



INSTITUTE FOR PEACE AND SECURITY STUDIES (IPSS)
THE ROLE OF PEASANT MILITIA IN MAINTAINING
LOCAL PEACE: THE CASE OF AHFEROM AND
MEREBLEKE WOREDA ADMINISTRATIONS IN TIGRAY
REGIONAL STATE

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Abbreviations

COY	Company (Military unit)
CS	Combat Support
CSS	Combat Service Support
EDU	Ethiopian Democratic Union
EPRP	Ethiopian People Revolutionary Party
ELN/NLA	National Liberation Army
FARC/RAFC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
IPSS	Institute for peace and security studies
PLA	People's Liberation Army
POW	Prisoners of War
NDF	National Defence Force
TPDM	Tigray People Democratic Movement
TPLF	Tigray People Liberation Front
TNRS	Tigray National Regional State

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Abstract

This study aims at examining the role of local peasant militia in maintaining local peace in two wereda administrations of the Tigray National Regional State, namely Ahferom and Mereb Leke in the central zone of the region. Field data were gathered through key informant interview and focus group discussions. As the findings of the study show, the peasant militia is a vital force, which plays irreplaceable role in maintaining local peace in the Tigray National Regional State, in both war and peace times. As it was the case during the Ethiopia-Eritrea war, in times of war, in the absence of the regular army, the militia force plays the role of defending the country from external and internal threats. The militia force also plays a supporting role in terms of facilitating logistics flows, collecting military information, and evacuating wounded soldiers from the war zone to safe areas where they would find medical treatment. In peace times, in collaboration with the police and other stakeholders like the mass-based associations, the peasant militia plays a vital role in maintaining local peace through preventing crimes in their locality. They also protect public and private investment infrastructures and projects, without which local development could not be materialized. However, although the militia force is an important force to maintain local peace and stability, it has critical problems, which would constrain to effectively accomplish its activities. The first problem is that the peasant militia are serving without any payment. The second problem is the process of selection to join militia is not rigorous enough. Consequently, it is common to see individual persons who do not actually fulfill the required criteria are selected and armed to become militia by the local administration. Therefore, the findings of the study suggest that to ease the challenges that would limit the effectiveness of the militia as a guarantor of local peace, the Regional Government should first, provide a mechanism that would enable the militia member find economic benefits that would compensate the time they invest in maintaining local peace. Second, the local administrations and concerned bodies of the Regional Government should strictly follow up whether the recruitment procedures are dully implementing.

Key Words: Peasant Militia, Armed mass, “Weyanay”, Revolutionary, Agitprop, and Rebellion

CHAPTER ONE

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

According to Galtung (1967:12) Peace is not only referring to the absence of violence and war. Its scope ranges from the termination of organized collective violence (negative peace) to positive peace as the overcoming of structural and cultural violence (cooperation and integration between human groups). Likewise, peace is like a disease in the negative case the equilibrium is unstable while in the positive case symptom free and the equilibrium is better stable than the negative one (Galtung, 1995:1). To bring about peace, there are many institutions at the international, regional and national, as well as, local levels.

To ensure sustainable peace, governments need to establish an institution that controls or grants safety and protection to the community it stands for. This exhibits peace as having the highest value among humanities and we cannot value it at any price. The price and meaning of peace are invaluable. In this regard, there is a saying that “There never was a good war or a bad peace” (Rommel, 1981, Jenner, 2014:1).

Because of its connection with religion, education, social, and other factors, peace is expressed in different terms. Peace is noted with several words such as inner peace, outer-peace, as well as, a feeling of negative and positive peace. Even if peace doesn't have a concise and all agreed meaning, “conventional peace refers to a cessation of war, or reconciliation and of civil order” in which violence is resolved through debate and compromise, as well as, the rule of law is effective (Daley, 2006). Thus, if peace has of high importance for humanitarian existence, it appears to be vital to examine who the actors are and the roles they can play to bring about and maintain it. In the contemporary world, there are many actors that bring peace like international and regional organizations, sovereign states, and non-state actors like civil society organizations.

From the aforementioned organizations, this study focuses on the role of militia in maintaining local peace, in the Tigray National Regional State. Thus, before proceeding to the role of this armed force to bring and preserve local peace, it is better to start with its definition.

Due to the objective it has, militia has varying definitions. However, the following definitions are commonly used by researchers. For instance, according to *Fumerton, (2018:3)*,

Militia is an organized, irregular, armed group drawn from the civilian population that performs security and governance functions within a state. In this regard, the primary goal of a militia is population control, especially the establishment of local rule in a given territory.

Differently Buchanan (2016), defines the militia as a “broad range of armed organizations and paramilitary groups, which serves as an important force in maintaining local peace”. As (Savage, Saiph & Monroy-Hernández, 2015), indicates, the militia is considered as a group of three or more individuals who defend their community, territory, property, as well as, laws. In this study, the concept of militia refers to a group of armed peasants who are voluntarily engaging in protecting their community.

Records show that though it is difficult to identify the exact time and place, when and where was first used, a militia is common in many countries. For example, the concept of militia goes back to the English tradition with the beginning of assize of Arms in 1181 (Officer, 2017). Likewise, since the 1550s, Switzerland experienced the cantonal militias (Gassmann, 2016). The militia was also introduced in the United States during the English colonial era (Slyke, 2016). However, the purpose and organizational structure of such force vary from country to country. Among the purposes of establishing militia are maintaining peace, and exercising local control which may involve the abuse of rights. For instance, since militia is an organized armed unit, states use it either to violate rights or pacifying key areas in the peripheries or rural areas when the central government is weak (Seth G.Jones, 2013), or which are beyond the central government's control.

Despite its nature, the primary goal of the militia is to enforce peace or to control it's the local population to establish local rule in a given territory” (Fumerton, 2018). The militia would also play a role in securing the citizens in their villages. As it is the case in Tigray (Ethiopia), in this regard, militia, in this study refers to a group of peasants who are trained and organized to defend their localities in times of peace and war as an auxiliary force to the army, police and intelligence institutions without payment.

The militia may operate under strict command and control of the government. On the other hand, militia may operate against a certain government to achieve specific goals under rebel movements. In this regard, militia during the protracted armed struggle (1975-1991) in Tigray was organized as a non-state armed group. However, after the fall of the *Dergue* regime in 1991, it was organized as a supportive force to the government. Generally, the establishment of the local peasant militia in Tigray it traced back to the Tigriyan national struggle under the

leadership of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). It was established as an auxiliary force to the TPLF soldiers in the liberated areas during the armed struggle (1975-1991).

With the establishment of the TPLF in 1975, the armed peasant militia was first organized around *Dedebit* in North-Western Tigray to provide support to the newly established organization. As an auxiliary force, it played a determinant role in the fight against the military government during the armed struggle (Tsige and Mezgebe, 2016). As Aregawi, (2008), points out, during the armed struggle, the peasant militia was established to work with administrative units in areas liberated by the TPLF.

Regarding its legal aspect, it was during the transition period that the Tigray National Regional State established militia as an auxiliary force to the region's police (TNRS, 1993). As stipulated in article 6 of the proclamation 6/1993(TNRS, 1993), which established the militia force in Tigray, the main functions of the militia are supporting the police and engaging in development activities. The proclamation clearly states that the militia is required to play an auxiliary role to the police force. However, it sometimes takes missions that are beyond the responsibilities or the reach of the police force.

An interesting thing that impressed me to conduct research regarding the role of peasant militia in maintaining local peace is that members of the armed group in rural Tigray, where I grew up there are peasant militias serving the community without any payment. In this regard, one may raise a question that what is the secret behind the commitment of the peasant militia to maintain local peace in rural Tigray? Another factor is the significance of the study has motivated the researcher to conduct a thesis on the area. To this end, the justification regarding the issue of the study is incorporated under the statement of the problem below.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The role of peasant militia in the Tigray National Regional State has been crucial for maintaining local peace. However, few studies have been conducted regarding the organization and role of this force in maintaining local peace in the Tigray Region particularly in the study area. For example, Tsige Hailemariam and Mezgebe weldegebriel (2008) in the book, the History of Armed Mass (Tigray Militia), describes the role of the peasant militia with particular focus on the armed struggle and the Ethio-Eritrean war, while Young (1991) points out the role of TPLF militia during the course of the 17 years armed struggle.

Likewise, Aregawi Berhe (2008) says a few about the role of the first starter militias along with the armed struggle led by TPLF. Yet, the few studies that have been conducted so far regarding the local peasant militia as a local actor for maintaining peace largely focus on describing its history rather than its roles, relevant bodies, and challenges of the peasant militia. Moreover, the limited available literature regarding the role and organization of the peasant militia lacks clarity to show the legal basis for its establishment and the interaction it has with other local and national forces of peace including, the regional police force and the National Defense Forces (NDF). Therefore, this research has tried to address such issues thereby filling the gap with the limited studies on hand.

Another issue is that while article 87 of the FDRE Constitution (1995), deals with the Ethiopian army, it says nothing about the interaction expected to have with local militias. Although article 52 (g) of the FDRE Constitution allows Regional states to establish security forces, it does not explicitly provide specific roles and powers to the militias. Similarly, the revised proclamation of establishing the Federal police commission 720/2011 clearly specifies the roles and objectives of the Federal Police Force. Accordingly, the Federal Police Force is established to maintain and ensure peace, security, and observance of the constitutional order, as well as, other laws of the country. However, the proclamation says nothing about the militia force. The Federal Police Commission can delegate its powers to the Regional States' Police Commissions when it finds it necessary to prevent and investigate crimes falling under the jurisdiction of federal courts and receive reports on the execution of the delegated powers. However, the Federal police proclamations do not specify how it would interact with the local militia. (Federal police commission, 2011).

Likewise, as stated under article 74 (2) of the Tigray National Regional State revised Constitution, empowers the *Wereda* administration to enact security rules as far as it is not contradictory with the federal and regional Constitutions and other laws based upon the unique circumstances of its jurisdiction (Revised Constitution, 1998). However, although it doesn't explicitly state the establishment of militia force, it is common practice to see the force protecting local peace on a routine basis

Based on such gaps and the proclamation which established the peasant militia, the main justification of conducting this study is to address the role of militia in maintaining local peace. The other reason that motivated the researcher to conduct research on the role of peasant militia is that although it plays a multi-role in maintaining local peace, members of the armed mass (peasants) are working without any fee (salary). Furthermore, as long as, the

knowledge of the researcher concerned, scholars gave less emphasis to conduct study on the role of the peasant militia and the challenges they face during their day-to-day activities.

Therefore, since the issue of peasant militia's role in maintaining local peace is not studied well, and lacks emphasis by researchers, the researcher seeks to contribute his best to address the knowledge gap by conducting research on this subject matter by taking *Ahferom* and *Mereb Leke Wereda* administrations in the Tigray National Regional State as cases in point. Furthermore, the researcher tried to address the gap regarding the peasant militia's role and provide his own possible recommendations generated from the findings. Hence, the researcher believes that this empirical data-based research would contribute to fill the existing knowledge- gap in this very important area of human security at the grassroots level.

1.3 Objective of the Study

The study has both general and specific objectives.

1.3.1 General Objective of the Study

The general objective of this study is to explore, describe, and explain the role of local peasant militia in maintaining local peace in *Ahferom* and *Mereb Leke Wereda* administrations in the Tigray National Regional State.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives of the Study

- A. To examine the legal basis for the establishment and operation of local peasant militia in Tigray
- B. To explicate the roles of peasant militia in maintaining local peace
- C. To assess how do the peasant militias interact with other stakeholders
- D. To analyze the challenges that hinder the local peasant militia to maintain local peace.

1.4 Research Questions

The study has the following main and specific questions intended to explore the roles and practice of local peasant militia in maintaining local peace.

1.4.1 The Main Question

What are the roles and responsibilities of local peasant militia in line with maintaining local peace in Tigray National Regional State, particularly in two *wereda* administrations?

1.4.2 Sub-Questions

On the basis of the general question stated above, the historical background and legal basis explored and analyzed in the empirical literature on peasant militia in Tigray national regional state, this study raises four questions:

1. What is the legal basis for local peasant militia in maintaining local peace?
2. How do the local peasant militias maintain local peace?
3. How do the local peasant militias interact with stakeholders to maintain local peace?
4. What are the challenges hindering the local peasant militia in maintaining local peace?

1.5 Significance of the Study

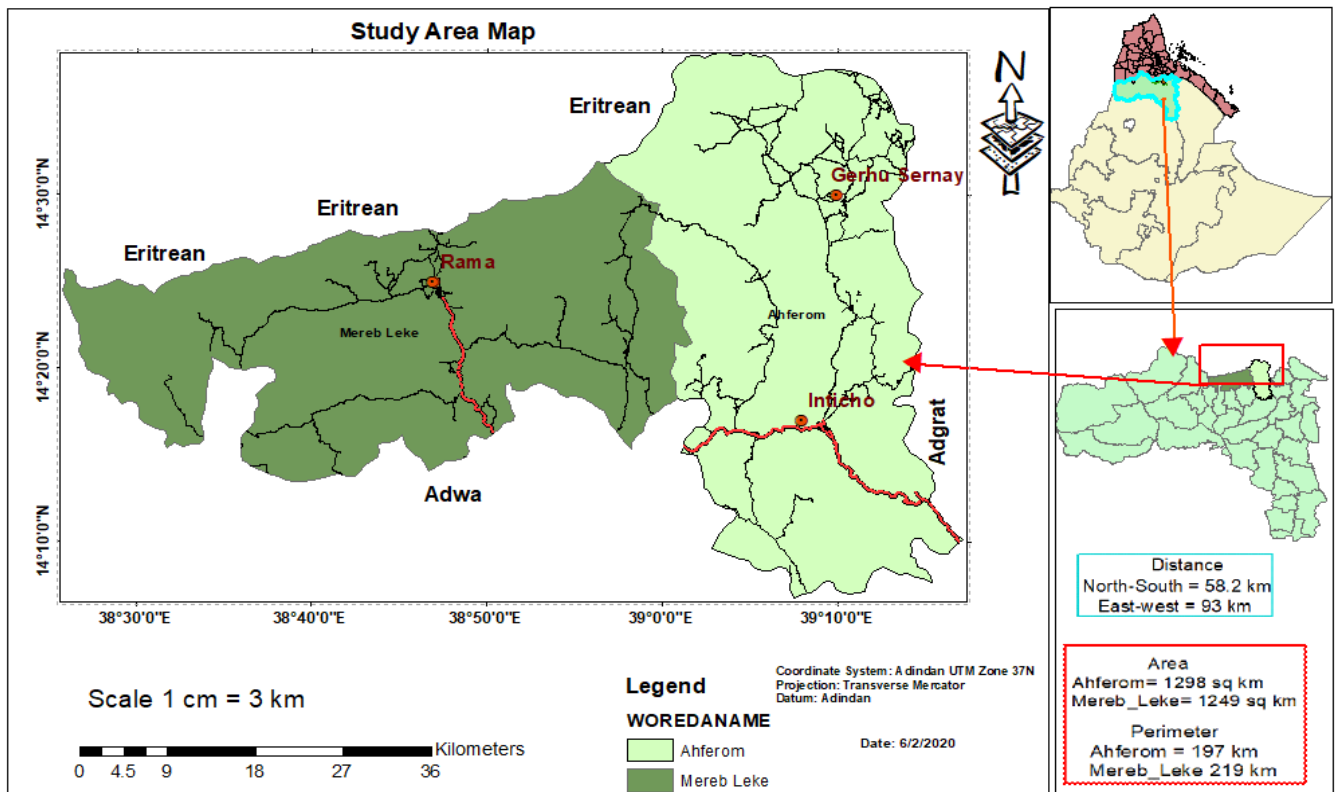
Conducting scientific study on the role of peasant militia in maintaining local peace would have the following significance. Firstly, it would an eye break to academic researchers to conduct study on the same issues and will serve as empirical literature. Secondly, the outcome of this study will intend recommendations to policy makers to establish similar militia force structure in the entire country and to fill the gap in utilizing this security force. Moreover, the final outcome of this research would help people to have positive insight towards the role of local peasant militia in maintaining local peace.

1.6. Scope of the study

The data were collected focusing on the role of Peasant Militia in maintaining local peace in *Mereb Leke* and *Ahferom Woreda* administrations in the central zone of Tigray National Regional State. Geographically, the two *Wereda* administrations are bordered in the North with Eritrea, in the East with *Adigrat*, *South Werei Leke*, and *Adwa* and in the West with *Adyabo*. Time-wise, by assessing the basis for the establishment, this study emphasizes the role of Peasant Militia in maintaining local peace from 1991 until the recent time and methodologically, this study is confined to a qualitative research. Regarding population size three focus group discussions were held each comprising 6 individuals with a total of 18 people.

1.7 Study Site

Figure 1 : Study site



Source: Extracted from Ethio-GIS

The study area is located at 14°N up to 14° 30' N and 38° 30' E up to 39 10' E. Area of interest of the study is 2547 km². Details are here in the map:

The Tigray National Regional State, covers approximately an area of 56,451,528 square kilometers. Out of the total area of the region the two *wereda* administrations where this data collected from covers approximately 2,547 km². Moreover, the distance of the study area is East-West 93km² and south –north 58.2 km². Area in Perimeter *Ahferom* 197 km, *Mereb Leke* 219 km.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

The objective of this study was to explore, describe, and explain the role of peasant militia in maintaining local peace in Ahferom and MerebLeke wereda administrations in the Tigray central zone. In this regard, since the proposed research methodology is exploratory and qualitative, a lack of researcher's experience in dealing with a semi-structured interview which needs more skills in the process of data collecting and interpretation. The other limitation of the study was the researcher was challenged by a lack of written sources of published empirical literature which were conducted in the past on the subject matter. Furthermore, the researcher challenged with the spread of the pandemic disease Covid-19 to search some documents in hard copy from the Ethiopian Defense Force Documentation and were also get challenged to return to his home base Addis Ababa. Therefore, all these factors would have an indirect impact on the findings of the study.

1.9 Ethical Considerations

According to Vanderstoep & Johnston, (2009) the concept of ethics in academic research deals with how the researcher treats those who take part in the study and how to handle the data after collection. In this regard, different ethical considerations are taken in the process of the study, . In the first place, to get informed consent from the study participants, the purpose of the study was briefly explained and participants informed for being on the record. Likewise, the researcher has sufficiently explained that the data taken from them is only for academic purposes and interviewees' names not be shown to any other third-party without the willingness of the informants that is to protect the privacy of informants from any harmful doings. Moreover, I described who am I, as well as, from where I am, which help me to have a good relationship with participants.

1.10 Organization of the paper

The study is organized into six chapters. The first chapter discusses the introduction part and specifically includes background of the study, statement of the problem, objective of the study, research question, significance, scope, limitation, ethical considerations as well as organization of the thesis. The second chapter describes the review of related literatures and theoretical perspectives. The third chapter deals with methodology and methods of data collection, chapter four deals with, History of militia in the Ethiopian Context, chapter five deals with the data presentation and discussions on the role of militia in maintaining local peace in Tigray. Finally, the fifth chapter deals with conclusion and recommendations.

1.11 Operational Definition of Terms

Peasant militia is trained and an armed mass who play a double role as farmer and security forces in maintaining peace of its localities.

Administrative regulation is the guidance document in which the Tigray militia administered (led) by.

Baitos are grassroots level democracies elected by the people and serves for the people as a local judicial body.

Kirbit (Agitprop) is a fire team organized having 7-9 fearless fighters to launch an attack on small units of government forces in one side, and to organize, mobilize the local militias to preserve peace of their locality.

Shigweyenti are local activists (torch bearer) of the armed struggle who mobilize youths to support TPLF's political program.

CHAPTER TWO

2. Review of Related Literature and conceptual framework

2.1 Conceptualizing Local Peace

Peace is a comprehensive concept that consists of inner and outer spheres of our life and the environment we live in. As Galtung, (1967) described its scope ranges from the termination of organized collective violence (negative peace) to positive peace as the overcoming of structural and cultural violence (cooperation and integration between human groups). Likewise, as Hummel (2001) stated peace may be defined as the mutual consensus between governments as absence of hostilities and war and/or the condition of lasting suspension of rivalry between political organizations. This refers, negative peace indicates to the absence of war and severe violence while positive peace denotes to the presence of cooperation, equity, equality and the presence of culture of peace and dialogue (Galtung,1967).

Moreover, peace has a number of tasks like eliminating the direct war that causes suffering on human life, removing trouble through economic equality (Galtung, 1964). This view tells us if peace is said to be maintained there would be three basic tasks such as building direct, structural and cultural peace. In this regard peace in the community of the study area is perceived to be the avoidance of war and threats which constrains the day-to-day activities of the people and in the absence of peace there wouldn't be full-fledged life. Therefore, the researcher used the term peace in this study is the avoidance of structural violence, free movement of peace from place to place, good governance and right to development.

2.2 Understanding the concept of militia

In accordance the role it plays in different countries, the militia force is viewed either as a destructive or constructive force (Fumerton, 2018). Those who positively view the militia force consider it as a vital force to maintain local peace and stability particularly, if the central government is weak and ineffective to maintain peace at the local level. On the other hand, those who view the militia force as destructive argue that it is largely used as an instrument to abuse human rights during government or state failure (Fumerton, 2018).

These arguments indicate that the purpose and roles of the militia forces depend on the interest of the political body that controls them, and the capacity of the governments to maintain peace and stability within the states concerned. In this regard, we can understand that militia forces would be instruments for either human rights violation (particularly, in times of state failure) or maintaining law and order. Moreover, even in times of state failure, militia forces would play a vital role in creating peaceful zones or zones of stability.

Seemingly, the militia force is a group of armed people, which usually stands on the side of certain ethnic, religious, tribal, clan or other political groups or political parties. The militia force may be established to serve the government in power or operate independently to combat other militias or insurgent groups. Moreover, the militia may pursue a criminal activity or support an insurgency movement (Buchanan, 2016).

2.3 Historical Development, Role and classifications of Militia

2.3.1 Historical Development of Militias

Individuals usually organize themselves based on their commonly established identities and interests to deter potential security threats and maintain peace and order. It is not exactly known when and where the militia force was first established. However, the available literature on the area shows that the militia force was commonly used by the Anglo-Saxon countries as a security force for more than fifteen centuries (Ansell, 1917). In return for their liberty and protection from attack, individual citizens or subjects were entrusted with the duty to serve as militias to defend and protect their government in times of need (Ansell, 1917).

According to Hummel (2001), following the footsteps of the English tradition, it is believed that militia in the United States was introduced in the colonial times. It was created and used as an organized armed group, which was constituted by male citizens aged between 16 and 60 years. In the American colonies, the militia force was mostly organized by providing abled individuals with a maximum of one week training in order to deploy it in a dire emergency situation. These militiamen were volunteers and armed by themselves. The governments were not required to pay them (Hummel, 2001).

To deal with emergency situations, a militia force was deployed by drawing from the colonies based on a quota set for each colony by the central government. But if the volunteers fail to do so the “districts would then meet their quotas through drafts” (Hummel, 2001:31). Likewise, when we look at the experience of Holland, before 1566s, militias were not active

in the political affairs. But, year 1566 saw a turning point in terms of the militia's involvement in political, economic and religious affairs where its concept of loyalty was tested. In principle, the militia force was only mandated to involve in maintaining peace and defending internal and external threats (Grayson, 1980). Accordingly, as stipulated in the Carolina Militia Manual, the militia force was expected to respect the laws of respective states and play the role of containing rebel groups, deter external invasion to protect the nation and its people from both internal and external enemies (Carolina, 1999)

2.3.2 Classification of Militia

Scholars who conducted research on militia have diversified views regarding the classifications and contributions of this force to maintain peace and stability. According to Michell, (2017) many governments around the world cooperates with death squads, irregular militias, vigilantes, “self-defense” forces, and paramilitaries. The militia forces could be classified into well organized and less organized forces (Statutes, n.d). For instance the National Guard militia and naval militia are well organized militia forces (Abdul Majid *et al.*, 2015). As Michell, (2017) points out, based on the links they have with the government in power, militia forces could be divided into semi-official and informal militia forces. The semi-official militia forces which are mostly organized by the government, in accordance with the law of the concerned state, have the right to receive compensation for their service. However, the informal militias are organized by rebel movements fighting against the government in power or other political and military forces. In this regard the militias in the study area are established as one security institution to preserve peace and security of its dominion without payment. Therefore, this study deals with the role of the legally established but nonpaid Peasant Militia in the purposively selected two wereda administrations in Tigray central zone. Both the formal and informal militia forces have similar organizational structure and rebel tactic against in fighting against their enemies. The militia force is constituted by a manpower which ranges from a small units or squad to a locally based militia force composed of a group armed people whose activities are closely linked to their villages' peace and order (Arjona & Kalyvas, 2009). The militia force may operate under the close guidance of the government in power or self-reliantly to fight against other insurgent movements, chase a criminal activity, or in support of an insurgent movement, which is fighting against the government in power (Buchanan, 2016). Likewise, Goodhand & Hakimi, (2014) point out that the term militia deals with the “*home guards and militia*” forces.

The difference between home guards and the militia are that the home guards particularly protect their village control over the population and decrease insurgencies capabilities and their role is preventing crimes or policing. While the militias are more effective than home guards and mostly deploy at remote areas almost at the border to foreign states (Goodhand & Hakimi, 2014). In this regard the militias in the study sites share both the role of the home guards and the remotely deployment of the militia to protect their border.

2.4 The Role of Militias in Maintaining Peace

The militia as an organized military component plays constructive or destructive roles regarding the maintenance of peace and stability (Fumerton, 2018). Most of the time, militia is a military component engaged in security provision or peace enforcement tasks. Besides, it plays a political role or gets involved in the political arena of states. Therefore, the militia force would participate in maintaining local peace enforcement activities and engaged in public administration activities when needed (Fumerton, 2018). This was the case during the armed struggle (1975-1991) under the leadership of the TPLF in rural Tigray.

Militia may also become an actor for human rights violations in situations of state or government failure to control and maintain the status quo. On the other hand, militia would play a constructive role in counterinsurgency tasks in times of state or government weaknesses to monopolize the mechanisms of coercion, i.e., the military, police and security forces (Arjona & Kalyvas, 2009).

2.4.1 Militias as the Guardians of Local Peace

As discussed earlier, the militia force has a number of roles. It provides military service to ensure local peace and security (Buchanan, 2016). Based on the role they play, militias could be regarded as local gaurds, which are organized by recruiting individuals from a particular village with the responsibility of policing their respective communities (Goodhand & Hakimi, 2014). This is closely related to the ‘Araki model’, which has to do with order and defending their border, as well as, the boundaries of the tribes and chiefdoms.

Militias are different from the home guards in that the home guards are organized in order to weaken rebel capabilities and ensure peace and stability within the concerned country (Goodhand & Hakimi, 2014). The militias are also distinct from the home guards in terms of their number and scope of operation. They are larger in number and more effective

than the domestic guards in terms of offensive military position and frequency of operations over a wider geographical area (Goodhand & Hakimi, 2014).

Unlike the home guards, the militias are civilian defense forces, which are established to minimize violence and help authorities to identify the scope of rebel operations and contain the possible threat they pose on the civilian population (Clayton & Thomson, 2016). In this regard, the militias are at the forefront in collecting intelligence clandestinely. This is because, being part of the local population, the militias have detail knowledge regarding the activities of individual persons within their respective communities (Clayton & Thomson, 2016:3).

The militias would also play the role of standby police force within their respective communities. For instance, until 1850, the American cities were not organized their very own professional forces. Consequently, they used the militias as standby neighborhoods protection forces (Hummel, 2001). It was since the 1850s that the English colonies merged the militias in the north to serve as the night watch while the Southern colonies assigned it with the mission of slave patrolling (Hummel, 2001). Generally, the militia forces were organized groups aligned with the government in office at all ranges of countrywide and sub-national level but no longer in the position of membership to conventional armed forces (Clayton & Thomson, 2016).

Concerning command and control, militias would align either with the countrywide army or ethnic based rebel movements. As Buchanan (2016) described the functions of the militia is not merely performing security enforcement tasks in peacetimes, It also would also engage in war on the side of the government to defend the sovereignty of a country or engage in fighting against the government on the side of a rebel movement. Moreover, militia force is necessary to preserve peace and order within its respective dominion when the regular army fails to ensure peace and stability at the national level. The militia force is important to control guns seized by disbanded troops.

In this regard, the history of the peasant militia in the study area shows that it was played both peacetime and wartime roles to ensure about the safety of their people. Nevertheless, civilian militias are important in identifying insurgencies during wartime and this leads to the reduction of state violence in a certain population and can collect vital intelligence in support of the government forces (Clayton & Thomson, 2016). In this regard, the militia are vital to contain the movement of anti-peace elements in their respective communities because they

have detailed knowledge regarding the activities of individual persons of the local population” (Clayton & Thomson, 2016:3).

2.4.2 Militia as an Auxiliary Force to the Military

As discussed earlier, militias have a direct and indirect attachment with the government. The militias play a role as an auxiliary force to the police, military, and intelligence forces. Providing support to the army, the police and collecting intelligence are among the most important roles the militia would play. In maintaining local peace, the close attachment it has with the community help the militia force collect information which is vital for the military forces (Clayton & Thomson, 2016). Moreover, militia forces emerge against rebellion movements in their village or establish as counter rebel groups to fight on behalf of the regular armed forces and the police. Militia force would also play a vital role in managing crisis that could rapidly spread over in a country in which the national military forces unable to cover (Althaus & Dudley, 2014).

According to Seth G. Jones, (2012), militias as an auxiliary force to the national army and the police would also play crucial roles in collecting intelligence about the rebel’s movement such as logistics, collaborators, avenue of approach and tactics and techniques. For instance, in Guatemala, one of the main objectives of the militia guards (patrolling) activities was to inform the government regarding the activities of guerrilla supporters in the community. That is, the militia members conduct reconnaissance of the population whether the collaborators of the insurgents are existing within the community at their respective villages and reported to the military. Likewise, the Colombian government used militia to collect information on guerrillas from the revolutionary armed forces of Colombia (FARC) and National Liberation Army (ELN) in the peripheries or rural villages (Seth G. Jones, 2012). Moreover, it utilized as an integral component of the counter-insurgency units

As discussed earlier, the militia force could be used as an instrument of maintaining local peace or violating human rights. For example, in Guatemala and Colombia, the militias are pivotal in collecting information at the grassroots level to support the army. As Seth g. Jones, (2012) explained, in the 1950s, the Indonesian government was established ceiling 6000 militias forces in Sumatra province targeted to fight the guerrillas in its dominion.

Experiences of different countries show that the strictly controlled and partially controlled militias under the government in office vary in terms of the outcomes they achieved in their security activities. If a militia force is strongly controlled under the government, it would

establish close coordination with the national defense forces and play determinant role in containing insurgent movements fighting against the government. On the other hand, if the militia force is loosely controlled by the government in office, it would not have close coordination with the national army and fail to play an effective role in containing insurgent movements within its dominion. Therefore, a strongly commanded militia under the government in office is more effective than a less commanded militia force to ensure local peace and security in any state (Seth G. Jones, 2012).

This shows that if the militia force is not effectively commanded and controlled under the government in power, it would create conducive environment for the operation of rebel movements fighting against the government. On the contrary, if the militia force is under the strict control and guidance of the government, it would deny space for the clandestine activities of insurgent movement at the grassroots level.

The researcher observed that the experiences discussed above are relevant to make sense of the role the peasant militia in the Tigray National Regional State have been playing in maintaining local peace and stability. As it was the case in China, the peasant militias in Tigray were involving in land distribution and administrative activities during the armed struggle (1975-1991) under the leadership of the TPLF. According to Seth G. Jones (2012), in the long-lasting civil war between the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil Tigers, the government effectively used the militia to fight against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil. In times of crises, the militia offers a way for states to recruit local fighters, especially in areas that have been inaccessible to the government. In short, the militia force is vital in maintaining local peace in support of the national government or in creating peaceful zones in times of national crises that weakened the central government's to effectively control its territory and population. Moreover, the militia forces may also play a vital role on the side of rebel movement to oust a government in power.

2.5 Critics of Militias in Abusing Human Rights

It is commonly argued that the militia is extremely prone to commit human rights violations. Perpetrating of violence is behaviorally part and parcel of its evolution. It "can serve as sub-contractor or instrument of conducting state terror (Fumerton, 2018:2)". It is an organized group that poses numerous challenges to peace efforts. Particularly, during post-conflict mediations, if the militia force is not included as part and parcel of the agreement reached in consensus among the parties to the conflict, it would play a destructive role that would lead to

the emergence of another phase of a conflict. In short, when a militia force is neglected from the process, it would pose a challenge to the peace efforts (Fumerton, 2018).

As several studies show, informal militia forces (forces which are not under the direct control of the government) are more involved in dirty activities of violating human rights than the formal militias under the direct control of the government (Clayton & Thomson, 2016).

Sometimes, sovereign states may collaborate with irregular militias and paramilitaries, as well as, self-defense forces in violating human rights. For instance, the Interahamwe militia during the Rwandan genocide and the Janjaweed militias in Darfur were known for their offensive violation of human rights through an act of terror that led to state failure. On the contrary, states have sometimes used the militia to defeat rebel groups and increase control over the peripheries (Mitchell, Carey, & Butler, 2014).

Since 2003 Darfur, the largest state in western Sudan, experienced war between two tribes namely, the natives (Black Darfurians) and the Arabs. Throughout the course of the destructive war, many people killed and thousands of civilians were forcibly migrated to neighboring Chad as a consequence of the fighting. The Janjaweed pro-government militias are one of the actors playing a major role in the human rights violation in the region, Darfur (Watch, 2004).

According to Watch, (2004), in Darfur, “The human rights abuses were worsened because the attacks have been targeted on villages rather than rebel force positions. Moreover, it is common to observe the involvements of militia in ethnic-based conflicts as an actor in human right violation as it is the case in Sudan (Mitchell, *et al.*, 2014). While Janjaweed in Sudan commits human right violations, it has no clear association to the army and the police forces. But as Human Security Baseline Assessment (HSBA), 2017:2) described, due to the hidden agenda gave by the government “*militias frequently attacked civilians instead of fighting the rebel forces, which further exacerbated the conflict*”

Militias during the time of war are exposed to misconducts such as human rights and human security (physical security) violation. A case in point is during 2000-2002, Zimbabwe crisis. The militias were engaged in genocide, political rape, forced conscript, as well as, opportunistic rape (Council, 2003). Since most militias are armed and they play active roles in armed conflicts, their involvement can abuse human rights. However, engagement and dialogue with militias have been over locked in the peace process (Buchanan, 2016). But as it is discussed at the presentation and analysis part, the peasant militias in the study area are

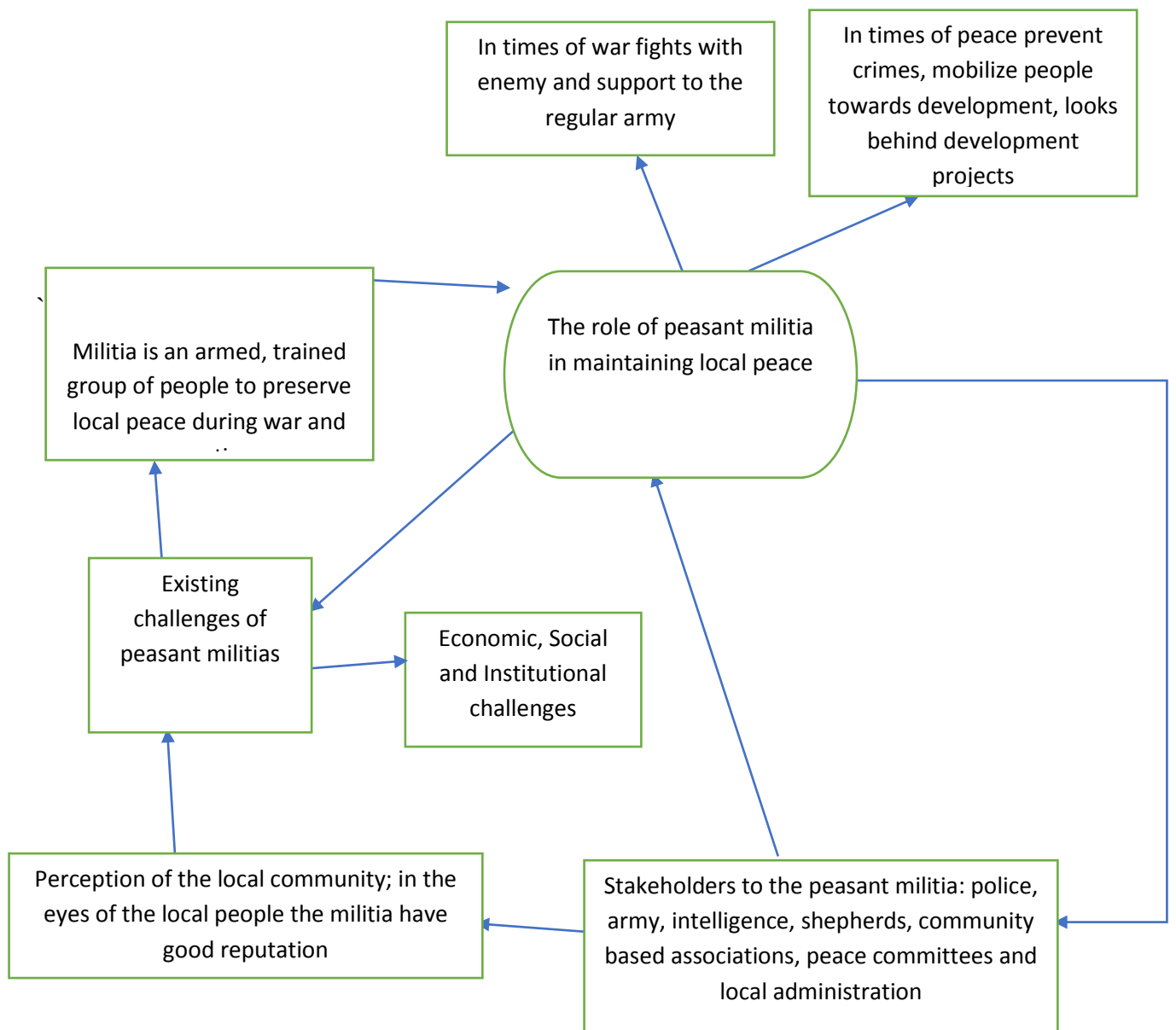
aware of human right and even if someone acted against the rules and regulations of the forces may liable to punishment. Regarding the involvement of militia forces in human rights violation, East Timor is an important example. In response to the strong resistance against the central Indonesian government, a proposal for special autonomy of East Timor was finalized in 1998 (Robinson, 2001). However, the East Timorese movements demanded independence, but the government launched a campaign to quell them through deploying the militia force which resulted in severe violation of human rights.

As a result, the militias were responsible for killing and other activities including at refugee camps. Observers of the event argued that the militias were established and commanded by the Indonesian army and the military officials were masterminded the “well-orchestrated plan” (Robinson, 2001:2). This shows that militia can abuse human rights in support of the national government. That is, the government in office may use the militia force as an instrument of violating human rights.

2.6 Conceptual framework on the role of peasant militia in maintaining peace

The Peasant Militia is an armed and trained group of people drawn from civilian population to engage in war and restore peace and maintain security tasks to ensure local stability equipping institutional mission. The main objective of this study is to examine the role of the Peasant Militias in maintaining local peace. This security force plays self and replaced the role of the Ethiopian armed forces and the police force. In this regard, this paper deals with the legal basis of the Peasant Militia in the study areas, the roles it plays, like its involvement in the security delivery activities both at war and peace times. Besides, this paper addresses the stakeholders’ contribution to the force in maintaining local peace. The stakeholders in the study area are the police force, Ethiopian Defense Force deployed at the study area, mass based associations, peace committee as well as local courts. The study also incorporates perceptions of the local community towards the role of the militia force, as well as assessed the hindering challenges of the security force in maintaining local peace. In addition, the research addresses the hindering challenges of the local Peasant Militia force to execute its mission as per the rule of administration of the office.

Figure 2 Conceptual Frame work diagram



CHAPTER THREE

3.1 Methodology and Method of the Study

The research methodology to this study deals with philosophy of the research process that is undertaken to explore, describe and explain a phenomenon.

3.2 Research Design

The main objective of this study is to explore and explain the role of local peasant militia in maintaining local peace in two administrative *weredas* in the Tigray National Regional Stat, namely, Mereb Leke and Ahferom. The study was intended to collect and analyze data regarding the role of local peasant militia in the research sites. And the purpose (broad goal) of the study is to explore the knowledge gap regarding the role of peasant militia in rural Tigray, particularly in the two *wereda* administrations. Due to its appropriateness to the study, the researcher employed qualitative research approach, which focuses on learning by “studying carefully selected ... cases than by studying representative ones” (Weber, 1991). Similarly, qualitative research examines the cause and effect of a certain issue and can answer the reason how and why (Cropley, 2007). Qualitative research also helps us in producing findings not addressed by statistical procedures and supports us to study human lives, experience, behavior, and organizational functioning. It is also interested in analyzing subjective meanings or the social production of issues or events (Rahman, 2016).

In this regard, the methodology of this study is qualitative one, which enables the researcher to adequately investigate and understand what the local militias are actually doing in their day- to- day activities of maintaining local peace. In this respect, it would be appropriate to conduct qualitative research, which focuses more on the idea about what the sample may reflect. This is because qualitative method is often rich in having intense and/or extended contact with participants in a naturalistic setting to investigate a problem at hand. Therefore, the study, using pertinent methods and instruments and consulting relevant sources, gathered qualitative data necessary to address the objectives of the study and answer the research questions forwarded. In line with this view, a case that considered multiple data and instruments of data collection was the strategy of this study.

3.3 Research Approach

This research employed qualitative research approach. As Rahman,(2016:2) stated, “ the term ‘qualitative research’, is any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification”. Also“ Qualitative research is interested in analyzing subjective meaning or the social production of issues, events, or practices by collecting non-standardized data and analyzing texts and images rather than number and statistics”(Rahman, 2016). The researcher used this approach to answer the questions raised and intended to address the rational which is to fill the knowledge gap by this study.

3.4 Target Population

The target population of the study are current militia bureau leaders, veteran militias, founders of militia during the TPLF’s 17 years armed struggle, police officers, and journalists who have produced documentaries in the area, and commanders of the Ethiopian Defense Force, as well as, local elders at both the purposively selected *Wereda* administrations. When we look at academic background of the respondents, most of the FGD participants and the veteran militias were not educated while the police officers, army commanders, journalists, as well as, the founders of the militia were first degrees holders and above. Their ages averaged between 46 and 88 years. Moreover, the respondents are from different walks of life and are residents of the area for a long time. In the process, the researcher tried to ensure gender balance and incorporate participants from and various religions.

3.5 Population size and Sampling Techniques

In providing information for this study 46 people participated as key interview informant and focus group discussion. In this regard, the researcher asked 28 individuals in key informant interview and conducted three Focus group discussions in one group average 6 total 18 people participated. The key informants were founders of TPLF militia 2, Veteran militia 5, Active militia 6, Police officers 3, and Journalists 2, from militia administration 4, Army commanders 4, and militia commanders during the Ethiopian and Eritrean war 2. Moreover, the FGD participants were composed of male and female, as well as, religious fathers. The sampling technique used in the research is purposive sampling because the researcher selected the informants based on their knowledge of the subject matter and the position they have too.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

The researcher used both primary and secondary sources of data via interview and focus group discussions, as well as, document analysis. The document analysis in primary data include printed documents by the front during the extended armed struggle and post 1991 proclamation and team charter used to establish and regulate the armed masses (militia).

3.6.1 Primary Sources of Data

3.6.1.1. Interview

In obtaining data, the researcher conducted in-depth interview with founders of the militia force during the protracted armed struggle (1975-1991), current militia office leaders, police officers, Ethiopian Defense Force Army commanders, and veteran peasant militia fighters (*Weyenti*) residing in the study sites, journalists who produced documentary on the subject matter. For this purpose, the researcher prepared semi structured interview questions and used to respondents.

3.6.1.2. Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

As Freitas, Oliveira, Jenkins, & Popjoy, (1998) stated “*Focus Group discussion is a type of in-depth interview accomplished in a group, whose meetings present characteristics defined concerning the proposal, size, composition, and interview procedures*”. In addition to this, it has high “face validity” (data) and less costly in comparison to the other instruments of data collection, as well as, gives speed in the supply of the results(Freitas, *et al.*, 1998). Other advantage of using focus group discussion are flexibility in questioning, the encouragement of dialogue and exchange of ideas(Villard, 2000).Thus, to triangulate and validate the data gathered through key informant interviews, the researcher also employed focus group discussion (FGD) or group interview by identifying participants who have relevant knowledge and experience about the subject matter.

3.6.1.3. Document Analysis

The researcher employed empirical documents written during the protracted armed struggle of TPLF (1975-1991), proclamations, administrative regulations and directives (team charter), as well as, reports.

3.6.2. Secondary sources of data

The researcher utilized researches, books, and journal articles, published and unpublished documents which deal with militia laws, reports, policies, and relevant web sources.

3.6.3. Data analysis and Interpretation Tools

According to (Kumar, 2011), a systematic content analysis method uses to accommodate in depth interview and unstructured aimed to be the study flexible. For this purpose, the researcher employed qualitative tools and applied a systematic content analysis method to analyze the data gathered through different methods.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. History of militia in the Ethiopian Context

4.1 Militia and the Ethiopian security structure

Even though it is difficult to mention the exact time when militias were established in Ethiopia its origin is traced back to the era of the nobles' (*Zemene mesafint*) in the late nineteenth century (Yonas, 2008)¹. Since its establishment as a military unit, the militia performed pivotal roles in Ethiopia's domestic security structure. Each noble had militias to protect his territory, and safeguard his subjects (Yonas, 2008). Militias were effectively functional, particularly, during the reign of Emperor Menilik II and Emperor Hailesillassie in Ethiopia (Yonas, 2008).

Regarding the name given for, they were labeled as 'peace and security guards of the community' during the former and '*Biherawi tor*' or 'National Army' during the latter. The territorial army was a separate unit organized with the aim of ensuring local securities side by side with the army and served as local militia but it was loyal to the regime (Yonas, 2008).

4.1.1 Ethiopian 'National Army' (*Biherawi Tor*) of Emperor Hailesilassie

As Gesit (2006:202-206) stated, the social violence in different corners of the country was the main cause for the establishment of local militias. Some of the causes to erupt violence in different parts of the country were land administration, tax system, tax collection, and mismanagement of state affairs. As a result, several public officials and police members killed in different parts of the country. The spread of social violence continued across different parts of the country and the disobedience became beyond the capacity of the police forces (Gesit, 2006:202-206). This resulted in the involvement of the regular army aiming at restoring peace through proportional use of force. But instead of down scaling the violence, the involvement of the army exacerbated the situation.

Following the instability in rural areas, the political momentum in cities forced the government to think over the means for the establishment of the militia. Because the protests in the army and in farmers hinted that there would be an imminent danger for the Emperor to

¹ Yonas, (2008:5) *The Militia in Ethiopia's Internal Security Structure – Unpublished policy paper. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.*

stay in power. Due to this reason, the Emperor officially declared the establishment of the army in 1951. Thus, the primary objective of organizing the National Army (militia) was to confront conflicts, maintain internal security in the areas uncovered by the police and the regular army, as well as, to render military service to internal and external threats of the country.

As Gesit (2006 E.C.) described, to establish the National Army² (Biherawi Tor), individuals were recruited from the rich farmers. Such individuals were required to perform agricultural production activities along with their mandate of policing their communities. However, they were required to be gathered in the military camps by call-out notice when required. In other words, their function largely resembled with that of the local militias. The National Army was led by landlords and their families. The Emperor organized the Territorial Army in all 14 provinces with numerical superiority in Showa and Wollo, but its military training center and training programs were almost similar to that of the national army.

However, the recruitment for the National Army has differed from the ground forces' recruitment process. Some of the required criteria to be fulfilled by individuals who would be recruited to the National Army were physical and mental fitness for service, membership to the landlord's families, willingness to serve under the Emperor's Territorial Army, acceptance of their request from the respective governor of the provinces, and age of recruit between 18- 25 years. These requirements show that the Territorial Army was needed to be equally strong with the national army.

The Emperor has established a separate office for the National Army administered under the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The army was being led by old generals of noble families and landholders. The command posts were led by colonels and majors of the noble families. Yet, the National Army received orders directly from the governors of provinces (Gesit, 2006 E.C.)³, regardless of the formal command structure. This indicates that the organizational structure under the ministry of internal affairs was insignificant. The problem was that when the chief of staff needed to give missions and issue orders, he was not expected to inform the governors of the provinces which were completely against the objective of the establishment

² Biherawi Tor refers to National Army (militia) which were organized at a brigade level to perform agricultural production activities along with their mandate of policing their communities without isolating from family and productivity.

³ ገሰጥ ተጫኔ (2006) የቀድሞ ጦር 1927-1983 ከቀድሞው የኢት/ያ ምድር ጦር ሠራዊት ወታደሮችና ስሺል ሠራተኞች፡፡

of the National Army. However, working with the local administration was far better in maintaining peace and security of the local societies.

The mission of the National Army in times of peace was assisting the maintenance of internal security, providing support to police forces when ordered by the governor of the province, and conducting training based on the program of the chief of staff. In times of conflict, the National Army was required to secure communication lines, depots and other logistical institutions, follow up and inform infiltrations of spies and rear enemy attack (*Gesit, 2006*).

In short, in both peace and war times, the Territorial Army was auxiliary force to the standing army of the country. When we look at the capacity building of the Territorial Army, after completion of their formal initial military training, they turned back to take rehearsals and acquire additional knowledge for two months in a year.

In general, the National Army consisted of 14 brigades with 107 battalions. The army remained ready in all times to provide reinforcements to the regular army and police force when required. Responsibilities for logistical administrations, recruitment and selection processes were given to the district governors. Moreover, every member was paid either salary in cash or land or in a combination of the two (*Gesit, 2006 E.C*).

Regarding organizational structure, the National Army (local militia) was organized in squad, Platoon, and company, battalion, and brigade. In terms of ranks, it was similar with that of the ground forces titled with private, noncommissioned officer (NCO) and officers.

Every member of the National Army (local militia) executed its mission within its territorial province. But the Ministry of Internal Affairs could mobilize the army across the country up on the permission of the Emperor to maintain peace and stability. All members were abided by the regulations, rules, and engagements of the National Army. However, the National Army was fundamentally different from the current peasant militia in terms of its objectives, organization, leadership, social class, and operational procedures. The militia during the imperial era was established as fire brigade to calm down public disobedience while the recent militia in Tigray was first established to support the armed struggle and later to accomplish outsourced power from the regular army and the police force.

4.1.2 Militia during the Dergue Regime

During the *Dergue* regime, there was an interest from political parties like MEISON that the existing national security structure be substituted with the militia taking the model of *red army* of the former Soviet Union. Yet, the government and other political parties insisted that replacing the whole security structure might demand much price to pay (Yonas, 2008).

Meanwhile, the militia during the *Dergue* regime was established in 1977, named after ‘people’s militia’ i.e., during the war in Eritrea in the north and with Somalia in the east. It consisted largely of peasants from different corners of the country and individuals from among the government and privately owned factories and institutions. In this regard, the armed peasants were labeled as ‘peasant militias’ and ‘proletariat militias’.

The class name of the militias revealed that they were different from the former regime’s National Army in terms of their number and class character. As Berhe, (2017) explained the number of the people’s militia forces deployed in Eritrea and Tigray by the *Dergue* regime was estimated to be more than 200,000. However, available literature on the Dergue militia shows that it was huge in number seemingly from the former National Army even its character was as regular armed force.

4.1.3 Militia during the Seventeen Years Armed Struggle of the TPLF

4.1.3.1 Armed Mass Strategy Military Doctrine (1988)

The white paper written by the TPLF illustrates that arming the mass was a strategy to strengthen and widen the liberated areas and narrow the Military Government’s scope of operation in Tigray (Berhe, 2017a; M. TPLF, 1988)⁴. Such military doctrine was derived from the Marxist-Leninist ideology, which claims that political power is that of the social class which represents the future economic interest of the society (M. TPLF, 1988).

A. Organization and Role of the Peasant Militia

The armed struggle under the leadership of TPLF (1975-1991) required broad and active involvement of the peasants. For this purpose, an armed mass strategy was introduced by the front (TPLF, 1988). The strategy was helpful to attain broad-based involvement of the rural peasants in the struggle alongside their involvement in agricultural productivity (TPLF, 1988). Therefore, according to the strategy, militias like armed peasants, were organized by

⁴ TPLF (1988) ምልሽ ህ.ወ.ሓ.ት (ዕጠቅ ሓፋሽ ስትራቴጂ) Literally refers to armed mass strategy.

the TPLF in every corner of the liberated areas in Tigray during the days of the armed struggle (1975-1991). These armed peasants are known in Tigrigna as *Weyenti* ('Revolutionary'), and an auxiliary force to the TPLF army, they played a vital role in defending, strengthening, and sometimes defending their communities from small army units of the *Dergue* regime. However, *Weyenti* (Peasant Revolutionary Fighters) played irreplaceable role in mobilizing the masses, administering localities, and ensuring law and order at the local level in the liberated under the TPLF control during the armed struggle against the military regime (M. TPLF, 1988).

Throughout the course of the struggle, the *Dergue* regime has tried its best to weaken the human and firepower bases of the TPLF, and destroy the revolution. However, this was tackled by the armed peasant militia (*Weyenti*) and the TPLF zonal army. In establishing and strengthening such armed forces, special focus was given to areas that were crucial to strengthen and further enhance the revolution. It implies, the TPLF were equipping the peasant militia during the armed struggle with arms captured from the *government (Dergue)* soldiers (M. TPLF, 1988).

According to TPLF (1988) *Weyanay* (Revolutionary peasant fighter) was one who was in charge of protecting the security of the rural areas in the liberated areas and engaging in agricultural productivity (as the other peasants do). The TPLF, during the armed struggle, believed that arming the masses without isolating from their agricultural productivity activities was a productive strategy. Understanding that the militia were a backbone of the TPLF, the *Dergue* government frequently inflicted exclusive damages or destruction on their families and properties (M. TPLF, 1988). To rehabilitate themselves from such an exclusive destruction of their properties, *Weyenti* or the militias were required to work harder than the other rural peasants to improve their productive activities (M. TPLF, 1988).

B. Mission of the Militia during the Armed Struggle

As an armed and administrative force in the liberated, *Weyenti* were vital in conducting land distribution and fighting the remnants of the feudal landlords in Tigray. Generally, as a political and security forces the militia force was in charge of protecting the social and economic institutions built by the TPLF. To perform their mission adequately, the militias were working in collaboration with the Front's Zonal (Regional) army (M. TPLF, 1988).

C. Militia in Defending Liberated Areas

The main mission of the militia force during the armed struggle was defending the liberated areas from the *Dergue* regime. This was a very important mission because ensuring the security of the liberated areas was a prerequisite for ascertaining the political, economic and military successes achieved by the TPLF, which in turn also regarded as foundations for the next greater achievements of the Front. The militia was placed dispersedly in every *Qebele*. The defense and resistance were carried out in every district checkpoints (*Kisadat*)⁵. These check points were as safe as an iron fence that denies enemy penetration to the liberated areas. However, these checkpoints were not supported by heavy firepower and combat service (M. TPLF, 1988).

In spite of their efficiency in fighting against the *Dergue* regime, the peasant militias (*weyenti*) lacked the capacity defend their communities from heavily armed government forces. Hence, in several cases, the *Dergue* regime penetrated the liberated areas and inflicted incalculable destruction on the lives and properties of the local people in many parts of Tigray. To contain such destructions, the local militias and the Zonal Army of the TPLF (zonal army) were working in collaboration to defend the liberated areas from the government army ((M. TPLF, 1988).

The Zonal Army of the TPLF was organized by drawing abled individuals from the militia fighters. The recruitment criteria were similar to that of the regular army in that physically fit and those of free of family responsibility were recruited to the Zonal Army. The zonal army executed its mission separately or in combination with the militia to crush the enemy beyond militia force. There were areas that the enemy massively mobilized its force to attack communities and destroy peasant properties. Thus, priority was given for organizing the zonal army in these areas (*M.TPLF, 1988*).

In general the liberated areas were secured by militia and regular army in which the regular army engaged against large enemy forces while the militia was dealing with small units of the *Dergue* army. Summing up, the militia, zonal army, and regular army performed their mission in collaboration but had also missions to be accomplished in isolation (*TPLF, 1988*). The works of militia were closely followed up by the public through elected bodies established by the mass-based associations of the Youth, Women, and Farmers.

⁵ Kisadat literally refers to checkpoints through which the government army was passed to inflict damages in the liberated areas under the TPLF control.

In accordance to (TPLF, 1988), in areas where the associations were absent, activities of the peasant militia were coordinated and followed up by people appointed by the elected bodies. This shows that, during the armed struggle, the TPLF managed to build institutions that resemble a modern government in the liberated areas under its control. In general, the militias (*Weyenti*) were the backbone of the revolution in terms of providing support to the TPLF army in many respects, defending and governing the liberated areas, protecting the political and economic institutions established by the TPLF and mobilizing human and material forces required to win achieve further victories over the *Dergue* army.

D. Challenges of the Militias during the Armed Struggle

Even though the militia started working with the TPLF since the commencement of the armed struggle, the armed mass strategy didn't clearly stated the roles of the militia force. However, following the foundation of MLLT, the strategic roles of militia and the regular army were clearly stated. Before the strategies were clearly stated, it the role the militia could play in the armed struggle was not clear. But, the militia members were facilitating logistics flows and serving as '*Tofegna*'⁶ (messengers) for the Front. However, because its role was not clearly distinguished, it was challenging for the militia force to effectively play its role in the formative years of the TPLF.

Another challenge that limited the role of the peasant militia during the armed struggle was shortage of arms. It was very difficult for the TPLF to arm huge number of militia fighters in the liberated areas. To solve this problem, particularly, in its formative years, the TPLF allowed individual persons to arm themselves through buying weapons. However, the TPLF made sure that such individuals use the weapon only to fight the *Dergue* regime, not to intimidate and harass innocent people. However, with the progress of the Front in many respects, later, restriction was imposed on arms market in the liberated areas (M.TPLF,1988).

E. Political Organization of Militia

During the armed struggle, there was no difference in terms of political organization between militia and the masses. Militia could engage in the mass associations and social court administrations. Their internal management were followed up and regularly evaluated by the commissars (local activists) and reported to district, zoned and regional secretariats (M. TPLF, 1988).

⁶ '*Tofegna*' literally refers to a person who serves the armed struggle as messenger.

F. Militia as Source of the Regular Army

Any physically fit citizen could become militia or a regular army. So, militia would be the source of the regular army. However, before it serves as a source to the regular army, it was required to become independent. The militia force was an important source of human power to the regular army in two ways. First, most of the young militia fighters who were physically abled joined to the regular TPLF army. Second, the militia fighters were critical agents of the TPLF in mobilizing the youth to join the struggle (M. TPLF, 1988).

4.1.3.2 Challenges of the Militia Force

The militias passed through several internal and external challenges over the course of the 17 years armed struggle. The popular militia force defends the liberated area in combination with the regular army and unarmed people. The objective of defending the liberated area was to create other newly liberated areas or to widen areas of control under the Front (TPLF, 1988a). After the establishment of MLLT in 1985, broad discussions were conducted on the old and new instructions of the organization (party). The volunteer veteran militias were synchronized with the new militia force. As a result, a strong militia force was set across the localities of all liberated areas. In the months of March and April 1987, extensive recruitment and training were conducted across the liberated areas. Accordingly, the institutions were revised to consider new developments (TPLF, 1988a).

4.1.3.3 Recruitment criteria during the armed struggle

The structure of militia was composed of members from *Baito*, (social judicial bodies), party, administrators, and mass associations. Recruited members should be free from criminal acts, records of bad back-grounds like theft and robbery. Besides, they were expected to be disciplined and hard workers and free of any guilt. Therefore, this force had enormous mass support and measured by its qualities, not based on quantities, and of numerical and weapon superiority. The most important quality of this force was the wider public support it attained which was accompanied by its progressive nature (TPLF, 1988a). This implies that during the armed struggle, the public support and their ethical behavior in the eye of the public were important criteria for individuals to be recruited to the militia force.

According to M. TPLF, (1988) public power is strong fortress for the militia fighters. Militia grows with the people, moves with the people. It is meaningless to operate alone without its locality. When we say militia should link with the surrounding society, he should mobilize, aware, coordinate, and administer the surrounding societies. Moreover, he should be the coordinator of the mass associations for a political and military purposes of the TPLF.

4.1.4 Militia and Regional State's Security Structures in Post-1991 Ethiopia

Although the militia force is accountable to the *Qebele* in both rural and urban areas, it operates with a high level of autonomy and that the government does not exert strong control over it. Moreover, the militia force has independent organizational structure, and is not accountable to the police force. Regardless of the limitations described earlier, in almost in all regions in Ethiopia, the militia is established under a formal regional proclamation. Accordingly, the post-1991 militia force in Tigray was established under proclamation No. 6/1985(TNRS, 1993) as a supportive force to the region's police force.

After the fall of the *Dergue* regime, the role and organization of the militia force was significantly changed. According to Yonas, (2008), the militia army was re-established in Tigray with the objective of guarding rights, benefits, ensuring the rule of law, peace, and security of people in the region by preventing rebellions and anti-peace elements (TNRS, 1993, Yonas, 2008).

When we look at the legal basis for the Establishment of Militia, the FDRE Constitution under 52(g), allows regional states "to establish and administer a state police force, and to maintain public order and peace within the State" (FDRE, 1995) but it doesn't specify the role this force could play. Similarly, the Constitution of the National Regional State of Tigray under article 47(L), states that the regional government shall establish and administer state police and maintain order and peace within the state. Moreover, 86 (10) of the Region's Constitution, states that the *Qebelle* or *Tabia* shall be responsible to maintain peace and security in its dominion (TNRS, 1995).

4.1.5 The Need for Peasant Militia in Tigray

As Fumerton (2018) explained, the local communities may establish militia force when they feel a sense of insecurity to defend themselves. Moreover, land boundary-based conflicts between communities may force government soldiers to create a militia to operate as a

security agent at the local level. In this regard, the establishment of Militia force in Tigray is largely associated with the objective of maintaining local peace.

In the first chapter of the armed struggle led by TPLF (1975-1981), the manpower was composed of almost exclusively intellectuals. For three basic reasons, peasants were not recruiting. Firstly, the front had a limited supply of kits and resources which helped to equip large force. Secondly, it was highly mobile and peasants were reserved about leaving their local areas; and thirdly, few peasants were prepared to make the necessary commitment in the early period of the revolution (Young, 1991). But after the initial period, when *Baito*'s were established and land reform was carried out, the TPLF did encourage the formation of the militia force at the *wereda* level in the liberated areas with the aim of maintaining and further enhancing the achievements of the revolution. As Tsige and mezgebe (2008), argue that it was the “the militia fighters who” began to meet fighters of the TPLF and help to gradually widen its scope of operations.

The TPLF militia members selected at *Qebelle* or *Tabia* meetings and had to appear regularly before such meetings to report their activities. Besides, the peasant militia members took varied types of training in TPLF bases within the liberated areas. Most of the training focused on enhancing skills in warfare (Young, 1991). Moreover, political trainings regarding the nature of the struggle was also offered alongside military training.

According to Young, (1991) local peasant militias were supporting the TPLF fighters when they engaged in major operations which were frequently organized for the dry season to ensure the safety of the crops and farmers to participate in the fighting. Militia casualties varied enormously but units near army bases suffered the most. As Young, (1991) stated, the militias were not only security providers rather they were also mobilizing the peasants to support the armed struggle and create a critical link between the TPLF and the villages.

4.1.6 Specific Roles of the Tigray Militia

According to Mesfin (2017, p. 29) in post 1991 Tigray, the Regional State established two basic peace and security structures namely, “The local security structures and the peace committee structures” The security structures are permanent components of local government in which the militias get involved in charge of crime prevention and local security while the peace committees are community-based structures, which comprised of people from different

walks of life like, religious fathers, women's association, famous personalities, local elders, and representatives from the local government units.

These structures are interdependent of each other when they perform their tasks. Information gathering is basically the mandate of the local security structures supported by the peace committee structures as a collaborative network. The filed information collected from the lowest administrative level which is the village or got and the actors in filed are mostly school teachers, a local militia, community police, and businesspeople. The role of the peace committee is to assist field monitors to gather information (Mesfin, 2017, p. 29).

4.1.7 Stakeholders and Customers of the Tigray Militia

As per the Team Charter (2017), stakeholders of the militia office in Tigray are classified into internal and external stockholders. Federal police, ministry of federal affairs, customs commission, national defense forces, national regional state of Afar, and national regional state of Amhara are the external stakeholders of the office.

The community, the National Regional State of Tigray, the council of people's representatives of Tigray, government offices at the district and *Tabia* levels, the *Tabia* councils, regional police commission, the region's prison administration and other bodies that have an interest in maintaining local peace are internal stakeholders of the militia office (Team charter, 2017).

CHAPTER FIVE

5. Data Presentation and Analysis

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter the empirical data obtained from informants using semi-structured interview, via focus group discussion, in-depth interviews with key informants and document analysis are presented and analyzed based on the general objectives and research questions of the study. Data presentation and analysis mainly focuses on the empirical data collected from informants and primary documents prepared for the establishment and rules and regulation of the militias in the Tigray regional state.

Available literature from related studies is employed for comparison and triangulation with the data obtained from participants and primary document analysis. The researcher has presented the analysis by comparing the literature with the view of the informants and come up with his recommendations towards the outcome of the analysis results. To come up with the findings, the researcher has gone through the designed questions to meet the objective of the study, i.e, filling the gap.

5.2 Basis for the Establishment of Peasant Militia in Tigray

As the available literature shows, the peasant militia in Tigray traced back to the first "woyane"⁷ rebellion and is highly linked to the second "woyane" movement led by the Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF), sparked on February 18, 1975. According to the documents of the Front, particularly, the armed mass mobilization strategy, which was introduced in 1988, shows that peasant militias were vital armed members of communities who supported the armed struggle in a multitude of ways. In the early years of the armed struggle, the Front was following Maoist guerrilla fighting strategy to attack isolated units of the *Dergue* regime(Berhe, 2017a).

The militias were originally envisioned for a self-armed starter farmer who began to struggle having a name in Tigrigna language ‘ወያኔ’ (“Woyanay”). The term *weyanay* was chosen in connection with the First *Woyane* Rebellion (Tsige and Mezgebe, 2019).

⁷ Woyane refers to rebellion movement of the Tigray People with a theme of ‘*Never kneel down*’

When the TPLF launched the national armed struggle in an isolated area in western Tigray known as *Dedebit* in February 1975, few self-armed peasants began to support the Front. Likewise, data obtained from key informants KI, 001,002, 003, 005,006, 011, 012, 019 and KI, 020 (2020: Interview), shows that even though self-armed individuals were walking around before the armed struggle sparked, the organization/TPLF/ and the *Weyenti* (revolutionaries) were established at the same time.

At times the TPLF raised the peoples' question; the militia was the sharp edge of the people. So, militia and the front were formed simultaneously. Even though they were armed prior to the launching of the armed struggle by the TPLF, the first militias who started to move with the Front was safeguarding the young organization in its early phases of establishment so that we could say they were emerged at the same time. Gradually after ten years ups and down, taking into account the role of the peasant militia in the national armed struggle, the TPLF introduced armed mass strategy in 1988. The strategy was intended to enhance the role of peasant militia to widen the liberated areas (*“ኣራ መሬት”*)⁸ and gradually overtake areas under the military government (KI, 007/2020: Interview)⁹.

According to Berhe, (2017a), in 1988, the TPLF introduced an articulated military doctrine in Tigrigna language which provides a means for coordination among the TPLF army, regional army, militias and civilian volunteers in strengthening and expanding the liberated areas and gradually narrowing down the bases of the *Dergue* regime. The author of this study describes this doctrine as a transformational document from the Maoist guerrilla fighting (hit and ran) used in the first chapter of the armed struggle to conventional war strategies. In 1979, fire teams comprised of seven up to nine personnel known as ‘*Kirbit*’ (Agitprop)¹⁰ which had been formed to organize and lead the local peasant militia in order to defend the liberated areas by under the TPLF control. Initially, the agitprops effectively set the military camps in the towns nearby in defensive positions through their small but well-planned attacks (Berhe, et al., 2019:98). He also point out that the number of the peasant militias in 1979 was about 5,800 but expanded to 40,000 four years after.

⁸ *ኣራ መሬት*(*Hara meret*) literally refers to an area liberated by TPLF

⁹ KI, 007(2020) lieutenant General Tsadqan Gebretensay, former chief of staff of the Ethiopian army. Interview held on February 14, 2020 in Mekkle, Tigray -Ethiopia.

¹⁰ ‘*Kirbit*’ literally refers to agitprop or match, organized as fire team comprised of seven up to nine personnel

In accordance with the armed mass strategy document, the integration of the peasant militias with the regular army, regional army (*Zobawi Serawit*) (*ግብይት ሰራዊት*)¹¹, and civilian volunteer (grassroots activist members of the TPLF) was very important. It was the militia who play an interface role with the armed TPLF fighters and the unarmed grassroots activists or the torch bearers of the revolution to keep the momentum of the armed struggle. “The second half of 1980 was the time when the Front shifted its social background to being dominated by peasant fighters” (Berhe, 2019:98). This shows that the militias were the core actors to bridge the relationship between the mass based associations and the armed fighters at the frontline. At the same time they were engaging with government forces.

To this end, the researcher also confirmed that all research participants of this study unanimously agreed that oppressed peasants began first to work with the movement around *Dedebit* area as a continuation from the first *woyane* rebellion. Concerning its challenges, the researcher ensured that the first starter militias were not politically aware or convinced beyond the love they had to hold a rifle. Having this in mind, the researcher tried to make clear whether there is a conceptual difference between the *weyanay* and militias. Empirical data obtained from the key informants indicates that the peasant militia transformed to government militia force after the armed struggle with the objective of ensuring local peace as an auxiliary force to the police force. According to the code of conduct number 106/2011, the militias are currently tasked to maintain internal peace and defend state sovereignty when required.

5.2.1 Legal Basis for the Establishment of the Militia Office in the Tigray Regional State

As it is discussed in chapter two of this study, in the post 1991 period, the role and organization of the militia were significantly changed. According to Yonas, (2008), it was engaged in protecting rules, peace and security of people in the region by preventing rebellions and acts of force to overtake its constitutional rights. (TNRS, 1993, Yonas, 2008).

Moreover, the FDRE Constitution, (FDRE, 1995) explicitly lists down the federal powers, the state powers, concurrent powers, and leaves residual powers to the states under Articles 51 and 52. As stipulated in article 52 (g), the Constitution allows Regional States “to establish and administer a state police force, and to maintain public order and peace within the State”

¹¹ *Zobawi Serawit*, is Tigrigna word which literally refers to a militia force organized at a zonal level.

(FDRE, 1995) to establish security forces in their dominions but it doesn't mention the type and to what extent is the role given to this security forces. Similarly, the Constitution of the National Regional State of Tigray under article 47(L), states that the regional government shall establish and administer state police and maintain order and peace within the state. Moreover, 86 (10) of the regional constitution, states that the *Qebelle or Tabia* shall be responsible to maintain peace and security in its dominion (Constitution, 1995). It is also part of self-administration as every Nation, Nationality, and People in Ethiopia have the right to a full measure of self-government which includes the right to establish institutions of government in the territory (FDRE, 39 (3).) Therefore, it is up to the states to organize their security apparatus to achieve the purposes stipulated in the FDRE constitution, i.e, to maintain public order and peace within a state up to the grassroots level of administration.

According to an administrative regulation number 106/2011 (Art. 2) of the Tigray National Regional State for the re-establishment of the militia office, "militia" is defined as the armed force which is created to maintain local peace. This force is required to maintain local peace while it is also engaging in agricultural production activities. In addition to these role, the militia force has also the mandate to keep the sovereignty of the country and take part in campaign upon the requirement of delegation for special responsibility based on the state callout. Regarding the organizational structure, the militia is explicitly recognized as security apparatus organized at regional, zonal, district, *Tabia* and the grassroots level.

In the administrative regulation number 106 clearly specifies duties and rights of militia members it also explicitly defines serious and simple faults of the militia members that would cause accountability for their failures. This also reinforced by the Team Charter or directives (2017) of the militia office. In both documents, the rights and duties of the militias are explicitly articulated in the white paper. The team Charter also specifies the relevant stakeholders of the militia office as discussed below.

5.2.2 Requirements for Membership of Peasant Militia in Tigray.

By the virtue of article 10 (2) of Proclamation NO. 194/2003 (TNRS) and the revised administrative regulation 106/2011, any natural person in Tigray will be recruited to the Region's militia force upon the fulfillment of the following requirements; he/she should accept the FDRE and Tigray Regional State constitutions, enthusiastic and loyal of Ethiopian Citizen; he/she should have willingness to join to the Militia Force for membership, he/she

should be accepted by the local people, he/she should be fluent in Tigrigna language and should have ability of understanding spoken language of the locality where he/she might be assigned with peoples of different ethnic groups (*Saho* and *Kunama*), has enough source of income to support him/herself and his/her family, has established permanent residence for at least two years within the locality or bears a letter of transfer from his/her previous place of residence.

Moreover, local residents who may be recruited to the militia force in Tigray are required to be free of criminal record such as participation in terrorist action and anti-peace movements, ready to be governed with the codes of militia, praised by the local people for their ethical conduct, admissible to democratic administration/management and well-structured physical appearance for fast movement and use of the necessary military equipment.

As key informant KI, 028 (2020: Interview)¹², also pointed out, people who may be recruited to the militia force are required to be: Disciplined, self-reliant, physically and mentally fit for service, accept the FDRE and the Tigray National Regional State constitutions, free from any addictive drugs, having acceptance within the localities, loyal to the local people and should be ready for sacrifices on behalf of the people. Moreover, the rest of the informants support the aforementioned view, but as one participant in a focus groups discussion (FGD3), surprisingly explained;

People who might be recruited to the militia force are required to love their families and show sympathy to their neighbors. In this regard, the assumptions is that, if they show concern to their families and neighbors, they will work for the wellbeing of the people/community when they join to the militia force.

However, as many key informants and participants of group discussions consistently explained, although the requirements are explicitly stated in the documents indicated earlier, unlike in the times of the armed struggle (1975-1991), the rules and regulations are not strictly respected in practice. The selection process is not properly implementing in accordance with the stated principles and procedures in the working documents. For example, although the revised code of conduct clearly states that members of the militia force are required to respect individual rights, there have been cases that show that they frequently cause injuries upon individuals. As KI,28 (2020: Interview) explained, on the other hand, while the law provides the ground for protecting the rights and properties of the militia's

¹² KI 28, (2020) Head of the Tigray National Regional State Militia Office. Interview held on March 11, 2020 in Mekelle, Tigray-Ethiopia.

while they are on duty, it lacks adequate practice. This implies that if the government couldn't able to maintain the rights of the militia force in line with the administrative regulation, there will not be more committed members in performing their tasks as per the administrative regulation and directives. Meanwhile, the newly recruited militias may also frustrate to accomplish security activities. summing up, although the legal basis for the establishment of militia in Tigray is not explicitly described word by word as per article 52(g) and Article 39(3) of the FDRE constitution, article 47(L) of the Tigray regional state Constitutions recognizes the regional state to establish security forces. Furthermore, the administrative regulation No, 106/2011 states specific roles, duties, and rights of the regional militia force in maintaining peace and security in the region. It also substantiated by empirical literature for example, article 39(3) of the FDRE constitution recognizes regional states to establish institutions in their jurisdictions. This implies the Peasant Militias in the study area are constitutional and have institutional administrative regulation that guides all- round activities of the militia to be confined. Therefore, the researcher confirms that the militia in the study area is institutional security force.

5.2.3 Unique Characteristics of Peasant Militia in Tigray

As data obtained from FGD1&2 (2020) and as KI, 019,020 (2020: Interview) ¹³ show, the peasant militias in Tigray, particularly, in the study sites are characterized by their dedication and commitment to perform their tasks. Besides, what makes the peasant militias in Tigray special is that they are both fighters and producers (farmers).

Peasant militia is strong and is often at the frontline to pay sacrifice on behalf of his people. Besides, the peasant militias are in favor of the right of women, disabled people and are also committed to carry out their mission day and night. Militias are messengers for the interest of the people and combat readiness at times of war. Moreover, they are models in development activities. Militias are characterized by honesty and loyalty towards the rule of law that they stands for. For instance at the study area particularly at a place called '*Hamedo*', there is a huge irrigation project which covers about 20,000 hectares where militias engaged predominantly as models for the rest of the inhabitants (KI, 15, 2020: Interview) ¹⁴. In general the militia plays an important role in mobilizing the local people towards developmental activities such as water and soil conservation campaigns.

¹³ KI, 019, 020(2020) Veteran Militias from Enticho. Tigray-Ethiopia

¹⁴ KI,015 (2020) Head of Mereb Leke Wereda Militia Office Rama, Tigray-Ethiopia

5.2.5 The Difference between “Weyanay” and Militia in Tigray

To collect the necessary data, the researcher used document analysis and an in-depth interview, as well as, focus group discussions with people from different walks of life. The data obtained from FGD participants and majority of the founders of the TPLF militia explained that although the terms look dissimilar, there is no conceptual difference between the word “*Weyanay*” and militia. Their point of argument is that “both *Weyanay*” and militia refer to security forces which are engaged in ensuring law and order in their locality. Even though their names are distinct in practice the role they play is similar to maintaining local peace without isolating from their families and production. Of course, the term *Weyanay* (revolutionary) was introduced during the armed struggle to express how they are trustworthy to the political program they stand for. Unlike other informants (KI, 003/2020: Interview)¹⁵, however, explained that militia is an international “nomenclature” used to express a civilian armed group, while the word “*Weyanay*” is derived from the “first *weyane* rebellion in Tigray”.

Informants from FGD also explained that the concept of *weyanay* refers to patience, truthfulness, openness, loyalty, self-sacrifice for the wellbeing of others. This culture doesn’t belong only to the armed mass but also to the public as well. The respondent unanimously agreed that the word *weyanay* was used until 1991. After the downfall of the military regime, it was renamed as militia. In accordance with the administrative regulation No 106/2011, “Militia” is defined as an armed peasant force, which is established for the purpose of maintaining local peace alongside its engagement in agricultural production activities. Moreover, the militia force would also play an important role in defending the sovereignty of the country and take part in a campaign to accomplish a special responsibility based on a call from the state or the government.

In this regard, the researcher confirmed that *Weyanay* and militia are conceptually similar terms which refer to a kind of locally organized standby security force to maintain peace at the local level. Yet, he observed that the former one was a politically loaded term and is highly linked with the TPLF’s political program. The latter is legally established by proclamation to ensure internal security and defend the country when necessary (TNRS, 1993).

¹⁵ KI, 003 (2020) Former Chief of Operation at Ethiopian Peace keeping Center (retired Colonel). Mekelle, Tigray-Ethiopia

5.3 Interaction/practice of the peasant militia with stakeholders in maintaining local peace

The peasant militias have several stakeholders' ranging from government offices to the mass-based associations of the youth, women and farmers. According to Team Charter of the militia office (2017), the stakeholders to the National Regional State of Tigray militia Office are the Federal police units deployed in the region, the Ministry of Federal Affairs (later renamed as *ministry of peace*), Customs Commission, and the National Defense Forces. Moreover, the National Regional State of Afar and National Regional State of Amhara are also other set of stakeholders.

At the regional level, the community at large, the Regional Council, government offices at all levels, the district and *Tabia/Qebele/* councils, the Regional Police Commission, Prison Administration and other bodies who have interest in maintaining local peace are also other stakeholders to the militia office in Tigray.

As KI, 007, 005, 011, & 020 (2020), described, during the armed struggle stakeholders, to the militia were the fighters, the local cadres (*'local activists or 'torch bearers of the revolution'*), the mass-based associations of the farmers, the youths, women, as well as the *kirbit (agitprop)*. However currently, stakeholders to the Tigray militia include mass based-associations such as farmers association, youth association and women association, as well as, the local administrations

As KI, 026 (2020: interview) ¹⁶ expressed, the interaction of the peasant militia is more with;

Shepherds/herds in order to obtain the necessary information about anti peace elements. The shepherds often collaborate with the militia force and stopped any stranger or passenger and check for identity. In the process, when they found unknown person who has not the required identity card which allows him to pass to the place he/she moves, they immediately report to the local militias for further investigation.

The interaction of the peasant militia with other stakeholders like the army is made through joint security committees at the regional, zonal, as well as, district levels (KI, 004 and KI, 022, 2020: interview) ¹⁷. The most relevant bodies for the militia are the Regional Police, the Federal Police deployed in the concerned locality, and the mass-based associations (KI, 028, KI, 025, 2020: interview).

¹⁶ KI 026 (2020) Journalist at Dimtsi Weyane tv (DWtv). Mekelle, Tigray-Ethiopia

¹⁷ KI, 004 (2020) Former 20th Division Commander (retired Colonel). Mekelle, Tigray-Ethiopia.

5.3.1 Relationship of the Militia with the Regional Police

According to Submitted *et al.*, (2009) indicated, among the functions of the peasant militia is playing the role of a standby local police force. Likewise, militias are effective units which perform policing and an offensive army role at the same time regularly over a wider geographical area which cannot easily covered by the local police force (Goodhand & Hakimi, 2014). As KI, 010, 15, 23(2020) explained, militia and the police force have concurrent powers like community policing to prevent crimes and instability at the Qebele/Tabia level. To this end, the task of the peasant militia is an interface role with the police and military forces. The police is uniformed force to enforce law and order, prevent criminal activities, as well as, teach the local people about human rights and crime prevention, arrest criminals and bring them to the law. However, militia is different in that it is not uniformed and cannot make technical investigation against crimes like the police (KI, 010, KI, 023, KI, 016 and KI, 021, (2020: Interview). Another distinguishing factor between the two is their way of recruitment. The police are permanently employed/recruited soldiers. The government assigns them to different localities. Unless ordered for special mission, the militias are non-paid and cannot be deployed by isolating them from their families and land away in other localities. Both the police and the peasant militia are not allowed to use force while they are conducting crime prevention activities.

The number of the police force in a certain *Qebele* is one or two, while the militias are many in (COYs) ranging 80-100 in a *Qebele*. It is because the militias are always within the community they can arrive within few minutes when an incident happens. Yet, it takes more time to the local police to reach the area where crime or any problem happens.

Another difference between the police and the militias is that militia is rendering free service to the society without any payment. However, members of the police force are employed workers with a monthly salary to conduct routine activities. The militia secures institutions on duty (turn by turn). Because their number is far larger than that of the police, militia cover places where the police couldn't reach. Militia arrests culprits and bring to the police and the police investigates their case.

This indicates that even though they are independent institutions, militia and the police perform their tasks more jointly. And both are also responsible to the security administration at the district level and have quarterly scheduled evaluation period to seat together. As key informants and participants of the focus group discussions consistently argued, the militias

are more reliable than the police in maintaining local peace. This is because the militias are permanent residents of the area and have families, properties, as well as, social responsibilities. So we can draw a conclusion from this that militia is a vital security force that can play an irreplaceable role in maintaining local peace in line with its farming activities.

5.3.2 Interaction of the militia with the Ethiopian Defense Forces

Militia as stakeholder to the National Defense Forces fights against rebel movements. In other words, the militia force engages in fighting against rebel movements and other anti-peace elements in support of the National Army. The militia force is also a vital force in playing the role of managing progressing crisis, which is beyond the reach of the regular army and the police (Althaus & Dudley, 2014).

Because of its regular presence within a community as an auxiliary force to the military, the police and the intelligence agencies, the militia force collects information about rebel movements, activities, logistics and the linkage they have with people in its respective community. Since the days of the armed struggle (1975-1991), the peasant militias in Tigray, as supportive force to the TPLF fighters (army) and later to the Ethiopian National Defense Force and the Tigray police have been playing irreplaceable role in maintaining local peace and defending the country's national sovereignty.

As the informants of the study consistently explained, the army and militia have been divisions of tasks after the war with Eritrea. During the war, they were fighting collaboratively having interdependent roles. That is, when the Eritrean army invaded Ethiopia's territory, the Ethiopian army was deployed remotely from the disputed territory with ignorance of any possible invasion by Eritrea. Moreover, there was no military preparation and no army was deployed around the borders with Eritrea. Due to this fact, it was the militia who first confronted with the well-organized and prepared Eritrean Army.

The militia was not only contained the aggressive attack of the enemy but also throughout the course of it was involving in combat formation as second echelon. Besides, it was playing an auxiliary role such as supplying logistics and evacuating wounded soldiers to safe areas (KI, 001, 003, 007, 017, and FGD, 2020). According to KI, 08 (2020: Interview), the militias were feeding information to the National defense forces regarding the activities of the enemy forces and their intent as well. Even in the post-2000 period, the militia and the Ethiopian

Defense Force units at the front line have been working together to secure the border from any potential threat.

To make brief it would better to look at its historical developments. Available empirical literature on the subject matter indicates that even though the integration between the peasant militias and the regular army started as soon as the armed struggle was launched, the introduction of the armed mass strategy (1988) was a turning point for the division of tasks with the regular TPLF army. According to KI,007(2020), following the armed mass strategy military doctrine, the regular army was formed as first echelon to breakthrough while the regional army and local militias were formed as second echelon to annihilate the off balanced enemy force.

To describe the importance of the collaboration and synchronization between the regular army and the peasant militias, although, it is expressed over the course of the armed struggle, there was a song from legend Eyasu Berhe which deals with the importance of the collaboration between the two forces.

“መራሒ መንገዱ በዓል ዓዲ

ወዲ ቁሽት እምቢታ ግዲ

“ሚሊሻ እንደ ያ ኣሎ ምስኡ

ግዲኡ ዝሰልፅ ኣብ ጥቅኡ

ክልቲኦም እንተኮይኖም ማ

ሰልፅ ብልፅ ኣሎ ድማ”¹⁸

Which means “the local orientate

A villager who never give up

At center of public mobilization, there is militia on his side

A force who defends his territory by destroying their enemy

¹⁸ Legend Tigrigna Language Singer Eyasu Berhe’s Song extracted from YouTube. In its context meaning the militia is vital force in supporting the regular army.

When they collaborate each other

They will overwhelm and drubbing the enemy”

Generally, the synergy between the TPLF army and the militia was vital in the fight against the military regime. This strategy also worked during the Ethio-Eritrean war. When the Eritrean forces aggressively invaded Ethiopian territory it was the militia in the study area, which contained the highly prepared and regular force first. This implies that the militia is an important security force in defending an invasion of external forces as it was observed during the aforementioned war. Therefore, the researcher confirms that the collaboration of the Peasant Militias and the army is not time bound; they are always together as a team to maintain peace and security.

5.3.3 Interaction with the Intelligence Unit

Even though the aforementioned institutions have intelligence departments, the researcher needs to show for readers the importance of the peasant militias in collecting credible information to support the missions of the military and the police. According to KI, 004,007,028 (2020: Interview), the militias are from the entire community and have better knowledge about the area of operation and area of interest. Since the military commanders are strange to the area of deployment and the community, it is the militias who give them the necessary information about the support they could get from the communities. As KI, 008 (2020: Interview) ¹⁹ explained based on the role they play, intelligence services would be categorized as passive and active. And from this perspective the role of the peasant militia was passive. The active intelligence are the reconnaissance units and case officer deployed at the area. Militia's role is mostly counter intelligence or countering spies of the opponent force. Since they are permanent residents within the community, they are ‘ears and eyes’ for the government. As KI, 18 (2020)²⁰ explained;

The peasant militias are within the people and have information about each activity in their dominion. For example the militias arrest many spies sent from Eritrea having the mission to create instability in the region. But due to the presence of vigilant local militia and their coordination with the community based associations managed to deny and deter the infiltration of spies and other anti-peace elements to their localities.

¹⁹ KI, 008 (2020) Former Chief of Intelligence in the Ethiopian Army. interview held on February 19, 2020 in Mekelle, Tigray-Ethiopia

²⁰ KI, 018 (2020) Active Militia from Hoya Egela. Enticho, Tigray-Ethiopia

5.3.4 Interaction with the Community Based Associations and Peace Committee

The stakeholders of the militia are not only the formal security institutions of the Federal and Regional Governments. As many informants consistently explained that the involvement of the community stakeholders on the side of militia is vital to maintain local peace. The peasant militias have interactions with the community through mass based associations like that of Women, Farmers and youths. Such associations are a means to create bondage between the community and the militia.

Most militia members in a particular community are members of the mass-based associations. This helps them regularly attend discussions that would enable them collect the necessary information regarding the state of peace in their locality. According to Mesfin (2010), the government security structure largely relies on the local security and peace committee. Although the number of the committees varied from one area to another, the composition of peace committee at the Qebele level is made up of women, elders, religious leaders, as well as, famous individuals within the concerned community. Likewise, KI, 010 and 022 (2020) explained that at each *Qebele*, there are peace committees composed of individuals from elders, religious fathers, and famous people who support the militia in maintaining local peace.

The Qebele peace committee which is chaired by the Qebele chief administrator is focused on crime prevention in support to security forces in the reconciliation efforts against minor offenses. As of the militias and the police force, the two committees are also responsible to the security and administration at the Qebele level. Furthermore, it is the peasant militia who coordinates the association to actively engage in fighting against an enemy force and performing developmental activities, as well as, creates linkage with shepherds. This implies the peasant militias play a '*liaison's*' role between the inhabitants and the government offices. Through creating close relations with the community-based associations, they share information if something essential is existed during natural and manmade hazards, as well as, at normal circumstances.

5.4 Role of the Peasant Militias in Different Occasions

5.4.1 The Roles of Peasant Militia (as Guerrilla Fighter) during the Armed Struggle

One may raise a question of why the researcher incorporates the role of the militia force pre-1991. The reason why even though the scope of the study covers post-1991 it would better

highlight the unique nature of the militia in the study area, while they fought as guerrilla fighters in support of the armed struggle led by TPLF. Empirical literature on the roles of peasant militia reveals that, in the first chapter (1975-1981) of the armed struggle (1975-1991), self-armed peasant militias were supporting the fighters particularly in areas liberated earlier (Tough, 1987). During this time, the Front was following the Maoist guerrilla fighting strategy to attack an isolated small military units of the *Dergue* (military) government (Berhe, 2017a.).

At the first phase of the struggle, “the Front was inferior in its firearms, communication devices, and man power” (KI 007, 006, 005(2020: Interview). Because of this, the Front applied guerrilla fighting to win the government force at his heart and mind. At this stage *“militia members’ have been tasked in security activities, raising materials and financial contributions for the TPLF, defending their home areas when soldiers were small enough to challenge”* (KI 005(2020: Interview). Moreover, the peasant militia played multitude roles such as protecting their villages, organizing and creating awareness in the public, fighting with small units, launching attack on isolated garrisons of the military regime, escorting the grassroots institutions (*Baitos*) and torch bearer of the revolution (*ሸፃ ወሾጊ*)²¹. Furthermore, they collect information and report to the TPLF fighters if they face a government army deployment which is beyond their capacity to defend their confine. The veteran and the founders of the peasant militia consistently argued that the militias were more effective during the armed struggle times.

5.4.2 Roles during Conventional War

As discussed in the scope of the study in order to make clear the role of the Peasant Militia it would be better to assess its background in order to understand how it morphed in to regional army and the role it played to destroy regular soldiers stretched in a trench. In this regard the researcher incorporated the role of the militia after it organized as an annihilation force (second echelon) of the regular army. Following the draft of the armed mass strategy doctrine (1988), the peasant militia in the study area reorganized as regional army, which was annihilative force or the second echelon to the regular army of the TPLF (KI 007, 2020). According to KI 006 (2020), even though the militia was organized as a department to continue as part of the strategic organization in 1983, the military formation as regional/

²¹ *ሸፃ ወሾጊ* (*Shigweyenti*), literally refers to torch bearers or local activists

zonal army established four years later aimed to widen the liberated area and to support the regular army being as second echelon or annihilation force. Similarly, (KI, 007/202: interview) explained that following the introduction of the armed mass military doctrine in 1988, the TPLF army and the militias re-organized as regular army (first echelon) to break through the opponent forces, the regional army was also organized at battalion level per each liberated zone as regular fighters (second echelon) to annihilate and the third echelon composed of aged peasant militias without moving far away from farming land protect their localities by establishing check points and fighting if government soldiers encroached to the area. Data obtained from (KI, 007/2020) indicates that the composition of these three forces were used in an operation known in Tigrigna as ‘*Wefri Hawzen*’ to destroy 604 command based in Shire Endasilassie.

The regular army launched massive attack and smashed the strong core/ command of the government force while the regional army and local peasant militias were exploiting the success by collecting the firearms and picked up the dismissed government soldiers, which resulted in capturing more than 20,000 government soldiers as prisoners of war (POW).

In the same fashion, throughout the Ethio-Eritrean war, peasant militias were an auxiliary force to the army and organized self-reliantly up to division level as one major actor of the war (KI, 001²², KI, 007, 2020). Likewise, data obtained from FGD-1 (2020) indicates that the peasant militias were not only fighters rather they have also been support force for the regular army at the same time to introduce the terrain ground and environment around the borders with Eritrea. When organized as rear guard force it is the militia who coordinates the community to supply logistics materials to the front line and to evacuate wounded soldiers and damaged materials to safe areas.

5.4.3 The Role of Peasant Militia during the Ethio-Eritrean War

Available literature shows a militia is an organized and armed but irregular group of people selected from the civilian population to provides security and governance functions to the local people (Fumerton, 2018). When the Anglo- Saxon institutions introduce the concept of militia for the first time, the militias were entrusted with the duty to serve as security force and protect their government in times of need (Ansell, 1917). The year 1566 was a turning point to the Holland militia when the concept of militia tested their loyalty and because of

²² KI, 001(2020), Militia division commanders of the Ethiopia-Eritrea war at the study area. Interview held on February 9, 2020 in Mekelle, Tigray Ethiopia.

this mandated to participate in maintaining peace of the country from internal and external security threats (Grayson, 1980).

When the central government is weak to pacify key areas in the periphery, militia plays a critical role. (Seth G. Jones, 2013). Likewise as (Gesit, 2006 E.C) explained, the Territorial Army (militia) of Ethiopia was created to control protests at the provinces uncovered by the standing army. Moreover, the People's militias of the *Dergue* regime established to defend the country's sovereignty from Somalia's invasion and to fight against the rebels in Tigray and Eritrea (Yonas, 2008).

In pursuance to the proclamation No. 194/ 2003, article 10 (2), the National Regional State of Tigray issued the administrative regulation No. 106/2011, for the re-establishment of the office. The amended administrative regulation is aimed at mandating the militias to ensure internal security and to engage in any campaign upon the call of the government to defend the nation. In this regard FGD participants and key informants unanimously agreed that, it was the militia who contained the Eritrean invasive force (1998-2000). According to KI 028(2020);

There was no expectation that there would be any possible invasion that would come from the Eritrean side. Based on this fact there was no army around the borders. However, the Eritrean government sent its forces to seize Badime and other areas forcibly. It was at this time militia and police directly engaged with the aggressing Eritrean forces.

Thus, the enemy force was coerced to stop advancing to control extra positions and forced to dig trenches for defense. This implies, if militia had not been defended, *Shaebya*²³ would have been inflicted serious damages on the lives and resources of the people around the borders between the two countries. Secondly, the militia strengthened the regular army by joining more than 20,000 personnel from the entire region directly into the army's unit formations (KI 28, (2020).

On the other hand, at the region level, more than 30,000 personnel dug strong trenches and engaged on defensive position independently. After the completion of the war, during the no war no peace stalemate, the militia denied several attempts of anti-peace elements originating from Eritrea to set mines, looting animals, kidnap and assassinate individual persons. Generally, the militia force enable the people move peacefully and perform their activities in normal way even near by the enemy. Especially, the militias in the study area secure all the

²³ Shaebya refers to Eritrean People Liberation Front(EPLF)

territories along the bank of *Mereb River* where which is inaccessible to the regular army. The defense force back militia only when there is a major engagements with enemy, *especially, in cases when the enemy is beyond the capacity of militia*". Likewise as KI, 001 (2020) the then militia's division commander at the study area explained;

The militias were organized in four brigades with a total manpower more than 13,000 attached with one Tank Company and BM battery, as well as, a battalion zonal army which was rejoined from the (demobilized) former TPLF fighters. Militias replaced the regular army dispositions at times when the regular army drew back to rear area for training. The informant emphasized that the Eritrean government never tried to open fire or launch an attack through this front. As per the informant, the reason why the Eritrean army never been tried to jump through was the militias were familiar with the key areas where the enemy forces could use as an avenue of approach and also know each other in their tactic, as well as, firepower.

Data obtained from FGD participants indicates that the role of the army was one and one which is preparing and fighting against an opponent force and is isolated from family, while the militias were involving in war but also simultaneously evacuating wounded friendly forces from the war zone to safe areas at the back, as well as, securing their environment and also participating in developmental activities through the mass associations. By the leadership of the peasant militia, the community at large and the youths in particular played a role in supplying ammunitions to the war zone which was impassable road to vehicles due to firepower pressure of the enemy or terrain situation by replacing cars.

In general as it is explained by KI 003(2020), the peasant militias can be taken as example of strength at a time of tough situations. This is because during the first months of the war with the Eritrean forces, the militia arrived first at the front line and it was "*the first shot of the shoot /የመጀመሪያ ገፈጥ ቀማሽ/* to confront this highly armed and best trained regular army against light and back ward militia arms" on top of the pressure of enemies firepower, there was not more food, shelter and cloths which fits to the tasks they engaged to (FGD 1&3, KI, 004, 008, 013, 020 and 027/2020).

This implies that the peasant militias during the Ethio-Eritrean war have been played irreplaceable role from the very commencement of the war until recently. Therefore, we can draw a conclusion that the peasant militia at the study areas were fighting replacing the role of the regular army, organizing the local communities for the campaign to the war zone in support to the Ethiopian army, as well as, collecting information which is vital for the army commanders.

5.4.4. Roles in Fighting Against Insurgents

According to the Northern Corolina manual based on which the state's militia force was established indicates, the militia members are required to dully respect the laws of respective states, contain the movement of rebel groups, deter external invasion and protect the nation and its citizens from all external and domestic enemies (Corolina, 1999). Likewise, since "the militia is constituted by members of the local population, it possess unique knowledge of the people within the communities in which insurgents and their supporters hide (Clayton and Thomson, 2016: 3)". As KI, 015 (2020) explained the role of the peasant militia in the post Ethio-Eritrean war period was significant. For example;

In 2009 a group of insurgencies of the then Tigray People Democratic Movement (TPDM) came to a place called Ahsea with the aim to collect information. However, in collaboration with the local people, the peasant militia enveloped the group first and captured without any damage. Later, the group again crossed the border with Eritrea and fought with the local militia force in a place known as Terawur where rebel members of the group were killed and one militia fighter was wounded. Moreover, "in 2011 a unit from the rebel group (TPDM) also clashed with the local militia force in a place called 'Adi Shumburuh' where one member of the militia force was killed.

Similarly data obtained from KI, 23 (2020: by phone) indicates the Peasant Militia denied the attempts of insurgent groups to infiltrate via the study area. For example, in 2007 five individuals crossed a village called Hoya Mender but all were captured by the local militia. With the same tone, three-reconnaissance group infiltrated an area (or friendly forces position) called Gerho Sirnay but one of them was killed and the rest two captured by the vigilant militia members of the study area (KI, 22, 2020).

5.4.5 The Roles during Peace times

As it has often been stated, the militia fighters involve in fighting and agricultural productivity simultaneously. The peasant militias in the study areas, therefore, have a unique character. They mostly serve as role models to the local people/inhabitants in development activities.

Most participants of the FGDs held for the purpose of this study consistently explained that, the local militia plays significant role in maintaining the peace and involving in economic development activities. The militia force gives protection to big development projects such as factories and industries, schools and health centers, as well as, bridges along with farming and small business activities. According to KI, 28,16 and 21 (2020), all investors in the region in general in the study area in particular feel at home due to the existence of militia in every gate of their institutions. For instance, in mining industry, banks, irrigation farming and

hotels. This shows that the existence of reliable, well commanded, disciplined and strong militia force contributes to attract foreign direct investment and encourages the growth of local investment. Generally, the local peasant militia plays more determinant role than the police force in looking behind development activities at the grassroots level. As informants in the local administrations of the study areas explained, you cannot maintain peace putting police in every 100 meter apart. Yet, members of the militia force are found everywhere and effectively maintain local peace across the board in Tigray. This is because the militia is part and parcel of the local community; it is well informed about any activity in the community. Moreover, according to the Ethiopian Customs Authority, Mekelle branch office report, (2017), the militias are vital security force to control the contrabandists who are involving in illegal trade such as exporting commodities to neighboring countries by its nature, the national army is mobile and doesn't have full-fledged knowledge about the area of deployment. To fill such a gap, the role of peasant militias is critical in providing information and necessary support for the success of its mission.

Furthermore, during peace times, the peasant militia conducts reconnaissance to make sure whether its area is free from any physical security threat (KI, 022, 2020: Interview). It provides protection to public gatherings during public and religious holidays. The militia force is also vital in protecting public and private investments. Any development project, whether it is government or private owned is protected by the militia members. This tells us that the militia force is essential security force to maintain peace and security at the local level, which is beyond the reach of the national army and the police. Because of this one can say that the peasant militia in rural Tigray has an out sourced power from the other security institutions but not expressively given to it based on the law.

5.5 Perception of the People towards Peasant Militias in Tigray

As per administrative regulation No. 106/2011, the militias have tasked several duties such as, engaging in any campaign during callout notice to defend the country, to provide security services to the community, reporting to immediate supervisors when there is security problem beyond their capacity, participating in development activities carried out by the public as role models to the local people, and managing, as well as, defending against any disputes.

As the participants in the focus group discussions consistently explained, the militias are important not only to secure their communities but also even to solve domestic problems within their communities. The local people understand that strong and well-disciplined

peasant militias are important to ensure the rule of law and to serve the community in many security aspects. As the local people in focus groups discussions and police officers in an interview explained, it is the militia force which is more reliable than the police to maintain local peace. But the local people have complaints in the process of recruiting individuals to the militia force. However, regardless of its limitations, when threat is observed the militia force is swifter than the police to address local problems of peace. Moreover, the peasant militias are not only armed security entities whereas they are also there to mobilize the public for development activities such as water and soil conservations and ensuring peaceful investment environment in its localities.

In other words, as far as the reputation of the militia force is good, it has a positive implication to attract investments. In this regard, the researcher confirmed that the peasant militias in the study area are more respected by the local people and this public acceptance is largely attributed the quality of service they rendered to the local people. Therefore, the researcher assured that organizing armed peasants is necessary to bring about peace and stability without isolating them from their family and farming land. As the data obtained from participants of FGD 1(2020) show in 2009, “A group of insurgents infiltrated to a place called Ahsea and information is disseminated swiftly, Militia enveloped the insurgents and get them captured without any causality and even a single shot”.

5.6 Challenges Hindering the Role of Peasant Militias in Tigray

The data obtained from respondents show that the peasant militias have several challenges ranging from sacrifices of their lives to economic challenges. For the purpose of this study the researcher classified the main challenges constraining the militia force to perform its activities effectively. These include, economic, social, and institutional challenges.

5.6.1 Economic Challenges

Key informants and focus group discussion participants of the study consistently explained that the main challenge that limits the militia force from effectively performing its activities is economic problem. When the militia members are deployed for a particular campaign, they left their helpless families behind. Moreover, there is no a mechanism to compensate their families when they lost their lives or seriously injured in the campaign. Furthermore, when they left their home for a campaign, their land would remain idle from productivity, which in turn would led to families’ disintegration as a result of the loss of their livelihood. Particularly, if the campaign is launched at the beginning of the rainy season (*mostly, June*)

they will miss the chance to produce the amount of food crops that would cover their annual consumption of their families. Because they don't have stored food. Even if the local people support them when they get ordered by the administration, still it would be challenging to them to plough their plots of land on time.

5.6.2 Institutional Challenges

Members may become victims of defaming gossips which can create trauma on their families. Some people release false information to defame the good named brave militias and launch attack on their property. For example, *“in 2018, there was a militia member at Mereb bridge area who was conducting his mission in line with the rules and regulations he stands for, but unknown people burned his heap”* KI 15, (2020).

In accordance with proclamation No, 194/2003, and the amended administrative regulation No. 106/2011, part three (8 and 9) rights and duties of the militias are explicitly stated. However, most of the respondents argued that the document actually remains as a paper value. Particularly, KI, 021(2020) argued that although several rights are listed in the regulation, they lack proper implementation. For example, if a militia member is accused of fault when he/she is in duty, the government required to assign a prosecutor to defend for him. However, in practice, the government often fails to do so. As KI, 003 and 007 (2020: Interviews) explained although the peasant militias take basic military training on how to operate their rifle, they still face challenges emanating from inadequate military training to build their capacities which would enable them to performs their duties properly.

As KI, 025 (2020: Interview) explained due to the failure of the government to issue uniform cloths and badge, the militia is not getting respect from the community, particularly from the youths. As she described if the militia members display their badge, they are legal in the eyes of the youths; otherwise, they see them as the other ordinary people in their localities. My personal view on this regard is, although the government enacted a proclamation to regulate the militia force in the region and explicitly stated rights and duties of the members of this force, it fails to implement them properly at the local levels of administration. This implies that the militias are not gaining their rights as stated in the administrative regulation of the region's militia office.

5.6.3 Social Challenges

The key informants and some FGD participants consistently explained that because of their close relationship with the local people in their respective communities, the militia members

may face problems when they take legal measures against people who commit minor crimes. Sometime, they even would become victims of revenge. Moreover, there are also cases where the militia members unintentionally commit grave mistakes when they are in duty. This would make them victims of their duty, they would be liable to the injury or harassment they committed against individual persons.

As KI, 015 (2020: Interview), explained, if a militia is conducting his/her task strictly as per the rules to prevent and catch criminals, he/she becomes a victim of revenge whether on his families or property). Moreover, the militia implement the administrative regulation as required. Therefore, if the government doesn't take appropriate corrective measure to address these kinds of limitations, the militia force would no more continue to perform its tasks effectively. Of course, the researcher concludes that the irreplaceable and strong determination of the local militia force to maintain local peace would gradually be degenerated, and this in turn would cause the spread of crimes and instability at the local level. Generally, the findings of the study indicate that as far as the government remains lenient to address the problems regarding recruitment, economic challenges of the militia force and respect from the general public, the militia force would no more continue as a reliable force to maintain local peace in Tigray.

5.7 Local Peace and Required Elements

As the available literature shows, peace is no longer the absence of violence and war. Rather it is structural machine-based primarily on a concept that consists of all the inner and outer spheres of our life and the environment in which we live in. Its scope ranges from the termination of organized collective violence (negative peace) to positive peace as the overcoming of structural and cultural violence (cooperation and integration between human groups) Galtung, (1967:12).

The data obtained from FGD, 1,2,3/2020), indicates peace is about health, accommodation of wealth, love, democracy, equality, safe movement of people, cooperation, closeness during happiness and challenging time, developing, as well as free market to buy and sale commodities. Generally, peace is key for everything. Yet, KI, 007 (2020: interview) explained;

Peace is not about war and violence rather it is a wide concept which incorporates human and democratic rights, human and social security, respect for all rights incorporated in the UN's charter, good governance, freedom from fear, freedom of

movement, freedom of association, right to accumulate property or wealth, as well as, power to deter national security.

While the rest informants of the study tried to define local peace from the perspective of development as the condition which refers to the existence of conducive working environment, operating of governmental and private institutions safely, the absence of civil war and interstate war, the presence of good governance, assurance of human and democratic rights, as well as freedom of gathering (assembly) and expression. In general, local peace means living in a situation where free from threat, anxiety, and free movement of people and resource from place to place.

Therefore the researcher takes local peace in this study as to the assurance of secured and favorable condition for the government bodies and the people to accomplish their day-to-day activities properly. This would be realized, if the government renders services that support the people to enjoy free movement from one area to another and create conditions for free expression without any threat. The declarations of human rights and social security are exercised when the people manage to peacefully execute their daily activities and enable to promote political and social interactions among them. Moreover local peace is said to be ensured when the people of the surrounding fully engage in their developmental activities without any possible threats. This is ensured only when there are not any anti peace and development elements in both organized and disorganized way.

CHAPTER SIX

6. Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1. Summary

The study was conducted in *Ahferom* and *Mereb Leke wereda* administrations in Tigray National Regional State central zone. The purpose of the study is to examine the role of Peasant Militia in maintaining local peace. The sample size of informants was selected from the active militia, veteran militias, police officers, army commanders, founders of TPLF militia, as well as, journalists. Moreover, to obtain these data three focus group discussions were held each consisting six people. While collecting data, interviews were conducted voices recorded and the researcher was taking notes. The findings of the study suggest that the Peasant Militia in the study area is a backbone to the security force that plays a vital role in both war and peacetime by being supportive of the police force and the regular army. Behind each private and public development project there is a militia to ensure peace and security of the organization, which implies that as long as the force is disciplined and strong, it has a pivotal role in attracting investors to the localities. However, to bring about peace in their areas, the militias are not conducting alone whereas, many stakeholders have been working hand in hand with them to preserve the peace and security of their locality. The other important point found out from the study is that in the eyes of the local community, the militia force has a good reputation for its timely arrival when a sense of insecurity is observed in both war times. Having the above said strength and quality, although the militia force is an important force to maintain local peace and stability, it has critical problems such as failure in the selection, economic, social as well as institutional challenges which could constrain effectiveness and accomplishments of its activities.

6.2 Conclusion

As stated in the introduction part, peasant militias are an armed group of people drawn from the masses for the purpose of maintaining local peace and stability. In the Tigray National Regional State, the militias have an essential role in ensuring local peace and stability while they are also engaged in agricultural production activities since the beginning of the armed struggle in the mid-1970s. During times of war, as it was the case during the armed struggle and the Ethiopia-Eritrea war, in the absence of the regular army, the peasant militia force in the study areas plays the role of defending the local people, and even the country, from internal and external threats. In the presence of the national army, the force plays a supportive role in terms of facilitating logistics flows through mobilizing the public. As the rule based on which the militia force is established, in peace times, militia members are required to play different roles to maintain local peace, including preventing crimes, providing protection for public and private investment projects, mobilizing the public for local development activities, escorting government representatives and social events that require public gatherings.

As the findings of the study show, the local militia in the study areas show strong commitment and determination to ensure peace within their communities. In return, the local people believe that the peasant militias are more reliable than the police and the regular army to maintain peace and stability in their localities. However, there are limitations in terms of training, logistics, and recruitment. Particularly, recently, the problem regarding recruitment causes lack of public confidence in the militia force as a guarantor of local peace in the study areas. This is because there are tendencies to recruit individuals who do not fulfill the basic requirements to become militia members.

Another problem is that members of the militia force serve voluntarily without any payment. They would get the return for their effort for the security of their communities, as a result, militia members would be satisfied with the peace and stability of their locality.

However, the time they invest in protecting the peace and security of their communities affects their livelihoods. Since they are peasants, they need either more time to invest in their plots of land or an economic benefit which at least covers part of their expense.

Therefore, the findings of the study indicate the militia has a good reputation to be a vital security in contribute an irreplaceable role in maintaining its dominion from internal and external threats. Furthermore, the peasant militias are the liaison between the communities and the government by coordinating the local people to mobilize towards a campaign designed by the government.

6.3 Recommendations

The findings of the study, therefore, suggest that if the militia force is to continue to play a pivotal role in maintaining local peace, the Regional Government of Tigray National Regional State should, Firstly, recognition to the selfless service of the peasant militia is important in order to have a good quality of service in the future. Secondly, based on clear plan provide the militia with adequate training and logistics, Thirdly, should ensure that the procedures of recruiting new militia members are rigorous enough and dully implemented, Fourthly, although it is difficult to pay to all these forces, provide a mechanism that would enable the militia members to find benefits which at least cover part of their expense.

Lastly, supplying dry rations especially to those who are forced to leave their families for special missions lasting more than weeks with own prepared rations. Because fully freely service will no longer important it may bring hindrances in maintaining local peace. Moreover, since they are covering the role of the army and the police federal government needs to take this good practice at national level to create uniform militia in the countries. By making this it may help to control illegal firearms smuggling in the country.

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Appendixes

Appendix I: Profile of Informants

A. Profile of key Informants for Interview

S/N	Code	Sex	Educational	Occupation	Position/Rank	Date of interview	Place of interview
1	KI,001	M	BA	Militia Leader	Division commander	9/2/2020	Mekelle
2	KI,002	M	BA	Militia Leader	Brigade deputy	9/2/2020	Mekelle
3	KI,003	M	MA	Military/Division Deputy	Colonel(retired)	10/2/2020	Mekelle
4	KI,004	M	BA	Military/Division commander	Colonel(retired)	11/2/2020	Mekelle
5	KI,005	M	MA	Founder	Private	13/2/2020	Mekelle
6	KI,006	M	PhD	Commissioner	MoP advisor	14/2/2020	Mekelle
7	KI,007	M	MA	Former chief of staff	L/general	14/2/2020	Mekelle
8	KI,008	M	MA	Former chief of intelligence (Army)	Colonel	19/2/2020	Mekelle
9	KI,009	M	0	Veteran militia	Farmer	21/2/2020	Ahsea
10	KI,010	M	Diploma	Wereda police deputy	2ic/deputy inspector	21/2/2020	Ahsea
11	KI,011	M	0	Veteran militia	Farmer	23/2/2020	Rama
12	KI,012	M	7	Veteran militia	Farmer	23/2/2020	Rama
13	KI,013	M	8	Active militia	Farmer	23/02/2020	Rama
14	KI,015	M	5	Active militia	Farmer	23/02/2020	Rama
15	KI,016	M	BA	militia office head	Wereda	23/02/2020	Rama
16	KI,016	M	MA	Wereda police	Commander	26/02/2020	Rama
17	KI,017	M	10	Active militia	Bank security	5/3/2020	Enticho
18	KI,018	M	9	Active militia	Farmer	5/3/2020	Enticho
19	KI,019	M		Veteran militia	Farmer	5/3/2020	Enticho
20	KI,020	M		Veteran militia	Farmer	5/3/2020	Enticho
21	KI,021	M	BA	Militia office head	Wereda	6/3/2020	Enticho
22	KI,022	M	BA	Security & mgt	Wereda	6/3/2020	Enticho
23	KI,023	M	10	Wereda police	Deputy commander	7/3/2020	Enticho
24	KI,024	M	BA	Active militia	Agriculture expert	7/3/2020	Enticho
25	KI,025	F	7	Active militia		7/3/2020	Enticho
26	KI,026	M	BA	Journalist	DW tv	10/3/2020	Mekelle
27	KI,027	M	MA	Journalist	College dean	10/3/2020	Mekelle
28	KI,028	M	MA	TNRS militia	Office head	11/3/2020	Mekelle

Appendix I: Profile of Informants

B. Profile of FGD Discussants

FGD 1 Participants at Ahsea

No.	Participant's Code	Educational status	Occupation	Position	Age	sex	Date of FGD	Place
1	p1	Priest	Religious father	Peace committee	75	M	21/2/2020	Ahsea
2	P2	Shah		Merchant	88	M	21/2/2020	Ahsea
3	P3	0	Private	Farmer	60	F	21/2/2020	Ahsea
4	P4	5	Private	Farmer	50	M	21/2/2020	Ahsea
5	p5	0	Private	Farmer	60	F	21/2/2020	Ahsea
6	P6	5	Private	Farmer	70	M	21/2/2020	Ahsea
7	P6	3	Private	Farmer	71	M	21/2/2020	Ahsea

FGD 2 Participants at Rama Area

No.	Participant's Code	Educational status	Occupation	Position	Age	Sex	Date of FGD	Place of discussion
1	p1	7	Private	Farmer	55	M	23/2/2020	Rama
2	P2	6	Private	Farmer	48	F	23/2/2020	Rama
3	P3	4	Private	Farmer	63	F	23/2/2020	Rama
4	P4	8	Private	Farmer	53	M	23/2/2020	Rama
5	P5	10	Private	Farmer	64	M	23/2/2020	Rama

FGD 3 Participants at Ahferom

No	Participant's Code	Educational status	Occupation	Position	Age	Date of FGD	Place
1	p1	haji	Peace Committee	Member	58	5/3/2020	Enticho
2	P2	9	Retired Police	Retired	70	5/3/2020	Enticho
3	P3	0	Private	Farmer	62	5/3/2020	Enticho
4	P4	5	Private	Farmer	65	5/3/2020	Enticho
5	p5	4	Private	Farmer	67	5/3/2020	Enticho
6	P6	3	Private	Farmer	73	5/3/2020	Enticho

Appendix II. Guiding Interview Questions for key informants and FGD participants

Before we start the interview, kindly allow me to introduce myself. My name is Mebrahtom. I am a graduate student from the Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS) at Addis Ababa University (AAU). Currently I am collecting data regarding the *“THE ROLE OF PEASANT MILITIA IN MAINTAINING LOCAL PEACE: THE CASE OF AHFEROM AND MEREB LEKE WEREDAS IN TIGRAY NATIONAL REGIONAL STATE”* I have chosen you for an interview based on the information I have about you and the subject of the study.

The purpose of the study is academic and the findings of the research will be openly available for further research as empirical literature. Thank you very much for agreeing to give me information about the “The Role of Peasant Militia in Maintaining Local Peace: The Case of AHFEROM and MEREB LEKE weredas in Tigray National Regional State. The interview will take us not more than an hour. Before we proceed, would you introduce us, your name, Job title you engaged with and for how long you stayed here? Guiding interview questions are hereby;

A. Guiding Question for key informants Militia Office, Active Militia and Police

1. How do you define local peace in your context?
2. What is the difference between “Woyenti” and militia?
3. Who are the stakeholders working with the militia to maintain peace in your locality?

Would you explain the interaction?

A. How do you explain the interaction with the local police force?

√If there are concurrent power and separate power with the police

√If security incident happened in your area who will arrive first the peasant militia or the police?

√Estimate the time for each

√In what way will they handle the security incident and who is considered to handle the incident to a great degree

B. Would you explain the interaction with Defense Force?

C. Would you explain the interaction with intelligence?

D. Would you explain the interaction with the communities?

Who centralizes the peace and security issues at Wereda Level?

4. What are hindering challenges to the peasant militia? And when they challenges more?
5. Who is responsible to organize and control the militia force in your local administration?
6. How do you perceive the local militias in maintaining local peace?
If militia member is abuse human rights how is its accountability?

B. Guiding Questions for Ethiopian Defense Force Officers

1. What was the role of local peasant militia during the Ethio-Eritrea war? Would you describe the coordination of the militia and the Army?
2. What was/are the hindering challenges to the peasant militia? And when they challenges more?

C. Guiding Questions for Veteran Militia and Founders of TPLF’s Militia

1. Why do we have militias and what are the basis for organizing the force?
2. What do you think is their role in maintaining peace and security in your locality?
3. How do you define local Peace in your context?

4. What was/ are the challenges hindering the peasant militia in maintaining local peace?
 - ✓ When they are more challenged?
 - ✓ Do they have any support from the government such as payment and logistics?
 - ✓ If the militias face challenges how do overcome?

D. Guiding Questions for Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Participant

1. How do you define local Peace in your context?
2. What is the difference between Weyenti and Militia?
3. How do you perceive the role of local peasant militia?
 - 3.1. Is militia important security force? Would you explain it?
 - 3.2. When an incident happens in your locality who arrives first the police or militia?
Would you estimate the time for both the militia and the police?
4. What was the role of local peasant militia during the Ethio-Eritrea war? Would you describe the coordination of the militia and the local people?
5. What are the challenges hindering the peasant militia in maintaining local peace?
 - ✓ When they are more challenged?
 - ✓ Do they have any support from the government such as payment and logistics?
 - ✓ If the militias face challenges how do overcome?

Thank you for the detailed information? May I summarize whether I catch-up your ideas please?

Thank you once again as far as possible I will try to tell you about the feedback on this regard.

Appendix III, Declaration

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for any degree in any other university and as far as possible all sources of material used for the thesis have been properly acknowledged.

Name: Mebrahtom Gebremeskel

Signature:

Date: June 2020

Name: Yonas Aday (PhD)

Signature:

Date: June 2020

Statement of certification

I certify that Mebrahtom Gebremeskel has carried out his research work under my guidance on the topic of “The Role of Peasant militia in maintaining local peace: the case of Ahferom and Mereb Leke Wereda administrations in Tigray National Regional State. This work is suitable for submission as partial fulfilment for the requirement of the award of Master of Arts in peace and security studies.

Advisor: Dr. Yonas Adaye

Signature

Date June 2020