional state, which is administered by the TPLF, refused to cooperate with the federal government and held elections in contravention of the Ethiopian Constitution, which exclusively mandated the federal government to administer elections in all regions.

The Amhara professor was asked what advantage the TPLF gained by weakening or destroying the federal institutions. The professor answered that the immediate advantage for the TPLF was to loot the federal institutions and build up Tigray, while the long-term advantage was to ensure that no one would challenge the TPLF by the time it declared Tigray an independent state. For instance, some of the nationalized businesses, such as the Ethiopian airlines, one of the most successful and profitable business enterprises in the country, was taken over by Tigrigna speakers. The TPLF fired the Amhara elites from all lucrative government-owned enterprises and replaced them with its own members. The TPLF established partisan business enterprises that competed unfairly with both private and nationalized companies and agencies. The latter included construction and engineering companies, Ethiopian Airlines, Ethiopian Shipping Lines, and the fertilizer import agency. Some of these government-owned enterprises went bankrupt while the TPLF party's companies amassed profit. The TPLF blamed the Amhara elites for unfairly taking government jobs and yet they themselves also took over government positions. They employed a few professionals from other ethnic groups just to pretend that there was ethnic diversity in the government bureaucracy, but in truth the TPLF dominated all federal departments, institutions, agencies, and businesses.

According to the Amhara professor, the TPLF assumed that Ethiopian government institutions were controlled by the Amhara elites, therefore weakening or destroying these institutions would

disempower the Amhara elites. The TPLF wanted to create their own elite class and their own political system. The professor believed that the TPLF planned to establish an independent state of Tigray and in order to implement such a plan, the federal institutions which might challenge any such proposal, should be destroyed.

The last question posed to the Amhara professor was, "What must be done to develop a competent and trustworthy civil service and government institutions which are accepted by all Ethiopians?" In reply, the professor declared that not only must the bureaucracy and government institutions be changed, but until the 1995 Constitution changes, there will be no transformation in the government bureaucracy and institutions. Ethnic federalism has direct and indirect negative impacts on the fairness of the bureaucracy and the impartiality of government institutions. As long as ethnic federalism exists, there will always be elements of partisanship and favoritism: political parties will be organized along ethnic lines; the winning party would be from one of the ethnic groups; and very likely the winning ethnic party would reward its members with government positions.

"What about a quota system?" He replied that whether a quota system was introduced or not, under ethnic federalism, the unfairness will continue. What would the quota system be based on? Ethnicity? Gender? Economic disparity? If the quota system were based on ethnicity, then the bureaucracy and federal institutions would not provide efficient service and could not be impartial. This is because the emphasis would be on the relative proportion of ethnicities represented, not on the competence and quality of service provided by the government.

The Tigrayan professor was also asked whether the Ethiopian government bureaucracy employed people fairly. He explained that the TPLF attempted to build a professional civil service, but the Amhara elites continuously obstructed their efforts. The Amhara elites controlled the entire government structure top-to-bottom, since Ethiopia's bureaucracy started to take form during Emperor Menelik II's rule. But Ethiopia belongs to all its nationalities, not just the Amhara. What the TPLF did through the 1995 Constitution was to create an equal opportunity for other ethnic groups to be represented in the government bureaucracy. This reform roused huge resistance from the Amhara elites who had controlled the bureaucracy for centuries; only blue-collar jobs had been given to other nations and nationalities. What the TPLF did, was allow all nations and nationalities to access white-collar jobs with opportunities for advancement. The

Amhara elites' excuse for excluding other ethnic groups from the bureaucracy was that they were not well-educated and did not have the skills to work in government institutions. However, the Amhara government neither provided them with educational opportunities nor did it establish schools in their localities. What the TPLF did, was to provide educational opportunities for all nations and nationalities, empowering them with short-term training and building thousands of schools and over 40 new universities. The Amhara elites did not like the new changes, as their privileges dwindled. The TPLF attempted to change the unfair bureaucratic system, but it was not easy for them to dismantle the Amhara elite's kleptocracy and cronyism and root out corruption in the system in just 27 years.

The interviewer pointed out that the Amhara elites accuse the Tigrayan elites of perpetuating the same system of corruption, kleptocracy, and cryptocracy. The Tigrayan professor dismissed this as one of the Amhara elites' tactics to obstruct the TPLF's reforms, adding that the Amhara elites blame Tigrayans for everything. When the Amhara elites controlled the entire government system, the Tigrayan elites challenged the Amhara elites by indicating how unfair and unsustainable the system had become. The Tigrayan elites were not concerned by the Amhara elites' top-to-bottom control; their concern was for fairness, independence, and professionalism. When the Tigrayan elites introduced bureaucratic and institutional reforms, the Amhara elites were number one in opposing the reforms because they were the ones who were going to lose their privileged positions. The Amhara elites' concern was why the Tigrayan elites were taking over the Ethiopian civil service, not why they were reforming and improving the system. If there had been fairness, independence, and professionalism, then the Tigrayan elites would have cooperated and eschewed military confrontation with the Amhara elites. Empowering nations and nationalities should be supported, but the Amhara elites support it only when it benefits them. The IMF, World Bank, and other international financial institutions funded the Ethiopian institutional reform policies elaborated by the TPLF in collaboration with nations and nationalities in Ethiopia. Elites representing diverse nations and nationalities would be the appropriate group to have a say on policies elaborated for their benefit. No one would expect those who lost privileges to say anything worthwhile about policy reform. The Amhara had a chance to introduce institutional and bureaucratic reforms in Ethiopia but did not do that and when the TPLF did it, all the Amhara elites did was to obstruct and complain. This was not new;

it was the Amhara elites' typical behavior. The Amhara elites were experts in "character assassination and oral savagery." Instead of cooperating with the TPLF and bringing sincere reform and development to the country, the Amhara elites conspired against and eroded the bureaucratic and institutional reforms of the TPLF. The Amhara elites believed that they must be in power to bring change to the country. They did not accept change initiated by others, they did not cooperate, and they considered everything as conspiracy, because it was part of their political culture. The Amhara elites are one of the major reasons why change and development are not coming to Ethiopia.

The Tigrayan professor was also asked to name the most important institution in Ethiopia. In the professor's view, until the TPLF toppled the military regime and took over Ethiopia's institutions and bureaucracy, the system was outdated and had been run by Amhara elites as if it belonged to them. It was very difficult to distinguish between private and public institutions. It was a system of kleptocracy where one had to bribe government officials to get ahead. Once the TPLF assumed power, it had a responsibility to change the old system. However, the TPLF and its affiliate parties faced stiff resistance from the Amhara elites and could not completely achieve their reforms. Nevertheless, one can see best practices and innovative changes made in the government system here and there, although there is still a long way to go.

The Tigrayan professor was asked a final question: "What must be done to develop a competent and trustworthy civil service and government institutions which are accepted by all Ethiopians?" He answered that if the TPLF reforms had been implemented without the Amhara elites' blockade, by now we would see independent and competent civil servants serving government institutions in Ethiopia. In Ethiopia, no matter how brilliant an idea or concept one has, if one does not belong to the Amhara ethnic group, one's idea will not be taken seriously by the Amharas. If the idea is generated by a Tigrayan intellectual, the idea will be supported by many Tigrayans but not by Oromo or Amhara intellectuals; it is either rejected outright without consideration or viewed suspiciously. The Amhara elites neither generate a policy or reform that is acceptable and beneficial to all, nor accept others' innovative reforms and policies, such as those of the TPLF. The Amhara elites obsess day and night to ensure that they remain in power at any cost. They have a problem working respectfully with others and accepting others' ideas. When others generate innovative ideas, the Amhara elites start to diminish the concept and

criticize them without sufficient evidence, eventually killing the ideas. This is the problem in Ethiopia. This is the result of the Amhara elites' disrespect for other ethnic groups, and mistrust of others. The Amhara elites think any idea generated by others will eventually harm the Amharas, which is not necessarily true. Therefore, government bureaucracy and institutional reform should take place in Ethiopia. The end result of the reforms should be a fair and transparent system where all government entities employ without bias and act effectively.

"Is it important to introduce a quota system in Ethiopia?" was the follow-up question posed to the Tigrayan professor. The professor answered that, if a quota system must be introduced, it should not be based on population size, but on allocating the number of job openings equally among the nine regional states. However, such a quota system would complicate the federal hiring process; therefore, basing it strictly on education and experience may suffice for the time being.

The Oromo professor, in answer to the question, "Does the Ethiopian government bureaucracy employ people fairly?" replied that the Ethiopian bureaucracy had never employed people fairly. The Oromo in particular had no chance to get higher positions in the civil service, as the federal working language was Amharic and all government employees were expected to speak Amharic fluently. The Ethiopian government bureaucracy had been controlled by the Amhara political elite for ages. The Ethiopian government awarded top jobs to a few well-educated Oromo just to tell the world that the Oromo exist in Ethiopia. When applying for the civil service, Oromo candidates would be recognized by their Oromo names in the screening process and during the interview process by their accent; thus, it was easy for the Amhara bureaucrats to discriminate and exclude them from government jobs. Only those with Amharic names got government jobs. If one finds other ethnicities employed in Ethiopian bureaucracy, it is because they were of exceptional caliber or mere tokens of equal opportunity. During the rule of Emperor Haile Selassie and the military regime, if you were Amhara or had a relative working in the bureaucracy, it was easy to get a government job. Most Amhara elites thought it was their privileged domain. Nepotism and bribes were a common phenomenon at the time. The TPLF attempted to reduce the number of Amhara elites in the government bureaucracy but because they had been there for over a century, it was practically impossible to purge all of them. The tragedy was that all the top government jobs held by the Amhara elites were filled by the TPLF

and its supporters. Instead of identifying the root causes of the unfair bureaucracy, the TPLF just repeated what the Amhara bureaucrats had done. It appears that the TPLF was not against the archaic and unfair Ethiopian bureaucratic system, rather they wanted to replace the Amhara elites and control the public service. The TPLF introduced a weird system where the top positions were given to ethnic elites, but the positions were symbolic. The person who was hired to run a particular government office had no power to decide on any issues. They would be given a luxury car, a government house, a huge salary, and other fringe benefits, but no power. These individuals were used by the TPLF as public relation or propaganda assets; their pictures and names were shown in all propaganda outlets to inform the Ethiopian people and international donors that a diversity of nations and nationalities was in charge. Deputies and other low-ranking officials who were assigned by the TPLF would have real power. That was how the TPLF controlled the government bureaucracy and institutions. During the TPLF regime, employment in the civil service was based on loyalty to the TPLF. Once Meles Zenawi was asked why the government bureaucracy was so mediocre. His answer was that the TPLF appointed people to government offices so that they would implement government policies (by government policies what he meant was TPLF policies) with great loyalty. His answer clearly showed what the TPLF thought about government bureaucracy. Hence, there was no fairness, no meritocracy in the civil service. If someone was politically loyal, they could get promoted without fulfilling the necessary educational or experiential criteria.

The Oromo professor was also asked to name the most important institution in Ethiopia. For the Oromo, the most important institution was the *Gadda* system, but Menelik II and his soldiers destroyed it a century ago. Since then, the institutions built in Ethiopia were designed to control and administer the Oromo and others under the Amhara elites. The TPLF repeated what the Amhara rulers did for a century. Therefore, there are no non-partisan government institutions in Ethiopia. Most Ethiopian government institutions exploit Oromo resources and assets. If one were to count the number of Oromo elites in the Ethiopian government system, one would find a much smaller number compared to Amhara and Tigrayan elites. The Oromo population is the biggest in Ethiopia and yet is significantly underrepresented in Ethiopian government institutions.

The same final question was also asked of the Oromo professor: "What must be done to develop a competent and trustworthy civil service and government institutions which are accepted by all Ethiopians?" He replied that a quota system should be introduced into Ethiopia's civil service. Government departments, agencies, and institutions should hire people fairly in a transparent and open process. During the Haile Selassie empire and the military period, the bureaucracy and government institutions were completely controlled by the Amhara elites; during the TPLF period the Tigrayan elites took their turn. These upheavals will continue until a quota system is introduced in Ethiopia. Ethiopia's government institutions and civil service should represent all its people. Ethiopia belongs to all nations and nationalities, not just the Amhara or Tigrayan elites. This does not mean employing people without education and experience. When hiring for government positions, education, experience, and qualifications under the quota system should merit equal weight.

The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan professors in their interviews expressed disbelief in the existence of fairness in Ethiopian government bureaucracy; however, their justification was different. Each one of them saw the inequities in the Ethiopian civil service from their own perspective. Each one of them assumed that the other ethnic group took unfair advantage of government bureaucracy. The Tigrayan professor thought that Ethiopia's civil service remained discriminatory and reactionary as a result of the Amhara elites' disrespect and mistrust of other ethnic groups. He charged the Amhara elites of being neither innovative nor accepting others' pioneering ideas. Although the Tigrayan professor repeatedly stated that the TPLF had earnestly attempted to change the Ethiopian bureaucracy in a fair way, the Amhara and Oromo professors viewed the reforms in a suspicious manner. Strong mutual mistrust and pessimism issued from all three when it came to the equitable employment of civil servants. Both the Tigrayan and Oromo professors railed against the Amhara elites for capturing the state and disproportionally occupying federal institutions. The Amhara professor, in turn, held the TPLF responsible for corruption, kleptocracy and cryptocracy. The Oromo professor blamed the Amhara bureaucrats for nepotism and corruption. Time and again, one blamed the other. The literature review, the survey results, and the interviews clearly demonstrate that avoiding responsibility of one's ethnic group and blaming the others for all wrongdoings are part of the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites'political cultures.

The professors, collectively, directly, or indirectly acknowledged that there are no non-partisan government institutions in Ethiopia. Nevertheless, there is no agreement on why such institutions exist in Ethiopia. The Oromo professor posited that the Amhara elites created government institutions "to control and administer the other ethnic groups," whereas the Tigrayan professor still held the Amhara elites responsible for using government institutions as their "private property." The Amhara professor, on the other hand, considered government departments, institutions, and agencies to be effective and politically non-partisan, up until the TPLF came into the picture and purged public officials and employees, labeling them "chauvinist" Amhara. However, the Oromo and Tigrayan professors thought that during the Haile Selassie empire and the military regime, Ethiopia's government was controlled top-to-bottom by Amhara elites. Whatever reasons the professors may suggest, one thing is clear: there are no non-partisan and equitable government institutions in Ethiopia.

The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan professors proposed three different solutions to solve the problems of discrimination, inequity, and political partisanship in the Ethiopian government. The Amhara professor believed that it was ethnic federalism that caused the partisanship; therefore, the ethnic federation should be disbanded, whereas the Tigrayan professor thought that the government bureaucracy should be reformed. However, the reforms the Tigrayan professor suggested were not clear, as he hesitated to add a quota system or set preconditions for a quota system. His proposal for a quota system based on regional states rather than population size is confusing. Perhaps the professor worried about the population size of Tigray (about five million as of the last census in 2007), which is a minority in Ethiopia. The Oromo professor, on the other hand, proposed a quota system for employing civil servants.

Apart from the Oromo professor, the Amhara and the Tigrayan professors did not seem to endorse the idea of an ethnic quota system. Their concern may be the issue of representation: the Tigrayan professor worried that the quota system might underrepresent the Tigrayans, while the Amhara professor was concerned that the existing disproportional number of Amhara elites in the Ethiopian bureaucracy (claimed by the Oromo and Tigrayan professors) would be reduced. The Oromo professor suggested a quota system, probably because the Oromo are perceived to have a larger population size in Ethiopia and may benefit from the system.

The three professors agreed that there was no equitable system of employment in the civil service and no politically neutral federal entities. But they had different points of view on why the inequity and political manipulation persisted. They also had divergent views of the solution to these problems. Such divergent perspectives are not a new phenomenon when it comes to the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites'political cultures. It may emanate from their deep ambition for hegemonic power. One would like to dominate the other and may do everything necessary to control the Ethiopian state at the expense of the other. The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites may need to engage in serious discussion and be ready to compromise in order to come to a middle ground where each may lose privileges or advantages; but in the final analysis, all would emerge winners.

The survey results showed that the Tigrayan, Amhara, and Oromo educated elites agreed unanimously that the Ethiopian government bureaucracy did not hire people fairly; however, the in-depth interviews added another dimension to the survey results. The interviews with the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan professors revealed the deficiencies of a data collection methodology based on survey results alone: although the professors consistently agreed on the existence of discriminatory employment, their reasons were contradictory. This provides insight into the survey results. Each of the Amhara and Tigrayan professors claimed that the Ethiopian bureaucracy was fair and free of political interference when under the control of their ethnic elite. On the other hand, the Oromo professor considered the Ethiopian bureaucracy to be neither fair nor politically neutral, regardless of whether during the rule of Haile Selassie, the military regime, or under TPLF administration. In his view, both groups used federal/central institutions to control and exploit the Oromo people and their resources.

6.6 Polarization among the educated elites

This section reveals how political violence and the absence of a tradition of negotiation between and among the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites undermined political stability in the period: 1991 - 2017.

In contemporary Ethiopia, the educated elites are polarized. The introduction of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia created educated elites who find it easier to advance their careers if they identify with a particular ethnic group. Scaling the ladder to higher political echelons is fast and

relaxed if you are an educated elite joining an ethnic-based political party. Such a system disregards meritocracy and breeds polarization.

In Ethiopia, there is no recorded history where two or more parties settled their political differences and worked together successfully for the common good of society. Ethiopian political culture is polarizing and views society along ethnic lines. People are emotional and do not consider logic when arguing or discussing politics. Such a situation is fertile ground for conflict and instability (Abbink, 2010: 2).

In Ethiopia the political party system is a relatively new phenomenon (Kassahun, 2003: 134-137). It was only just before the 1974 popular revolution that political parties emerged in Ethiopia (Melaku, 2019: 123-200). Lack of sufficient experience and the political culture described above made it difficult to negotiate a settlement when a political crisis arose. When the opposition gained a landmark victory in the 2005 general election, there was high hope in the population and among election observers that the opposition and ruling parties would sit down together and find some common ground in order to break the stalemate around the election results. Despite such high hopes and expectations, the ruling party chose to use force and engaged in a zero-sum game. The opposition refused to join parliament and broke off negotiations. In so doing, they adopted the same stance as the ruling party – that is, either we are awarded the majority vote we gained in the election or we refuse to legitimize the ruling party by joining them in a new parliament. Here, one can see that there is inflexibility on both sides. Had the parties involved negotiated and made reciprocal arrangements, they would have prevented the killing of many innocent lives (over 300 people were killed in the aftermath of the election) and, most of all, the country would have gained experience in democracy, marched one step forward in its journey to democracy, and would have avoided further political instability (Young, 1996: 539).

Out of many political parties, the EPRP and MEISON were able to challenge the military regime at that time, but their efforts ended in tragedy. Ethiopian governments have always been authoritarian. They do not share their power with opposition parties, rather they seek to weaken them. For the survey question, “Who has political power in Ethiopia?” 46% of Amhara, 70% of Tigrayans, and 63.3% of Oromo educated elites, said “the ruling party.” However, for the survey

question, “If you were asked to choose the most important institution in Ethiopia, which one would you choose?” political parties are given the lowest percentile: 6.7% Amhara, 4% Tigrayans, and 5.3% Oromo. This means that the ruling political party holds the most power despite being the least trusted institution in the country. It may also imply that the ruling party did not come to power by popular consent. If you believe that an institution is unimportant while acknowledging its power, it shows either you have disrespect for the institution, or the power it holds is irrelevant or unhelpful to you.

The following survey question responses support the above argument. For the question “Are you happy with the way the federal government runs the country?” Ninety-four percent of Tigrayan respondents, 90.7% of Amhara respondents, and 62% of Oromo respondents do not believe that the ruling party, which runs the federal government, is doing a good job. During the data gathering time, an Oromo prime minister was selected, and this may be one of the reasons why 38% of Oromo respondents expressed their satisfaction with the federal government rule. Similarly, one can assume that Tigrayan educated elites’ responses would have been completely different had the data been gathered when the TPLF was in power.

Although it is the ruling party that governs all the regional states except for the Tigray region, there is a slight variation in responses to the survey question concerning regional states. For the survey question, “Are you happy with the way regional states govern their regions?” 22% of Tigrayan respondents answered “Yes” and 22.3% of Oromo respondents expressed their approval. Only 9.3% of the Amhara respondents expressed satisfaction with the way regional leaders governed their states.

For the survey question “Do you want to see strong local governments?” 62% of the Amhara, 84% of Tigray, and 67.3% of Oromo educated elites answered “Yes.” According to this data, the educated elites would like to see devolution of power to the regional states. Writers in Ethiopian politics have generally agreed that a federal political system is the best one to manage Ethiopian diversity; however, there is no agreement so far on whether ethnic federalism or another type of federalism would be better.

For the survey question, “Who should rule Ethiopia?” 33% of Amhara respondents, 30% of Oromo respondents, and 56% of Tigrayan respondents wanted to see a coalition of political

parties govern the country. At the same time, 44% of Amhara, 46.7% of Oromo, and 28% of Tigrayan educated elites responded that "Whoever wins in the national election" should rule Ethiopia. The reason why the Amhara and Oromo educated elites answered in this way may be because of their greater population size compared to the regional state of Tigray. The Tigrayan educated elites clearly prefer coalition. Perhaps they learned from the TPLF how difficult it is to govern the country as a single party. In a country like Ethiopia where there are diverse ethnic groups, it is very difficult if not impossible for a single party to rule the country. The TPLF more or less ruled the country exclusively for almost three decades, partnering with other ethnic political parties merely as a front. But under TPLF rule the Ethiopian nation-building process disintegrated and the country regressed by at least a century (Maimire, 2023: 31).

For the survey question, "Which political parties do you think will best promote your political interests?" 62% of Amhara, 40.7% of Oromo, and 28% of Tigrayan educated elites responded "None of them." All the political parties listed in the survey question are the major political parties in the country, including the ruling party. Fifty-six percent of the Tigrayan educated elites responded that the TPLF promotes their best interests. During the data collection time, the TPLF was labeled a "terrorist organization" and war was raging between the federal soldiers and TPLF special forces. Despite the resulting destruction and bloodshed, a great number of the Tigrayan educated elites – 56% of them – still voted for the TPLF. This represents a big challenge to the nation-building process. One can foresee confrontation against the federal government from the Tigrayan elites. The fact that 62% of the Amhara and 40% of the Oromo educated elites expressed their disapproval for all political parties in the country may indicate future political instability as well.

In Ethiopia, civil society has no sway over the government; therefore, the government in power can do whatever it wants and no one will hold it accountable for its actions. Governments in Ethiopia either control civic organizations or eliminate them. The Ethiopian Teachers' Association, the Ethiopian Journalists' Association, and many other independent associations and civic organizations were forcibly dismantled by the government, which formed its own associations loyal to it. According to *Education International* (2006):

> The Ethiopian government has actively harassed the union, including freezing the ETA members from their jobs, and jailing dozens of teachers. In 1993, the government created a

> surrogate teachers union also called the Ethiopian Teachers' Association, thus engaging in what amounts to "identity theft" of the authentic organization. In 1996, government forces arrested and imprisoned ETA President Dr. Taye Woldesemiate for his trade union advocacy and criticism of government education policy.

If civic organizations were empowered and able to operate independently, then citizens might organize along professional lines, irrespective of their ethnic origins. Professions cut across many layers of identity and beyond ethnicity. Vibrant and functioning civic organizations attract professionals and they in turn will safeguard the rule of law in the country. But what the Ethiopian government leaders have been doing so far, is disempowering civic organizations, or creating "surrogate organizations" that are dependent on, or extensions of, the government. However, people do not trust the "surrogate organizations" and do not participate in them. The parties in power are a functioning ethnocracy that monopolizes and distributes power to whomever follows its principles. Such a system breeds a zero-sum game where educated elites destroy each other in order to gain exclusive power. The following EPRP and MEISON cases further explain the point.

The EPRP and the All-Ethiopia Socialist Movement (MEISON) were the pioneer parties in the history of Ethiopian political parties. A brief background on the evolution of the EPRP and the MEISON helps in understanding the political culture of Ethiopia in general and that of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites in particular.

Although the EPRP and MEISON were not organized along ethnic lines and their founders denied the existence of ethnic affiliation in the organizations at that time, there was Tigrayan influence in the EPRP and Oromo influence in the MEISON (Fasika, 2021; Melaku, 2019). Both the EPRP and MEISON were established around the same time in the early 1970s (Melaku, 2019: 166-178). Both were student parties and both were very concerned about the economic backwardness of Ethiopia. Their objectives were to bring about socio-economic development, democracy, and social justice in Ethiopia (Melaku, 2019; Hiwot, 2014; Andargachew, 2020). However, they were not able to work together or indeed tolerate each other. In fact, they ended up in violent confrontation and finally destroyed each other. That was the beginning of violent political cultures in Ethiopia's political parties.

According to Melaku, one of the founders of the EPRP, the major fault line between the EPRP and the MEISON was disagreement on how to resolve the main problem in Ethiopia at that time, namely the question of nationality. Many nationalities, including the Eritrean movement, had raised arms to fight the central government. The EPRP believed that "objective conditions" (it was the right time to establish a political party) had been fulfilled and they should establish a political party led by the factory workers, whereas the MEISON believed that the "subjective conditions" (society must be educated and prepared before establishing a political party) must be met before moving to establish a political party. The political party that the MEISON had in mind would be led by farmers. However, Melaku accused the MEISON of manipulation. He claimed that they had already established a political party and wanted to prevent the EPRP from establishing one. He thought that the MEISON wanted to control the EPRP political movement and block the formation of a political party that they could not control (Melaku, 2019: 212). The MEISON worked as an intellectual arm of the military regime and was accused of being instrumental in the assassination of EPRP members (Melaku, 2019: 214), while the EPRP was accused of launching an urban armed struggle against the well-armed military, which led to the massacre of thousands of young people (Hiwot, 2014). The EPRP exercised violence even among its own ranks: EPRP members mercilessly killed their own leaders when some of them developed a different set of ideas or expressed their dissent (Melaku, 2019; Hiwot, 2014).

Setting aside accusations and counter-accusations, what becomes transparently clear here, is that the EPRP and the MEISON were not able to settle their political differences peacefully and work together even though they had similar political objectives. In the modern political history of Ethiopia, the pattern of dehumanizing and violently eliminating political opponents began in the early 1970s with the EPRP and the MEISON and appears to remain the dominant political culture of Ethiopia until the present.

Political violence has been used in Ethiopia either to maintain political power or to overthrow the party in power. The study period 1991-2017 of this thesis was characterized by ethnic federalism where the main party in power, the TPLF, was ethnic-based and most of the opposition parties, such as the OLF, were also ethnic-based. Therefore, political power was organized along ethnic lines.

Short of engaging in physical violence, both the EPRP and the MEISON parties were active in character assassination, demonizing, and dehumanizing others. Character assassination is one of the patterns of behavior in Ethiopia's political cultures. For instance, the military junta labeled the TPLF as a terrorist organization during its guerrilla fighting days, while the TPLF labeled its opponents, the OLF and CUD, as terrorists as well. After 27 years of rule, during the data-collecting period, when the TPLF was involved in full-scale war against federal forces, the Ethiopian parliament branded the TPLF, for the second time, a "terrorist" organization.

Although Fanon (1961) theorizes his concept of political violence in the context of colonialism, the concept still applies in the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan circumstances. Sorel (1950) and Fanon believed that the only way to bring about change and justice, is to engage in political violence. For those in power, "change and justice" means combating terrorism: the first duty of a government in power is to maintain law and order. Where there is terror, there is no law and order, therefore engaging in political violence is legitimate. For those who are fighting to replace the party in power "change and justice" means replacing the status quo by force. Being branded "terrorists," is an existential threat; therefore, engaging in political violence is justified. In the case of the OLF, which is also branded a terrorist organization, it believes that the Oromo people are subjected to colonialism; therefore, Fanon's conceptualization of political violence fits perfectly. The literature review, the survey results, and the interviews showed consistently that the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites' resort to political violence in the assumption that the end result will deliver political hegemony for their ethnic group. Fanon (1961: 3) puts it succinctly: "For the last can be the first only after a murderous and decisive confrontation between the two protagonists."

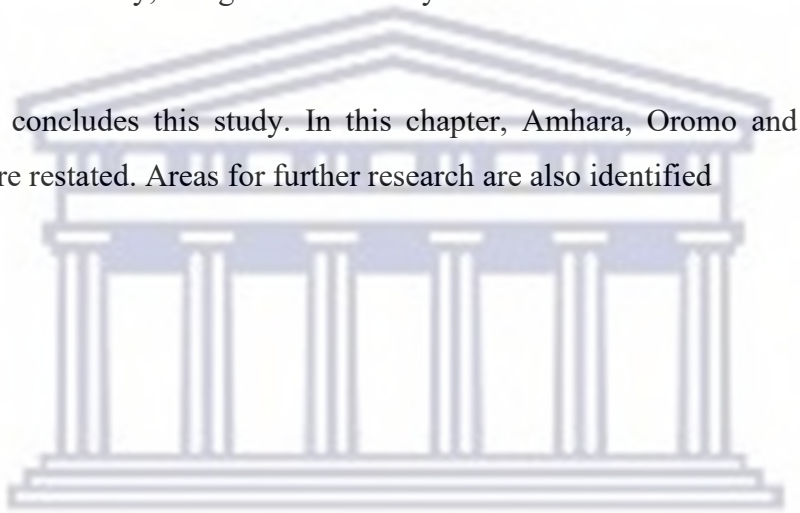
With the party in power constantly using political violence to remain in power, and the opposition parties persistently using political violence, there is endless political instability in Ethiopia and it stems mostly from the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political cultures.

6.7 Chapter summary

The chapter reveals how neopatrimonial practices are embedded in the political cultures of the three elites, the Amhara, Oromo and Tigrayans and used extensively and routinely among them.

The study also shows how the neopatrimonial practices eroded trust and political tolerance between and among the three elites. Neopatrimonialism manifested in different forms and style among the three elites, including in accusing each other, polarization and competing unfairly.The widely used neopatrimonial practices of the Amhara, Oromo and Tigrayan elites have not only eroded the trust and political tolerance among the elites, they have affected the state institutions and government bureaucracy. A key example if the educated elites strongly believe that the government bureaucracy does not employ citizens fairly. By introducing meritocracy and fairness into the bureaucracy, the government may increase trust and establish a new inclusive political culture.

The next chapter concludes this study. In this chapter, Amhara, Oromo and Tigrayan elites' dominant views are restated. Areas for further research are also identified



Chapter Seven: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

Compelled by the vicious cycle of political violence and political instability in Ethiopia, the study examines the political cultures of the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayans, the three dominant populations in the country. The study reviews available literature and fills gaps in the existing material. The main research question, "What are the dominant views and approaches that influenced Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan political cultures in Ethiopia from 1991 to 2017?" has been successfully answered.

The study discloses that the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites' aspiration for hegemonic power is a pattern of behavior embedded in their political cultures that manifests in violence and neo-patrimonial practices. The study also reveals that such a pattern of behavior did not just develop during the study period but has existed since the beginning of the Zemene Mesafint. Such a disclosure indicates that the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites' political cultures are "pattern-maintaining": political violence and neo-patrimonial practices continue to exist despite regime changes.

The study recommends introducing a mechanism for equitable allocation of employment opportunities among ethnically diverse candidates for the federal civil service based on meritocracy and fair employment principles; conducting transitional justice to rectify conflicts concerning history and past injustices; creating a fertile ground for civic organizations in the country; and finally, carefully identifying and engaging in more participatory landmark national projects similar to GERD.

7.2 Dominant views and approaches in Ethiopian political culture

The literature review, the survey responses, and the interviews have clearly answered the research question, "What are the dominant views and approaches that have influenced Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites'political cultures in Ethiopia from 1991 to 2017?"

The Amhara educated elites' dominant view is that they played a vital role in the building of their country, and therefore deserve to take advantage of what the nation has to offer. They would like to justify their current disproportionate presence in the government bureaucracy and other government institutions based on their past achievements. They would like to maintain the

status quo that existed prior to 1991. This status quo includes claims to territory, continued dominance of the Amharic language, and the guarantee of safety and privileges outside traditional Amhara territory.

The approach employed by the Amhara educated elites includes but is not limited to engaging in soft power, such as using media campaigns and non-cooperation with the government in power. There is always the undertone of threat to use violence if all other avenues do not work.

The Tigrayan educated elites' view is that Ethiopia is the product of the ancient civilization of Axum and most of Ethiopia's civilization came from Tigray or via Tigray; therefore, Tigrayans deserve special privileges in government. The Tigrayan educated elites would like lawmakers and others making decisive policy decisions not to consider their population size, rather their contribution to the country. The Tigrayan approach appears to be mostly violent and manipulative. When in power, the TPLF demonstrated excessive political violence and used divide-and-conquer techniques. The Tigrayan educated elites time and again threatened the Ethiopian parliament that if their demands were not fulfilled, they would invoke Article 39 of the 1995 Constitution, which guarantees the right to self-determination, including the right to secession.

The Oromo educated elites' motivation is to claim their fair share in the country's political realm. The elites believe that they have been dominated and considered as second-class citizens in their own country; therefore, they would like to make sure this never happens again. They would like to be represented and participate in the country's politics proportionate to their number. The educated elites would like to make sure that their resources, their cultural and political affairs in Oromia are fully controlled by them and that they can participate equitably in federal politics.The dominant approach used by them is legal, but they have demonstrated that they would not hesitate to use violence if necessary.

When it comes to language, it is mostly the Amhara and Oromo educated elites who took diametrically opposite positions. In 1991, the OLF formally adopted a modified Latin alphabet called *Qubee*. The Amhara elites would like the Oromo to use the Amharic alphabet when writing Affan Oromo. They justify their push for the Amharic alphabet, saying it is indigenous and would help unify the country. The dispute related to language between the Amhara and

Oromo, the two biggest ethnic groups, is mostly political and historical. Politically, the Oromo would like to show that they have options and reject the language once historically imposed on them. Politics and time may solve the sticky language issue.

The literature review, the survey results, and the interviews directly or indirectly have made it clear that the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites' use of violence to achieve their political goals most probably generates ethnic conflicts in the country. The conflicting hegemonic ambitions of the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites, coupled with the desire to reclaim "past glories," unless settled by transitional justice and "grand elite bargaining," may lead to ethnic conflict in the country and in the extreme case, may lead to the disintegration of the country.

7.3 Areas for further research

The data collected and the interview results indicate that there is a rift among the elites when it comes to ethnic federalism and the 1995 Ethiopian Constitution. Further research is needed to determine how ethnic federalism in Ethiopia and the ratification of the 1995 Constitution have affected the country's political cultures.

The following need further research:

- The literature review and survey results indicate that the introduction of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia and the ratification of the 1995 Constitution that provides, under Article 39, that each ethnic group has an unconditional right to self-determination, including the right to secession, increased ethnic tension among the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites. Further research is needed on how ethnic federalism has aggravated ethnic tension in the country.
- Although the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites'political cultures are clearly indispensable in shaping government policy and administration, it is important to note that Ethiopia has more than 80 ethnic groups – small and big. They, too, have their own political cultures that may affect federal decision-making. Studying the political cultures of these ethnic groups may reveal relevant patterns of commonality and divergence relative to *Ethiopiawinet*. Other ethnic groups, such as the Guragage, Somali, Sidama,

and others may have contributed directly or indirectly to the political cultures of the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayans.

- The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan mass political cultures need to be studied to get the full picture of the political cultures of the three main ethnic groups in Ethiopia. To understand how the masses influence the elites or vice versa, it may be imperative to conduct a study on the mass political cultures of the three dominant ethnic groups in Ethiopia.

- Ethiopia claims to have existed for over 1,000 years and yet it is not clear why the nation has no common heroes. During the study period, no popular singers were universally admired. The study shows that respondents from Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray exhibited significant support for their respective ethnic singers and heroes but declined to acknowledge famous personalities, heroes, and singers of other ethnicities by saying "Prefer not to say." Why are the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayans as Ethiopians not able to have popular singers in common? Or music that they cherish collectively? Why do the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites decline to find common cultural icons? What is the implication of not having cross-cultural connections? These questions may need further study.

7.4 Conclusion

Recurrent ethnic conflicts have dominated Ethiopia for the last three decades. Attempts to bring political stability to the country have not been successful, as competing political cultures in the country have constantly struggled for hegemony. This study finds the political cultures of the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayans – the three major ethnic groups that constitute about 67% of the total population of Ethiopia – to be problematic, as they constantly contradict each other.

The study identifies the dominant views and approaches that have influenced Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites'political cultures in Ethiopia from 1991 to 2017. It also establishes why the approaches generate ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia.

The main research question, "What are the dominant views and approaches that have influenced Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites'political cultures in Ethiopia from 1991 to 2017?" was answered successfully through the survey, interviews, and literature review. The political history

of Ethiopia is where the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites' perspectives originate, and they continue to dominate present political cultures in Ethiopia. The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites have particular articulations of their own view and characterization of the other elites. Their views also differ from subject to subject. For instance, there is no agreement on the political history of Ethiopia, and there is visible or invisible aspiration on the part of each ethnic elite to remain a dominant political force in the country. The deeply hegemonic ambitions of the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites have exacerbated the political violence that has ravaged the country for ages and hindered the nation-building process.

Beyond the disagreements on political history, the educated elites accuse each other when it comes to the many challenges faced by the country. They accuse each other of state capture, corruption, inciting ethnic conflicts, malpractice, poor governance, misguided policies, divide-and-rule tactics, and misappropriation of the nations' economic wealth. The elites themselves do not shoulder responsibility for any failure in the country and do not show any interest in understanding other points of view but claim privileged political positions in present-day Ethiopia for past accomplishments. Blaming the other, engaging in a zero-sum game, eschewing political negotiation, making patronage appointments, and not taking on responsibility – these behaviors and practices have generated ethnic conflicts in the country.

The concept of political culture is complex. What makes it complex is that it studies attitudes, values, and opinions that are very hard to quantify and measure. To make it even more difficult, political cultures may change over time. However, this study has contributed to the knowledge of political culture in that it confirms the existence of "a particular pattern of orientations" that do not radically change over time. The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites'political cultures consistently showed during the study period and even long before, that "a particular pattern of orientations" that included competition and aspiration for hegemonic power, a zero-sum game, the absence of political negotiations, and exercising political violence either to maintain the status quo or to unseat the status quo.

This thesis presents various perspectives on the central theory or concept of political culture and the "pattern of orientations" which exist in the Amhara, Oromo and Tigrayan elites' political cultures as reflected in their attitudes towards Ethiopia's political system and their participation

in it. The political culture approach enhances our ability to describe and analyze the interactions among the three ethnic elites. By distinguishing their differing behaviours, attitudes, norms, and traditions, the paper is able to explicate differences in their performance and relationships. The concept of political culture helps to explain why the Amhara, Oromo and Tigrayan elites live in the same country and yet produce divergent political interests.

The thesis focusses on the three ethnic elites' political objectives and their predisposition to political violence. These are determined by such factors as tradition, historical memories, education, economic and social conditions and cultural norms Having established the particular orientations and relationships of the three ethnic elites, one can clearly see which elements of the elites' political cultures give shape and meaning to the political actors and their actions.

The Amhara, Oromo and Tigrayan elites vary both in the intensity of their beliefs and in their willingness to act on them; and depending on the issue the structural possibilities for action also differ. For example, the Amhara and Tigrayan elites mostly would like to ensure their cultural dominance in the greater Ethiopia, as seen in their involvement in the language issue, whereas the Oromo elites are mostly concerned with the fair distribution of political power, resources and justice in the country.

Almond and Verba justified their undertaking of a five-nation study on the grounds of its usefulness in explaining the structural-functional characteristics of the political systems under review. The study at hand, however, focusses only on three major elite political cultures where the subject orientations allow the elites the necessary initiative and freedom to take decisions. This "freedom" is not given by consent, rather, due to the authoritarian nature of the Amhara, Oromo, Tigrayan elites political cultures, it is seized by force.

It is very difficult to say whether the Amhara, Oromo and Tigrayan elites recognize the danger of cultural fragmentation to the integrity of the Ethiopian state or to the unity of the country. Judging by the interviews conducted for this paper, however, the elites seem more committed to their immediate hegemonic interests than to national unity.

The political violence exhibited by the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayans has two dimensions, both aimed at the status quo: for the ethnic group dominating government, political violence is used to

maintain the status quo, whereas other ethnic groups that aspire to hegemonic power adopt Fanon's justification of political violence to change the status quo. As a result, there is constant political violence in Ethiopia.

Some of the problematic elements of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites' political cultures include conflicting interpretations of Ethiopian political history, ethnic rivalry, the absence of common heroes, constantly blaming the others, and zero-sum politics. The study clearly distinguishes that the Ethiopian nation-building process brought about a divergent political culture among the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites. The elites believe that the political history of Ethiopia in the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries still matters; however, they have different interpretations of that history, and the study finds that there are sharp differences in their understanding and perception of the past. For instance, as exhibited in the survey responses, the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites do not have a common hero: what is a hero for one is not for the other. A common hero represents a common purpose and shared ideals. The attributes of heroic figures are the epitome of a particular nation's political culture. They represent the best of the nation, and in the case of this study, they are the greatest the Amhara, Oromo, or Tigrayan elites'political cultures have to offer. Since the three ethnic groups have lived side by side in Ethiopia for centuries, the assumption is that their heroes should transcend their ethnic identities and become heroes for all Ethiopians.

The political history of Ethiopia during the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries is characterized by territorial expansion and domination of one ethnic group by another. Depending on who interprets past political history, there is a different version. Territorial expansion mostly happened by means of war and conflict, leading to resistance and resentment from the defeated population. Therefore, the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites' political cultures are heavily weighted with political violence. The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites' political cultures coupled with the introduction of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia have become problematic for the political stability of the country.

The rhetoric and narrative of the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites' political cultures have always made others responsible for challenges collectively or individually faced.

The Amhara educated elites blame the Oromo; the Oromo blame the Amhara and Tigrayan rulers; and the Tigrayans blame the Amhara rulers. None of them criticize their own ethnic community or hold their own leaders responsible for the misery, economic backwardness, and political instability of the country. Nevertheless, Ethiopia is nothing without the Amharas, Oromos and Tigrayans. If these three ethnic groups are to live in peace and harmony, the unfair political competition, the political ambition to dominate others, and criminalization of other ethnic groups based on past political history will need to stop. Tigrayans have the right to show their pride in past glory and civilization without harming, underestimating, or belittling other ethnic groups. The Amharas have the right to take credit for their efforts in building the Ethiopian nation without dehumanizing and insulting other ethnic groups. The Oromo should equally have the right to be proud of their identity and the *Gadda* system, and to present historical incidents with credible evidence, without exaggerating or deceiving. The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites should work together to bring about democracy, economic development, political stability, and peace for the present and future generations, rather than digging up past history and making it a bone of contention. Many countries that faced brutalities and miseries have reconciled with the past and now attempt to govern and develop peaceful societies. The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites can learn from those countries.

If the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites are not able to agree on past history, then they should work together to build their future together in a democratic and participatory manner. The past should not drag them back into the abyss. The fact that the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites have declined to agree on past political history or never sought to settle past grudges and injustices has led to a zero-sum game, whereby the hegemonic interest of one group is sustained at the expense of the other.

The zero-sum game is a fundamental problem in Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites' political cultures and structures. In Ethiopia when one group is in power, it retains every privilege, and all the resources of the state will be under its command. As Mesfin (1997: 33) noted, "As long as the state in Ethiopia is prized as the major avenue of accumulation of wealth, privilege and status, there may be less chance for peaceful and democratic change, and greater possibility for recurrent violence." Political dissent is not accommodated, and any opposition is forcefully eliminated. When opposing forces succeed in overthrowing the political group in power, those

who collaborated with the former regime are punished harshly. Hence, for an Ethiopian, loyalty to one's ethnic origin is a stronger motivation than loyally serving the state. Such a political culture makes continuity in governance very difficult – whenever a new government is ushered into the Ethiopian political landscape, an attempt will be made to create a new state apparatus while totally eliminating the old one. Once in power, the new (ethnic) governing body will exclusively maximize its members' benefits without sharing. The governing leadership will do its level best to retain power, for once it loses political power, the governing elite will be physically eliminated, exiled, imprisoned, or left destitute. If we consider the recent political history of Ethiopia, we learn that the entire cabinet of Emperor Haile Selassie was killed, imprisoned, or exiled. The TPLF, after overthrowing the military regime, imprisoned, executed, or exiled the entire cabinet. The age-old Ethiopian defense forces were demobilized, and the entire state apparatus was taken over by TPLF members and loyalists (Mesfin, 2017: 153). Unless such a zero-sum game ends and a new political system is ushered in, where dissent and democratic governance are allowed, where the bureaucracy is merit-based, and sincere inter-ethnic cooperation emerges based on respect and recognition, the political stability and economic development of the country will remain in jeopardy.

The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan elites' zero-sum political cultures essentially derive from the fact that there is an absence of negotiation, and all challenges are solved using political violence. When one ethnic group depicts the other in a derogatory way, it is difficult if not impossible to negotiate and come to an agreement. Demonizing or dehumanizing political opponents has been a common aspect of political culture in the long history of Ethiopia in general and in the study period in particular.

In 2005, after the much-contested general election, the ruling party killed over 300 CUD demonstrators. Right after the massacre, the government in power made false statements on state television to cover up its use of excessive force, announcing that the demonstrators were killed while trying to rob banks in Addis Ababa. Such demonization and extreme propaganda closed off avenues for discussion, negotiation, and political bargaining. Without discussion, negotiation, and political bargaining, political differences were resolved using force and all possible means of eliminating the opposition were deployed. The consequences of such zero-sum strategies were

stalemate and political instability. The political culture created a vicious cycle of violence and political instability in Ethiopia.

In 1991, during the transitional period, the TPLF promised to conduct all-inclusive dialogue with all political forces to create the new government but failed to do so; rather, it forcibly eliminated them one by one and by 1992 remained the only political force. Even the OLF, which was one of the collaborators in the transitional government, was eventually excluded. Its military wing was forced to disarm, remain in barracks, and then disbanded. In 2005, after the much-contested general election, the opposing CUD won a substantial number of seats in the parliament. However, the ruling party, dominated by the TPLF, declared that it was the winner. The CUD declined to join parliament, as it felt that the election had been rigged and even international election observers and the European Union confirmed that the election had not been free and fair. Despite enormous pressure, the TPLF-dominated party proceeded to take over parliament. When the CUD threatened to organize a nationwide political demonstration, Meles Zenawi, the then prime minister, stated that his party would negotiate with the opposition about any issue under the sun if they waited until the African Union's annual assembly ended peacefully. The CUD and other opposition parties trusted the prime minister's word and canceled their scheduled nationwide demonstrations. Once the African Union's annual assembly was over, the prime minister rounded up and imprisoned all opposition party members who had won the election but had declined to join the new parliament.

Such political drama and the violent history of the TPLF have made it difficult to develop trust between the TPLF and its opponents. In light of past political history, it has become impossible for opposing political parties to sit down and negotiate political issues. During the study period, lack of trust and an absence of sincere political negotiation were clearly apparent. The political culture of mistrust and the settling of political differences through violence rather than negotiation have been manifested time and time again.

One of the remarkable and positive findings of the study is that the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan educated elites, despite their many differences, collectively stood together when it came to the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. Over 90% of the survey respondents said that they contributed voluntarily to the GERD. Regardless of their many differences and disagreements, the elite revealed that the dam united them. This is a good indication for

policymakers to design participatory, comprehensive, and inclusively beneficial projects transcending ethnicity. The survey results also show that it is possible to shift current political cultures toward a shared approach that might provide firm ground for future collaboration across ethnic boundaries. Most educated elites of Amhara, Oromia, and Tigray also agreed that there are many ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia because people do not negotiate or compromise.

The data collected and the interview results indicate that there is a rift among and between the elites when it comes to ethnic federalism and the 1995 Ethiopian Constitution. That is the reason why further research is needed on how ethnic federalism in Ethiopia and the ratification of the 1995 Constitution affects the country's political culture and its landscape. Ethiopia has more than 80 ethnic groups; therefore, there is a need to study further how the remaining ethnic groups shape the country's political culture. To conduct another study on the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray, mass political cultures need to be studied not just to get the full picture of Ethiopian political culture but also to examine how the mass political culture influences the elite or vice versa. In this regard, Welch (1993: 10) recommends quantitative methodology to study the mass political culture.

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9. Appendices