



College of Social Science
Department of Political Science and International
Relations

Ethiopia's Domestic Political Dynamics:
Implications on the Horn of Africa Politics

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Advised by: Yonas Ashine (PhD)

June 2025
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



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Submitted to the Department of Political Science and International Relations
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in
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Abstract

Based on a neoclassical realist theoretical framework, the principal objective of this study is investigating and examining how and when Ethiopia's domestic political dynamics affect the Horn of Africa's politics. To collect relevant data, the study has employed qualitative research methodology. Key informant interviews with scholars, specialized on Ethiopia's domestic politics and the Horn affairs, have utilized to collect primary data. Besides, available literatures that are closer to the thematic area of study have also included and analyzed as a secondary source of data. Analysis of the data validates the assertion of neoclassical realists on nexus between international/regional politics and internal political dynamics of states. The study finds that in the Horn of Africa modern political history, the most devastating inter-state conflicts occurred due to Ethiopia's domestic political insecurity. Through neoclassical realists' assertion, Ethiopia's domestic politics determine the likelihood of inter-state war, the level of proliferation of proxy's and possibility of filling/creating leadership vacuum in the horn aligning with the theory of hegemonic stability. In addition, the study identifies inverse relationship between the occurrences of interstate war and proxies in the horn, and Ethiopia's domestic political security. Moreover, the study finds a continuity and similarity on the regional implication of post-2018 Ethiopia's political unrest.

Keywords: Horn of Africa, Ethiopia, Regional Politics, Domestic Politics, (in) security

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis titled “**Ethiopia’s Domestic Political Dynamics: Implications on the Horn of Africa Politics**” submitted for the partial fulfilment of the requirement of award of master of art in International Relations and Diplomacy, is a result of my original inquiry and has been carried out under the guidance and supervision of Yonas Ashine (PhD). The thesis is original and has not been submitted for the award of any recognition to any other university or institution.

Abel Gisila Demeke

Signature _____

Date _____

Certification

I hereby certifies that the thesis prepared by Abel Gisila Demeke entitled “**Ethiopia’s Domestic Political Dynamics: Implications on the Horn of Africa Politics**” submitted in partial fulfillment of master of art in International Relations and Diplomacy, in Addis Ababa University, Department of Political Science and International Relations, has conducted under my supervision. The paper complies with the regulations of the university and meets the accepted standard concerning originality and quality. Thus, it is sufficient for submission for the partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of a diploma for Master of International Relations and Diplomacy.

Advisor: Dr. Yonas Ashine

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Addis Ababa University

Department of Political Science and International Relations

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***Ethiopia’s Domestic Political Dynamics: Implications on the Horn of Africa
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List of Acronyms

AAPO	All-Amhara People’s Organization
ANDM	Amhara National Democratic Movement
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
AU	The African Union
CDU	Coalition for Unity and Democracy
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
DERG	Provisional Military Administrative Council
ELF	Eritrean Liberation Front
EPLF	Eritrean People Liberation Front
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
EU	European Union
GERD	Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam
IGAD	Inter-Governmental Authority on Development
IR	International Relations
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NCP	National Congress Party
ENDP	National Democratic Party
NATO	Non-North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OLA	Oromo Liberation Army
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
OPDO	Oromo People's Democratic Organization,
PFDJ	People’s Front for Democracy and Justice
SNNPR	Southern Nations Nationalities People Region
SNM	Somali Liberation Movement

SEPDC	Southern Ethiopia People's Democratic Coalition
SEPDF	Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Front
TPLF	Tigray people liberation front
UN	United Nations
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UEDF	United Ethiopian Democratic Forces
USA	United States of America
USC	United Somali Congress
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WPE	Workers Party of Ethiopia
WWII	World War Two

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

In various ways, international relations of a country is an extension of domestic politics and hinged on domestic political dynamics of countries (Tasleem 2023:2). Nonetheless, understanding the nexus between domestic politics and regional impact is quite complex issue. Its complexity coupled with academic orthodoxy had led most of international relations researchers to overlook the significance of domestic political factor in shaping international/regional politics. Similarly, comparative political researchers centered their attention on domestic political factors while downplaying the influence of international actors (Putman, 1998:427).

Starting from late 20th century, rapid expansion of political and economic globalization draw much attention towards examining nexus between domestic and international affairs in internal relations (Ibid). Even when some international relations depends mainly on the decision made by national leaders, then analyzing the perception, power and preference of those leaders matters. Consequently, scientifically inquiring these variables is believed to depict the extent of entanglement existed between domestic and international relations (Lobell, Ripsman & Taliaferro; 2009).

Milner (1997) argues that domestic politics and international relations are inextricably interrelated (Milner, 1997:10). A country's international position puts an important impact on its internal politics; on the other hand, its domestic situation shapes its behavior in international relations. electoral politics, the interest of political leaders in first assuming and then retaining power, and the psychology of leadership are basic domestic political factors impact the foreign policy of a country and its regional influence, (Putman, 1998:427). In any study of domestic and international politics nexus understanding the nature of the leaders is critical to be considered (Tasleem, 2023:2). As Tasleem argues further, autocratic leaders enjoy more freedom of action on foreign relation issues than democratic leaders (Ibid). So that critically examining the psychology of leadership and the interest of political leaders retaining power will remain essential.

The variables in the domestic politics of a country can be usefully be conceived as a factor, the impact of which extend towards territorial boundary of the state (Lobell, Ripsman & Taliaferro; 2009). The connections between intra-state, regional and wider international issues are heavily depend on the domestic politics of the actors of the field. Therefore, understanding the interplay between the domestic politics and regional influence of a country is essential to understand both domestic politics and international relations in a more holistic way.

This liberal internationalist, neoclassical realist and constructivist assumption of nexus in various ways is valid in the horn of africa politics in which the internal political dynamics of countries like Ethiopia rarely remain confined within their national territory (Holmquist & Rock, 2023:5). In this sub region, political factor are the root cause of the problem of regional peace and security, (Tafesse , 2009). Hence, taking in to account the role of state and its institutions as determinant of conflicts and instabilities in the Horn is essential to understand and forward feasible recommendation, because since 1970's, in the Horn of Africa, all of regional problems primarily have internal origin and amplified by the pattern of mutual intervention (Cliffe, 1999). Tafesse affirming Cliffe's assertion provides that nearly all the insecurities in the Horn have initiated by domestic political and economic factors coupled with spillover effect domestic instability (Tafesse , 2009).

Ethiopia shares border with all of the Horn states, that puts itself on equivalence with other regional powers of the world despite Ethiopia undeveloped economic reality (Mesfin, 2012:87). Moreover, the geopolitical location that makes the country more affected by regional problems than any other state in the Horn (Ibid). Its internal politics has largely been influenced by external factors, a period of fragility and political shifts, caused not only by domestic political transformation but also by the rapidly changing regional, international, and global environment, (Zohorik, 2017). Conversely, also issues arising from Ethiopian internal political dynamics have regional implication significantly.

Throughout Ethiopian Modern History, its level of the dynamics of regional implication has been varying throughout the regimes due to various domestic political issues. Each of political transition underway in Ethiopia has affected its relations and impacts in the Horn of Africa and the broader Red Sea region widely (Mosley 2020:1). As a result, it is vital to consider carefully the impact of Ethiopian domestic politics on the Horn politics. Ethiopian domestic

politics has often been shaped by the political and ideological conflict within its territory and around the horn. Therefore, reviewing Ethiopian strategic culture, the formal and informal domestic politics, and assessing how these dynamics work in the context of foreign and domestic politics issues critical to the Ethiopian republic in light of neoclassical realism theoretical approach is the central thesis of this research paper. Here Ethiopian domestic factor becomes relevant mainly due to its communicability nature to the regional political dimension. Critically determining and analyzing the factors that have detrimental role for interplay of Ethiopian domestic politics and implication on the Horn of Africa politics and security is subject of this study. Therefore, this thesis examines and systemically analyze how and when Ethiopia's domestic political dynamics affects for the Horn of Africa politics.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

This thesis examines Ethiopian domestic political dynamics and critical political shifts implication in the Horn politics as well as continuities and changes, if any, in post 2018's period. In doing so, the paper try's to inquire the validation of neoclassical realist assumption on interaction between international politics and the internal dynamics of states in the context of Horn and Ethiopia. The paper investigates the implication of Ethiopia's domestic security/insecurity for Horn of Africa regional security. Moreover, the thesis also investigates how Ethiopia acts in the region when the variables in its domestic politics varies. This includes analyzing the impacts of Ethiopia's domestic politics on its leadership role in the region. In this paper, neoclassical realism assertion on the nexus between international politics and internal dynamics is the base of theoretical framework and aims to unravel the theoretical framework in light of Horn and Ethiopia dichotomy. There are a plethora of literatures on the stability and instability of the horn of Africa as the one of the most conflict-ridden and insecure regions in the world. The related literatures provides various reasons for the proliferation of recurrent instability in the region and the feasible way outs (de Waal, 2015; Clapham, 2017; Lyons, 2019; Bereketeab, 2013; Bereketeab, 2017; Ylönen & Záhořík: 2017; Tafesse , 2009).

Ethiopia, as one of the most prominent country in the Africa and Horn of Africa, its political dynamics, has significantly played critical role in the shaping regional politics and has been a key player in the Horn of Africa crucial for maintaining regional peace and security. Ethiopia has been considered as a trustworthy mediator in East Africa and the Horn due to its

active participation in regional peace and security operations, effective utilization of multilateral platforms, willingness to combat terrorism and a long history of a pan-Africanist legacy (Ibid).

Therefore, Ethiopia's long history of state formation, its role in the establishment of regional organizations such as Organization for African Union (OAU), African Union (AU), and Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) shows its significance on the regional level. Moreover, Ethiopia geographically located at the heart of Horn of Africa, and this geopolitical location means that Ethiopia is more affected by regional issues than any member state in the horn (Ibid). According to Peter Woodward Ethiopia has dual role as both a stabilizer and instigator in the Horn of Africa stating that Ethiopia has been central to regional stability and conflict, since the Haile Selassie's regime (Woodward 1996:17). However, Ethiopian internal political dynamics characterized by government and ideology change and recurrent conflict have shifted its role from stabilizing force to destabilizing force. The impact of internal political system and dynamics, accompanied with political tensions and violent conflicts have not only affected Ethiopia's domestic political stability, but also affecting its credibility and prominent role as a trustworthy diplomatic partner and influencer.

While Ethiopia's centrality in the Horn of Africa politics is widely recognized by plethora of academic literatures, there is a critical disconnect as to incorporating its domestic politics to the Horn politics. Most of the scholarly works consider Ethiopia's role in the region as outcome of pure classical realist's calculation while neglecting the domestic political dynamics in shaping the security, aspiration, ability and character of Ethiopia. The contraction exist in two ways. First, most of the research papers, the writer consulted, consider Ethiopia as static actor, overlooking how and when Ethiopia's domestic politics shape how Ethiopia acts in the region and spillover effect of domestic problems, second, the studies focus on some Ethiopia's domestic political reality without assessing how such realities shapes regional politics.

Consequently, by testing the validation of neoclassical realism assertion on bridging domestic level politics to regional implications, this paper unfold the puzzle and argues that impact of Ethiopia's domestic politics is not only limited to its territorial boundary but rather has a capacity to transcend and determine regional politics. Hence, this paper aspires to unfold the underexplored link between Ethiopian and Horn in light of (in) security and politics of leadership.

1.3. Objectives of the study

1.3.1. General objective

The principal objective of this thesis was to examine how and when Ethiopia's domestic political dynamics affects for the Horn of Africa politics.

1.3.2. Specific Objective

The specific objectives of this study are the following,

1. Examine how Ethiopia's domestic political (in) stability determine the (in) stability of the Horn of Africa
2. Evaluate the nexus between Ethiopia's domestic political dynamics and its regional impact since 2018
3. Examine how domestic politics of Ethiopia fills/creates leadership vacuum in the Horn of Africa.

1.4. Research Questions

1.4.1. Main Research Question

How and when, does Ethiopia's domestic political dynamics, affects the Horn of Africa politics?

1.4.2. Specific Research Question

1. How have Ethiopia's domestic political (in) stabilities determined the (in) stability of the Horn of Africa?
2. What is the nexus between Ethiopia's domestic political dynamics and its regional impact since 2018?
3. How domestic politics of Ethiopia fills/creates leadership vacuum in the Horn of Africa?

1.4. Research Methodology

The research methodology includes a research design and a method of data collection, analysis and interpretation. To obtain relevant data's from multiple sources, this thesis employs

qualitative research design emphasizing on understanding and describing the domestic politics of Ethiopia, and its impact on the regional affairs. Moreover, qualitative approach is opted in this thesis because the nature of research problem requires an in-depth analysis based on numerous data sources such as in depth interview and literature analysis.

Qualitative approach allow a researcher to conduct the research with few or no preconceived assumptions. To address principal objective of this research thesis, this research employs qualitative research design. Therefore, this research implement a set of non-statistical inquiry techniques and processes to gather and process relevant data's. This is essential to critically understand the nexus between the two.

1.5.1. Research Methods

Exploratory research design was applied to illustrate the implication of Ethiopian domestic politics in the Horn of Africa. To enhance the credibility of the findings, this thesis employ multiple source of data gathering techniques ranging from conducting in depth interview to incorporating books and articles written in the study area are being used. The most important research method of this study is interview and to incorporate various expert view on the matter, the interviewees were purposively chosen based on their knowledge and authority they affiliated with. To include a balanced view, Seven Experts from Addis Ababa University, Institute of Peace and Security Studies, F.D.R.E. policy studies institute (PSI), Institute of Foreign Affairs, Center for Dialogue, Research and Cooperation (CDRC), Chatham House and Institute for Security Studies (ISS), are being interviewed. Since the principal aims of this study is to find in depth information regarding the impact of Ethiopian domestic politics on the region, open-ended semi-structured interview questions were implemented. Selection of the institution was conducted following selective sampling method based on their proximity to the issue in particular and the Horn of Africa politics in general. Apart from the above primary source, in this thesis data's collected from published journal articles, books, dissertation, governmental and non-governmental organization reports, and trusted internet sources are utilized as a secondary data.

1.6. Techniques of Data Analysis

Data is the primary building element of every study. Regardless of their shape or method of collection, data has little or no intrinsic relevance in their raw condition. A researcher must process, analyze, and evaluate data before it can make sense (McNabb, 2010:287). In this study, the obtained data's are existed in a sort of narratives in a form of in depth interviews, article, book and dissertation analysis, and recorded statement of officials. In order to analyze and interpret these data to have meaning and to make sense in light of research questions, this study employs various techniques of data process, analysis and interpret.

To interpret the techniques of data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions from the data are being used in this thesis. Thereby sorting and re-sorting data to uncover patterns is one of the fundamental processes of analysis that the qualitative researcher must do in order to establish meaning and definition, (Ibid: 288). In this thesis, clustering method that's putting things that are like each other together into groupings or category coupled with employing comparative analysis for similarities and differences of data's are used. Derived by the above techniques of analysis, the study develop a conclusion as to the implication of Ethiopian domestic politics on the Horn of Africa politics.

1.7. Scope of the Study

The scope of this thesis is delimited to analyzing the critical political shifts and transition in Ethiopia in light of security/insecurity dynamics in Ethiopia since 1941. The selection of major political critical shifts is deliberate. The year of 1941 marked the return of the emperor Haile-Selassie to the throne as a major political transition. Despite the research focuses on the major shifts of political dynamics in light of security/ insecurity and leadership role from 1941 onwards, it will not delve in to the causes and factors of the transition because these areas of Ethiopian politics are over researched besides digging in to the causes of the shifts would make the scope the research unnecessarily wider lacking academic significance. Thereby, the study does not analyses the domestic political issues that led to the transitions and other internal factors.

The thesis is solely about Ethiopian domestic political transition and stability/instability that follows every transitions towards their implication on the region. In terms of thematic scope,

the thesis is heavily depend on the political sphere and stability/instability dynamics. Thereby, the paper prioritize the major events, political changes and conflicts so that should not be considered as a comprehensive analysis of Ethiopian political changes and their overall impact on its regional diplomacy. Moreover, other social and economic factors will not be considered as variable to the regional security and leadership dynamics unless such factors have affected the domestic politics, in this study.

1.8. Limitation of the Study

The thesis has certain limitations arising from the scope, the frame, and methodology of the study. The first critical challenge of this thesis arises from lack of willingness from some governmental bodies and scholars who could provide essential information regarding the issue. Besides, since the researchers conduct the research while devoting in full-time legal job, the researcher faced a constraints of acquiring the necessarily time flexibility. However, to overcome the above challenges, the researcher has employed the mechanisms of obtaining optional source of data's and has gone through sleepless nights devoted to this thesis.

1.9. Significance of the Study

This thesis will have both empirical and policy significance for Ethiopia and the Horn countries. Empirically, the finding and analysis of this study have a huge significance in deeply understanding the interplay between Ethiopian internal political dynamics and its regional politics and influence. Thereby, this study would be invaluable addition to the scant literature available on how internal issues intertwine with regional security and politics. Besides, this paper try's to check the validation of mainly neoclassical realist school of thought in light of Ethiopia – Horn context. As a result, to the best of author's knowledge, this paper is a pioneer to incorporate neoclassical realism in to Ethiopian context. This has a capacity to pave a way for future inquiries using neoclassical realism as theoretical framework.

In policy wise, the study of the thematic area is highly important for Ethiopia in urging to implement inward looking approach towards regional diplomacy. Understanding these dynamics will be helpful in designing a foreign policy, which accept and prioritize promoting internal peace and stability to enhance the regional influence properly. So that it is crucial to understand

and determine how and when it's domestic politics affects a country's regional leadership role and regional security.

Even though, as indicated in the problem of statement segment, there are a plethora of academic literatures about Ethiopia's prominent role in the Horn of Africa and Africa in general, there are scant academic analysis that specifically follow an inward approach and address how Ethiopian domestic politics affect the regions security and Ethiopia's influence. This thesis will fill the gap in the literature and serve as resource for academics to understand neoclassical realism in Ethiopian context. The finding of this study will be crucial for Ethiopian contemporary issues and serving as foundation to other academic and policy discourses in viewing international relations through the lens of domestic politics and provide lesson for future diplomatic engagements to enhance Ethiopia's regional influence. Moreover, the writer believes that the outcome of this study will trigger debate and discussion among professionals and scholars who are interested in the horn of Africa diplomacy and Ethiopian internal political dynamics.

1.10. Ethical Consideration

In conducting this study, there are several ethical consideration; the writer follows to ensure protecting participants and integrity of research process. Given the political nature of the topic, the principle of neutrality and objectivity is the basic ethical consideration the writer adhere to. In addition, one of the key informant does not want to be revealed his/her identity in the paper, so that, in the study the identity of the informant is anonymous and changed to some artificial identity created by the researcher. Since effectively communicating, the research purpose, methodology and intended contribution is critical; to participants of the research the writer explicitly provided necessary information to acquire an informed consent to participants. Moreover, properly acknowledging source of both primary and secondary data's, is strictly implemented throughout the study and employ other necessary ethics, values and principles of research.

1.11. Organization of the Study

The study is organized in to five chapters. The first chapter incorporates the basic introduction of the paper consisting background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study,

research questions, methodology, scope, limitations, significance and ethical considerations. The second chapter is devoted for detain review of literatures on the nexus between domestic politics and international relation and tries to provide a theoretical foundation for the paper.

Chapter Three is vested to discuss about the Horn of Africa and Ethiopia, regional political evolution, interstate tensions and political dynamics, critical political shifts on Ethiopia's political transitions, including the historical role of Ethiopia in the Horn of Africa Politics coupled with its contemporary Political Dynamics, are illustrated in detail.

In the Chapter four of the thesis, the paper presents the analysis of the findings and interpretations of data's emphasizing on providing a detailed analysis on the interplay between Ethiopian internal politics and its regional effect. The chapter shows, how the Ethiopian political insecurity affects the Horn. Besides, the study also analyses how the relative security of Ethiopia means for the region and the diplomatic character Ethiopia depicts to the regions during the two variables changes. Moreover, this chapter deals with the impact of the domestic affairs on Ethiopian regional influence and leadership. In doing so, the study examines the nexus between domestic political stability/instability and regional leadership dynamics.

Chapter five critically communicates the finding of the research and recommend potential way forwards for Ethiopia to strength its regional role and influence on one hand and provide an insight for the Horn of Africa states regarding how to shift their perception of the Ethiopian political dynamics and avoid regional atrocities. Finally, in this chapter the paper incorporates significant policy suggestions and identify potential areas of research for further inquiry and concluding remark.

Chapter Two

The Nexus of Domestic Politics and International Relations: Understanding the Interplay

2.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework behind how and when domestic politics and international relation are intertwined together. The chapter demonstrates the development of scientific inquiries in both international relations and comparative politics. It discusses major three theories of international relations that incorporates domestic politics variable, i.e. Liberalism, neoclassical realism and constructivism. Among three, this research opts neoclassical realism as principal theoretical framework to understand why, how, and under what conditions the domestic political dynamics of Ethiopia influence the regional politics. As will be discussed below, liberalism expression of the nexus emphasizes on strong domestic institutions while constructivism rely on ideology and normative natures. However, neoclassical realism, asserts the intersection between domestic political dynamics, such as stability/instability, attitude of leaders and the existence of structural balancing, as determinant factors with a capacity to impact international system. Accordingly, this research stress on neoclassical realism as theoretical foundation.

The Putnam's (1998) article entitled "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-level Games", set the foundation discussing the intractable linkage between internal political dynamics of a state and its external relations. This has lightened a new academic light across the academic circles resulting in a diverse spectrum of theoretical approaches and empirical investigations. Consequently, this chapter discusses the major academic inquiries happened at the late of 20th c influencing the sphere of connection between domestic politics and international relations. As stated above, neoclassical realism as important approach to international relations that focuses on the interaction between domestic dynamics of the state and international system, (Lobell, Ripsman & Taliaferro; 2009), sets a foundational theoretical framework for this thesis.

Before Robert Putnam's article, the widely recognized view of international relations considered the field as an independent discipline in which state actors competing with each other

for more power, resources, economic resilience. For a long period of time, international relations scholars have totally ignored the impact of domestic politics in determining and contributing how the state acts in the international arena. This is mainly facilitated due to the relative dominance of realist's theory of International Relations in the twentieth century until the end of cold war period. Thereby, in the academic discourse of international relations and comparative politics, incorporating the concept of one in to other had been considered as contaminating the fields.

Thus, this chapter unfolds the genesis of the new revival in international relations that incorporates the nexus between domestic politics and international relations in various manners. To explain the development, the chapter includes a comparative study of multiple international relations theories incorporating their stance regarding the impact of domestic politics in international arena. Thereby, the organization of this chapter starts with providing a framework of understanding for the nexus and move to discussing, the realists, liberalist, neorealist, neoclassical realist and constructivist views towards the impact of domestic politics on international relations.

2.2. Historical Background

The international relations academic discourse had been filled with the total dominance of realist's approach that totally disregard any domestic political approach to international relations. For both academic and practical purpose, international relations were traditionally defined as an independent discipline in which state actors competing with each other for more resources, economic resilience, power and prestige and so on regardless of their domestic structures and politics (Lai Y., 2021: 77).

Even if the country is either strong or weak state, the sole ultimate purpose of states is maximizing their hunger for power and resource thereby, in such quest for power and resource; states domestic political dynamics has nothing to do with determining the states aspiration in international relations. This conception of detaching the international relations from any domestic political affairs became the leading scripture of the discourse. Consequently, the long-standing understanding of International Relations has ignored the impact of domestic politics in determining and contributing how the state acts in the international arena.

The perception of such detachment have been particularly rigid because of the relative dominance of realist's theory of International Relations in the twentieth century until the end of cold war period (Ikenberry J, 1996:293). This is because explicit purpose of pure realist approach was to remove and exclude the study of International Relations from the study of comparative and domestic politics (Ibid). Therefore, irrespective of what is happening in the domestic affairs of the state, as a rational being, they only strive for power, resource and prestige against the other states. This is the intrinsic characteristics of states that is not affected by any domestic matters related to power struggle and insecurity.

This until the coming to academic spectrum of Robert Putnam's article "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-level Games", the overall history of international relations dominantly exclude any domestic matters and affairs that was the accepted view until 1988. The year 1988 marks the significant development in the field of international relation when the domestic political variable attained for the first time, the luxury of being in the international relations academic circle as a point of debate. This proclaimed the starting a new approach in the field since then navigating the interdependence between internal political dynamics of a state and its external relations has long fascinated scholars, resulting in a diverse spectrum of theoretical approaches and empirical investigations.

2.3. Understanding the Nexus

As indicated above, Putnam's (1998) article initially provided a new academic debate that challenged the previous standings by addressing the connection between the domestic politics and state rationality through the process of negotiations and ratifications of international agreements (Putnam, 1988: 433 - 435). After Putman's initiative, navigating the interdependence between internal political dynamics of a state and its external relations has long fascinated scholars, resulting in a diverse spectrum of theoretical approaches and empirical investigations. This new approach after Putman's article acknowledging the entanglement of domestic and international politics, argues that understanding the domestic political landscape of actors of International Relations is crucial to scientifically determine international politics (Yongzhen Lai, 2021:78). Over the last three decades, there has been a significant shift across major IR theories and scholarly discourses to include domestic politics and decision-making factors as a key component. In this regard, neoclassical realism, and variants of liberalism and constructivism, for

instance, have incorporated domestic political institutions, public opinion, and domestic political culture as crucial determinants in International Relations (Kaarbo, 2015:1).

In this respect, scholars have explored specific domestic factors that influence foreign policy and International Relations. Among many domestic factors, Economic conditions and political (in) stability and rivalry, are critical factors that have a profound impact on how states act in the international arena. Therefore, figuring out when and how domestic politics affect the International Relations has become a decisive question for the modern International Relations scholars after the launch of the Putman's masterpiece. Consequently, growing numbers of literatures on International Relations starts to argue that domestic politics is typically an important part of the explanation for states foreign policies, so that placing a proper place for domestic politics, in the scholarly discourse of IR has increasingly gained attention (Saroha, 2019: 14).¹

The history of recent world politics has proved that domestic political shifts frequently have profound consequences. For example, the Syrian internal political dynamics of civil war resulted in the closure of embassies and the ejection of Syrian government from various international organizations. Similarly, the internal civil war in the Somalia republic and the subsequent state failure happened after 1991 had exerted significant impact on the International Relations. Moreover, the 2004 Madrid train bombing prompted the Spanish government's withdrawal from the US-led military coalition in Iraq. Besides, the recent Euromaidan revolution resulted in not just a shift in Ukraine's attitudes towards the European Union, but also paved a way to Russian operations in Ukrainian territory (Kinne, Maoz & Zeev 2023:1). Therefore, at their most extreme, home events could have a capacity to impose major adjustments in foreign relations. Thereby, as can be seen from these instances, domestic political realities heavily determine how the country frame it's foreign policy showing with whom it plans to establish amity and enmity, and more importantly, the domestic situation affect the perception of other governments and their foreign decision towards the state.

¹ Scholars of comparative politics sometimes stretches the argument to the extent of asking what would explain foreign policy if not domestic politics. According to this approach, foreign politics is also the domestic politics of foreign countries, or the product of their domestic politics. This approach perceive domestic politics as umbrella in which foreign politics is part and parcel of domestic politics.

2.4. Conditional Dynamics: The when and How of Domestic Politics in International Affairs

To understand how and when domestic politics affect a country's external relations, it is critical to emphasize on patterns of interaction within players of domestic politics such as government in power, militaries, political parties, civilians and opposition movements (Ibid). Primarily when there is uneven distribution of power among these domestic players, there would be disturbing domestic politics with far reaching implication beyond the state in turmoil.

According to Kinne, Maoz and Zeev (2023) the existence of structural imbalance² is a critical moment to determine when the domestic politics affect a country's external relations. They stated that,

Imbalanced relations make unclear the preferences and strategies of domestic political actors. When political ties are inconsistent and contradictory, friend-versus-enemy distinctions erode, and future behaviors become unpredictable. Imbalance thus diminishes the incumbent government's confidence in the domestic coalitions it depends upon for survival. This uncertainty incentivizes leaders to implement survival strategies, such as making concessions on international issues or manipulating foreign ties to show competence. This incentivizes foreign governments to shift their own ties by taking actions to prevent imbalance from diffusing into their own politics, or by intervening in an unstable neighbor for political gain. The greater the imbalance generated by domestic events, the greater the probability those events will affect foreign relations. Kinne, Maoz and Zeev, (2023:1)

The above explanation articulates the inextricable interplay between domestic political dynamics and International Relations of a state in which domestic political events primarily affect foreign relations when those events generate imbalance among domestic actors. Even though, the level of intensity difference significantly between democratic leaders who are very sensitive to deterioration of public support and authoritarian leaders who worry more about violations of loyalty norm that ensures elite support (de Mesquita, 2003:7), understanding the interplay between domestic politics and International Relations is critical to shape the international political landscape.

As indicated, some scholarly researches conducted in united State of America confirms that, there is a direct correlation between domestic political vulnerability and international

² In the political science, the concept of structural imbalance dictates the political scenario in which the politics is dominated by uneven distribution of power, resources, or representation between the political actors of the state.

conflictual behavior in which the decline domestic public approval of a leaders increase the likelihood that the USA involvement in more international dispute (James & Oneal, 1991). Here, the literature asserts that, USA has taken part in more disputes that are international when there is an economic and public support decline especially before an election (Russett, 1990).³ However, the above findings revolve around the developed industrial democratic countries in which the leaders are very sensitive about public support decline, which, of course, could make the level of influence a bit stronger; however, this does not ruled out the impact of domestic politics in authoritarian and underdeveloped countries as well.

Flipping the coin, a dynamics in the International Relations also has profound domestic political consequences as well. the presence of international threats from rival states ignite domestic unrest and oppositions anti-regime challenges, which would make governments rely more on repressive tactics given resource constraints and a high level of domestic political intolerance (Bak, Chavez & Rider, 2020: 1). Thereby, it would be incomplete to talk about the impact of domestic politics only without taking in to account the profound impact of the changing international political sphere on domestic politics of states.

Nonetheless, these domestic consequences of international rivalry are different depending on the characteristics of political systems and the level of threat perception. External threats or rivalries vary in their character and origin and only when the treat attain the level of being

³ The studies on the relationship between domestic political turmoil and the likelihood ness of conflictual behavior is primarily conducted in light of USA and some selected developed countries perspectives. Critically follow the pattern of conflictual diplomatic behavior and domestic politics in Africa and in Ethiopia is decisive. In the above studies, there are conflicting findings on the same thesis. The reader of this thesis has to take into consideration the below two swings of the argument. As stated in the above text, there are theories that connect domestic political vulnerability and aggressive international behavior related with economic decline or poor economic growth, deteriorating of domestic political acceptance, and other domestic factors.

On the other hand, Leeds & Davis, (1997), in there article called, *domestic political vulnerability and international dispute*, contends that, there is no empirical evidence for the relationship between domestic political condition and international outcome. Under the study the authors cover eighteen industrialized democratic countries and stated that there is no finding showing the initiation of dispute or show, or use of force often when the economic is doing poorly or election is approaching. Because democratic leaders are less likely to provoke dispute by their own. However, their study dictates that, this does mean the relationship does not exist at all. There is diverse relationship by which when a democratic countries economy is declining, there is a possibility of being a target of violence.

severe, it could be able to influence a state's domestic political landscape (Ibid). Even though, the existence of external threats from foreign counterpart seems to improve domestic political unity and stability among the people, however is, not always or entirely unfortunate, for a political leader pursuing a preponderance of domestic support.⁴

Generally from the above discussion, it would be logical to draw conclusion that bi-lateral and multi-lateral relations of states are not only a result of factors that are not domestically generated but rather, there is the reciprocal influence between domestic and international politics depending on international and domestic variables.⁵ So that the state domestic political dynamics is not domestic per se but rather it extends to foreign policies and interstate relations in a way that defines the variation of foreign policy/relations based on the political dynamics of a state with respect of leaders willingness and political ability.

2.5. Theoretical Foundations

Among major international relations theories unlike radical and structural realism, liberalist, neoclassical realist and constructivist school of thought acknowledges the intertwined nature of domestic politics and international relations, with different level of intensity. In this section, besides to above theories, the theory of hegemonic stability will also be discussed to illustrates how Ethiopia's stability determines the Horn politics.

In the history of International Relations, the transition from cold war world order to a liberal world order is a decisive moment that strengthens the scholarly approach towards the nexus between domestic politics and International Relations. This transition resulted in increased democracies, economic transactions, and interdependence. Such a move in international politics

⁴ In the article entitled, Domestic Political Consequences of International Rivalry, Daehee Bak, Kerry Chávez and Toby Rider state some historical examples to illustrate the other side of external treat and domestic politics. They provided that, From ancient to modern history, many accounts show that domestic instability sparks or inflames amid external security threats

Therefore, as per the above explanation, international political factors mainly conflictual practices exert on specific state has both a positive and negative consequence on the stability of domestic politics. So that, it is imperative to consider the existence of both scenarios.

⁵ However, it is essential to recall the nature of international and domestic politics, become the former does not have a well-defined institutional structure; politics on that international level is more of anarchic, and international negotiations are generally conducted without a constitutionally mandated sequence of moves. In contrast, the domestic politics incorporates a highly structured model of politics.

refocused scholar's attention and led to the advancement of liberal international theory and domestic politics approaches (Jørgensen, 2021). Mainly, in the 1990s, the proponent of liberal school of thought proposed liberal international theory and domestic politics as viable alternatives to explain states' foreign policy behavior, sparking intense debates and a growing literature on International Relations (Ibid). Narizny (2018) asserts that liberal theories begin with describing domestic actors' preferences and how they are politically aggregated as critical variable of explaining international politics. Taking into account domestic affairs, liberal theorist argues that it is possible to predict how politicians will attain their constituents' goals within the constraints of the international environment (Narizny: 2018).⁶

In nutshell, Liberalism can be defined as a set of political and economic philosophies that center on the core values of liberty, equality, economic freedom, the rule of law, and limited and democratic government (Ibid). Liberals generally take an optimistic view of human nature. They have great faith in human reason and this human nature is the guiding principle in the International Relations as well. (Jackson & Sørensen, 2013). Therefore, for liberalists individuals share diverse interests and can thus engage in harmonious and cooperative social action, domestically as well as internationally, which results in greater benefits for human nature in international as well as domestic issues (Ibid). Therefore, for liberalist the concept of mutual benefit, cooperation, international law, progress and rationality are the core values in which the theory rely on.⁷

In this respect, according to liberals the interplay between domestic politics and liberalism in international politics is quite entangled together. So that, liberals maintained that explaining what governments desire to achieve, and why they do so, primarily needs an examination of the domestically determined preferences of political players within these state societies (Jørgensen, 2021). The liberal theory of International Relations and domestic politics approaches place a

⁶ The article presents an example to explain the nexus; the author states, for example, a state leader who represents a domestic interest group that makes earning from an overseas empire, prioritizing on the defense of the empire. The leader will try to incorporate what diplomatic channel and military commitments will best serve that end.

⁷ Liberal thinking is closely related with the emergence of the modern democratic constitutional state. Liberals believed that modernization is a process involving progress in most areas of life. Therefore, the process of modernization ignites the scope for cooperation across states. The defined progress as a way of creating better life for the majority of individuals.

strong emphasis on the link between societies and governments because, in democratic political systems election goals encourage responsiveness to the government demands, which legitimizes government behavior (Ibid). Therefore, for liberalists, International Relations is not an alien concept that has detached from the domestic political dynamics, but rather both are entangled together.

Liberals believe that state-society relations exert significant influence governments' preferences for international conflict or cooperation (Jørgensen, 2021). Specially, the process of globalization has shifted in domestic actors' expectations and role in the international political events (Ibid). This brings out the importance of domestic politics on international spectrum.⁸ Therefore, it's logical to conclude that, for liberal school of thought domestic interests, domestic institutions and domestic political ideas, play a prominent role in explaining governmental preference formation and aspiration of foreign relation that are further entangled with each other by globalization which emphasized the relevance of this relationship between governments, domestic and international actors.

However, Political realism also known as power politics, is the oldest school of thought of politics and it is the most adopted theory of International Relations (Burchill, 2013:29). Realists emphasize the constraints on politics imposed by human selfishness and egoism and the anarchies nature of International Relations, which require primacy in all political life of power and security (Gilpin, 1986). Hence, for the proponents of the realist school of thought, rationality and selfish statecentrism are core premises and pillars of international politics. In this respect, the conjunction of anarchy⁶ with egoism and the significance of power politics provide in the central realm of realism (Burchill, 2013:29). For realists, the international politics, in which sovereign states are the principal actors, is a zero-sum game so that the gain for one is essentially a loss for other. Therefore, they consider states as rational unitary actors which acting under the consideration of its own national interests. Ultimately, national security and survival are the

⁸ For instance in the contemporary economic interdependence world, international economic policies can not be a pure from domestic influence in a various ways, particularly in trade. Andreas Dür argues that society actors' trade preferences for protectionism or liberalization are influenced by the anticipated costs and benefits of a shift. This highlights the significance of such interests for governmental preferences. This dynamic generates domestic winners and losers, resulting in proponents and opponents of trade cooperation and policies; this shows how domestic political dynamics and institutions are crucial in shaping governmental preference and International Relations for liberals. (Knud Erik Jørgensen, 2021).

primary goal of the states and their relationship is determined by power and capabilities (Jackson & Sørensen, 2013). In the overarching history of realist school of thought, the book of Niccolo Machiavelli (1469 – 1527), entitled “The Prince” is considered as a masterpiece and guiding bible of the theory. Machiavellianism is a doctrine, which denies the relevance of morality in politics, and claims that all means even if moral or immoral are justified to achieve certain political ends (Burchill, 2013:29). As Machiavelli stated in the prince, in politics a politician must act as if all men are morally bad in principle so that that they will always tend to be evil when opportunity offers a right condition and capacity (Jackson & Sørensen, 2013). In this regard, radical realists, such as Machiavelli totally exclude almost everything except power and self-interest from International Anarchy in International Relations is defined as the absence of hierarchical political rule in which there is no international central organ to guide the character of states repress the egoist nature of humans. According to realists in domestic politics, egoism is restrained by hierarchical political rule. In International Relations however, the absence of government allows and even encourages, the worst aspects of human nature to be revealed.

Radical realists disregard the significance of domestic political dynamics in international politics because the theory solely focus on the power politics, states status in the international system and maximization of power (Saroja, 2019:15). The realist theory dictates that domestic structures and political dynamics of states play minimal role in foreign policy and International Relations. So that, the doctrine does not consider state’s actions, are being determined by domestic factors such as ideology, political condition, and religion. Instead, realist sees states actions are being based on its interests in the power it perceives it needs to survive. Preparing for war and calculating the relative balances of power are the basis emphasis of foreign relation of any country, as per realists, (Ibid).

As stated above, the idea of power politics is the central thesis for the realist argument since foreign relations is self-interested, aimed at preparing for war and calculating the relative balances of power. Moreover, national interest is the only main guideline to the states formation of foreign policy, and therefore the national interest is the accumulation of power. Consequently, it is because of the nature of state egoism and not domestic politics that cause a state to adopt certain foreign policy and act in a particular way, according to realist school of thought (Ibid)

Next to above school of thought, neo classical realism is also decisive in relation to establishing the nexus. Neoclassical realism is a problem-focused sub-school within realism that acknowledges the weakness and diversity of realism. In principle, neoclassical Realism agrees on the realist's core argument of considering international system as an anarchical system (Jørgensen, 2021). Besides, it takes the argument of neo-realists regarding the significance of the structure of the international state system and relative power of states. It also acknowledges the classical realist stance on importance of leadership and foreign policy. It deviates, however, from the above version of realism by attempting to come up with middle ground view and positively response to some of the liberalist arguments (Ibid).

Neoclassical realism has shifted its focus of attention from classical and neo realists by focusing on domestic politics and decision-making factors (Kaarbo, 2015:32). Rejecting neo-realist basic argument of unit-level characteristics are unimportant in international politics and International Relations theories are separate from foreign policy theory, neoclassical realists have incorporated a coherent realist perspective on foreign policy (Ibid).

Therefore, neoclassical realism distinguishes itself from other kinds of realism by taking in to scholarly debate within the realist realm the domestic politics of states. This theory, seeks to explain why, how, and under what conditions the internal characteristics and the political conditions of states influence the international politics. This depicts how this school of thought positively response to the liberal approach of emphasizing in the importance of domestic conditions of countries to explain International Relations and foreign policies (Jørgensen, 2021). Therefore, according to this theory, state international character and influence is highly affected by a wide range of domestic political and decision-making factors such as states motives, domestic political condition, institutions and previous experiences (Kaarbo, 2015:33). As a result, states often react differently to similar problems and opportunities, and their response is highly motivated by domestic factors (Ibid). consequently, many neoclassic realists argue that foreign policy decisions are made by human beings so that certain domestic political condition and decision-making pattern are intervening conditions determining these human beings (leaders) reactions to the international system (Ibid).⁹

⁹ To answer a basic set of question of studying *to what degree is state X's policy an end response to external pressures and incentives as opposed to internally generated? If a new party were to come to*

Being on the same vein, the theory of subaltern realism, as coined by Mohammed Ayoob, provides a very detailed explanation of domestic level analysis to the international relations, (Cerioli, 2025). Acknowledging the centrality and the survival nature of state in the IR, subaltern realism argues that, most of the IR theories are western-based theories overlooking the realities of the developing/global south countries, (Ibid). Ayoob argues the other realist theories does not recognize the intrinsic difference between state that have appeared after decolonization and Westphalia states (Ibid). Furthermore, accepting the intertwined nature of domestic and international politics in a third world country, argues that third world countries are struggling with entangled nexus between domestic and external matters (Ibid). Even though most of this school assertion aligns with neoclassical realism, however, it defines third world countries as state that comes from decolonization and their domestic politics resembles the late medieval and early modern period in Europe (Ibid).¹⁰

The other critical theoretical framework is provided by constructivism school of International Relations. This theory was born because of the end of the Cold War and the debates arises within the circles of scholars in international in America (Burchill, 2013:194). Constructivists consider states form more than a system, and emphasis on the role that ideological and normative structures of the state exert in determining the behavior of actors of International Relations (Adeniji, 2022:46). The proponent of this school of thought stress on the significance of normative and ideological structures of the states in shaping their political actions. Moreover, constructivists argues that in order to understand International Relations properly, investigating the non-material structures that affects the shaping of identities of political actors is crucial. Therefore, the proponents dictates having a proper understand of how political interests are formed within political actors is essential in the explanation of a wide range of global political phenomena (Ibid). in this regards, they put both structure and actors on the same foot arguing

power, how much would the policy change? Would state X respond more favorably to incentives or threats? (The Oxford Handbook of International Relations, 2008),

Neo classical realists tend to be more flexible to consider multiple domestic and international factors unlike its realistic predecessors.

¹⁰ However, the subaltern realism assertion lacks theoretical clarity to best define the Ethiopian politics and state formation, so that this thesis, while acknowledging the importance of subaltern realism, to best explain Ethiopia's domestic politics and Horn, the researcher opts to heavily rely on neoclassical realism as fundamental theoretical framework.

that structures are not existed before the actors they produce rather both structure and actors are mutually constituted (Ibid: 47).

The emergence of constructivist school of thought in International Relations has brought more stress on the nexus between domestic politics and International Relations. Although some factions of the school emphasizes on social construction of international politics and the importance of shared norms at the international level, the other factions give a priority on attending to societal level normative and ideational forces inside the state taking in to account internal norm contestation and internalization (Kaarbo, 2015:23). More importantly on the nexus, constructivists recognize the existence of a strong connection between culture in societal level and policymaking at the elite level and this cultural identity of states have a capacity of constraining elites from pursuing their own version of foreign policy (Ibid, 30). Thereby, the theory resonates that such impact of domestic factors are critical to grasp practical experience of International Relations.

In addition to the above thoughts, a theory of hegemonic stability provides a critical point of analysis to assess the level of influence a hegemonic power stability could exert on international/regional politics. The theory of hegemonic stability argues that for an optimal operation of international system and to avert failure international cooperation, the presence of single strong and dominant actor lead to collective desirable outcome, however, the lack of leader/hegemony lead to instability in the international system with undesirable effect on individual states (Snidal, 1985). Hence, the theory of hegemonic stability dictates that, the dominance of single state helps to ascertain the international order by averting unrest that comes from undue competition with a diminishing effect.

This study, with varying level of stress, employs the bridge of the above theories as theoretical framework. Neoclassical realism is best suited for this analysis because it incorporates domestic variables, such as, domestic (in) security, historical background, and leaders' capacity of treat assessment, the role of domestic interest group, capacity of resource extraction and mobilization, as detrimental factor with a capacity of exerting and shaping regional pressure. The applicability of Putnam's two level game in Ethiopian context is very much limited because it emphasizes on domestic institutions as key players however, Ethiopia's weak's institutional framework with minimal capacity to influence the act of executive makes applying Putnam's two level game

theory problematic. Neoclassical realism on other hand, better take into consideration domestic insecurity/security, leader's character and their capacity of assessing external treat, communicability of internal problems with direct regional implications. The paper also incorporates the view of constructivists on impact of domestic ideology and normative structure when, Ethiopia's ideological orientation impact it's assessment of enmity and amity in the Horn. Neoclassical realism coined with theory of hegemonic stability as theoretical framework, in this thesis helps to demonstrate the intertwined nature of Ethiopia's domestic political variables and their capacity to determine and communicate to the region.

Chapter Three

Understanding Horn of Africa and the Role of Ethiopia

3.1. The Geo-history of Horn

Horn of Africa geographically located in the northeastern corner of Africa continent, which is known by its complicated geopolitical significance, geographically consists of Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia, (Mosley, 2020:1). However, the composition of Horn of Africa is understood differently based on historical, demographic, geopolitical and cultural consideration (Birhanu, 2013:72). The term Horn of Africa initially used to denote Ethiopia, Djibouti, Eritrea, and Somalia. Later it was extended to incorporate the North and South Sudan (Ibid). So that most researchers of Horn of Africa also incorporates Sudan and south Sudan as the member of the region in their studies. (Bereketeab, 2013:3). Some, even view all member countries of IGAD as part of Horn of Africa, including Kenya and Uganda as Horn of Africa states (Birhanu, 2013:72).

According to Peter Woodward, the term Horn of Africa is not an indigenous term and has no relationship with the region historical or political reality, it comes from a glimpse at a map rather than any perception of inhabitants of the area (Woodward, 2002:1). Geographically, the region is bounded by Red Sea and Gulf of Aden to north, comprising Bebel-Akaba strait that links Red Sea to Indian Ocean. Bebel-Akaba strait is vital for the global food and trade security, (Manuel, 2020:46). Moreover, the region serve as a linking point for Asia and Europe through the Red Sea, the Suez Canal, and the Mediterranean Sea. Therefore, this geographic position gives the region control over major maritime lines, including the Aden-Suez Canal route, which is crucial for global trade, particularly oil transportation, (Pandey, 2024:59). However, the existence of The Nile, the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean in the region coupled with many other natural resources have exposed it to external influences as well (Woodward, 2002:11).

The Horn of Africa is highly impacted by wars, conflicts and historical legacies. In the post-colonial era, the region has faced a number of devastating interstate as well as inter-ethnic conflicts, which cost heavy number of casualties (Bereketeab, 2013:26). Ethiopia-Somali wars occurred in 1964, 1977 – 1978, 2006 – 2009, Kenya – Somali war of 1964 and the Ethiopia –

Eritrea war that happened from 1998 – 2000, have resulted devastating influences on the regions geo-politics (Ibid). The region also witness inter-communal conflict triggered by environmental factors and poorly marked interstate boundaries that splits those who belongs to the same ethnic group (Ibid). Bereketeab (2013), argues that, the region recurring conflicts are intra-state which has three types, the first type of conflict is inter-communal conflict among ethnic, clan, and occupational group such as pastoralists. The second type of conflict is Inter communal conflicts are initiated by resource scarcity over land and water. The second type of intra-state conflict is the one-sided conflict occurred when government or rebel groups committed atrocities against civilian population for different reasons, the third and according to Bereketeab, the most devastating types of intra-state conflict is civil war between state and ethnic or region based organized political groups (Ibid).

The conflicts that have occurred in the Horn of Africa are closely interconnected and reveal the fact that almost all of the countries of the horn have experienced intra- interstate conflict even though the intensity varies (Birhanu, 2013:71). These recurrent occurrences of conflict have been considered as one of the basic characteristics of Horn of Africa. As the poorest sub-region in the world, most of the violent conflicts in the region are mainly driven by economic factors, prone by famine and deep economic problems (Ibid). As indicated, properly understand Horn of Africa requires taking in to consideration its geography, member states and recurrent conflict patterns as well. Thereby, this chapter demonstrates the political evolution, contemporary politics and interstate tensions of the region. Besides, the chapter provides the basic of political understanding of the regions member states.

The historical and political evolution of the Horn of Africa has long characterized by the rise and fall of states, civilizations and dynasties (Woodward, 2002:13). It is a place where the great civilizations of Meroe and Axum emerged that lasts for centuries as a panacea of knowledge and great power. Relatively, even though the history of the Horn of Africa modern statehood is characterized by rise and fall of states, the Ethiopian state sustaining the greatest longevity (Ibid). In the evolution of Horn of Africa, mobility has been a principal feature of state building. However, the current border demarcation was made mainly by colonial powers, so that the state

demarcation in the region does not reflect the mobility of society in region, rather it reflects the character of European rivalries and the principle of *Uti Possidetis Juris*¹¹ (Ibid).

The burden of history lies heavily on the Horn of Africa countries, which makes the political evolution after the 20th century penetrated by mentality of zero-sum politics. The political power exercise of leaders has been manipulative, exclusive, and undemocratic. As a result, the political evolution of the states in the horn dominated by manipulative political thoughts has contributed adversely in shaping the fate of the Horn politics (Crummey, 2003:126). Consequently, across the region, the political culture is characterized by situation in which the political leaders have repetitively betrayed their original promise and have distortedly used history for narrow ends, (Ibid).

In the course of the second half of the twentieth century, the region has experienced numerous local, national, regional, and international changes related to the Cold War and post-Cold War politics and liberation movements. Because of this, the member states have been influenced by a number of internal as well as external interested, which has made the region to be characterized with its recurrent revolutions, military coups, and difficult ethnic, socioeconomic, and religious conflicts (Ylonen & Záhórik, 2017:1).

This political instability of the region has led the states to be ranked at the lowest rank in development index. Furthermore, in justice index as well, the states have been experienced the lowest score measuring the level of state strength, political rights and civil liberties, and corruption (Ibid). Despite the existence of tested economic improvement in some countries¹², the member states national political dynamics have remained closed and tightly controlled by the

¹¹ The principle of *Uti possidetis juris* is largely determining principle of customary international law in determining territorial sovereignty in the era of decolonization. The principle used as a guideline for the borders of newly created states formed out of territories that previously lacked independence or sovereignty. According to this principle, states emerging from decolonization shall inherit the colonial administrative boundaries that they held at the time of independence, (Bell A. & Kontorovich E., *Arizona Law Review*)

¹² Last three decades, some of the member states have shown some improvement on economical aspect. Visible economic developments have occurred, notably in Ethiopia, Somaliland, Somalia proper, and the Sudan's. However, the economic development has been generally restricted to the narrow and privileged elites that are unevenly distributed among the citizens of the members states with apparent distinction between population groups, particularly between the state cores and peripheries, (Aleksi Ylonen & Jan Záhórik, 2017:1)..

narrow political elites and their organizations that infringes the political and civil rights of citizens (Ibid).

Furthermore, despite declaring independence from colonial power by all of member states except Ethiopia after the second half of 20th century, the states in the region don't totally detached themselves from of colonial power and legacy, i.e. the influence of France in Djibouti (Ibid:2). Besides, for instance, even if, Somalia was unified in 1960 after former Italian and British Somali territories, socio-political problems have continued to escalate as a result of different colonial administrations, and clan-based societal classification. Sudan suffered from similar problems because southern Sudan had been administered as a different territory for decades. Surprisingly even, Ethiopia's uniqueness as to not be colonized state in region become unable to bring stability and peace to itself (Ibid).

In the political evolution of the Horn states, the cold war international bipolar political dynamics affected the region badly that divided the states in to two blocks by pledging their alliances to Western and Eastern affecting internal political dynamics of each states in the Horn. During cold war, numerous political conflicts in the region started associated with the Eritrean war for independence and the South Sudan political struggle, which both had significant implications for the political dynamics of the region, Moreover, during this period, most of the states engaged in proxy wars giving a support of armed opposition in each other's territories (Ibid: 2-3). The conclusion of the Cold War in 1990–1991 brought significant impact on the overall politics of the region. Right after the end of cold war, the collapse of the authoritarian regimes in Somalia and Ethiopia, independence of Eritrea, and the unilateral declaration of independence of the Republic of Somaliland have occurred (Ibid). so that, the era after the end of the Cold War resulted in the birth of a new player in the Horn of Africa's political game, i.e. Eritrea. Thereby, the above mentioned discussions generally depicts that the 20th century onwards political evolution of the region is primarily influenced by external actors and forces that have continued to have a deep impact on local and national politics in the sub-region (Ibid:4). Moreover, it is critical, to bear in mind that, as subaltern realism discusses, most of the states in the Horn of Africa are a result of decolonization and there internal weakness of the state is highly susceptible of external influence and exploitation.

Besides, As the Third World's countries, the Horn state security problems are multilayered with major three reasons, (Ayoob, 1995:189). These three factors are the domestic, regional, and international. However, as per Ayoob, among the three factors, is the domestic security factor plays a decisive role, (Ibid). So that, these domestic security concerns have invited interstate conflicts by providing the feasible opportunity for bordering states to exploit in others domestic matters.. Furthermore, Ayoob argues that the internal security predicament of Third World states paved a way for global and regional powers to compete in the land of these state, (Ibid). He states that,:

If the internal sources of conflict had been absent, or present on a much reduced scale, Third World states would have been more immune to external involvement by regional and global powers (Ibid).

Consequently, the above-indicated geo-history of the Horn of Africa affirms the neoclassical and subaltern realism assertion regarding the linkage between domestic and external political factors. Moreover aligning with Mohammed's Ayoob's subaltern realism, except Ethiopia, the geo-history of other countries as will be discussed in the following segment, reveals the fact that the modern existence of the states are mainly a result of decolonization with high geo-political and economic vulnerability and domestic instabilities. The nature of state formation coupled with other factors, as will be indicated in state level analysis, each states domestic politics have gone thorough high level of political violence that makes them the most fragile states in the world inviting external actors to highly determine the politics. As a result, positive report of Horn of Africa has seldom come out of scholarly literature or media reports but rather the sub-region has always been associated with crises of devastating outcomes (Tafesse, 2009:1).

3.2. Interstate Politics in the Horn

The interstate relation of the Horn states is derived from the commonalities and defining features of each states such as recurrent conflicts, poverty, underdevelopment, migration, political violence and so forth and characterized by its complexity (Bereketeab, 2023). Interstate relations in the Horn of Africa has often been characterized by a pattern of following radical realism as stated in the previous chapter depicting continuous trend of defying international rules of guiding interstate relation such as a principle of non-interference and respect the sovereignty of others. The overall relation, in nutshell, can be expressed in extensive utilization of proxies and short-

lived amity and recurrent enmity.¹³ Hence, as discussed in the theoretical framework section of the previous chapter, featuring a realists approach of interstate relation, which is characterized by, calculating the relative balances of power, engaging in proxies, resorting to enmity quickly, are the basis defining features of interstate relations of the Horn. In addition, the interstate relations of the Horn is deeply influenced by the internal social structures, political systems, governments, sociological connection and the dominance pattern, (Clapham, 2017:177). Derived from the making of the state's dilemma, the internal factors of one states in the horn has a capacity to determine their interstate relations.

However, the interstate politics of the Horn has been highly influenced by external actors and ideologies. The regions proximity to the Middle East and the ideological impact of Cold War through rivals between two blocks and the post-Cold War politics of a resurgent Islam has also led to a revival of political connections between the some states of the Horn with the Arabian Peninsula (Clapham, 2019). As well as regional and wider international rivalries, in addition to producing state collapse, widespread social suffering and economic backwardness (Woodward, 2002), in recent years, the region becomes a epicenter of competition between global powers and regional powers alleviates (Alexandre, 2020). In addition, the race between these two powers for military base, commercial ports and so on coupled with the alignment of Horn states in such race influences the interstate relations. Hence, the involvement of these actors largely shaped the pattern of interstate politics in the Horn. Therefore, the researcher argues that, their interstate relations cannot stand-alone per se; rather, it has been highly shaped by external factors. Besides, the Horn interstate relations is highly shadowed by resource politics making ethnicity and religion are factors only mass mobilization in most cases especially where inequality in the share and control of national resources is existed. Tafesse argues that, due to the prevalence of scarcity, resource competition to assert monopoly over scarcity are the primary factor for conflict and interstate tensions in the Horn (Tafesse , 2009: 8). Moreover, as a third world states, instabilities, insecurities and disorder of states their relation is mainly related to the early stage of state making (Ayoob, 1995). Hence, due to the above reasons, the internal factors, external actors and ideology and the existence of severe resource scarcity determines the interstate relations of the Horn making the regional politics to be dominated by, as discussed in the previous chapter,

¹³ SCH-4; Personal Interview April 11, 2025

disregarding liberalist conception of international rules of guiding interstate relation such as, principle of non-interference and respect the sovereignty. Collectively these factors have significantly shaped the interstate relations in the Horn.

3.3. The Contemporary Horn Politics

At the contemporary period, The Horn of Africa faces significant challenges related to internal displacement, civil war, political unrest and interstate political tension causing fierce humanitarian crises. The largest and the most influential country in the horn, i.e. Ethiopia, has been engaging in the destructive civil wars with greater implications to the region. This has create enemy and ally interplay between Ethiopia – Eritrea, Ethiopia – Djibouti, Eritrea – Djibouti, Ethiopia – Sudan, Sudan – Eritrea, Ethiopia – Somalia, and beyond.

Internal conflicts have been the primary drivers of instability in the contemporary politics of Horn of Africa. The political tensions and instabilities, such as the Somali civil war, Ethiopia’s Tigray tension, civil war in Amhara and Oromia Regional state, and the Sudanese crises, have not only destabilized the country in dispute but also has created regional security dilemma with significant impact on the interstate bi-lateral and multi-lateral relations as well (Abie, 2024:28). In the contemporary Horn of Africa politics, the actors are not only the member states of the region rather there is a growing number of external actors that have been increasingly participated in the Horn of Africa politics, motivated by economic and strategic interests, (Ibid). Among the global powers, United States, China, Russia and the Gulf States, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have all installed a presence in the region with implications in the regions political dynamics. This external involvement in the regions politics has been increasing local and political conflicts coupled with proxy war because of the competition between regional powers, (Ibid).

According to Global fragile index annual report of 2024, Somalia republic led the fragility index attaining the status of being the only country in the very high alert category. Sudan and South Sudan categorized under high alert states securing the second and third place of fragility. Ethiopia and Eritrea categorized with in Alert category, ranking 12 and 26 respectively. Among states of the Horn only Djibouti showed a better achievement by placing forty eighth under High warning class (Fragile state index annual report 2024:7).

This reveals that the contemporary political dynamics of the horn states is characterized by the failure of the perceived legitimacy of the leadership that binds the citizens of the state to accept the authority properly. Therefore, the contemporary political dynamics of the Horn is filled with actual and potential insecurities at national and regional level emanating from the nexus between violent domestic political dynamics and state fragility (Yonas, 2019:29). Yonas, argued that, the contemporary political insecurities of the region are a result of a cumulative effect of the failure of the political leadership and state institutions as well as foreign involvement with a significant impact on the security of the Horn (Ibid). The above scenario confirms that, the prevalence of democracy is declining significantly in the region and an authoritarianism political rules have flourished due dominance of ruling regimes and tight political space for oppositions, that in turn led the opposition to take part in to insurgency movements.

On the top of that, the contemporary dynamics of the Horn shows that, even though it's not a member of geographic and political Horn, Kenya has increasingly been exerting influence on the regional politics which ignite a kind of moderate power competition between Ethiopia and Kenya. The domestic violent political situation in negatively affected the role it is has been playing in the region and this allows Kenya to extend its regional influence. To strengthen its sphere of influence, Kenya has showed interest to take part actively in East African Economic Community and the African Union Peace and Security Council, (Getachew, Ayferam, & Amb. Mohamed, 2024:8)

The escalating tensions among states of the Horn has been taking the states to take part in the proxy wars in one another. The history of the regional show that most inter-state conflict that has taken place in the region happened through proxy war. Aidi (2020) raise a very surprising fact about proxy wars in Africa. He states that, since 1960, only 30 percent of the conflict in Africa were purely internal. However, the remaining 70 percent of violent conflicts have been internationalized in way of proxy war or another (Aidi, 2020:3). The current politics of the region is the exact, if not the worst, replica of the above finding in which member states are at odd in one another and try's to engage in proxy wars in various fronts. Therefore, the contemporary politics of the region shows the continuance of trajectory of instability across the region, grave causalities and frequently changing strategic alliance and shifts.

3.4. Domestic Political Dynamics of Ethiopia: A Geopolitical View

Understanding Ethiopian geopolitics provides a more awakening lens to understand the Horn of Africa. Ethiopia's complex political processes coupled with ethnic based rebellion, aborted political development have filled the Ethiopian modern political evolution from Emperor Haile Selassie to Prosperity Party, and deadliest civil wars continue to present pressing problems. However, unlike other African countries in which their political dynamics in many ways related to the legacy of colonialism, Ethiopian political landscape has special characteristics with little correlation with colonial powers (emphasis added). Thereby, Ethiopian modern political evolution is a cumulative result of the historical making and unmaking of the political regimes in power of ruling the country (Gedamu, 2022:3). Accordingly, this sub section specifically introduce the readers to critical political shifts in Haile Selassie I and onwards emphasizing on key political shifts only.

3.4.1. Imperial Period

Ras Teferi Mekonnen, who later assumed the throne as a king of king (Negusa Negest) Haile Selassie I on November 2, 1930, came onto the political sphere of Ethiopia in the early 20th century (Zewde, 2002:140, Gedamu, 2022:32). In the modern political dynamics of Ethiopia, the emperor become the most important historical and political figure who attached himself with most of the country's political histories of twentieth century and became the strongest and long serving political leader (Gedamu, 2022:32).

Moreover, the Emperor is considered as a champion of Emperor Tewodros II aspiration of unitary Ethiopian state through diminishing the power of regional lords (Zewde, 2002:140). The enactment of the first written constitution of the country after a year of assuming power in 1930 provided a legal backup for centralization of power by Emperor Haile Selassie. This systematic exclusion of regionalism towards national integration and unity had allowed Emperor Haile Selassie to be considered as one of the longest ruling heads of state in the history of Ethiopia and Africa. Seemingly, the political dynamics of Ethiopia under the Emperor Haile Selassie regime was characterized by the existence of a strong central government and constitutional absolute monarchy promulgated under 1931 as well as 1955 constitution.

During this period, the coronation of the Emperor in 1930, the exile of the emperor in 1936, the reinstatement of the emperor in 1941, the occurrence of attempted coup d'état in 1960 and the overthrow of the emperor in 1974, were the critical moments in the political dynamics of the imperial era. After the reinstatement of Emperor Haile Selassie to Ethiopia and the throne in 1941, a massive attempt to modernize Ethiopian society sowed the seeds of potential dangers for which ultimately gave a birth to revolution (Bereketeab, 2022: 67). The emperor, inspired by Western education and recurrent travel history of Europe was committed for introducing modern, Western style state structure and education, which produced new elite social class, industrialization, urbanization, and bureaucratization. Therefore, as bereketeab (2022) stated, "the emperor was credited with creating a progressively centralizing state and society, where administrative provinces and structures were clearly established."¹⁴

Unquestionably, the magnification of the 1960s and 1970s, political thoughts of nationalism, socialism, anti-colonialism, and Marxism-Leninism with various degrees in the international politics and Horn of Africa in particular, affected the country's political landscape gravely, which paved a way for the first attempt of coup d'état in 1960 (Jan Záhorský, 2017: 13). Gebru Tareke (2009) boldly states that;

Selecting benchmark dates as beginnings or endings of long and complex historical processes can be arbitrary, often faulty. However, if we were to choose the event that both foreshadowed and inspired the generation that catalyzed the Ethiopian Revolution, it certainly would be the aborted coup d'état of 1960. That event set in motion a decade of political protest against monarchical absolutism that did not abate until the more momentous upheaval of 1974. What transpired in that year, of course, was not imagined by the conspirators of December 1960.¹⁵

The precedent set by this failed coup d'état was far reaching and eye opening to the elite classes who were heavily intoxicated by Marxist-Leninist ideology. and as Gedamu (2022) provides the failure of Haile Selassie to contribute towards setting foundations to achieve the democratic aspirations of the Ethiopian people and student movement and ethnic rebellions,

¹⁴ In an effort to foster education and civilization, the regime was committed to dispatch students to the West countries, considering knowing a western knowledge is a necessary condition for the modernization of Ethiopia. (Bereketeab, 2022: 80).

¹⁵ On December 13, 1960, led by Brigadier General Mengistu Neway, and his brother Girmame, the coup tried to dethrone Emperor Haile Selassie while he was out of the country however, it did not come to materialize its aspiration, led the coup.

which demanded greater freedom and equality became a challenge to the regime and resulted the overthrow of the Emperor and the End of Solomonic dynasty.

The regional implication of the Haile Selassie Era ranges from helping other countries to sustain liberation from colonial powers to being in the same shoulder, the regime tried to determine the future of the region. Furthermore, the regime was extensively engaging in demonstrating the communicability of Ethiopia's domestic power and international acceptance in a way of engaging in anti-colonial movements, soft power diplomacy and representing the Horn and Africa in international arena.

3.4.2. The Derg Era

Inspiring by Marxist teachings and the history of socialist revolutions, at the last period of imperial Era, establishing armed rebellions and fighting for ethnicity-based nationalism became the new politics of the decade. The popular student movement was a cultivating ground for leaders and supporter of the protests and rebellions to create a new better order of Ethiopia. Surprisingly, however, most of the protestor came from the relatively advantageous geographical and economic realities, Students primarily from the northern and historically dominant part of the state were leading the struggle to create utopian socialist state in which the issue of equality is addressed adequately (Gedamu, 2022:40).

Consequently, The existence of recurring student protests at the then Haile Selassie I, University and Higher educational institutions, carrying the famous *Land to the tiller motto*, which was well received by the peasantry and the urban educated elite, coupled with hidden political networks of resistance, cumulatively fasten the collapse of the imperial regime. Until 1974, the Emperor Haile Selassie was the main symbol of Ethiopia and the black community in the international political sphere. The emperor made Ethiopia to be an active in African politics, and liberation struggle against colonial and apartheid regimes, therefore, in 1963, due to its immense contribution for African liberation; Addis Ababa was selected as the seat of the Organization of African Unity. (Jan Záhork,2017: 58).

After the diving in to a state of power decline at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s by the imperial region due to peasant rebellions, student movements and a military uprising, in September 1974 the regime came to an end replaced by a military regime,

Provisional Military Administrative Council, or Derg (Ibid). Jan Záhorský (2017) states that “the revolution itself had multiple causes, in many ways fragmented, and impacted the country like no other event in Ethiopia’s history. Jan borrow the words of Tareke (2022) describe the revolution as the moment of great segmentation and rages against each other of fraction of society based on ethnic, religious and prior political affiliation (Ibid). Moreover Gedamu (2022) describe the revolution as,

an epoch-making event with historical similarities to many of the world’s popular social revolutions, such as those in France in 1789 and in Cuba in 1959. As result of 1974’s revolution, Ethiopia was totally shifted from imperial state with long-standing historical narrations to a strong and centralized socialist state (Gedamu, 2022:42).

The revolution was a result of widespread popular grievances against political, economic and cultural inequality and suppression of basic rights. The well-known Ethiopian historian Beharu Zewde provides the 1974’s revolution caught everybody by unexpected surprise in which the most radical regime change mongers were not even prepared to deal with the changing reality even though they had been struggling for it for a decade (Zewde, 2002:228). Zewde, further articulate the revolution and states that, the Amharic equivalent term of Revolution, which is “Abyot”, was a very recent term that literally means eruption/explosion revealing the sudden nature of the revolution to both the regime and opponents (Ibid).

In the words of Zewde, *how to handle, let alone direct, that explosion became on long process of adjustment and improvisation that ultimately delivered the country into clutches of totalitarian dictatorship.* The revolution changed most things radically exceeding the natural way of societal adoption of transforming realities, which opened a huge gap between the perceived idea of change and the actual existed reality. Moreover, some scholars compared the 1974 radical Ethiopian revolution with French Revolution, in both, radical dramatic social transformation occurred and high level of terror perpetuated by both governments (Bereketeab, 2022: 67).

After disposition of the emperor, the Derg enacted a proclamation that enables to control full state power, banned any demonstration and association, dissolve parliament and terminate the 1955’s constitution. Furthermore, the assassination of its promising prominent leaders such as General Aman Andom, and General Teferi Benti, made to quickly fade away the hope resided in the revolution (Gedamu, 2022:41). Such assassination of the early architects of the revolution

marked the start of bloodiest political dynamics of Ethiopia. Besides, by doing so, Derg showed how quickly it disowned the popular movement led by educated elites that marked the starting of opposing understanding of September 12, 1974, as a victorious day of popular movement for Derg and the day of the movement hijacked (Zewde, 2002:236).

In this respect, the revolution had grown to two competing revolutions, on one hand there was a revolution led by a radical military personnel who considered themselves as Marxist-Leninists, which utilize the state's resources and tools to achieve their end. On the other hand, there was revolutions led by insurgent elites, who claimed to be Marxist-Leninists basing their strong hold on the countryside, (Tareke G, 2009:45). Which ultimately resulted the bloodiest red terror and white terror bloodshed and the birth of more than fifteen opposition groups following own-armed combat (Ibid). in dealing with why the revolution and changes in Ethiopia often failed to deliver on its promises to address the issues raised by a widespread popular movement, Gedamu (2022), quote the answer of a civil servant who served both Haile Selassie and the Derg about Ethiopian political transitions and states that;

“The problems with the Ethiopia’s political transitions is that the seeds that enticed revolutionary movements, which also received wider support for a hope of new beginning, would soon disappear, and the new political regime emerged as a worse copy of the regime it replaced.

The military formed itself into the Provisional Military Administrative Council, which administered the country from 1974 to 1984, and was succeeded by the Workers Party of Ethiopia (WPE), which ruled from 1984 to 1991. (Bereketeab, 2022: 84). The Derg, the military dictatorship that assumed control, implemented a fundamental restructuring, particularly in terms of land rights. Furthermore, it dramatically altered social and class relations in Ethiopian society by profoundly upsetting the old political economy and restructuring the state (Halliday and Molyneux 1981; Ottaway and Ottaway 1978 as cited by Bereketeab, 2022: 67). In this respect, many historian and politicians agree up on that, The Derg's most major contribution was the revision of land property rights by demolished the old land property rights structure, which involved taking land from wealthy landowners and allocating it to landless peasants, shattered the feudal system's core purpose. (Bereketeab, 2022: 84).

Peasant associations were established as key rural institutions in post-revolutionary Ethiopia, alongside land reform. In 1975, a proclamation was issued to organize and consolidate peasant associations. The goal was securing the political, economic, and social rights of peasants

(Jan Záhorkík, 2017:17). Driven by the existence of bipolar international political order, after the advent of the revolution, and particularly after the Somali invasion of Ethiopia in 1977, Ethiopia began to receive massive military aid from Moscow, which was critical in assisting Ethiopian forces in defeating the Somalis and eliminating the Eritrean threat for a brief period of time. Between 1978 and 1987, the Ethiopian government received an incredible amount of military aid, totaling US\$7 billion. Jan Zahorik, argued that the regime was highly relied on Soviet support to withstand internal and external problems till the end of the 1980s such dependence made the regime to pay the price when the cold war starts to end. The Derg rule came to an end as a result of the Cold War's end and the combined efforts of the major liberation fronts (Jan Záhorkík, 2017:59). Thereby, the collapse of socialism in the late 1980s and early 1990s, coupled with significant ethnic-based rebellions exacerbated the downfall of the Derg Regime. As a result, The Derg regime international relation aligned with constructivists' view of point regarding the impact of domestic ideological inclination on state behavior.

3.4.3. The EPRDF Regime

The year 1991 marked a watershed and critical shift in contemporary Ethiopian history. After seventeen years in power, Ethiopia's Marxist-Leninist regime collapsed due to catastrophic military defeat and disintegration. The president, Mengistu Haile Mariam, escaped into exile, and his former adversaries, the Marxist-Leninist guerrillas of Eritrea and Tigray, divided the country in two. On May 24, 1991, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) conquered Asmara, Eritrea's capital. It marked the end of 30 years of civil conflict. Four days later, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), a coalition of four political organizations, three ethnic nationalists, i.e. Oromo People's Democratic Organization, Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM), and Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and one regional party (Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Front), controlled the capital city of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa (Gebru Tareke, 2009:2, Bereketeab, 2022: 85).

This heralded the beginning of a new spectrum in Ethiopian political system in various ways. After the collapse of Derg regime, competing ethnic nationalism has penetrated the field of Ethiopian political dynamics unlike previous Ethiopian regimes, which had tried to overlook the issue of ethnicity. Gedamu inspired by the Joireman's (1997) article states that the title of the article depicts the real picture of the complexities of what has become of the Ethiopian state in

the last few decades (Joireman 1997: 387). After 1991, Ethiopia lost both of its Red Sea ports, leaving it landlocked once again (Gebru Tareke, 2009:2). On the top of that, After 1991 Ethiopia become a state with a constitutional design of ethnic federalism as a form of government structure, which is unusual in the context of other federal situations in Sub-Saharan Africa and abroad.¹⁶ EPRDF had reconfigured Ethiopian state along ethnic federalist lines by establishing nine regional states and two autonomous cities, each representing a dominant ethnic group (1995 constitution, article 47).

This historic event of 1991, was not imperative for the current Ethiopian political landscape, it also marked the total independence of Eritrea. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the US supported Eritrea's independence as a measure of stability hoping to encourage democratization and expand the liberal capitalist order in the Horn of Africa. this paved a way to the Eritrean vote in April 1993 for independence and surprisingly one month later, Ethiopia became first to recognize the state of Eritrea, (Ylönen, 2017:44).

During the interim period (May 1991–April 1993), Eritrean-Ethiopian ties were founded on cooperation, interdependence, contradicting Pan-Ethiopian, Cold War sceptics, and fear. Both Ethiopian and Eritrean leaders emphasized the need of sustaining regional peace for their nations' democratic transitions and economic development as well as mutual respect (Iyob, 1997:137). During this period, the two countries agreed to designate Assab as a free port, while Massawa became a free transit port for commodities bound for Ethiopia. Which according to Iyob (1997) the principal reason of Ethiopia over rule over Eritrea, access to the sea, was met peacefully. Ethiopia's national currency, the Birr, was used in both Eritrea and Ethiopia (Ibid). They signed agreement of trade, environmental, scientific, and educational cooperation more over, Ethiopia was providing military assistance when its Eritrea was involved in an armed conflict with Yemen (Tareke, 2009:344).

¹⁶ The rationale behind ethnic federalism provides that it aims to distribute political, economic, cultural, and linguistic resources fairly among different ethnolinguistic groups. The state, as the major repository of national resources, has a tendency to monopolize them, allowing those who take the state to dominate those resources as well. As Berketab, dictates Ethnic federalism has been viewed as a resource distribution strategy that empowers underprivileged communities. The concept of the social compact was well-received by intellectuals and politicians, but its implementation proved to be a letdown or disaster. Despite the existence of such appreciation, many have been this political though as skeptical from the very outset. (Bereketeab, 2022: 86).

However, a few years after 1991, the partitioning and establishing Eritrea as a new state in the Horn of Africa sub-region created volatility rather than stability and eventually exacerbate Eritrea and Ethiopia relationship that resulted the outbreak of Eritrean-Ethiopian War, fought between 1998 and 2000 (Ylönen, 2017:45). Gebru Tareke (2009) states that, The Eritrean-Ethiopian war of 1998–2000 shows how far the governments ever learn from history. After seven years only, from joint victory against Derg, the former allies fall apart and entered into a disastrous war.

As indicated above, prior to the beginning of hostilities, the governments of Eritrea (Eritrean Peoples' Liberation Front, EPLF) and Ethiopia (TPLF/EPRDF) were believed to be intimate and cordial. They battled alongside each other for 17 years against Ethiopia's Derg regime, seizing power in both Asmara and Addis Ababa when the regime collapsed in May 1991. Furthermore, the leaders of the two fronts are from the same linguistic group: Tigrinya-speaking highlanders who live on the Eritrean-Ethiopian/Tigrayan frontier (Tronvoll, 2009:6). So that even if they seemed as both ethnic and political brothers and protectors of peace and stability in the Horn of Africa, this could not avert both from entering in to the most senseless war of the century with very grave casualties (Ibid).

Tronvoll (2009) argues that, the territorial claims of the war by the ruling elites were simply an expression of deeper animosity existed between them rather than being a sole reason for the war. Rather the war was caused by a complex combination of historical, economic, political, and cultural factors, culminating in Eritrea's decision to establish its own currency in 1997 and Ethiopia's demand for cross-border trade in international currency or through a letter of credit. (Ibid).

During the start of the war, Ethiopia is thought to have mobilized approximately 400,000 soldiers, while Eritrea had close to 350,000 army members (Ibid). The overall casualties of the war was very intensified and this intensified interstate war claimed, though the number varies, some scholars like Tronvoll (2009) extends to the lives of up to 200,000 combatants, while Bereketeab (2022) provides the resulted in the deaths of over 100,000 soldiers. Despite the disparity of numbers, most literatures agree on the casualties that is more than 100,000 human life is lost because of this deadliest war between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Along with the death casualties and billions of dollars material destruction, several hundred thousand became internally displaced, and there were over one million became refugees during the conflict. Furthermore, 75,000 Eritreans and Ethiopians of Eritrean descent who lived in Ethiopia were deported and stripped of their citizenship privileges after being declared enemies overnight. Similarly, Eritrea expelled about 70,000 Ethiopians who lived and worked in Eritrea during and after the war. (Tronvoll, 2009:5). Historically, despite there has been a process of assimilation, Ethiopian rulings, individuals living within the political domain were considered subjects of the Ethiopian crown however, the Ethio- Eritrean war introduced the political discourse of inner enemy rhetoric based on being an Eritreans or Ethiopians of Eritrean origin, (Ibid, 176). Tronvoll (2009), compares the statements given by the then Prime Minister Meles Zenawi on May 26, 1998 and Gebru Assrat, the then Regional President of Tigray on may 28, 1998, with the statement issued by Meles Zenawi on a year after the may's speech on July 9, 1999. Prime Minister Meles Zenawi on May 26, 1998 says that,

The EPRDF is of the opinion that it is a grave crime to label grossly any people as enemy. We should try to treat separately government and people. ... This being the case, our attitude toward Eritreans will not change at any rate. If there are individuals who would like to harm the interest of our country, they will bear the consequences individually. The EPRDF can never take any 'anti-people' stand

Being on the same page, Gebru Assrat affirmed that,

'We have to like and respect the Eritrean people. We should not develop hatred of people because of worthless propaganda of the Shabiya. You Eritreans who are in Ethiopia! You are our brothers and the Ethiopian people are your brothers.

However, after a year, On July 9, 1999, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi stated on national radio Foreign nationals in Ethiopia rely on the government's goodwill. Meles emphasised that, *if we say go, because we do not like the colour of your eyes, they have to leave'*

The de-facto Ethiopian military victory over Eritrea finally led to truce agreement signed in Algiers facilitated by the Organization of African Unity, United Nations, European Union, and the United States (Tronvoll, 2009:3). However, this agreement made this chapter of Ethiopian political dynamics to turn into a relative no peace no war situation. Apart from its heavy casualties occurred because of the war, Mulugeta, (2009) provides that, when the war started, the EPRDF turned back to it's politico-military style of leadership. This style of leadership allowed it to deal with the war effectively, and ultimately win the war however, the war

triggering the division of EPRDF's leadership at the end of the war. The internal divisions, related to how to manage the war later, changed into debates on policy, which resulted the expulsion of half of the TPLF leadership, eventually turning into EPRDF-wide splits and divisions (Mulugeta, 2009:205).

Among several point of difference in the central command of EPRDF, the major key point of split was the way of handling the Eritrean case and EPRDF Executive Council's decision to advance the war up to Asmara and control the capital to facilitate the occurring of transition (Ibid:212). Some members of the leadership argued that the objective of the Ethiopian war must be limited to maintaining Ethiopia's own territorial integrity and sovereignty of the nation. According to proponents of this group plan to march to Asmara is an aggressive plan contrary to international agreements that would be considered as violation of sovereignty (Ibid) however, the others members of executive council members supported the idea of marching to Asmara stating that demolishing the Eritrean force, and reclaiming the Ethiopian territory, was the objective of the war. The then TPLF central committee member, Mulugeta, (2009) dictates that, *the majority of the EPRDF Central Committee members agreed the limits of the war should be defined by the need to break the fighting capacity of the Eritrean Defense Forces* (Ibid)

As a result of the above point of departure coupled with other ideological and policy related issues, the top leadership of EPRDF was divided between two loosely organized groups were operating with intention of prevailing. These two groups are operated around the Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and the head of the EPRDF headquarters, (Ibid). Even though the major political split, among the coalition parties of EPRDF, was among TPLF members, was the resignation of Dr Negaso Gidada from his membership of the OPDO revealed the existence of some sort of division on OPDO as well (Ibid). This episode of Ethiopian political dynamics resulted the victory and dominance of Meles Zenawi's group on EPRDF and Ethiopian politics afterwards. Consequently, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi's faction survived and consolidated its hold on party leadership.

The other critical political juncture in the evolution of Ethiopian politics is the advent of 2005 Election. Before the 2005 National election, there had been three elections held in Ethiopia, in 1992, 1995, 2000, consecutively. The 1992 regional elections was conducted to legitimize ethnic parties affiliated with the ruling party (Lyons, 2019:93). Under the new constitution, the

first regional and national elections were conducted on May 1995.¹⁷ After the 1995 election, the national elections in 2000 and the local elections of 2001 followed. This election was characterized by being noncompetitive and boycotted elections (Ibid: 86). Except in Addis Ababa and a few areas in the SNNPR, the participants of opposition and the existence of competition was very minimal to the extent being not sufficient to threaten the ruling party's hold on power either regionally or in the center (Ibid).¹⁸

After the above loosely competitive elections, due to EPRDF opening up the political space for a brief period before the election, the 2005 election became the most competitive and active election in the entire political evolution of Ethiopia. Lyons (2019) expresses the event that was filled with;

Live televised debates on matters of public policy, opposition party access to state-owned media, and political meetings in the countryside all culminated in a million people rallying in Meskel Square in the center of Addis Ababa to listen to opposition speakers on the last day of campaigning. These unprecedented events made it clear that the 2005 elections represented a decisive moment in Ethiopia's political development. Lyons, (2019:130)

This election offered to most of eligible voters a chance to, meaningfully exert impact on the future of their country through votes as oppose to long history of deception of requiring military confrontation as the only tool of achieving a political end. Unlike the long political history of Ethiopia, most Ethiopians witnessed tense political debate and active and peaceful soliciting of support by opposition parties (Ibid). Lyons (2012), affirms that, the most important departure in 2005 was that the EPRDF's leadership commitment to allow the opposition to operate actively in wherever they want (Ibid). After the ruling parties opening the political space up, the opposition parties could effectively started election campaigns which further reached to

¹⁷ Lyons (2019) states that, in the 1995's election, only a few political organizations were competing against EPRDF, however, according to Lyons, even though it was not competitive per se, the 1995 election was critical for EPRDF to consolidate its power. In this election, almost all political participated were organized based on ethnicity. Major opposition parties such as the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the All-Amhara People's Organization (AAPO) were organized purely on ethnic lines. In addition, the other party participating was the Southern Ethiopia People's Democratic Coalition (SEPDC), similar to Southern Ethiopia Coalition party. A single multi ethnic party in the election was Ethiopian National Democratic Party (ENDP), which only secure a single seat.

¹⁸ According to Lyons, (2019) the 1995 and 2000 elections showed the opposition parties vulnerabilities and limited amount of real competition. Moreover, these elections depicted the ruling party capacity to mobilize the population to participate in a process that affirmed and legitimize the ruling party's dominance.

calling an estimated million Ethiopians rallied in Meskel Square in a peaceful political rally on May 8, 2005, that had facilitate the occurrence of the most fiercely contested elections in the country's history (Ibid).

During the election, principally two opposition coalitions, the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CDU) and United Ethiopian Democratic Forces (UEDF) which included the Southern Ethiopia People's Democratic Coalition), were competed against the EPRDF's ruling coalition (Ibid). This revival of pan-Ethiopian identity provided the basis for most of opposition movements in the election.

According to the former TPLF Central committee member, Mulugeta Gebrehiwot, the opening up of the political space had allowed an alternative political movement by to intensify in the greater magnitude (Mulugeta, 2009:227). This made EPRDF to lose the political ground significantly, resulted the 40 loss of the parliamentary seat according to Mulugeta. However, Mulugeta dictates that,

The opposition, in a 'now or never' mood, rejected the election results and declined to take the 40 per cent of seats in the parliament it won. It instead called for civil disobedience and riots, which eventually succumbed to a multifaceted intervention of the government, including the use of its security forces. This ended the short-lived era of competitive politics in Ethiopia. Ibid

For the most scholars of the political and Ethiopian History scholars the opposition parties made a regrettable miscalculation on deciding to call for disobedience and public out rest as oppose to securing the uncontested shares and claiming for the rest after. For instance, Gedamu (2022) states that Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD), had won all Addis Ababa's parliamentary seats. Despite the glimpse of light of democracy, the mismanagement of the afterwards of the election by both the government and opposition parties halted the very competitive political dynamics of Ethiopia in its entire history. The political evolution of Ethiopia After, 2005's election has been characterized by the prevalence of dominance and internal power struggle within the same political party.

From 2011 onwards, revival of the Nile water geopolitics that challenged the hegemony of Egypt has lighted a new spectrum in the political evolution of Ethiopia, which has been used as emblem of power legitimization by the ruling party. The regional political evolution that made Ethiopia's revival in the status of a regional hegemon in the Horn of Africa. Because of developments under the rule of Meles Zenawi, coupled with other international political events,

such as Arab Spring made Ethiopia to imitate the building of Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam heralded on the celebration of 20th of Derg downfall on May 28, 2011 (Jan Záhorský, 2017:66).

The next critical event in the political evolution of Ethiopia is marked by the year 2012 that was the year the TPLF/EPRDF lost its long-standing Leader, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, (Mulugeta, 2009:301). Meles headed the EPRDF that ruled the country through a massive transformation for near to two decades. Lyons (2012) dictates that there are many reflections on Meles's leadership have pointed to his personal qualities and his complicated and often quite contentious legacies.

3.4.4. The Advent of Prosperity Party

The year 2018 was momentous in the history of the persistent reconfigurations of the Ethiopian state in many dimensions. It heralded not only the end of the EPRDF and its revolutionary democracy, but also represented a power shift of historic magnitude. This political change was the last major episode that changed the face of the ruling coalition EPRDF (Gedamu, 2022:186). The two ideological beliefs that the EPRDF ruling coalition utilized across almost every aspect of its political and economic programmes until early 2018, i.e. revolutionary democracy and the developmental state model for economic growth and strategy, (Gedamu, 2022:154), has come to the final chapter after the advent of 2018's political evolution. The popular protests that emerged in 2018 across the Oromia and Amhara regional states of Ethiopia's fragile federation led to a highly promising new administration, although it remains somewhat insecure regardless of its meaningful success on the reform front.

Lyons (2022) describes that,

In 2018, Abiy Ahmed and other OPDO leaders managed, although remaining within the EPRDF, to position themselves as connected with the anger and rising Oromo nationalism that came out of the protests. They questioned EPRDF policies with regard to the federal security services operating in Oromia, for example, and managed to remain in the party's top leadership. Following Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn's resignation, an alliance between the OPDO and the ANDM provided the backing for Abiy to rise to the top position in the EPRDF, (Lyons, 2022:213)

This shift of leadership and power within EPRDF has resulted numerous, which contributed to the significant loss of central political power by the TPLF, which orchestrated recurrent military confrontations between the Federal Government and different armed groups.

Hence, after four years of consecutive anti-government protests, in which the states responded with declaring state of emergencies, the reputation of TPLF lead EPRDF decayed, this allowed to the rising of reformists within EPRDF's camp (Plaut & Vaughan, 2023:217). A young generation, who had no memories of Derg regime, began to label EPRDF as worse than the Derg regime that is repetitively narrated by social media and diaspora led satellites, (Ibid).

After the triumph of reformist within EPRDF, the transition seemed to bring a new political perspective that are ready to apologize to the population for the past political mistakes, to amend oppressive legal documents such as the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation, Civil Society Proclamation and Mass Media Proclamation coupled with release of thousands of political prisoners. (Weber, 2018: as cited by Tadesse, 2019:36, Plaut & Vaughan, 2023:218).¹⁹

After the amendment of Mass Media proclamation, Hundreds of websites, blogs and satellite TV channels were unblocked, with even the most radical opponent group's media's such as OMN and ESAT became allowed to operate in the Addis Ababa. Surprisingly, for the first time in thirteen years, there were no journalists in prison, moreover, the offer of rapprochement with Eritrea revived in the political spectrum of Ethiopia after near to two decades, no war no peace situation. (Gardner, 2024:144).

Prime Minister Abiy's populist new framing of Ethiopia's, plus notion of medemer or 'synergy' dramatically increase the hope of the public. The concept of Medemer proposed by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, states about shared Ethiopian values and togetherness, stressing on unity under Ethiopian umbrella. Accordingly, *however, to be united does not mean to be one; it*

¹⁹ Prime Minister Abiy, on 2 April 2018, officially apologized for casualties sponsored by Government against protestors and asked for "forgiveness from the bottom of my heart". On this speech, He called for national unity and for talks with the opposition, urging for bridges to be built even with Eritrea. "For us, building democracy is today an existential matter," he intoned, "more than it is to any other country." (Gardner, 2024:141).

Gardner described the moment as:

The newly elected invoked the inclusive spirit of Ethiopiawinet and the Battle of Adwa, the equal contribution of all Ethiopia's ethnic groups; the blood of Amharas, Tigrayans and Oromos, all intermingling in the nation's soil.

According to Gardner, *One survey that summer found Abiy's approval rating to be more than 90 percent. Within little more than a year in office, the prime minister was anointed one of Time's 100 Most Influential People, Foreign Policy's 100 Global Thinkers, as well as laureate of the UNESCO Peace Prize—all before the Nobel Prize. In 2019, the Financial Times splashed Abiy on the cover under the headline "Africa's new talisman."*

is about bringing together our collective forces for collective security, prosperity, cherishing diversity and power. This was manifested in real political life of Ethiopia when amnesty was given to hardliner contesters of EPRDF, coupled with invitation of oppositions, (Plaut & Vaughan, 2023:219). Moreover, the commencement of leader's engagement between Ethiopia and Eritrea was another major change of direction, which was facilitated by Ethiopia and Eritrea signing of the Joint Declaration of Peace and Friendship, which reopened diplomatic relations between the two countries, along with transportation and communication, (Lyons, 2019:197).

In this regard, the above and other simultaneous decisions made by the Prime Minister and his circle, has excreted a considerable political implication for the contemporary Ethiopia's political dynamics. This political dynamics has made a great shift in the domestic constellation of power associated with rebranding EPRDF that has tried to scapegoat TPLF for the problems of the past, (Ibid).

The internal political dynamics started to swiftly changing after November 2018 when the government started to detain security and prisons administrations and 36 officials. A grand corruption investigation on the government's military industrial conglomerate METEC, with the arrest of 27 suspects intensified the relationship between the new reformist government and TPLF (Ibid). According to Plaut & Vaughan, (2023), there were huge media propaganda to scapegoat the fault of the past to the TPLF officials. They stated that,

The day after the arrests, pro-government media aired a powerful documentary alleging embezzlement, corruption and incompetence at METEC and presuming the guilt of those arrested. Tigrayan commentators took exception to the trial by media and what they saw as the singling out of Tigrayan suspects for prosecution. A second documentary on the abuse of human rights by the security institutions was aired in December 2018, provoking domestic revulsion at the grim story it detailed, and international concern about the 'court of public opinion'. A warrant for Getachew Assefa, the previous head of the countries deep state apparatus, arrest had been issued in November 2018, and human rights charges were added in early 2019. Plaut & Vaughan, 2023: 225

This created a very hostile political and social environment that led most of TPLF leaders to begin to move back to Tigray regional state and started to resist the central government in various ways. The other critical political point of turn is the demolition of EPRDF's coalition and the establishment of prosperity party at the end of November 2019. However, starting from the plan, TPLF has been fiercely opposing the dissolution of EPRDF, stating that the other three members of EPRDF don't have a legal power that empower them to dissolve the party (Ibid). Besides, TPLF was not the only power who oppose the dissolution, the key allies of the Prime

Minister, such as his brother figure Lemma Megerssa, abstain from voting publicly stating his reservation.²⁰

Despite the existence opposition from multi corners, prosperity party has established as a single party that incorporate representatives from regional states of Ethiopia, except Tigray. This political dynamics has significantly influenced Ethiopia's contemporary politics in a number of ways and should be considered as critical point of reference in the political history of Ethiopia. After the above tense political confrontations, Ethiopia has witnessed numerous disasters with very grave causalities. On 23 October 2019, protests erupted in Addis Ababa, after the famous Ethiopian politician Jawar Mohammed, made a social media posts accusing the authorities of threatening his security, resulting the death of many innocent individuals. Moreover, The ramification of the militarization of special force in the regional states escalated ethnic tensions between major ethnic powerhouses, followed by the death of Military chief of staff, Se'are Mekonnen, Amhara regional head of security, Asameniw Tsige, and Amhara Regional State President, Andargachew Mekonnen in June 2019.

Furthermore, government decision to postpone the 2020's elections coupled with the unexplained murder of popular Oromo singer Hachalu Hundessa on 29 June 2020, erupted violent protests and causalities. That resulted detainment of Jawar Mohammed and Bekele Gerba, (Ibid: 251). Which heralded the immediate closure of Oromo Media's, which set precedent on the revival of suppression of right of expression in the country.

²⁰ However, this critical political departure has raised multiple competing arguments among scholars and politician who are interested in Ethiopian politics.

Some writers like Plaut & Vaughan (2023) argued that,

little seemed to have been done to institutionalize new systems in the new unitary ruling party, no congress was held, and the significance of the national merger in terms of day-to-day political practice was not clarified. Rather, power continued to be invested in the person of the prime minister, 'and the growing chasm between the promise of liberalization and the reality of concentrating power became even more painful.

Gedamu, (2019) provides that, the establishment of prosperity party is considered as an opportunity to unite the country and come to a solution for many problems of the country. He stated that, the occurrence of a pan-Ethiopian party would bring a potential to address major political problems of the country.

The political tension between Prosperity Party and TPLF reached to its climax after the decision of the Federal government to postpone national election of 2020. Despite, the federal government political pressure, declaration of unconstitutional by the federal parliament four days before it took place and warning saying only the National Electoral Board had the power to organize elections, TPLF decided to conduct its own regional election to its state parliament. On 9 September 2020. This had levelled up their confrontation and made clear of their inclination towards military quarrel (Ibid). This led to the eruption of bloodiest war of the twenty first century between the Federal government and TPLF.

The armed conflict between the TPLF and the federal government was the most distractive war for Ethiopians and all over the world (Gedamu, 2019:223). This new chapter of vicus circle of conflictual political dynamics has made the country to continue its barbarian way of entertaining political differences, which accelerated military confrontation in various corner of the country. Consequently, the contemporary political dynamics of Ethiopia is characterized by the violent politically motivated confrontations. The two largest and the post populous regional states in Ethiopia, i.e. Oromia and Amhara, the government is facing increasingly deadly conflict with armed insurgents. In Amhara regional state between Fano insurgent groups versus the federal and Amhara regional states, in Oromia, OLF and The federal as well as Oromia regional state. In Tigray, after the bloodiest conflict, the political tension within TPLF party has escalated and seems to split the party in to two competing political standings with multifaceted regional implication. The interim admiration of Tigray has started to blame for being a facilitator of internal turmoil in Tigray, (Addis Standard, 2025). Besides, to these three regional states, there has been a fierce political tension in Somali regional state between the regional government and Ogaden Liberation Front and in other regions as well with different level of intensity.

The current deteriorating relationship between Ethiopia and Eritrea raise a serious concern to the political elites of both countries fearing that armed conflict might erupt suddenly. Formerly Chief of Staff of the Ethiopian Defense Forces luteal General Tsadkan Gebretensae has started warning that preparations for war is reaching to final stages and military confrontation may break out at any moment. He further emphasized that if the conflict occurs, it would spread beyond the two countries, affecting Sudan and the Horn of Africa (Addis Standard, 2025). Furthermore, Ethiopia's diplomatic maritime dilemma has put the country and its diplomatic

relation with Somalia republic and Djibouti to be at odd. Therefore, the above discussion evinces that the contemporary politics of Ethiopia become devoid of improvement, but rather reversely it arrives to the point where internal peace and security is at very risky stake let along paving a way to proper democratization and continues to be a fragile big elephant of the Horn. To conclude, Ethiopia's domestic political dynamics starting with the imperial period has been filled with high level of political violence, devastating wars, low level of socio economic cohesion coupled with its semi-exceptionalism as to the detachment of its political dynamics with legacy of colonialism,

3.5. Historical Role of Ethiopia in the Horn of Africa Politics

After discussing about the critical political shifts in Ethiopia's political dynamics and regimes, this section delve in to addressing the role of Ethiopia in the Horn Politics though out such critical shifts. As highlighted above Ethiopia holds a special position in the Horn politics due to its unique history related with colonialism, geography, population and material capacity (Zahorik, 2017). As a result, in the Horn inter-state and intra-state political dynamics, Ethiopia has played a central role in various spectrums. Among the Horn of Africa countries, which have been long involved the rise and fall of states, exceptionally; Ethiopian state has maintained the longest duration of statehood (Woodward, 2002: 13). Moreover, in colonial time, Ethiopia was the one along with France, Italy, and Great Britain, participated in the demarcation of borders of the Horn countries though its level of influence was not on equal foot with the colonial powers.

The historical significance of Ethiopia in the Horn of Africa's modern state politics can be traced back to Ethiopia's victory on the Adwa on 1 March 1896. The Ethiopian army victory under emperor Menilik II rule against the colonialist Italian forces, forced colonial powers to be fragmented along the coasts of the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean contributing to the disintegration of the region and colonial demarcation of states following the coastal (Clapham, 2017:34). The victory of Adwa has ultimately been served as a point of benchmark for the state formation of some horn states and border demarcation between Ethiopia and the rest of Horn countries. Besides, in the pre-colonial era, Ethiopia's diplomatic victory to be first African independent state to join the League of Nations, and thereafter being a leading African voice in the United Nations, made Ethiopia to be dominant not only in the Horn of Africa, but also in Africa politics. Which made Ethiopia to be at the forefront of claiming to ex-colonial territories by Italy i.e. Eritrea and Somalia, after WWII's defeat justifying through the regional significance

for stability emphasizing on the right of sovereign states to territorial integrity. This claim of Ethiopia resulted the federation of Eritrea to Ethiopia under the imperial crown (Iyob, 1993:268). After the liberation of most of the Horn states, Ethiopia continued to serve as the symbol of African nationalism and independence, which was strengthened by its detrimental leadership in the organization of African union and strong diplomatic alliance with various super powers, which helped Ethiopia to remain the center of power in the Horn (Iyob, 1993:268). Such strong regional hegemonic power of Ethiopia is depicted by the total annexation of Eritrea to Ethiopia in 1962 when no other neighbouring countries oppose loudly the conduct. Iyob (1993) remarked that, Ethiopia's acquisition of federation and annexation of Eritrea marked its transition from a dominant power to a regional hegemon (Ibid:267). Iyob further dictates that,

The fact that it was able to make such a transformation without losing legitimacy as an ' anti-colonial' power was a testament to its international stature and increasing influence in the politics of the region. Iyob, 1993: 267.

The above reasons reveals the fact that, Ethiopia is the writer of the political ABC's of the horn, which forced the perception of some scholars to consider the shape of future developments on the Horn as dependent on how one defines Ethiopia (Harbeson, 1997:26). Therefore, the political history of the states of the Horn are deeply affected by bi-lateral relationships between Ethiopia and the remaining states and that are very heavily influenced by the internal social structures and political dynamics of Ethiopia and the other Horn states. as indicated above, the geographic location of Ethiopia, which put it at the heart of the region coupled with its outnumbered population, economy and military power, Ethiopia has served as a regional political hegemony for so long with a geographical as well as political domination, even though the level of influence varies though out multiple regimes in power (Clapham, 2017:179). However, every political shifts of Ethiopia determines the overall political landscape of the Horn and influence Ethiopia's role.

For instance, the 1974, most radical political revolution occurred in Ethiopia had exerted a profound consequence on the regional politics of the Horn. it highly determined the politics of Sudan, and Somalia. First, the event motivated Somalia to compete for being a regional power by diminishing the power of Ethiopia, and this prompted the government of the Somali Republic to launch invasion on Ethiopia in the Name of building the greater Somalia (Clapham, 2017:179). Clapham, (2017) analogize the Somalia invasion after the revolution with the fate of France and

Russian revolution, (Clapham, 2017:179).²¹ For Somalia's politics, Ethiopia's factors have been served, as an epicenter of influence and point of contention. In Somalia politics, it's aspiration of Greater Somalia and it's irredentist approach towards Ethiopia by exploiting the political transition of Ethiopia in post 1974 period, not only resulted a devastating loss in military confrontation but also the complete disintegration of the country and lead towards being a failed state. Thus, the domestic political transition of Ethiopia in 1974 and the subsequent move of Somalia became one of the major factor for the complete political failure occurred in Somalia (Yihun, 2023).

Second, for the largest neighbor of Ethiopia, i.e. Sudan, the event affected its domestic politics and bilateral relation with Egypt. Even prior to 1974, As Yehun (2016), provides, for long, bilateral relations between Ethiopia and Sudan always have characterized on mutual suspicion and readiness to discredit and utilize each other's weakness (Yihun, 2016:67). The principal factors that entangled the tight relation between Ethiopia and Sudan are, the issue of mistrust arising from Sudan's inclination towards Egypt and Arab/Islamic camp, the issue of insurgencies, the non-demarcated boundary factor and the number of each other's refugee (Ibid). The Sudanese politician has repetitively resorted to raise the cards of Ethiopia for their own consolidation of power domestically. However, the raising of this card depends on the situation of Ethiopian domestic politics. Since Sudan's independence in 1956, Ethiopian-Sudan relationship principally characterized by subsequent tensions and suspicion among themselves which has been exerted in various ways. High level of animosity has been witnessed in the past sixty years between these two states (Ibid:68). After independence, Ethiopian governments have suspiciously been following the attachment of Sudanese politicians with Egypt in Sudan's political sphere considered as serious treat for Ethiopia's existence and security, so that to counterbalance the Egypt dominance in Sudan politics, Ethiopia has tried to line with political factions that wants to establish closer cooperation with Ethiopia, (Ibid). accordingly, the fall of global order coupled with extensive proxies that destabilized the Horn result the fall of Derg regime that continues to impact the Horn in advance. However, it's essential to note that, even Though it's detrimental political hegemony in the continent declined after the downfall of Emperor Haile Selassie, the victory of Ethiopia over Somalia, allowed to reclaim the political

²¹ states that, attach was the similar to the post-revolutionary attacks on France after 1789 and Russia after 1917 revolution.

hegemony in the Horn with comparatively greater military power coupled with USSR 's strong support. Besides to that, in the political dynamics of Ethiopia's role in the Horn, the year 1991 was a critical historical point of reference, writers such as Clapham, (2017), call the year as "a year zero in the Horn". According to Clapham;

By 1991, the patterns of state formation established by empire and revolution in Ethiopia, and by the post-colonial transition in the peripheral territories of the Horn, had comprehensively failed. In January 1991 in Somalia, and just four months later in Ethiopia, the established and extremely authoritarian regimes in what were then the two principal states of the Horn were not merely overthrown, but destroyed by armed insurgencies. Clapham, (2017):61

First, the downfall of the Derg regime in Ethiopia in 1991, affected the liberation struggle in the Sothern frontier of Sudan. This regime change happened in Ethiopia, forced the significant retreat of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), as well as the sending of hundreds of thousands of southern Sudanese from camps in western Ethiopia back into Sudan (Woodward, 2002:58). Next to that, the military victory of insurgent movement tasked with establishing some new kind of political order, in four current Horn states. In Eritrea, 1991 marked the declaration of sovereign state, new political force in the Horn politics, for Ethiopia, the year resulted the end of authoritarian regime, and the land locked ness of Ethiopia as result of Eritrean succession. For Somalia, 1991 became a year of territorial disintegration when Somaliland rejected any continued association with the Mogadishu and starting acting as a de facto state. Thereby, for Somaliland, the year officially heralded its de facto independent existence. So that, 1991 was a critical year for Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia and Somaliland political evolution (Ibid: 62), however, such critical shifts predominantly shaped by Ethiopian factors and associated with Ethiopia's role in the region.

After 1991, and more specifically after the end of Ethio- Eritrean war, Ethiopia continued to be projected as regional power in international forums and committed to peacekeeping operations. However, some scholars such as, Le Gouriellec (2018), contends that, Ethiopia's regional hegemony in the horn have been an imperfect hegemon where its international legitimacy is not universally recognized in the region (Le Gouriellec 2018:1075). Despite such argument, Ethiopia along other African states engages itself under the African Union mission AMISOM in the peace building operations in Somalia aiming to push the al-Shabaab from the southern Somali region, (Rudincová, 2016:221). However, After 2018, However, Dizolele, Singo, & Wondimu (2025), dictates that;-

Political, security, and diplomatic developments in the Ethiopia have dented Ethiopia's regional role and diverted attention and resources to internal security challenges, with internal conflicts weakening Ethiopia's peacekeeping reputation. Declining relations with Kenya and Sudan, as well as a security partnership with Eritrea, resulted in Ethiopia abdicating its regional role and influence. Dizolele, Singo, & Wondimu, 2025:7

Consequently the above analysis shows that, Ethiopia is as an elephant in the room with regard to the Horn politics with a role ranging from demarcating the boundaries of the other states, even if, it was in lessor capacity, to determining critical political junctures. The above analysis shows the pattern of both positive and negative influence in the region. affirming the argument of deep entanglement and significant impact of Ethiopia in the Horn.

Chapter Four

Ethiopia's Domestic Political Dynamics on Horn: Change and Continuity

4.1. Introduction²²

To unfold the nexus between Ethiopia and Horn of Africa politics, this chapter incorporates neo-classical realism theoretical framework coupled with some constructivist views. Neoclassical realism provides a foundation to analyze on how and when Ethiopia's domestic political dynamics, such as (in) security, determine/affects the political and security reality of Horn of Africa. Constructivism helps to discuss how ideological orientation of Ethiopia determines its regional character and influence. However, as indicated in the chapter two, understanding how and when domestic politics affect a country's external relations and regional communicability, requires emphasizing first, on pattern of interaction within domestic political players. Accordingly, this chapter stress on the basic analysis regarding the pattern of interaction of domestic players. Besides, this chapter incorporates the theory of hegemonic stability, as outlined in the chapter two, as framework that argues the importance of single leader in international/regional politics to avert unnecessary competition with undesirable outcome for each states. Accordingly, this chapter make regional level analysis of the theory of hegemonic stability in light of Ethiopia's domestic variables.

As detailed in theoretical framework for neoclassical realist the role of a state in international system is derived first by its place in regional system specifically related with its relative material power and other factors such as geo-politics, demography, geography, population and economy (Rose, 1998). Hence, the neoclassical realism approach describes how internal political dynamics of Ethiopia to seldom, remain bounded within its national territory rather transcends to the region.²³ However, the Horn political pattern highly shows how radical

²² *NB: it is important to note that; the term security and insecurity, as recurrently stated throughout this chapter, are conceptualized within the framework of relative security and insecurity not in absolute term.*

²³ SCH-5;Personal Interview, April 30, 2025

realism best explain the political reality. Tronvoll (2009) accepting the inevitability of the hybrid between neoclassical and radical realism, asserts that studying Ethiopia's and Horn politics *Ethiopia inevitably and regrettably leads to the study of conflict* (insecurity), and this assertion to some extent validates by this chapter. Besides, this chapter identifies a continuity in post 2018 era arguing that Ethiopia's domestic insecurity is still continues to be a primary factor for regional insecurity.

As realists assertion, that indicated in the chapter two, the idea of power politics is the central thesis for the Horn of Africa interstate relations which is highly depend on self-interested, aimed at preparing for war and calculating the relative balances of power. as provided in the previous chapter, interstate relations in the Horn of Africa has often been characterized by a tendency of defying international rules of guiding interstate relation such as a principle of non-interference and respect the sovereignty of others; which are integral part of international law.²⁴ Therefore, in the Horn politics pervasive utilization of the proxies and other indirect involvements are prevalent; that has facilitated the development of regional system exhibiting recurrent defying of international norms with quick spillover effect of internal problems.²⁵ This aligns with radical realist's argument mentioned in the theoretical foundation section about the lack of morality in international politics, and claiming that all means even if moral or immoral are justified to achieve certain political end.

On other hand, aligning with structural imbalance argument, as stated in chapter two, among the patterns of interaction within domestic political players, such as, government in power, militaries, political parties, civilians and opposition movements, unclear the preferences and strategies of Ethiopia's domestic political actors. Resulting frequent change in amity and enmity of others, not only affect the domestic politics of Ethiopia but also the regional political landscape²⁶. Consequently, Taking in to account the above theoretical frameworks in light of domestic realities of Ethiopia, The below analysis shows how all of the devastating interstate wars in the Horn of Africa, in one way or another linked to Ethiopian domestic politics dynamics manifested by insecurity.²⁷ In addition, the proliferation of proxy wars also in various way

²⁴ SCH-4; Personal Interview April 11, 2025

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

entangled with Ethiopia's domestic affairs. Basing on the above foundational conception, this chapter investigates the dynamics and implication as follows.

4.2. Ethiopia's Relative Instability and Horn Politics

This section employs neoclassical and radical realism approach to explain Ethiopia's insecurity to the Horn and Horn states to Ethiopia's insecurity, respectively, and the implication of these bidirectional relation on Horn politics. As indicted in the theoretical section of chapter two, this study argues that, neoclassical realism explain how Ethiopia's domestic insecurity become communicable to the region and radical realism shows how Ethiopia's insecurity reveal the opportunist nature of the Horn politics. As a result, this section shows the alignment of Ethiopia's instability with neoclassical realist lens regarding how domestic political dynamics drive external behavior of Ethiopia and communicability of its problem (Lobell, Ripsman & Taliaferro; 2009). Accordingly, this section argues that Ethiopia's domestic political insecurity is an intervening variable having a significant capacity to shape the Horn politics.

As discussed in theoretical framework section about neoclassical realism, the relative material capacity of states determine the level of communicability of its internal problems. Given the large size, geography, population, economy, military of Ethiopia, its political fragility has had profound potential to be communicable and lead to fuel regional insecurity (Gebreluel, 2023:1140). Because for neoclassical realism, a countries international/regional role significantly, depends on power capacity of a state (Rose, 1998) however, the unit level variables of a country with relative material capacity has implication to determine regional/international issues. In this respect, this study argues that Ethiopia have had a better relative material and political capacity in the Horn, and it's domestic fragility has a capacity to determine and increase regional fragility. Besides, as stated in the chapter three, Ethiopia has been playing a detrimental role in the Horn Affairs in which the political realities of Horn; are deeply affected by bi-lateral relationships between Ethiopia and the remaining states as well as what's happening in Ethiopia domestic politics. As provided in the previous chapter, Clapham (2017) provides Ethiopia as a regional political hegemony with geographical as well as political domination, with distinct variation depending on regimes in power. The central theme of this study agrees with neoclassical realism assertion connected with Ethiopia's better relative material capacity and arguing that the decline of its material capacity because of domestic fragility puts the Horn

politics in a more fragile position. However, prior to examining broader implications, it is essential to describe critical political variables that determines the insecurity of Ethiopia. Scholars identifies four imperative variables of determining the level of insecurity and weakness of Ethiopia. These are; the level of socio-political cohesion, legitimacy of the state, high level of political violence and the lack of strong Institutions.²⁸ These factors serve as critical point of analysis to understand the nexus of Ethiopia's domestic instability, as stated by neoclassical realism, towards the regional politics and security dilemma.

The level of socio-political cohesion depends on whether the Ethiopian state is cohesive or not; based on two important questions; i.e. one, is the Ethiopian state uncontested? Second, do Ethiopians from Moyale to Mekele perceive being an Ethiopian equally? These critical junctures determine whether this variable could lead to insecurity and state weakness.²⁹ Therefore, since 1960's, one of the central mission of Ethiopian politics has been creating Ethiopian that everyone under its territory claims as mine. Yet, this remains unresolved to this day, and lies at the root of Ethiopian security weakness. Even though, Ethiopia differs with some weak states that witness total absent of socio-political cohesion, Ethiopia continues to suffer from low level of socio-political cohesion.³⁰ The second crucial variable is legitimacy; it revolves around the concept of to what extent is the Ethiopian state legitimate? In other word, how Ethiopian perceive the Ethiopian state as truly their own. This is critical determinant of Ethiopian security. For instance during the 1974 revolution, the rallying center of revolt was, describing the state as a feudal state, after the revolution numerous secessionist movement arose who questioned the legitimacy of the Ethiopian state and the regime. Consequently, Ethiopian has been facing recurring legitimacy crises.³¹

The above two variables has caused a very devastating security concern for Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa. Motivated mainly by the these factors, since 1961 Ethiopia has faced more than twenty-armed insurgency movements with backing of neighbouring states (Ethiopian

²⁸ SCH-1; Personal Interview, March 4, 2025

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

Journal of Strategic and International Affairs, 2024:64).³² The prevalence of such insurgency movements in Ethiopia is a manifestation of the existence of high level of political violence, i.e. the third variable.³³ The variable of political violence raise the question of how do Ethiopians resolve our differences, how do we compete for power, how do we capture power, how do we redistribute political resources; are essential factors to be considered.³⁴ Yet, all of this has been mostly answered by one thing, i.e. armed devastating violence.³⁵ Thereby, the Ethiopia political culture is characterized by high level of recurrent political violence with far reaching impact on the domestic and regional security. Since, 1961, after, the start of armed struggle by Eritrean Liberation Front, the recurrent and quick resolution to military confrontation has become the trend of confronting political differences and realities of Ethiopia. So that, the existence of continued high level of political violence owns the lion share for Ethiopian insecurity and weakness.³⁶ In this regard, the politics of national liberation act as the major security treat of Ethiopian state targeting the ideational, territorial and fundamental elements of the state (Tariku, 2024:250). The politics of national liberation not only pose a threat on the ruling regime of the country, but also to the very existence of the state itself (Ibid). These has also coupled with lack of proper institutional strength. The above factors, in one way or another, affirms chapters two assertion regarding the communicability of structural imbalance that provides the greater the imbalance generated by domestic events, the greater the probability those events will affect foreign relations. Moreover, preceding analysis shows how the Ethiopia domestic insecurity- resulting from high level of political violence, state and government legitimacy and low level of socio-political cohesion- externalize in to regional crisis. This analysis validates the neo-classical

³² Some of the insurgency movements occurred in Ethiopia are, Eritrean Liberation Front, Eritrean People's Liberation Front, Tigray People's Liberation Front, Oromo Liberation Front, Western Somali Liberation Front, Gambella Liberation Front, Gambella People's Liberation Movement, Benishangul People's Liberation Movement, Oganden National Liberation Front, Islamic Front for the Liberation of Oromia, Oromo and Abo Liberation Front, Issa and Gurgura Liberation Front, Ethiopian People Patriotic Front, Gambella People Liberation Front, Kemant Fighters, Oromo Liberation Front- Shenie, The Gumuz People Democratic Movement (Ethiopian Journal of Strategic and International Affairs, 2024:64 - 66). The ongoing Amhara Fano insurgency is also one of the insurgency movements occurred in Ethiopia. All of these insurgency movements targets either the state or the regime in power, using armed conflicts.

³³ SCH-1; Personal Interview, March 4, 2025

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

realism assumption about the communicability of domestic pressure and the significance of the theory in bridging both domestic and regional politics.

Ethiopia's security, from the view of Horn to Ethiopia, must be seen in terms of vulnerabilities and threats depending on the level of structural imbalance existed domestically, allying with the radical realism approach, as outlined in the chapter two of this thesis.³⁷ Because of high level of political immorality existed among Horn states, the impact of Ethiopian insecurity has been considered as an incident in which, adjacent states have been eager to exploit the internal weaknesses and insecurity.³⁸ As a status quo state plus the prevalence of opportunistic regional politics, Ethiopia's internal weakness inversely emboldens its neighbors to assert their unresolved grievances against Ethiopia. For instance, when the Derg regime came to power and domestic political violence escalated, Ethiopia became a target of military attack. In addition prior to Ethiopia - Eritrea war EPRDF demobilize DERG military and only sustained 6000 military personnel (Tariku, 2024:253). This created a conducive environment for Eritrea to attack Ethiopia when the later was in the process to establishing a national military force from the scratch.³⁹ Moreover, As the Tigray War escalated, Eritrea, a long-standing adversary, as inadvertently empowered, while Somalia and Sudan exploited Ethiopia's vulnerabilities.⁴⁰

Therefore, the above dynamic reveals the proliferation of anarchic regional politics coupled with opportunistic state behaviors best explains the Horn to Ethiopia's fragility. Hence, when more domestically fragile Ethiopia becomes, the more exposed itself regionally as a target of attack and the bordering states, bring numerous claims with a potential of resorting to devastating conflict between Ethiopia and contiguous states in terms of direct interstate military confrontation and tense proxy wars.⁴¹ Following pure radical realism approach to Ethiopia's fragility, the two devastating wars happened in the horn of africa, i.e. Ethiopia – Somalia and Ethiopia – Eritrea, occurred when the domestic political and military insecurity of Ethiopia attains its highest level, and both of the wars were, initiated by these two countries.⁴² The same pattern of exploiting Ethiopia's insecurity persists into the contemporary period reflecting how

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ SCH-2; Personal Interview, March 26, 2025.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ SCH-2; Personal Interview, March 26, 2025.

⁴² Ibid.

Ethiopia's domestic problems are exploited by other states having a destabilizing effect on the region. Therefore, from Horn to Ethiopia's insecurity perspective, the data's shows how the pattern of radical realism best contend the dynamics and regional implications.

As stated above, the Ethiopian political insecurity does not directly attack the bordering states, but rather it creates a conducive environment for others to launch an attack on Ethiopia, this in effect exacerbate the insecurity of the region. Affirming the classical realist, Machiavelli quote stating, in politics we must act as if *'all men are wicked and that they will always give vent to the malignity that is in their minds when opportunity offers (Burchill, 2013).*⁴³ Exactly, aligning with Machiavelli's approach, Ethiopia's fragility serve as opportunity to ignite malignity of others. The Horn politics towards Ethiopia can be best expressed by the classical realist approach of waiting for opportunity to exploit once weakness. According to the informant from Addis Ababa University, Institute of Peace and Security Studies, there is reverse relationship between deteriorating domestic political reality and military and diplomatic unconditional approach of Ethiopia in the region.⁴⁴ However, externalization of domestic problems are prevalent in Ethiopia's domestic politics. Such kind of externalization of domestic problems has persisted in Ethiopian politics to this day.

Thereby, aligning with radical realists assertion, Ethiopian political problem attracts/serve as conducive environment for rivalry neighbouring states to raise their claim against Ethiopia. As indicated above, both Eritrea and Somalia conflict were driven from Ethiopia's domestic instability. Similar pattern continues after 2018's political transition, Sudan start to claim the Al-fashiga's land before the new transition attains a year in power.⁴⁵ Besides, the Eritrea's military encroachment in to the disputing territory is also another incident. These actions occurred while Ethiopia is struggling with internal political crisis reflecting the combination of neoclassical realism and radical realism approach as to the bidirectional nexus and the eagerness of some neighbors to exploit the domestic political dynamics of Ethiopia with a potential to destabilize the region.⁴⁶

⁴³ SCH-2; Personal Interview, March 26, 2025.

⁴⁴ SCH-1; Personal Interview, March 4, 2025

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Anonymous Key Informant II, Senior Researcher at F.D.R.E. Policy Studies Institute, Personal Interview, April, 2025

However, from Ethiopia does fragility to Horn perspective, the neoclassical assertion regarding the relative material capacity of states and its capacity in determining the level of communicability of its internal problems elucidates the nexus. Considering the geography, population, economy, military and political significance of Ethiopia in the Horn, its political fragility has had profound potential to be communicable and lead to fuel regional insecurity with high regional security implication over the horn of Africa states. When political instability occurs, boarder surveillance capacity would diminish significantly, Consequently, this enables unauthorized activity along the boarders undermining the legitimacy of the government resulting continued reliance on coercive instruments perpetuate the cyclical pattern of insecurity.⁴⁷ Most often, when Ethiopian center – periphery relations deteriorates, other countries, would start to back rebellious around the boarder, this ultimately affect not only the relation between armed groups and government but also the bilateral relation between Ethiopia and the supporting state with endangering the security of the region. Besides, as neoclassical realist perception towards leaders, Ethiopia’s domestic dynamics at least, has a capacity to determine what kind of leader come to power and his/her attitude towards Ethiopia’s interest in the Horn. As neoclassical realists’ perception, the leader’s attitude can be taken as a unit level variable in international relations and unit level analysis of Ethiopia’s leader’s attitude on the national interest of Ethiopia in the Horn of Africa has been largely shaped the Horn politics.

As indicated above, most of the neighbouring states of Ethiopia have self-interest over Ethiopia that waits a moment of internal insecurity of Ethiopia, as radical realists argued. For instance, the issue of Sudan’s – Ethiopia contested territory is raised when Sudan become certain that Ethiopia domestic security is deteriorating.⁴⁸ When Ethiopia was in heavy military confrontation with Somalia, the Sudan politician reinvigorated the card of al-Fashaga and went to extent of prohibiting Ethiopian flight in its air space. Furthermore, blaming Ethiopia as a black colonizer, it had brought the issues of the Eritrea liberation fighter in their own internal politics while openly proclaiming support to the secessionist struggle, (Holmquist & Rock, 2023:5). During this period, its internal politics was open to Eritrean rebels and some of the rebel leaders granted a position of privilege among the highest forces of the Sudanese government and allowed to made public demonstrations in the presence of higher Sudanese officials (Holmquist

⁴⁷ SCH-5; Personal Interview, April 30, 2025

⁴⁸ SCH-1; Personal Interview, March 4, 2025

& Rock, 2023:5). In addition forwarding claims, in times of Ethiopia's insecurity, Sudan has tried to establish a close tie with Egypt (Holmquist & Rock, 2023:5). Sudan's desire to strengthen its tie with Egypt ignites the security dilemma between these two big states of the Horn, i.e. Ethiopia and Sudan, mainly expressed in extensive use of proxies to weaken each other. At this time the relationship between Sudan and Egypt reached to its peak with various spectrums.

Similarly, when Ethiopia engaged in deadliest war in Tigray in 2022, Sudanese army decided to utilize this excellent opportunity to its own self-interest. Thus, they army occupy the area, forced Ethiopian farmers out of al-Fashaga, the government of Sudan, tried to utilize this occupation as a mechanism of internal power consolidation of the then ongoing political transition, (Holmquist & Rock, 2023:5). These reveals not only the existence of rivalry and deep mistrust between Ethiopia and Sudan, but also, its proneness to exploit the internal instability of Ethiopia to its own internal political end. As per informant from Institute of Foreign Affairs, Sudan's occupation of al-Fashaga used as externalization tool for the domestic political crisis, however exacerbates enmity between two countries⁴⁹ Consequently, when Ethiopia seems insecure because of its domestic political dynamics; the perception of countries in the region towards Ethiopia will change significantly. Such perception motivates other state to bring various claims further even to the extent of commencing mobilization for conflict.⁵⁰ However, Ethiopia's uses the claim of others as a counter strategy in both, direct military confrontation and proxy wars, destabilizing and igniting security dilemma of the region.⁵¹

Mohammed (2024), argues that the political insecurity of Ethiopia has been transforming the country from a stabilizing force that strive to keep a peace and security of the region into a potential destabilizing actor, that impose a treat to the security of region (Mohammed, 2024:1). In addition, this insecurity has created power vacuum in the Horn of Africa, leading the other states to compete for regional hegemony.⁵² This would create competition and tension among themselves endangering the security of the region, which contributes towards a far volatility, and

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Anonymous Key Informant I, Senior Researcher at F.DR.E. Policy Studies Institute, Personal Interview, March 25, 2025

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² SCH-3; Personal Interview, April, 2025

unpredictability of the regional security. Therefore, this study argues that Ethiopia's insecurity has a capacity to impose direct insecurity implications for the Horn of Africa with the capacity of exacerbating the already existed security dilemma of the region. Besides, it opens a gate for external actors to regain a control over a power balance of the region, because of its ability of creating security management vacuum in the region with wide implication (Mohammed, 2024:11 & Gebreluel, 2023:1140).

Assessing when Ethiopia's instability affect the Horn politics, requires to text the variables based on structural imbalance approach discussed in chapter two of this study. Because, Imbalanced domestic political dynamics make unclear the preferences and strategies of domestic political actors and the greater the structural domestic imbalance, the greater the probability those events will affect foreign relations. Aligning with this foundational understanding as outlined in chapter two, data's collected for this thesis reveals that the *period around Ethiopia's political transition* is highly related to Ethiopia's instability and proliferation of exploitation by countries with a capacity of disturbing all regional politics and security.⁵³ Yihun (2023) argues that, instability and political translation have been entangled together throughout Ethiopia modern political history; he states that it has been consistently observed that political transitional periods are susceptible to insecurity and challenges with regional implication (Yihun, 2023:45). During such periods, internal political violence escalates, coupled with strong external pressures (Ibid). For instance, Yihun noted that, following the Second Italian Invasion and the return of the emperor to Ethiopia, the early years, were considered as a period of political transition in which the imperial government was striving to assert control/power on the country. At this moment, Britain sought to exert administrative control over Ethiopia under the guise of trusteeship, exploiting the political instability and questions of legitimacy of the imperial government, (Ibid). This was not the first time in which Britain as the then administrative neighbor of Ethiopia assert to exploit the political insecurity of Ethiopia. At the early 20th c of Ethiopia, after the death of Emperor Minilik II, British along with France and Italia aspired and agreed to separate Ethiopia to themselves in three factions. Similarly, the internal political instability that happened after the 1974 revolution revealed how the neighbouring states of Ethiopia cooperate to exert influence over Ethiopia through various means. For instance, in the aftermath of the 1974 Ethiopian

⁵³ SCH-5;Personal Interview, April 30, 2025

Revolution and the following political violence, as stated above, the moment was utilized by Somalia and Sudan to exert their claim against Ethiopia through military means. A heavy causality was occurred due to Somalia's calculation of employing Ethiopia's insecurity to its own mean that led Somalia's invasion of Ethiopia during the Ogaden War from 1977–1978 (Ibid). Sudan also tried to militarily ascertain its border claim against Ethiopia during that transitional period (Ibid). Apart from directly confronting the regime in power, after the Derg's transition, countries such Egypt and Saudi Arabia, had engaged in threatening the states unity and sovereignty by utilizing Ethiopian insecurity through directing/supporting insurgency movements that have both regime change and total secessionist aspiration. Hence, the period of political transitions are highly susceptible to internal political crisis with a capacity to invite other countries and ultimately engager the security of the Horn. Consequently, the harmonization of the theoretical framework discussed in the chapter two of this study, mainly, neoclassical realism and radical realism, with the domestic political dynamics of Ethiopia reveals the centrality of Ethiopia's insecurity in the Horn of African politics.

In addition, the Ethiopian instability erodes its capacity to anchor regional diplomacy and balance the bilateral and multilateral relations among horn states. Which exacerbates the anarchies nature of regional politics. Ethiopia's domestic stability contributes positively to the bilateral/multilateral relations, by engaging in leading a mediation and other activities to enhance their bilateral/multilateral relations.⁵⁴ However, Ethiopia's internal insecurity undermines its regional diplomacy role, which creates power vacuum and interstate tension. Data's shows that in time of instability, Ethiopia becomes less active in the region to perform its mediation and other means of enhancing the countries relation.⁵⁵ Currently to fill this void, Kenya is trying to engage proactively in the region. Even if there is no empirical evidence that shows a direct confrontation/cooperation among the horn states because of Ethiopian domestic situations, but as a lead state, it has a profound impact on their relations.⁵⁶

In nutshell, the Ethiopian instability affect the Horn politics in two ways. First, it drives the regional politics towards more instability and more proxies due to the pattern of fragility

⁵⁴ SCH-3; Personal Interview, April, 2025

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ SCH-2; Personal Interview, March 26, 2025.

exploitative regional politics.⁵⁷ Second, this instability affects how Ethiopia acts in the region. Especially when there is no willingness to address that instability through a political mechanism, Ethiopia always be suspicious of the other countries involve in the internal affairs. This makes Ethiopia to export insecurity to the regime and that is going to be a protection mechanism in most of the cases.⁵⁸ Therefore, other than for those who recognized as neutral, Ethiopia also exports instability with the effect of destabilizing the region.⁵⁹ Thereby, the role Ethiopia plays in the region differs in time of internal instability, particularly when there are actors that try exploit instability and such pattern of exploiting and counter defense exacerbate regional security predicaments.⁶⁰ Due to relatively high defensive capacity of Ethiopia compared to other neighbouring countries, thereby when external forces claim something against Ethiopia, it might uses such claims as opportunity as a countering defense to exert power over others. Moreover, if because of Ethiopia's high level of political violence and the nature of Horn politics causes collapse of the state, Ethiopia would go down with the region.⁶¹ This would result not insecurity of the Horn of Africa but its impact could stretch to the continental level as well.⁶²

Consequently, this sub section affirms the neo-classical realism assertion regarding communicability of domestic political pressures to regional/international politics. Accordingly, when Ethiopia's insecurity exacerbates, the occurrence of either interstate or heavily tense proxy war in the region is very likely, shifting Ethiopia from regional stabilizer to regional destabilizer. This perfectly aligns with neoclassical realist arguments regarding how domestic leaders assess possible international/regional threats and identify possible counter strategy and internal factors ultimately drive external behavior of state (Lobell, Ripsman & Taliaferro; 2009). However, as neoclassical realists argue, the response of Ethiopia's government for any external vulnerability determines by the level of political violence that are crucial on implementing a strategy of interprets international threats and opportunities (Ibid). Hence, the impact of Ethiopia's insecurity in the Horn can be characterized within the framework of neoclassical and radical realism in which from the Horn to Ethiopia's perspective, radical realism describes best the

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

existed eagerness of others to exploit its fragility. However, from Ethiopia to the Horn perspective, a neoclassical realists assertion about communicability of the domestic pressure suits the real nexus between the two. Consequently, the harmonization of the theoretical framework discussed in the chapter two of this study, mainly, neoclassical realism and radical realism, with the domestic political dynamics of Ethiopia reveals the centrality of Ethiopia's insecurity in the Horn of African politics.

4.3. Ethiopia's Relative Stability and Horn Politics

This section integrate the theoretical framework of neoclassical realism and theory of hegemonic stability, as a foundation to analyses the implications of Ethiopia's domestic political stability in the Horn. As indicated in the chapter two, the theory of hegemonic stability states that to protect the international system from failure, the presence of single strong and dominant actor is essential because the existence of single actor has a capacity to leading to collective desirable outcome. (Snidal, 1985). The existence of hegemonic stability, as outlined in chapter two, the existence of single leader avert unnecessary competition that has undesirable outcome for each states. Moreover, as neoclassical realism indicates, the domestic unit level variables of a country with a better material capacity has a higher communicability pattern towards international sphere. These two theoretical frameworks reveals the nexus between Ethiopia's domestic stability and Horn politics.

Ethiopia is a status quo state in the horn in terms of economy, population, geography, resource and power; therefore, maintaining its national security has positive implication for the region's security.⁶³ Based on neoclassical assertion of state material capacity, Ethiopia's strength because of domestic stability, positively contributes to Horn political stability. Moreover, affirming theory of hegemonic stability assertion, as a status quo state, Ethiopia has been serving as the police of the region when domestically stable, Ethiopia function as stabilizing force that will influence positively on the overall security and politics of the states in the region.⁶⁴

First, as theory of hegemonic stability argues, when Ethiopia domestic political dynamics is at relative stability, most of the neighbouring countries refrain from advancing their claim

⁶³ SCH-1; Personal Interview, March 4, 2025

⁶⁴ Ibid.

against Ethiopia, rather they adopt to follow a relative submissive approach towards its leadership influence.⁶⁵ For instance, at the early years of Derg regime, when there was military confrontation with Somalia and the ongoing internal political violence in the country, Sudan's claim against Ethiopia had attained its peak and increased their active support for the secessionist movements, such as Eritrean Liberation Front and Eritrean People Liberation Front, publicly (Yihun, 2016:79). Even In 1977 the Sudan prohibit any Ethiopian registered flights to the air spaces of its country, engaged in persuading the two rebel groups in Eritrea into creating a united front, and went to extend of calling for the transfer of the OAU headquarters from Ethiopia (Ibid:78). Furthermore, Sudan had repetitively declined/tried to cripple the mediation effort led by OAU with Ethiopia. However, surprisingly, after Derg's military success against Somalia and relative consolidation of power in Ethiopia, reversely, Sudan turned to be the one that initiated a peace talks after January 1980 (Ibid: 81). Yihun (2016) states that; Ethiopia's military victory over successfully defending Somalia's aggression, a relative military power development of the regime coupled with relative improvement of repressive capacity forced Sudan to rethink to initiate the peace deal with Ethiopia, led by OAU that was rejected by itself just two years back (Ibid). This reveals when Ethiopia's political dynamics turn to relative stability, the Sudan's stance towards Ethiopia and the need for exploiting their cause against Ethiopia diminishes and more importantly starts to balance its relation with Ethiopia and Egypt. For instance, as stated above, after Derg's military success against Somalia and relative consolidation of power in Ethiopia, Sudan was the one who initiated a peace talks with Ethiopia (Yihun, 2016:81). Sudan's political shift was reached to the extent of inviting the Ethiopian government to participate in the third National Congress of the Sudan Socialist Union Party (SSUP) conference in Khartoum that was held from January 25 to 30, 1980 (Ibid). The short-lived relative stability of Ethiopia after 1978 made Sudan to fear its support to EPLF would led Ethiopia to in stabilize Sudan through helping in South Sudan insurgency movements, (Ibid). Moreover, at the relatively stable eras of EPRDF's region, years after Ethiopian millennium and inauguration of the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), Sudan projected a positive attitude towards the dam and tried heavily to balance its relation between Ethiopia and Sudan in taking part in the 2015's declaration of principle on GERD, (Holmquist & Rock, 2023:6). However, it's imperative to underscore that; Sudan's stance towards Ethiopia is influenced by both its internal fragility and Ethiopian

⁶⁵ SCH-2; Personal Interview, March 26, 2025.

fragility.⁶⁶ This is depicted how they being influenced by Egypt regarding their position about Nile. When both Sudan and Ethiopia is at relative stability, it accepts the fact that GERD is going to be much more beneficial to them as it is to Ethiopia, so the position they take is going to align with that when they are stable. When Ethiopia and their domestic politics are in a position of being a fragile, it becomes Egypt that influence Sudan's approach.

The above illustration shows that how internal stability of Ethiopia leads to single and strong actor in Horn politics avoiding unnecessary competition among other states having a peace dividend value to individual states aligning with theory of hegemonic stability. Affirming neoclassical realists perception, Ethiopia's domestic stability increase its capacity to lead and discipline the region while affirming the theory of hegemonic stability in which if Ethiopia becomes a single actor of the region, individual states will benefit from the Horn politics.

On the same note, Ethiopian domestic stability heavily determines the level of Sudan and Ethiopia's engagement in proxies. Because, Ethiopian political dynamics and proxy war with Sudan, significantly contributed the birth Eritrea and South Sudan as independent states. Yihun (2013) states that the Ethiopia and Sudan conflictual relation ultimately led to the disintegration of the Ethiopia and Sudan leading to the emergence of the states of Eritrea (1991) and South Sudan (2011), (Yihun, 2013: 35 – 36). In the face of Sudan's continued assistance for the Eritrean insurgents, the two previous Ethiopian regimes engaged in actions they thought necessary to preserve Ethiopia's fundamental interests. Because of the two countries chronic internal strife and eventual partial fragmentation, Eritrea and South Sudan emerged as states (Ibid: 47).

Hence, for the two big states of the Horn, i.e. Sudan and Ethiopia, Ethiopia's domestic relative security positively affects in two ways. Firstly, it reduce the extent of Sudan's alignment with Egypt and position to stand against Ethiopia, secondly, it significantly diminishes how deeply Sudan engage in supporting Ethiopian insurgencies resulting the reduction of proxy wars among the two. This implication of Ethiopia's relative security works for every bordering states except Eritrea. because as stated above, attaining a relative stability makes the other states to show more submissive character towards Ethiopia, this in effect at least avoid the occurrence of

⁶⁶ SCH-4; Personal Interview April 11, 2025

interstate conflict/tension in which Ethiopia is part of.⁶⁷ Moreover, relative security reduce the engagement of other states in supporting Ethiopian insurgencies, as indicated in the Sudan's case⁶⁸

Besides, Ethiopia's stability plays instrumental role in promoting and protecting peace and security of this conflict-ridden region of Africa through actively engaging in counter-terrorism, negotiations, mediation, and peacekeeping missions in regional and sub-regional organizations (Mohammed, 2024:3-4). An informant from Policy Studies Institute affirms that, Ethiopia is surrounded by fragile states except Kenya, and its security has an impact on defending the regional security.⁶⁹ Thereby, internal political stability of Ethiopia sharply increase its engagement in counter terrorism, mediation and other peacekeeping efforts that will benefit the region holistically and enable Ethiopia to be a lead state.⁷⁰

. Consequently, in terms of securing the Horn politics relative security of Ethiopia has an ability to diminish the possibility of interstate wars and proxy engagement in the Horn. The data's reveals that the occurrence of interstate war in which Ethiopia is a party is inversely, related with domestic security. When domestic security goes up, the possibility of interstate military confrontation would go down and vice versa. The affirms how internal stability of Ethiopia leads to single and strong actor in Horn politics avoiding unnecessary competition among other states and its domestic stability leads Ethiopia to be a police of the region affirming the theory of hegemonic stability with benefit for each individual states.

Moreover, Ethiopia's relative security magnifies its regional aspiration. This aspiration of being a regional leader has both implication of peace and tension among the member states based on the response of other countries. Ethiopia uses two instrument to exert influence over others. 1. For those who accepted Ethiopian aspiration of being a lead state, Ethiopia projected some soft over them by providing scholarship and other means of exerting soft power 2. Towards those states who resist this aspiration, Ethiopia might use diplomatic/semi-military force against

⁶⁷ SCH-2; Personal Interview, March 26, 2025.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Anonymous Key Informant II, Senior Researcher at F.D.R.E. Policy Studies Institute, Personal Interview, April 17, 2025

⁷⁰ SCH-3; Personal Interview, April 4, 2025

them.⁷¹ The critical example is the extent of diplomatic force Ethiopia use against Eritrea to detach the country from diplomatic sphere in Africa as well as in the world.⁷²

As a result, when Ethiopia is more stable domestically, its aspiration to be regional peace keeper/leadership will flourish.⁷³ To understand this scenario, carefully examining the character of Ethiopia towards the region after the Ethiopian millennium is essential, according to the informant, this period was the time Ethiopia exhibited a relative domestic stability. In this time, there was both the aspiration and capacity of being a leader of the region.⁷⁴ Even if, Ethiopia's aspiration of being a regional leader does not absolutely fade away during instability, the capacity and the level of aspiration reach to its peak in time of relative stability.⁷⁵

In addition, Ethiopia's domestic stability contribute/determines the bilateral/multilateral relations among the horn states in mediation and other activities. This would in turn enhance their bilateral/multilateral relations.⁷⁶ Therefore, Ethiopia's stability benefits the Horn of Africa, significantly, spanning from being a mediator and leader to not being a source of instability to the region. As stated above, the prominent instances as peacekeeper, in Darfur, South Sudan, and Somalia, maintained security cooperation with Djibouti, and engaged closely with Sudan, all are related with relative domestic stability.⁷⁷

Consequently, when there is stability, since Ethiopia is a big state with a big population, it exports stability dividend to the region. Without considering the other factors, if it is rating the regimes, the tenure of EPRDF exhibited a relative stability with a different scenario.⁷⁸ The EPRDF government had a relative stability during that period; Ethiopia was respected and voicing the continental as well as regional concerns. Besides, after internal power consolidation by increasing repressive power of EPRDF coupled with some economic growth.⁷⁹ Regionally,

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ SCH-3; Personal Interview, April 4, 2025

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Anonymous Key Informant I, Senior Researcher at F.D.R.E. Policy Studies Institute, Personal Interview, March 25, 2025

⁷⁷ SCH-1; Personal Interview, March 4, 2025

⁷⁸ SCH-4; Personal Interview April 11, 2025

⁷⁹ SCH-5; Personal Interview, April 30, 2025

Ethiopia was considered to be an agenda setter, Both in AU & IGAD. Therefore, Ethiopian Stability has a peace dividend value for the region manifested in actively engaging in reinstating/assisting institution building, restoring stability and fighting terrorism coupled with a strong desire for cooperation.⁸⁰

However, the data's shows that the Eritrean pattern towards Ethiopian domestic politics is quite different with a distinct feature of affecting the Horn politics. In both security and insecurity Eritrea, though, the level varies, it has not offered a submissive approach towards Ethiopia. The Eritrea case to some extent aligns with constructivists approach making the contradiction with Ethiopia as a basic ideological orientation because as informant states, the Eritrea nationalism works in contradiction to Ethiopia.⁸¹ The domestic political commitment of Eritrea to use the Ethiopia political dynamics for its own need by either employing the insurgencies or engaging in direct military confrontation.⁸² The last three decades of Eritrean, independence shows the pattern that, When Ethiopia is at relative instability; Eritrea would not hesitate to launch direct military confrontation with Ethiopia, and when Ethiopia is under relative stability, Eritrea engages aggressively in supporting Ethiopian insurgency movements despite the ideological enmity of the insurgencies.⁸³ These patterns have continued by the Isayas's Government until the contemporary period. Thereby, exceptionally for Eritrea, Ethiopia's domestic politics determines only the kind of approach the Eritrean government employ against Ethiopia. Accordingly, the Ethiopian relative instability invites the Eritrea government to advocate its citizen's for military mobilization and confrontation. However, the Ethiopia domestic stability restrains the state only on extensively hosting and helping insurgencies that has both aspiration of dissolving the state of Ethiopia and revising the existing status quo, simultaneously.

Accordingly, this section, integrating the theoretical framework of neoclassical realism and theory of hegemonic stability, as a base to analyses the implications of Ethiopia's domestic political stability in the Horn shows that the internal stability of Ethiopia leads to single and strong actor in Horn politics with a capacity of avoiding unnecessary competition. Therefore, this

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ SCH-1; Personal Interview, March 4, 2025

⁸² Ibid

⁸³ Ibid.

will reduce the coming of undesired outcome from Horn politics to individual states aligning with theory of hegemonic stability. Besides, affirming neoclassical realist's perception, Ethiopia's domestic stability increase its capacity to lead and police the region while affirming the theory of hegemonic stability in which if Ethiopia becomes a single actor of the region, individual states will benefit from the Horn politics. As a result, the Data's reveals that Ethiopia's domestic stability has an ability to significantly, diminish a possibility of interstate wars and proxy engagement as well as support of each other's insurgency movements, in the Horn. The data's also reveals that the occurrence of interstate war in which Ethiopia is a party is inversely, related with domestic security. However, the finding regarding proxy and insurgency support works for all neighbouring states except Eritrea in which, Ethiopia's relative security doesn't have inverse relation with proxy wars and support of insurgency.

4.4. The Politics of Regional Leadership

Based on neoclassical realist approach of regional leadership regarding the effect of domestic political dynamics as essential variable to determine state capacity and ability to attain and sustain regional power (Lobell, Ripsman & Taliaferro; 2009). This section argues that Ethiopia's domestic political dynamics influences the aspiration and ability of it towards regional leadership. Furthermore, the paper aligning with hegemonic stability theory, argues that the existence of single, strong and dominant actor in the Horn politics is essential to get collective better outcome for all member states because the absence of Ethiopia from Horn leadership environment creates leadership vacuum and this vacuum will impose undesirable outcome for all of member states.

The modern history of Ethiopia dictates that, Ethiopia has been actively engaging in the regional and continental (Getachew & Ayeferam, 2024:7). For instance, the imperial government of Ethiopia managed to exert its influence in the continent and abled to forge Organization of African Union to establish in Addis Ababa. Moreover, the imperial government was known for its active participation in anti-colonial and apartheid struggles (Ibid). Though out Ethiopian modern history, Ethiopia has managed to seize the geopolitical landscape of Horn of Africa, thorough engaging in peacekeeping in Rwanda, Burundi, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, coupled with meditation and military aids (Ibid). As a result, Ethiopia became a country with the largest peacekeeping force in Africa.

Ethiopian regimes have been prioritizing state security concerns of maintaining internal peace and a balance of strength in the area, to ascertain its status as a status quo power in the Horn of Africa. The TPLF-led EPRDF government mostly adhered to this practice (Tadesse: 2015:333). However, the early years of EPRDF was dominated by the concept of good neighborliness over security, reducing and compromising Ethiopia's military capacity. This however resulted in a regional status quo vacuum, that exacerbated regional tensions and conflicts that directly threatening the nation (Ibid:334). Despite this, the EPRDF government recovered fast and shown Ethiopia's ability to take decisive action when its interests were challenged. As a result, Ethiopia resumed pursuing its objectives without waiting for clearance from big powers. The EPRDF-led government used military force and African security organizations coupled with diplomatic move to expand its regional influence beyond economic limitations (Ibid). Tadesse (2015) named the Ethiopia's shift occurred from 1996 – 2006 towards the region as a journey from non-interference to non-tolerance (Ibid:338). Consequently, Ethiopia has recognized as status quo, anchor, or contested hegemonic state of the Horn of Africa by scholar of the region. However, to maintain its sphere of influence in the region, Ethiopian domestic politics plays an integral part of the horn of Africa regional leadership making. An informant from Addis Ababa University, Institute of peace and security studies argues that,

Domestic stability is what matters a lot for Ethiopia; there is no question about it. When the domestic sphere is stable, Ethiopia uses this and emerges stronger. When Ethiopia is preoccupied with domestic issues, another country might come into the region and claim leadership. When Ethiopia is stable, it increasingly assumes a leadership role in the region.⁸⁴

For instance, when Ethiopia had a relative stability in domestic politics, the influence of Egypt in the Horn of Africa had faded away for two decades and Ethiopia has reclaimed the leadership of the region acting as status quo state. This effort has successfully prevent Egypt from gaining a foothold in Somalia, despite seventeen rounds of negotiations on the Somali issue, in which Egypt did not participate, and Ethiopia's intervention in 2006 to halt the rise of United Islamic Court.⁸⁵ As a result, during such stability era, Ethiopia became able to contain Egypt from exerting its ambitious interest towards the Horn.⁸⁶ This reveals the existence of causal

⁸⁴ SCH-1; Personal Interview, March 4, 2025

⁸⁵ SCH-1; Personal Interview, March 4, 2025

⁸⁶ SCH-5; Personal Interview, April 30, 2025

relationship between relative stability of domestic political matters and the level of influence exerted by Ethiopia in the region. Foreign policy and influence begins at home, so there is no doubt that if a country wants to have a regional leadership role and agenda setting capacity, it needs to have internal stability and capacity to properly manage, its home.⁸⁷

After instability since 2020, how countries are acting/ have been acting towards Ethiopia reveal the deeply intertwined nature of the two. However, an informant from Center for Dialogue, Research and Cooperation raise a very critical argument saying there is domestic stability, does not necessarily mean a country will attain regional leadership. There are many other variables for that. The very essential one is a country need a strategic/visionary leadership along with stability.⁸⁸ A country can be stable domestically, but that does not mean it going to have a regional leadership role. For instance, Kenya, there long standing relative stability have not automatically transformed it to regional leadership.⁸⁹

However, Ethiopia's political history shows that. It does not lack the aspiration but often, the capacity. For instance during the late EPRDF period, after consolidating power, its aspiration to be a leader state of the regime increased. Thereby, the nexus shows when the stability of Ethiopia increases; its regional aspiration will also increase.⁹⁰ The EPRDF aspiration was not domestic crisis diversion to regional aspiration rather; it is a result of its perception of power consolidation domestically.⁹¹ Therefore, the aspiration to become regional leader emanated from relative stability of domestic matters. During that period making the Foreign policy an extension of domestic policy was prevalent, for instance the concept of revolutionary democracy and Federalism, the government tried to export these domestic principles to regions such as Somalia and South Sudan.⁹² Therefore, such regionalization of domestic political ideologies towards the region occurred because of relative domestic power consolidation.

⁸⁷ SCH-4; Personal Interview April 11, 2025

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid

⁹⁰ SCH-2; Personal Interview, March 26, 2025.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

However, after 2018's transition, the instability coupled with the position of the government negatively affect the regional role of Ethiopia.⁹³ Ethiopia could not sustain the regional role it had had because of the instabilities, mismanagement of transition and other factors. Previously there were aspiration and tendency of acquiring regional role and exploiting regional institutions like IGAD and AU, to observe national interest. Nonetheless, Ethiopia's inability to maintain the position within IGAD and the new administration perception of IGAD drove to opt for the alliance between Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia, but the alliance was considers as alliance against something rather than for something by other states and TPLF.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, maintaining Ethiopia's role in the IGAD was the better option rather than establishing that tripartite agreement.⁹⁵ After the transition politics in the different form occurred, the mentioned tri-partite alliance/agreement between Ethiopia-Eritrea-Somalia has completely disrupted the IGAD role.⁹⁶ It was a treat to the regional mechanism/regional order specially the so called Gonder agreement.⁹⁷ Therefore, there was intentional shift from utilizing regional instruments like IGAD initially.

Due to the above factor and the political instability, that have prevailed in Ethiopia over the last couple of years, the leadership role of Ethiopia is facing numerous challenges arising from domestic concerns (Getachew & Ayeferam, 2024:9). Terribly the starting of the northern Ethiopia conflict in 2020, has diminished Ethiopia's leadership and dominant role as peace keeper of the region (Ibid: 9). The conflict effect is not limited to the deterioration of the Ethiopian capacity, but also damage the legitimacy of the government and it's established role in the region (Ibid). Consequently, the internal political insecurity and violence in Ethiopia, has transformed the country from a mediator state to subject of mediation/ from agenda setter to an

⁹³ SCH-4; Personal Interview April 11, 2025

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ On January 27, 2020, Eritrea's President Isaias Afwerki, Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, and Somalia's President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo had their third trilateral summit in Asmara, Eritrea, following the 2018 peace, Eritrea's Joint Plan of Action for 2020 aims to strengthen peace, stability, and security while also encouraging economic and social growth in the region proposing to establishing a new regional union in the Horn of Africa (HoA), known as the Horn of Africa Cooperation (HoAC), The HoAC proposal risks alienating regional partners and undermining security efforts of other institutions, like the IGAD, AU, and Eastern Africa Standby Force (Henneberg & Stapel:2020:339- 340)

agenda that made the country to retreat/lose its regional leadership role (Henneberg & Stapel, 2020: 8-9).

Due to the above factors, Kenya has utilized the decline of Ethiopia as an opportunity and start to accord the status of regional leader with a support of United States of America and European Union (Ibid:13). Getachew, & Ayeferam provides that, Kenya has secured a Non-North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) ally status for the first time to sub-Saharan country. This is a high social and military recognition attained to Kenya by the super powers. This would help Kenya to benefit from military, diplomatic and economic help coming from super power to solidify its leadership role in the region (Ibid). since recognition by the super powers was the significant factor that contributed Ethiopia to be designated as regional leader however, the contemporary domestic insecurity of Ethiopia pave away to Kenya to be designated as regional actor (Ibid). Therefore, the combination of Kenya's increasing influence and Ethiopia domestic insecurity coupled with a shift of EU and USA in supporting Kenya's role in Horn, has led Ethiopia to retreat from geopolitical sphere.⁹⁸

In addition, Ethiopia's political stability has a capacity to deter regional leadership struggle between other member states of the Horn.⁹⁹ There by, there is a direct correlate between political securities and leadership role of Ethiopia and vice versa.¹⁰⁰ Conversely, the more fragile Ethiopia goes the less active it become in the region.¹⁰¹ Therefore, when Ethiopia is becoming domestically weak, fragile, its regional role would diminish significantly.¹⁰² In other less fragile regions than Horn of Africa, as well, internal strength is essential to exert regional leadership.¹⁰³

The modus operandi of Ethiopia's governments reveals that when the repressive power of government coupled with some economic development increases, because of its demography, geography, population, economy, military, geo-political advantage, governments assert

⁹⁸ SCH-1; Personal Interview, & Anonymous Key Informant II, Personal Interview, March 4 & April 17, 2025, respectively

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ SCH-3; Personal Interview, April, 2025

¹⁰² Ibid

¹⁰³ SCH-4; Personal Interview April 11, 2025

leadership over a region at the desired scale.¹⁰⁴ Because as neoclassical realists contend, the state capacity to resource extraction, essential to regional leadership, is highly influenced by domestic affairs (Taliaferro, 2009). Therefore, without proper resource extraction, exerting leadership over other competing states are logically impossible. Consequently, in contemporary Horn of Africa, because of the existence of recurrent political violence in Ethiopia, Kenya's becomes regional mediator and de facto acting leader of region, displacing Ethiopia.¹⁰⁵ As a result, center for strategic and international studies, (2025)¹⁰⁶ Clearly states that,

On the soft-power frontier, Kenya has embraced neutrality and impartiality, which have earned it the credibility and legitimacy to intervene in nearly all countries in the region affected by conflict and violence. When this is combined with its long-standing political stability, Kenya has emerged as the "anchor state" of the region, the "regional stabilizer" or "regional leader" in peace and security in the Horn of Africa.

The article further dictates the era of a single state acting as a status quo state in the Horn of Africa is lapsed, However, Kenya's rule over the region is limited to its diplomatic good will not in its military dominance of the region.¹⁰⁷ So that, in terms of military, the decline of Ethiopia as regional power could lead the a region, that lacks both a strong regional organization and a de facto militarily strong status quo state, to chaos and external intervention. Likewise, informant from Institute of Foreign Affairs affirms that in the contemporary east Africa, the concept of one lead state has been changed, there is a tendency of having G-2/G-3 model is being accepted. Therefore, in the region not one country but two/three countries could have a lead role similar to EU's, in which two countries, i.e. France and Germany, have been serving as lead state.¹⁰⁸ This in effect impede the sole regional leadership aspiration of Ethiopia. Moreover, during the regime of Prosperity Party, Ethiopia is trying to be a revisionist state and has started to claims over others.¹⁰⁹ This has ignite the siege mentality of other states influencing the credibility of the country.

Therefore, this section affirms neoclassical realists' approach of regional leadership contending that domestic political dynamics are essential variable to determine state capacity and

¹⁰⁴ SCH-5; Personal Interview, April 30, 2025

¹⁰⁵ SCH-1; Personal Interview, March 4, 2025

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.csis.org/analysis/vying-regional-leadership-horn-africa> , accessed on April 5, 2025

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ SCH-2; Personal Interview, March 2025

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

ability to attain/sustain regional power. Further, this section uncovers how the state domestic capacity to resource extraction essential to regional leadership. Therefore, this section concludes that due to domestic political crisis, Ethiopia has been displaced from the previous status of being a leader/anchor of the Horn. In addition, such displacement brings the lack of single, strong and dominant actor in the Horn politics, creating unsuitable outcome for Horn politics. In the absence of Ethiopia from Horn leadership environment. The paper argues that the leadership vacuum has an ability to impose undesirable outcome for all of member states.

4.5. Ethiopia's Post 2018 Unrest: Regional Implication and Continuities

Based on the foundational analysis of the previous sections, this section discusses the basic implication of the political instability after 2018, mainly 2020. It argues that there is a continuity as to how and when of the nexus between Ethiopia domestic politics and the horn dynamics in the post 2018 era. The continuation validates the cotemporary significance of neoclassical realism, radical realism, and the theory of hegemony stability as discussed in chapter two and previous sub sections, to illustrate the implications of post 2018- political unrest.

The instability occurred in this period and the pattern of its impact and neighboring states eagerness to utilize the insecurity reveals the existence of continuity in the horn politics and Ethiopia's impact. As a result, in post 2018 as well, this section argues that the neo-classical realism contention regarding communicability of domestic political pressures to regional politics, continues to be validated coupled with the opportunistic nature of states as per radical realists. Besides, the political unrests occurred after the political transition has profoundly affected the Horn of Africa in various ways spanning from advancement of terrorist groups to destabilizing the region by creating a recurrent change in amity and enmity of the member states and ignition of new form of proxy war in which Ethiopia is part of it.

Shortly after the advent of the new leadership, In June 2018, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed lifted the state of emergency, and violence escalated in various parts of Ethiopia (Ibid). among the numerous violence's; the Sidama and Wolayita conflict, the Burayu's killing, the Jijiga's killing of Christians in June, Shashamene and eastern Hararghe unrest in August, the Gurage political unrest, the Benishangul-Gumuz region conflict in September and Moyale tension between

Oromo and Somali's in December; are the major one (Lyons, 2019:193). These here and there tensions have grown to militant armed conflicts, resulting the escalation of casualties in Ethiopia. However, to understand the political unrest happened after 2018, critically examining what happened is essential.¹¹⁰ Because the situation was quite different; before the party transformation in EPRDF, Ethiopia was even an anchor state that exports stability other than exporting instability to the region, besides Ethiopia went to leveraging multi-lateral institutions such as IGAD and African Union.¹¹¹

As indicated in above sub chapters, regardless of the regime in power, the Ethiopian insecurity means the insecurity of the Horn of Africa because it triggers the neighbouring states to bring their grievances against Ethiopia to regional politics and engage in supporting insurgencies for their own need. This trend of exploiting insecurity and political problems of Ethiopia has continued after 2018's political change in various ways. Principally, the Tigray War created a situation unprecedented in Ethiopian history, compelling actions that would otherwise have been unthinkable.¹¹² Accordingly, Initially when the conflict arise, because of heavy disarmament of the federal forces, the government relied on militias and special forces, but later deployed untrained federal police to combat.¹¹³ This led to the invitation/participation of Eritrea in the war. The regional implication is what Ethiopia is currently witnessing: a tangled reversal of roles that makes the internal became external, and the external became internal.¹¹⁴ Consequently, Eritrea has gained significant intelligence and military influence over Ethiopia's internal affairs, fueling an endless cycle of unresolved grievances and vendettas over participants of the conflict. Plaut (2023) expounded that, the Ethio - Eritrea re-rapprochement and the Tigray war allowed the Eritrean president Isaias Afewerki to gain remarkable influence in Ethiopian domestic politics and management of crisis (Plaut & Vaughan, 2023:271).

Moreover, Afriye, ayangbah, & effah (2023) argued that, Ethiopia's Tigray conflict has had significant impact on the overall East Africa's peace and security, particularly for Horn of Africa states. They affirmed that since Ethiopia has been considered as the most powerful state in

¹¹⁰ SCH-4; Personal Interview April 11, 2025

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² SCH-1; Personal Interview, March 4, 2025

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

the horn of Africa in terms of military and economy, any political insecurity in Ethiopia will impose dreading impact on the horn of Africa (Ibid). The level of intensity and causality occurred in Tigray's conflict, has exacerbated an already existed serious insecurities and humanitarian needs in the region, affected Sudan, Eritrea and Somalia, heavily, besides, the Tigray war made Ethiopia to become a source of insecurity for its neighbors (Ibid). More specifically, regarding security, the Tigray's conflict undermine AMISOM's achievements in Somalia because, according to the above writers, *Ethiopia redeployed some of its forces from Somalia to Tigray, and the military imprisoned roughly 200 ethnic-Tigrayan service members stationed in Somalia (Ibid)*. Thereby, its well-deserved reputation as a peacemaker and mediator of the region has affected by the Tigray's conflict that pushed Ethiopia to be perceived as destabilizing power in the region, (Ibid). Consequently, the political unrest and conflict in Tigray affected the region adversely causing large number of migration and increased tension in the Horn of Africa politics (Ibid). Apart from the Tigray's, conflict informant states that, the other conflicts lacks proper and direct regional implications. Stating that,

I do not consider Fano and Shene movements as regional security threats with direct implication over the Horn security. Politically, these issues can be resolved because they are highly localized. For instance, even if the OLA (Oromo Liberation Army) expands its activities, it cannot operate beyond Oromia, any engagement would involve neighbouring regions. Similarly, Fano's activities are confined to the Amhara region; if they spread, they would clash with other regions. Therefore, these groups will self-contain, eliminating the need for a government containment policy. The government's policy should instead focus on addressing grievances through dialogue. However, their regional implications are indirect rather than direct, as domestic political turmoil overshadows external impacts. Especially, Sudan's own crisis, for example, has prevented the Fano issue from spilling over into broader regional instability. In spite of that, however, if the Sudan's condition changed, these insurgency movements would escalate to the region and impact the overall political engagement of the region.

However, informants from institute of Foreign Affairs underscore that, all major armed conflicts in Ethiopia since 2018, including the Tigray war, Fano and OLA insurgencies and Oromo Somali boarder dispute, had regional implication.¹¹⁵ All of the insurgency movements have the capacity to be proxy and susceptible to external influence the possibility is open.¹¹⁶ Even Kimant Fighters confrontation with Amhara Regional state has a regional implication. Some Kimant fighters perceive Sudan as a far ally than Ethiopian authorities even if the territory that has occupied by Sudan's was primarily inhabited by kemant's. Thereby, not the other heavily armed conflicts,

¹¹⁵ SCH-2; Personal Interview, March 2025

¹¹⁶ SCH-4; Personal Interview April 11, 2025

even the Kimant Fighters case has regional connectivity in which the military apparatus and financial gains flow from neighbouring states.¹¹⁷ The Fano and OLA insurgency could have a regional implication with the involvement of Sudan and Eritrea but the magnitude of regional influence is not as equal as the Tigray's conflict.¹¹⁸ However, of the civil wars since 2018, the conflict with the TPLF (Tigray People's Liberation Front) remains the one that has had and continues to have the most profound regional implications, persisting to the contemporary period.¹¹⁹

Mohammed (2024) argued that, Since after the advent of Tigray conflict, Ethiopia's role in counter-terrorism initiatives have been reduced and this contributed to increased treats by Al-Shabaab and other terrorist organizations. So that domestic political unrest and interstate animosity between Ethiopia and neighbouring states have hindered efficient cooperation against al-Shabaab, this increased the level of danger imposed by Al-Shibab to the region (Mohammed, 2024:11). Furthermore, these conflicts resulted a millions refugees and internally displaced peoples with huge implication on horn countries, (Ibid). Consequently, due to the ongoing political violence in Ethiopia, the region has lost Ethiopia's stabilizing role. Even current security dilemmas in Sudan and re-advancement of Al-Shibab terrorist group in Somalia, would not be envisaged the way it is now, if Ethiopia was not entangled by domestic political insecurity.¹²⁰ Moreover, the ongoing diplomatic circling of Egypt was primarily a result of Ethiopia's domestic insecurity with a potential of multiple future proxy wars.¹²¹ Over the past years, even the Sudan's position has shifted and started to align closely with Egypt's position towards GERD.¹²² In 2021, Sudan's went to extent of threatening Ethiopia by agreeing to strengthen military cooperation with Egypt on GERD coupled with engaging in frequent joint military trainings.¹²³

¹¹⁷ SCH-2; Personal Interview, March 2025

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ SCH-5; Personal Interview, April 30, 2025

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

As stated above, Ethiopia's regional inactivity and preoccupation with domestic issues have allowed Sudanese to claim for the land and occupy it.¹²⁴ Such revival of claim over Ethiopia is a result of domestic insecurity implying that the Ethiopian domestic insecurity is a gateway for neighbouring states to bring their multiple claims against Ethiopia, which sometimes result initiation of heavy wars and counter defensive attack by Ethiopia, with the implication of endangering the overall security of the horn states. Surprisingly due to Ethiopia's domestic insecurity, for instance, Somalia, a fragile state for so long, has abled to mobilize diplomacy against Ethiopia, and tries openly to align with Egypt.¹²⁵

Consequently, this sub section affirms the neo-classical realism assertion and the continuity of regional implication of Ethiopia's domestic insecurity in post 2018's period. The pattern of insecurity after political transition has repeated itself with proliferation of proxy wars; destabilized bilateral relation with almost all traditional member of the Horn and raising of military tension with a potential to be converted to full-scale interstate confrontation. Therefore, the political unrest occurred since 2018 changes Ethiopia from stabilizing force to regional destabilizer aligning with neoclassical realist arguments regarding how domestic problems communicates to external world and leaders identification of regional threats and possible counter strategy and internal factors that impacts external behavior of state (Lobell, Ripsman & Taliaferro; 2009). Besides, the response towards the post 2018 unrest shows the continuity of radical realism on Horn politics however, the impact shows how the Horn states lack military leaders of the region with destabilizing effect on individual states of the Horn, affirming the importance of theory of hegemonic stability in Horn politics.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ SCH-1; Personal Interview, March 4, 2025

Chapter Five

Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1. Conclusion

In this thesis, the researchers try's to examining how and when Ethiopia's domestic political dynamics affects the Horn of Africa politics. The paper argues that neoclassical realism approach to international relations focusing on the interaction between international politics and domestic dynamics of states best explain the relationship between Ethiopia to Horn politics. The paper shows that Ethiopia's domestic political pressure arises out of insecurity that often follow transition and proliferation of insurgencies determines how Ethiopia's leaders assess regional threats and opportunities. Validating the neoclassical approach, this thesis reveals the communicable nature of Ethiopia's domestic problem with a capacity to engendering the regional politics. In addition to neoclassical realism, the study find the Horn to Ethiopia's domestic political insecurity to validate the radical realism assertion of immorality of politics and the opportunistic nature of international relations best explain the nexus.

The study identifies a widespread desire to exploit fragility among the member states that has been expressed in way of taking the advantage of other fragility and political unrest. The thesis reveals that Ethiopia's political insecurity has a quick potential to be communicable towards the region fueling regional insecurity. Ethiopia has been the principal victim of this trend of exploitation of instability. The paper shows that, the most devastating inter states wars occurred in the Horn of Africa, i.e. Ethiopia – Somalia and Ethiopia – Eritrea; were a result of Ethiopia's domestic political insecurity and the desire of both countries to exploit that insecurity to achieve their own claims against Ethiopia. Therefore, the study contends that such aspiration of utilizing domestic insecurity and Ethiopia's counter measure for such desire, ultimately, have put the already conflicting region in to worst security dilemma. Accordingly, the study argues that Ethiopia domestic insecurity is a decisive variable that determine significantly the occurrence of interstate conflict and proliferation of proxy wars in the Horn of Africa.

Furthermore, in this thesis, the theory of hegemonic stability has also been texted under Horn political context in light of Ethiopia's role. As result, the study argues that the absence of

leadership and the disposition of Ethiopia from regional leadership creates regional disorder negatively influencing all of the Horn states. Hence, the paper proposes for adopting theory of hegemonic stability for Horn politics to alleviate the degrading security reality of the region. In this thesis, the combination of neoclassical realism and theory of hegemonic stability theoretical framework applied to assess the implication of Ethiopia's relative domestic security for the Horn politics. This thesis reveals that Ethiopia's internal political stability has a peace-dividend value for the region. Increasing its participation in counterterrorism, mediation, and other peacekeeping operations that will benefit the region as a whole. Besides, this thesis identifies a direct nexus between Ethiopia's domestic political stability and submissive approach of other states towards Ethiopia and Ethiopia's regional role. Thereby, when the Ethiopia's domestic dynamics is inclined to stability, Ethiopia become active in reinstating/assisting institution building, restoring stability and fighting terrorism coupled with strong desire for cooperation. This has at least two implication for the Horn of Africa. First, it avoid the occurrence of interstate conflict in which Ethiopia is part of. Second, Since Ethiopian relative security reduce the engagement of other states in helping Ethiopian insurgencies except Eritrea, which in effect mitigate the number of proxy wars in the region. The Horn politics also, as provided by theory of hegemonic stability, will be advantageous from having a single strong regional leader with a peace dividend effect to individual states. Being on the vein of theory of hegemonic stability, this thesis finds that Ethiopia domestic dynamics has an ability to create and fill the vacuum of leadership in the Horn depending on the pattern of domestic security. the study reveals that Ethiopian political stability has a peace dividend value for the region. In addition, the study finds that, there is a reverse nexus between Egypt's influence in the Horn and Ethiopia's domestic stability.

Furthermore, this thesis finds continuation as to the regional implications of the post 2018 political unrest. The study argues that the neo-classical realism assertion continues to be validated and the dynamics impose severe regional implication in post 2018's period. The pattern of insecurity after political transition has repeated itself with proliferation of proxy wars; destabilized bilateral relation with almost all traditional member of the Horn and raising of military tension with a potential to be converted to full-scale interstate confrontation confirming with radical realist point of assertion. Especially, the Tigray conflict has had a huge impact on the overall peace and security of Horn of Africa. The paper demonstrates that, in terms of regional security the Tigray's conflict undermine AMISOM's achievements in Somalia due to

Ethiopia redeployment some of its forces from Somalia to Tigray's war coupled with the military imprisonment of ethnic-Tigrayan service members stationed in Somalia. Besides, the starting of the Tigray conflict creates leadership hole in Horn politics with undesirable outcome on regional politics. Moreover, the study finds that; domestic political unrest and interstate animosity between Ethiopia and neighbouring states occurred after 2018's have hindered efficient cooperation among the Horn states against al-Shabaab; consequently, resulting the advancement of the terrorist group endangering the security of the region.

Furthermore, the thesis identifies the concept G-2/G-3 form of regional leadership. model Therefore, currently, in the region not one but two or three countries might play a lead role in issue based leadership style. However, the paper argues that in the absence of proper military leader, such preposition could have undesirable outcome besides, in such divided region, having a single more powerful states to take the leadership role should be the priority of regional politics.

As a result, the thesis concludes that the impact of Ethiopia domestic politics validates the neoclassical realism assertion of intersection between both variables, i.e. domestic and regional politics. Accordingly, neoclassical realism approach to international relations focusing on the interaction between international politics and domestic dynamics of states best explain the impact of Ethiopia to Horn politics and radical realism express, the Horn to Ethiopia's instability nexus is characterized by exploiting instability. In addition, the theory of hegemonic stability express the impact of Ethiopia's stability to the Horn. As a result, Ethiopia's domestic politics has a both implication of exporting stability and instability based on the domestic political dynamics.

5.2. Interpreting the Findings

This research finding reveal that, from wider spectrum; the overall political dynamics of the Horn of Africa is heavily reliant on how the domestic politics of Ethiopia revolves. The desire to exploit the vulnerability of Ethiopia by neighbouring countries has significantly been endangering the region security, bilateral/multilateral relation, regional institutions. The finding of the study regarding the nexus between exporting stability and instability based on domestic political dynamics shows that Ethiopia's domestic relative security has a peace dividend value for the region, which has the capacity to force other states to follow a more submissive approach

towards Ethiopia. That enhance the role of Ethiopia as a police and leader of the region. Thereby, the finding affirms that, the Horn of Africa will be beneficial/profitable because of Ethiopia's stability. Therefore, the implication of Ethiopia's domestic politics is critical in numerous junctions for the region. Especially, the deteriorating of Ethiopia's domestic political stability creates a power vacuum in the Horn that invites heighten tension among near and distant neighbors to exert influence on the region. Besides, the above finding shows that; Ethiopia's domestic problem implication goes to the extent of allowing other middle power countries to compete and engage in proxy wars in the region. in addition, some distant neighbors; such as Egypt's desire to establish a solid sphere of influence various significantly following the Ethiopia's political security/insecurity dynamics.

Moreover, the finding regarding the decisiveness of Ethiopia domestic insecurity to determine the occurrence of interstate conflict and proliferation of proxy wars lighten some insight and add to the literature of regional security predicaments. This affirms that; studying the cause of interstate conflicts and proxy wars; should start from analyzing the pattern of Ethiopia's domestic political dynamics. Almost, most of the proxy wars and insurgency support in the region, in one way or another incorporates Ethiopia, either as a victim of support or supporter. Except for Eritrea, the pattern of proxy wars existed in the region, have been heavily determined by Ethiopia's domestic political dynamics. Because as stated above, Ethiopia's domestic security brings a more submissive approach of other states and such submissive character they depict, would not allow them to actively engage in proxy wars and insurgency support. This also reduces Ethiopia's engagement in counter insurgencies support; this diminishes the proliferation of insurgencies, counter insurgencies and regime against insurgency conflict.

Besides, the finding that shows the most devastating inter states wars occurred in the Horn of Africa, i.e. Ethiopia – Somalia and Ethiopia – Eritrea; were a result of Ethiopia's domestic political insecurity and the desire to exploit its insecurity; reveals that, the future inquiries to stop interstate wars should revolve around Ethiopia's domestic politics and the response of others. In addition, the finding regarding the intertwined nature between Ethiopia's domestic political stability and the level of influence shows to what extent Ethiopia's foreign policy makers towards Horn of Africa, should follow a neo classical realistic approach taking in to account the pattern of domestic politics. Because, even if Ethiopia has the aspiration of regional leadership,

what happens domestically determines a capacity of the country coupled with determining the level of acceptance other could offer to such leadership.

In the same vein, the finding regarding the regional implications of the post 2018 political unrest on political instability and on influence of Ethiopia in the region reveals that; the above findings on the nexus of Ethiopian and the Horn politics, has continued to validate itself. This unrest has both effect of deteriorating the regional security and igniting the engagement of proxies/insurgencies support effect in the region. Besides, it has significantly diminished the leadership capacity, acceptance, and ability of Ethiopia; creating a power vacuum and competition in the region. The revival of hegemonic stability, as outlined in chapter two, as the existence of single leader avert unnecessary competition that has undesirable outcome for each states is critical to be considered in the Horn politics.

5.2.1. Security

To understand the security of Horn of Africa, the findings of this study brings an insight as to the extent of capacity that Ethiopian domestic politics encompasses to determine overall regional security. Broadly speaking, it has two principal implication for the regional security. These are the capacity to export stability and the capacity to export instability. As provided above; Ethiopia's relative domestic security has a profound peace dividend value for the region. As a largest state in terms of number of variables coupled with the home of numerous clan and ethnic leaders of the Horn, its domestic stability of Ethiopia has a diminishing ability over inter-state, inter-ethnic and inter-clan tensions/conflicts. Therefore, analyzing the security of the Horn of Africa, in light of Ethiopia's domestic security variable provides a foundation understanding of the overall security predicament of the region. Besides, the rivalry and desire to exploit Ethiopia's insecurity by near neighbors has an implication of destabilizing their domestic political order coupled with endangering the regional security. Thereby, following the pattern of Ethiopia's domestic politics and the response of the near neighbors provides critical insight to predict and understand the regional security dynamics.

5.2.2. Leadership

Filling and creating the leadership vacuum of the Horn of Africa is heavily dependent on the domestic political dynamics of Ethiopia. So that, to understand who, to what extent and how regional leadership role should be managed; requires analyzing on how either the democratic or

the repressive capacity of Ethiopian government is varying domestically. If the government democratic or repressive capacity increases, the relative security would follow and this ultimately enhance the capacity of Ethiopia to assume the leadership role of the region. The current trend to follow European Union model of regional leadership is still devoid of having a pertinent military leader in the region. The coming of Kenya as regional leader and mediator still lacks a capacity to claim the military leadership. So that, the decline of Ethiopia's regional leadership due to its domestic political predicaments implies the lack of military leader of the region, which has an implication of, allowing the region to be a safe haven for insurgencies and terrorist groups coupled with inviting other interested groups to decide the fate of the Horn politics. Therefore, understanding the pattern of Ethiopia's domestic politics contributes to acquire a full picture of regions leadership and predict how the leadership mechanism of the region is going to be determined. This has, even, an implication over measuring the extent of distant neighbors influence; such as Egypt and Middle East middle powers; on the Horn's overall politics. Thus, the variable of Ethiopia's domestic security affects heavily how the regional leadership role determines.

5.2.3. Bilateral/Multilateral Relations

Apart from Ethiopia's domestic politics, the bilateral and multilateral relations between Horn of Africa states have been determined by numerous other factors, of course. However, the Ethiopian domestic political dynamics cannot be totally disregard in one way or another influencing their bilateral and multilateral relationship. The first impact derives from the existence of leadership vacuum. This power vacuum invites unnecessary competition among the other countries to exert regional influence, this in effect, heighten the bilateral and multilateral tension between these countries with the effect of endangering the regional security. However, if Ethiopia's government democratic or suppressive capacity expand, the other states often follow a kind of submissive approach towards, Ethiopia's leadership in the Horn; this protects them from engaging in competition of holding regional power. Therefore, from this spectrum, Ethiopia's attainment of leadership role, facilitates and positively contributes for bilateral and multilateral relationship of the Horn states. Moreover, as provided above, the intensity of domestic insecurity of Ethiopia, determines the way of other near neighbors react towards the instability. If exploiting the insecurity leading to inter-state conflict, as the literatures provide regarding Ethiopia – Eritrean War following a non-aligned approach would be very unrealistic. This forces

the non-conflicting states to choose a side of support or inclination. This would endanger the bilateral and multilateral relations with other countries that inclines towards other conflicting state. Therefore, to understand and analyses bilateral and multilateral relation of other states in the Horn, taking in to account the domestic politics of Ethiopia; and how the state are reacting towards it is crucial variable.

5.2.4. States Domestic Politics

In the Horn of Africa, in which states are interconnected in various ways, as a largest and the most diverse state, Ethiopia's domestic political pattern impose some implication on the other's domestic politics as well. Mainly, Sudan, Somalia and Eritrea's internal politics. As stated repeatedly; these three countries relation with Ethiopia is characterized by a recurrent animosity and short-lived cooperation. All of these states have multiple claims and desires against Ethiopia for so long. The pattern of Ethiopian politics determines when and how to pick the card against Ethiopia for their own internal political power consolidation and mobilization of military personnel's. The animosity and desire of exploiting Ethiopia's by their political elite serve as a method of consolidating their power internally. Therefore, it is essential to consider the pattern of Ethiopia's domestic politics in analyzing the politics of Ethiopia's neighbouring states.

5.3. Recommendations

In studying the Horn of Africa's politics, it is essential to bear in mind that there is no single actor and outcome. There are complexities in Ethiopia's political dynamics as well. The existence of International actor and other regional actor in the region reveals the complexity of the Horn of Africa issue. However, exclusively sticking on the implications of Ethiopia's domestic political dynamics on the region, this paper forward the following recommendations.

For Ethiopia

- ✓ The paper recommends Ethiopian policy makers to strictly abide by neoclassical realism approach of domestic political dynamics in designing Foreign Policy and follow Issue Based Diplomatic approach towards the Horn of Africa. Besides, taking in to account the radical realist nature of the Horn politics is essential in every formulation of policies and strategies as to the Horn politics.

- ✓ The paper recommends Ethiopian government to strive to expand either its democratic or repressive capacity in Ethiopia's domestic politics. The proliferation of numerous armed insurgencies are a result of lack of proper democratic aspiration and capacity of the state. Thereby, this study recommends that, in order to overshadow the recurrent occurrence of political violence by insurgencies groups, a real commitment to expend the political space is decisive.
- ✓ Such expansion of a democratic capacity of the Government will have a significant contribution in reducing the occurrence of political violence and legitimacy of armed insurgency movements. Such kinds of political commitment will be paramount to enhance relative political stability of Ethiopia having a peace-divided value for the Horn politics.
- ✓ The paper further recommends that Ethiopia should strive to build its capacity to take back its leadership role in the region by properly consolidating domestic power. This will contribute positively towards resolving regional security predicaments and mitigating the impact of bilateral tensions between other member states.

For Neighboring States and Horn of Africa

- ✓ The Horn of Africa can be more beneficial from Ethiopia's stability than Ethiopia's insecurity. Therefore, the Horn of Africa countries should strive to bring back Ethiopia's stability by refraining from exploiting the insecurity.
- ✓ The paper recommends that having a single and strong hegemonic country especially in terms of military is essential to advance regional cooperation.
- ✓ Accepting the status quo of Ethiopia in the region is detrimental to enhance the deteriorating security realities of the Horn.
- ✓ In order to sustain the peace and security of the Horn of Africa, the paper recommends, the neighbouring states to stop striving to exploit Ethiopia's insecurity. Because, the study reveals that; such attempts have had a very devastating back firing consequence on both; a country that initiate the exploitation and the region.
- ✓ The existing trend in Horn politics that is characterized by dominantly defying the international norms and laws; should be changed in way that aligns with the international law of respecting the territorial integrity and domestic politics of each other states.

- ✓ The states mutual independency should be transferred towards economic interdependence and following issue based diplomacy by reducing the temptation of each states to exploit the others instability. Thereby, formalized regional economic integration and interdependence between Ethiopia and other states will be a key to reduce the impact of Ethiopia's insecurity to the region.
- ✓ Following the example of India – China bilateral relations characterized by issue based diplomacy; should be implemented in the worst-case scenario rather than resorting to absolute enmity conception in every aspect.

Appendices

Appendices: I: Interview Guide

Semi-structured Interview Guiding Questions for Key Informants

Specialized on Ethiopian Domestic Politics and Horn of Africa

1. What are the implications of Ethiopian domestic political instability to Horn of Africa?
 - 1.1. When Ethiopia's domestic politics becomes instable, how has Ethiopia acted in the region?
2. What are the implications of Ethiopian domestic political stability for the Horn of Africa?
 - 2.1. When Ethiopia's domestic politics is stable, how has Ethiopia acted in the region?
3. How, when and to what extent Ethiopia's domestic political dynamics affect the region politics?
4. How do you explain the nexus between Ethiopian domestic political a dynamics and its impact on the leadership role/status quo of Ethiopia in the region?
5. How do you see the nexus between Ethiopian regional unconditional approach/ aggressiveness in terms of military/diplomacy and its domestic political dynamics?
6. What are the impacts of Ethiopian domestic politics on the internal politics of neighbouring states?
7. What are the regional implications of Ethiopian political unrests after 2018?

Appendices II: Lists of Key Informants

Interview 1: March 4, 2025 with Yonas Tariku (PhD), Addis Ababa University, Institute for Peace and Security Studies, **coded as SCH-1**

Interview 2: March 25, 2025 with anonymous Senior Researcher at F.D.R.E. Policy Studies Institute (coded as Anonymous Key Informant I),

Interview 3: March 26, 2025 with Gezachew Asrat (PhD); Director General and Senior Researcher of African affairs at F.D.R.E. Institute of Foreign Affairs, **coded as SCH-2**

Interview 4: April 4, 2025 with Abel Abate (PhD); associate fellow of African program, at CHATHAM HOUSE, **coded as SCH-3**

Interview 5: April 11, 2025 with Wegene Mengiste, Senior researcher at Center for Dialogue, Research and Cooperation, **coded as SCH-4**

Interview 6: April 17, 2025 with anonymous Senior Researcher at F.D.R.E. Policy Studies Institute, (coded as Anonymous Key Informant II)

Interview 7: April 30, 2025 with Tegbaru Yared, Researcher in the Horn of Africa Security and Analysis Programme; Institute for Security Studies (ISS), **coded as SCH-5**

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