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**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**

**COLLEGE OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES**

**CENTRE FOR REGIONAL AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STUDIES**

**THE IMPLICATIONS OF FRACTIOUS CENTRAL AND SUB-NATIONAL  
GOVERNMENTS' RELATIONS FOR ETHIOPIA'S DECENTRALIZED  
FEDERATION: THE CASE OF TIGRAY-FEDERAL FEUD**

**BROOK ABDU**

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

**November 2021**



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THE CASE OF TIGRAY-FEDERAL FEUD

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DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

November 2021

*“Be wary of paramilitaries... When the pro-leader paramilitary and the official police and military intermingle, the end has come.”*

- Timothy Snyder

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### **DECLARATION**

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work, and all sources of materials used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged. I further confirm that the thesis has not been submitted either in part or in full in any other university.

Brook Abdu Mohammed

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Table of Contents

Acknowledgement .....	I
Table of Contents .....	II
List of Figures .....	IV
Maps.....	IV
List of Tables .....	IV
<i>Accronyms</i> .....	V
<i>Abstract</i> .....	VI
Chapter One: Introduction .....	1
1. General Introduction.....	1
1.1. Background of the Study.....	1
1.2. Statement of the Problem.....	4
1.3. Objectives of the Study .....	7
1.3.1. General Objective .....	7
1.3.2. Specific Objectives .....	7
1.4. Research Questions .....	7
1.5. Scope of the Study.....	8
1.6. Significance of the study .....	8
1.7. Limitations of the study.....	9
1.8. Organization of the paper.....	9
Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature.....	11
2.1. Conceptual Clarification and Operational Definitions.....	11
2.1.1. The Concepts of Decentralization and Federalism .....	11
2.2. Decentralization and federalism in Ethiopia: Empirical Review .....	28
2.2.1. Legal frameworks for decentralization in Ethiopia .....	30
2.3. Region-Center relations.....	30
2.3.1 State-Party Relations .....	31
2.3.2. State Capture.....	32

2.3.3. Elite Capture .....	34
2.4. Federalism: origins and definitions .....	37
2.5. Intergovernmental Relations .....	40
Conceptual Framework .....	44
Chapter Three: Research Method .....	45
3.1. Description of Research Area .....	45
3.2. Research Approach and Design .....	46
3.2.1. Research Design.....	47
3.2.2. Sources of Data and data gathering tools.....	47
3.2.3. Sample selection procedure and techniques .....	48
3.2.4. Methods of data analysis.....	49
3.3. Ethical considerations .....	50
Chapter Four: Results and Discussion .....	51
4.1. Introduction .....	51
4.2. The Genesis of the Tigray-Federal feud.....	51
4.2.1. Merger of the EPRDF and Emergence of the Prosperity Party .....	51
4.2.2. Power struggle and the general elections.....	56
4.2.3. Mishandling of the Reform: The Eritrea Peace Deal Factor.....	60
4.2.4. TPLF's Resentment .....	62
4.3. Examining center-region relations .....	64
4.4. Effects of the feud on the state-party relations in Ethiopia.....	73
4.5. Implications to vertical IGR and future scenarios.....	79
4.5.1. Implications.....	79
4.5.2. Future Scenarios.....	82
Chapter Five: Conclusion and Policy Implications .....	85
5.1. Conclusion.....	85
5.2. Policy Implications.....	89
References.....	i

Additional Materials used .....	xiii
Annexes.....	a
List of Interviewees .....	a
Interview questions .....	b

### **List of Figures**

Figure 1 Understanding decentralization as a process of empowerment	19
Figure 2 Ethiopian Governance Structure	29
Figure 3 The institutional structure of Kebele	29
Figure 4 Dimensions of Corruption	34
Figure 5 Framework of decentralized federal system and state-party, center-region relations.	44

### **Maps**

Map 1: The Map of Ethiopia and Tigray Regional State.....	45
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### **List of Tables**

Table 1: Features of Local Governance Systems.....	15
Table 2: Forms of decentralization .....	17
Table 3: Composition of Interviewees .....	49
Table 4 Possible scenarios for Ethiopia’s decentralized federal system.....	82

### *Accronyms*

ADP- The Amhara Democratic Party

ANDM- The Amhara National Democratic Movement

BGPDP – The Benshangul Gumuz Peoples’ Democratic Party

CCI – The Council of Constitutional Interpretation

EPRDF- The Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Democratic Front

ESPDP – The Ethiopian Somali People’s Democratic Party

GERD- The Grand Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam

GPDM – The Gambella Peoples’ Democratic Movement

HoF- House of the Federation

HPR – House of Peoples’ Representatives

IGR- Intergovernmental Relations

NEBE – The National Election Board of Ethiopia

ODP- The Oromo Democratic Party

OPDO- The Oromo People’s Democratic Organization

PMO – The Office of the Prime Minister

SEPDM- The Southern Ethiopian Peoples’ Democratic Movement

SNNPR- Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Region

TPLF – The Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front

## **Abstract**

*One of the major political developments the country witnessed since the reform government of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed took power was different parties governing at the center and regional level. Since disagreeing with the merger of the EPRDF and the formation of the Prosperity Party, the TPLF was minimized from central power and went on administering Tigray region; losing its dominance in the country's central politics. This happened for the first time since the formation of the federation as a result of the constitution enacted in 1995. This trend in the federation resulted in a feud between the state of Tigray and the federal government to later get intensified by different factors such as the postponement of the sixth general elections, the conduct of a regional election in Tigray, as well as the formation of the Boundaries and Identities Commission and Reconciliation Commission at the federal level. This research found out that the root causes of the feud between the two sides were the disagreements in the manner the EPRDF was merged and the Prosperity Party emerged, the power struggle and the sixth general elections, the mishandling of the national reform agenda mainly manifested in the lack of institutionalization of the Eritrean peace deal as well as the resentment from the TPLF side because of blames for all faults during the EPRDF era and mishaps afterwards during the reform period. This feud is destined to affect the center and region relations in the federation as well as lead to a reexamination of the party-state relations in the country. The departure in the narrative of the reform government to move away from the TPLF era marriage of state and party affairs, the promises to deliver this are expected to be acted up on. But this remains pretty much the same and would likely continue to be the same given the results of the sixth general elections. On the other hand, the administration's commitments to bring about real federalism shifting from the legacy of centralized system through party discipline, the center-region relations in the federation are expected to be rules based and balanced fitting the constitutional stipulation. However, the strong military buildup in the regions as well as the tendency of centralization by the federal government could affect the realization of this aspiration. The study concluded that, the feud with the TPLF will have an impact on the two factors and the remaining sub-national entities could take lessons to challenge the federal government which in some instances threaten the national unity and fate of the federation itself.*

*Key words: Decentralization, Federalism, IGR, Party-State Relations*

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **1. General Introduction**

This section of the thesis introduces the general framework for the study and present theoretical and empirical underpinnings for the problem. In so doing, it will have the background of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, research objectives, scope of the study, limitations of the study, and significance of the study.

#### **1.1. Background of the Study**

Because of the increasing and highly heterogeneous demands from citizens of their governments, centralized governments face unprecedented challenges at this time (Saito, 2011). Hence, pushed by the belief that it would bring increased efficiency to the economy as a result of the proximity of local administrations to the people, countries started to adopt decentralization by devolving more power to the lower levels of the administration. But, even within a decentralized system, there is no uniformity because of variations in “forms, scopes, and issues associated with decentralization.”

Although the concepts of decentralization and federalism are not the same (Mulugeta, 2012), the two are used interchangeably and federal governments are considered already decentralized (Saito, 2011). But “decentralization has often been regarded almost as a ‘panacea’ – a policy that is indisputably and normatively justified, even if nobody has officially proclaimed decentralization as such.”

In the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a wave of decentralization reached the developing world – in some countries by design and in some by default (Steiner, 2005). This decentralization was pushed to the developing world as a result of the IMF Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) (Nickson, 2011). SAP gave central attention to the local level of administration and it demanded the empowerment of the local administration through SAP Credit (The World Bank, 2002).

Ethiopia’s decentralization followed the removal of the Derg regime in 1991 and the subsequent Transitional Government Charter and the 1995 constitution. The constitution which introduced a

federal arrangement in the country by forming nine regional states along ethnonational lines subsequently devolved power to the lower echelons of the government in two phases (Tegegne, Clacey, & Godden, 2011; Yilmaz & Venugopal, 2008).

The federal system in Ethiopia adopted an ethnic-based decentralization with ethnic groups having the constitutional rights of self-determination that extends to cessation (Ayele, 2014). However, this has been a subject of contention because it has elevated ethnicity to the primary identity for political mobilization. In this regard, it is said to have ignored other elements like provincialism as important elements of political mobilization which could have helped in organizing regional states that are dominated by single ethnic groups (Yonatan, 2017). This institutionalized ethnicity as well as ethnic mobilization of politics have resulted in contestations (between ethnic federalists and Ethiopianists) in the country and presented daunting challenges to the peace and security of the nation (Semir Yusuf, 2020; Yonas Adaye Adeto, 2019). Although the adoption of this form of federalism was feared to be disintegrating the nation, it lived through ethnically charged conflicts without disintegration. But this resulted in a strong and dominant-party system (Aalen, 2002).

Sometimes this system of small circle elite political and economic dominance is termed as “vanguard” in a sense that it is “a system combining the expansive economic logic of capitalist markets with the centralizing political logic of a dominant party steeped in the Leninist tradition of vanguard thinking” (Weis, 2015).

The system that the EPRDF put in place is now nonexistent and the previous comrades in a single-party system are contending for influence in the political system- especially in power relations between the federal and the regional governments.

The feud between the Federal Government and the Tigrayan Regional Government as well as the ruling parties at the Center and the Region has introduced a new political dynamism in the Ethiopian decentralized federalism (International Crisis Group, 2020). This is a new trend for the Ethiopian federal system mainly characterized by a dominant party system that also influences the exercise of devolved power at the lower echelons of the administration (Yilmaz & Venugopal, 2008).

Following a decision made in November 2019 to merge the four-party coalition of the Ethiopian Peoples' Democratic Front (EPRDF) into one, the national Prosperity Party (PP) was officially formed with a new ideological orientation and structural arrangement (Tokuori, 2019). The party propagates that, with the thinking and approach of the EPRDF, the economic achievements of the past could not be maintained as well as the wrongs could not be corrected. Hence, the PP states that the political identity followed by the EPRDF has lost its feasibility. It then promises to bring about centrist political practice in the country by deviating from past extremism (Prosperity Party, 2019). But, the ruling party in the Tigray region declined the merger and started leading the Tigray region with decreasing roles at the federal government as well as roughening relations with the center.

This incident created a new trend in the country's exercise of federal decentralization which was mainly dominated by the TPLF and the EPRDF resulting in the difficulty of separating the party structure and the state in the past (Veen, 2016). On the other hand, this centralized party system led by the principle of democratic centralism (EPRDF, 2006) allowed the party to have control over the sub-national entities of the federation through the EPRDF-allied parties (Lee, 2015). Through this, the dominant party system under the EPRDF defined how the center and the regions interact.

But with the separation of the dominant TPLF from the centrally controlled party system, causing separate regional and central party systems, has evidently changed this situation. Furthermore, this separation has created a feud between the two entities that accuse each other of disrespecting the rule of the land, including the constitution. This contestation between the two levels of the federation has led to a military confrontation between the regional government in Tigray and the Federal Government (Abiy Ahmed, 2020).

The purpose of the thesis is, therefore to assess what the implications of these unaccustomed fractious relations between the two entities would mean to the Ethiopian decentralized federation that ran for decades smoothly, nonetheless. Hence, the state party relations, the center-region relations as well as the spillover effects of this incident are entertained in the study.

In a departure from the previous practice of centralized control over regional states that have constitutionally guaranteed decentralized power, the current trend at the center and region would present a new approach in the practice of power at the regional as well as central levels taking note of the pronouncements from the administration.

Hence, this research assesses what the implications of the dismantling of a centrally controlled one-party structure would present to the Ethiopian decentralization, what this lack of one of the defining features of the Ethiopian decentralization would mean to the state-party relations in the country, what the same would mean to the center-region relations as well as what possible new forms of practicing decentralization would emerge out of this new trend.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

There is accumulated literature in the field of Ethiopia's decentralized federation that found out that the country had a highly decentralized system of government until subsequent administrations of Emperor Menelik II and Emperor Haile Selassie I accrued power to the center. This centralization continued until the EPRDF took power in 1991 (Ayele, 2014). The current decentralized federal Ethiopia came as a result of the 1995 constitution that formed nine regional states and two city administrations with separate and concurrent powers with the central government (FDRE, 1995; Zemelak & Yonatan, 2012). This decentralization in Ethiopia also required the formation of necessary institutional arrangements viz. executive, legislative and judiciary bodies (Lee, 2015). With this institutional arrangement and formation, the Ethiopian federation was run more or less smoothly without much dissent from any member of the federation. This was mainly as a result of the centralized party system commanded under the principle of democratic centralism (EPRDF, 2006) through an unofficial network of patronage (Chanie, 2007).

Hence, although there were various legal frameworks for the functioning of decentralized federalism in Ethiopia in regards to party -state and center-region relationships, the party system and its practice of democratic centralism played a constitutional role in the Ethiopian federal arrangement (Berihun Adugna Gebeye, 2020). Hence, "[EPRDF's] leading ideology or

revolutionary democracy and the party practice of democratic centralism has played the real constitutional function in practice.”

But the three years’ popular protests leading to 2018 in the country, first started as a result of the 2014 Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan, started to show cracks within the Front as well as the state and the regional government (Biruk Terrefe, 2020; Jawar Mohammed, 2020). The then Oromo Peoples’ Democratic Organization (OPDO), one of the member parties of the EPRDF, immediately announced that the masterplan would not be implemented. This was the first sign of internal division within the EPRDF. Following subsequent events, the member parties of the EPRDF started changing their names and some like the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM) hinted that they are speculating on shifting from the Revolutionary Democracy ideology of the Front (Abraham Adamu, 2018). Then the OPDO and ANDM announced changing their names to ODP and ADP respectively (Reporter (Brook Abdu), 2018).

Based on the final decision by the Front at the 11<sup>th</sup> Convention held in June 2018 (EPRDF, 2018), the EPRDF is forged into a single national party with the name the Prosperity Party (PP). This creation of the PP resulted in the departure of the dominant member of the EPRDF, the Tigrayan Peoples’ Liberation Front (TPLF) with an administrative regional state under its leadership. This separation introduced a regional state that is led by a different party than the federal government. From the outset, the PP and the TPLF as well as the regional government in Tigray and the federal government in Addis Ababa were at odds (Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front (TPLF), 2019). This separation led to a level of disrespect to laws and decisions made by one another as manifested by the TPLF’s disregard of laws made by the Federal Government and declaration that the “group” at the center lacks legitimacy to lead the country after October 5, 2020 (Elsabet Kassa (Tigray TV ), 2020). According to Article 58 (2) of the constitution, after elections every five year, a new government should be formed on “Monday of the final week of the Ethiopian month of Meskerem” (September).

Now, the EPRDF has demised and its central role in the federation, as well as decisions making process, is overtaken by PP at the sub-national levels. In addition to this, with the incumbency of different ruling parties at one regional state and the federal level, there is a question of what the future holds for the center-region relations in the decentralized federation of Ethiopia as

Negussie (2016) wondered. On the other hand, it was difficult to draw a clear line between the party and the state during the EPRDF era (Lee, 2015). With the dismantling of the EPRDF as UK Home Office called it (2020), there is a vacuum in the state-party relations and sometimes, the party itself had to discuss this issue in detail by criticizing public officials for their decreased roles in recruiting members and playing roles in the party (Amhara Branch Prosperity Party, 2012). This also shows that there is change in the nature of state-party relations since the end of the EPRDF and the beginning of the PP.

These questions will also be seen in tandem with what precedent the relationship between the TPLF and the PP, thereof Tigray region and the federal government, would set to the rest of the members of the federation. In this research, efforts will be made to find out answers to the above questions as well as draw possible scenarios for what would be perceived form of decentralization the country would exercise given the above circumstances.

Previous studies regarding decentralization and federalism in Ethiopia found out that the EPRDF era party-state relations have blurred lines and party relations often overshadow that of governments both at the local and national levels. And, because of the hierarchical relationships between the local and central governments within the party, the leaders at the center or higher level of regional administrations use the lower levels of administrations as a means of control at the local administrative units. (Vaughan & Tronvoll, 2003; Zemelak Ayele, 2011). On the other hand, although the constitutional rights of regional administrations give them a wider space to find local solutions to their problems, the influence of party discipline did not allow for variations (Zimmermann-Steinhart & Yeshtila Bekele, 2012).

These studies on the Ethiopian decentralization and federalism, party-state relations as well as center-local relations are conducted while the dominant one-party system was in place (Hailemariam Desalegn, 2020). There has not been a research conducted on what would be the impact of a defiant regional state to the federation. This research also differs in the sense that it is going to look into a new trend in the Ethiopian decentralized federation where the country experienced a regional government administered by a different political party that is defying the central government's decisions and a unified one party that promised to avoid the previous practices of democratic decentralization. Moreover, the study looks into the impacts of regional

forces to such relations. Hence, the previous conditions for the practice of decentralization and federalism in Ethiopia have been disrupted so that opening a new chapter in the system.

### **1.3. Objectives of the Study**

#### **1.3.1. General Objective**

The overall objective of this thesis is to assess the implications of the fractious federal-Tigray relations to the Ethiopian decentralization that more or less smoothly ran for about three decades.

#### **1.3.2. Specific Objectives**

The specific objectives of this research are:

- i. To delve into the causes of the feud between Tigray and federal governments' feud.
- ii. To find out how the Federal-Tigray feud would redefine the center-region relations in the Ethiopian decentralization.
- iii. To assess if the dispute between the two levels of government and parties would affect the state-party relations in the country.
- iv. To pinpoint what precedents this fractious relationship would set to the remaining members of the federation as well as how it would affect their future relations with the center.

### **1.4. Research Questions**

Based on the above-stated problem, this research will try to answer the following questions:

- i. How did the feud between the federal and Tigray governments evolve?

- ii. What would the Federal-Tigray feud implicate to the center-region relations in the Ethiopian decentralization?
- iii. What implications would the dispute between the two levels of government and parties has to the state-party relations in the country?
- iv. What precedent could this fractious relationship set to the remaining members of the federation and how could this change their relations?

### **1.5. Scope of the Study**

This research is concerned about how the feud between the TPLF and the PP would mean to the decentralized federal system in the country which previously is known for dominance by a single party structure with a democratic centralism principle. Hence, it will only look into what the feud and the events that unfolded would mean to the federal-state relations as well as party-state relations since 2018 until the war between the federal government and the TPLF/Tigray region broke out in November 2020.

Therefore, it won't involve itself in the study of the military preparations the two made and the factor-by-factor analysis of the feud. It will also not dwell on security analysis of the feud/conflict between the two.

### **1.6. Significance of the study**

This study will fill the gap both in the academic and practical fields of decentralized federalism in Ethiopia. By putting empirical and theoretical perspectives of the field of study, it will also present policymakers with alternative ways of approaching federalism and hence, plan according to the scenarios to be presented.

For the academicians, this will be an addition to the collection of growing literature on decentralization, party-state relations, and center-region relations as it studies a new trend in the almost smooth functioning of decentralization with a significant contribution to the literature.

Donors and other international, as well as local organizations interested in aligning their plans and functions with the political-economy of the country, could also benefit from this study as it will come up with some practical outcomes of the feud.

Hence, the research will have a multi-faceted benefit for anyone interested in the field of study and academic exercise.

### **1.7. Limitations of the study**

Although there were heated exchanges of words between the federal and Tigray region officials and some institutions were warning of possible military confrontation between the two (International Crisis Group, 2020), the researcher did not expect that war would break out with communication blockades in one of the study areas. Citing an attack on the Northern Command, the federal government declared a military offensive in Tigray consequently issuing arrest warrants to almost all of the possible informants for this research. Hence, the war and its aftermath were challenging for the researcher's primary data collection from the Tigray region.

On the other hand, the prevalence of the coronavirus pandemic affected the data collection process as informants (interviewees) wanted to avoid physical interaction and contacts with strangers. While there are technological alternatives to in person interviews, technological hindrances also affected the process to some extent. Therefore, the researcher exploited the costly method of phone calls for data collection.

Apart from this, national events such as the sixth general elections conducted in June 2021, caused a congested schedule for the interviews intended to this research, hence, affecting the number of interviews that researcher intended to conduct. However, with the rich experience, exposure and expertise the informants have, as well as the depth of the discussions conducted with the researcher, the amount of data collected suffices the research objectives and questions.

### **1.8. Organization of the paper**

The paper is organized into five chapters. The first chapter presents the introduction with the background of the study, statement of the problem, the scope of the study, limitations of the study, research questions, and objectives of the study. The second chapter deals with a review of

related literature concerning decentralization, party-state relations as well as center-region relations in the decentralized state. It presents conceptual and empirical literature and Ethiopia's experience of decentralization along with the research questions. The third chapter deals with the methodology of the study including methods of data collection and sampling as well as data analysis. The fourth chapter presents the discussion and analysis of the findings. The fifth chapter is the conclusion and policy implications.

## Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature

### 2.1. Conceptual Clarification and Operational Definitions

#### 2.1.1. The Concepts of Decentralization and Federalism

Countries of the world started to implement decentralization in the 1980s for two main reasons: accommodating diversity and enhancing economic development (Ayele, 2014). The formats of decentralization that countries followed since then are varied depending on the context of the implementation. Similar to the variations in the implementation, the understanding as well as conceptualization of decentralization show disparities.

And, although “decentralization largely responds to political imperatives, the link runs from politics to economics” and responding to such questions do not have simple answers and require critical thinking (Eshetu Chole, 1994).

Hence, decentralization does not have one single definition that is agreed upon by all social scientists and practitioners. And it has also been said that defining the term decentralization is difficult because of the complexity of the criteria in doing so (Hart, 1972), Hence, various scholars have defined decentralization differently. Therefore, the words delegation, de-concentration, devolution, and privatization are often raised in defining decentralization (Steiner, 2005 ).

*Delegation refers to the transfer of responsibility for the provision of public goods and services to parastatal or semi-autonomous institutions, which act on behalf of and are directly liable to the central government. De-concentration implies the outsourcing of central government functions to local or regional offices of the same. Devolution is the creation of autonomous sub-national administrations, which dispose of full discretion over most local affairs. Privatization or deregulation relates to the transfer of previously public functions, or at least the right to the implementation of those, to private organizations and companies (Ibid).*

This shows that there are varying and wide-ranging conceptions of decentralization and the use of the term could mean one of the four depending on the message the person intends to convey. For a deeper understanding of the term decentralization, let’s look into some of the definitions forwarded by various researchers that studied decentralization.

Alene & Worku, (2017) define decentralization as a term “usually understood as the reassigning of authority and responsibility for public functions from a higher echelon of government to lower orders of governments and/or the private sector.”

The definition above shows that decentralization encompasses a concept of distributing power to the lower levels of the government from the central authority. But it also implies that decentralization can also refer to the transfer of power/ authority to the private sector, which is de-regulation as Steiner (2005) indicated.

Another definition by Bekele & Kjosavik (2016) takes that “decentralization denotes the transfer of power from national to sub-national structures of government, assigning resources to local authorities through de-concentration, delegation, or devolution.”

While this definition mainly stresses that decentralization is the transfer of power from a national government to its lower structures, unlike Steiner’s inclusion of the concept of deregulation, this one also carries that fact that, in implication, the central government is the one that divides its power to the lower levels so that they can exercise governance at their respective jurisdictions.

Another definition by Bland quoted in Deribe Assefa (2015) defines decentralization as “a process of transferring power to popularly elected local governments.

A new concept in this definition is the idea of the process and popularly elected local governments. The central government does not delegate or transfer its powers to the lower level at once and it is a process. On the other hand, the existence of a popularly elected local government is a requirement for the transfer of power. Hence, in reference, decentralization is a trait of a democratic system of government.

Cheema and Rondinelli Quoted in Mulugeta Debebe (2012) define decentralization as “a process of state reform composed by a set of public policies that transfer responsibilities, resources, or authority from higher to lower levels of government in the context of a specific type of state.”

This definition also concurs that decentralization involves states, opposed to the concept of privatization in some definitions, and it is a form of reform that governments at the center pursue “distribution of load in order to ease burdens on the center”.

Faguet, Khan, & Kanth (2019) on their side define decentralization as “the devolution of authority by the central government over specific functions, together with the administrative, political and economic attributes that these entail (e.g., tax-raising, expenditure, and decision-making powers), to elected regional and local governments that are independent of the center within a legally delimited geographic and functional domain.”

The above definition also asserts that the devolution of power from the national government to the sub-national entities includes political and economic powers and the delegation of this power is meant for elected governments that are autonomous by themselves within their jurisdiction.

Kibre Moges (1994) defines decentralization as “the division of political, economic and administrative power/ responsibility between the center and subnational levels of government.” This definition also highlights that this transfer of power by the center varies in degree and could constitute simply adjusting workloads on various institutions to diverting all government responsibilities previously considered central government’s responsibilities to the sub national entities.

In general, from the above definitions, we can deduce that decentralization is a process of transfer of vital powers of decision making from the central (national) government to the lower levels of government in the structure. This delegated power should be exercised with autonomy by the lower-level governments. Although the concept of decentralization extends up to privatization (de-regulation) it is not a concept we find in many definitions. Rather, the majority of definitions discussed above show that the practice of decentralization involves the state and it is a state endeavor meant to minimize the burden of conducting its functions across a nation from the center.

### **Types of decentralization**

The majority of literature in the area of decentralization and devolution of power discusses decentralization in its types. Some literature classify decentralization into two as functional and territorial, based on the form of decentralization (Mulugeta Debebe, 2012); others as managerial and governmental based on the purpose of decentralization(Nickson, 2011). Another classification of decentralization comes to a common four forms (dimension) as administrative, fiscal, economic, and political decentralization (Aldo Morka Atnafu, 2017; Alene Agegnehu &

Worku Dibu, 2017; Steiner, 2005). For the interest of this thesis proposal, we will discuss the purpose-based classifications of decentralization and the four dimensions of decentralization.

### **Purpose based classification of decentralization**

According to Nickson (2011), decentralization can be conceptualized in two forms based on the purposes that they perform. These are managerial and governmental. In the managerial form of decentralization, the purpose of the local government is to efficiently deliver services, and “local government’s competencies are clearly defined, regulated by statute and circumscribed by the application of the principle of ultra vires.” Hence in this type of decentralization, local governments are equated with local administration. Therefore, “embedded within this ‘managerial’ function of local government is an implied political subordination to the dictations of the central government.”

The other form of purposive decentralization is the governmental type of local government. While delivering service to the locality is essential as indicated in the managerial form of local government, the governmental form of decentralization recognizes a “wider role for local government both as the mouthpiece of shared community interests of a locality and also in making policy choices” and “local government exercises considerable discretion over the power of local taxation and the rates at which these taxes and charges are applied.”

The following table summarizes the general features of decentralization under the managerial and governmental systems in terms.

Table 1: Features of Local Governance Systems

Feature	The ‘managerial’ type	The ‘governmental’ type
Legal status	Creature of Parliament	Protected by National constitution
Average population size	Large	Small
General powers	Limited by statute	General competence
Intergovernmental fiscal transfer (IGFT) system	Determined by the central government and limited by ear-making	Revenue-sharing and with considerable discretion
Financial control and audit function	Strict regulatory and ‘value for money’ auditing	Weak regulatory & legal/probity auditing
National monitoring of standards of service provision	Strict	Weak
Number of citizens per elected councilor	High	Low
Electoral system	First past the post (FPTP)	Proportional representation
Voter turnout	Low	High
Citizen participation	Limited/restricted	Extensive/ encouraged

Source: Andrew Nickson (2011)

### **Dimension based classification**

This classification of decentralization introduces four types of decentralization. These are administrative, fiscal, economic, and political (Yeshtila Wondemeneh Bekele & Kjosavik, 2016).

Administrative decentralization refers to policies that transfer administration and service delivery to the sub-national entities. These policies of administration and services could include education, health, social welfare, or housing (Falleti as quoted in Aldo Morka Atnafu, 2017).

Fiscal decentralization refers to decentralizing revenue raising and/or expenditure of money to a lower level of government to ensure financial responsibility in a manner that enhances the capacity of the local governments to make decisions (Alene Agegnehu & Worku Dibu, 2017).

Similarly, Alene and Worku (*Ibid*) point out that economic decentralization refers to the transfer of certain economic functions from the public to the private sector. It can be done only through privatization, of public-owned functions and businesses to NGOs and other private organizations and through deregulation- the abolition of restrictions on businesses competing with government services.

Political decentralization aims to give citizens or their elected representatives more power in public decision-making. It can be realized only in a truly pluralistic politics and representative government (Mulugeta Debebe, 2012).

Similarly, there are various views from different schools of thought as to where the origins of decentralization are. Among these thoughts are the endogenous and exogenous factors of decentralization. The endogenous factors refer to the advent of decentralization because of internal pressures motivated by growing heterogeneity in the interests of the people that can be ethnic, religious, or economic (United Cities and Local Governments of Africa, 1970).

The exogenous factors for decentralization deal with the push for decentralization from external forces like the World Bank's and the International Monetary Fund's Structural Adjustment Programs.

As is the case with the understanding of the subject of decentralization, the purposes of decentralization see variations. Traditionally, decentralization is focused on "checks and balances, on how to restrain the central government's power" while in some circumstances the powerless lower administrations would want the central government to give them protection and security (Bardhan, 2002).

In addition to this, "viewing government as a benevolent agent", the decentralization theorem was created, "which states that in the presence of diverse preferences and needs, provision of services from a decentralized government will lead to increased citizen welfare" because of the proximity of the local governments offers them access to information better than the central

government (Martinez-Vazquez, 2011). Treisman (2002) relates this with the familiarity of local officials to local conditions that are relevant to policymaking.

Treisman also indicates that decentralization helps to bring better accountability to the government as voters/ the general public would not be able to closely monitor the activities of the central government.

Tiebout (1956) also argues that decentralization could result in competition among sub-national entities.

The four types of decentralization are presented with the concepts of privatization, delegation, de-concentration, and devolution in the table below.

Table 2: Forms of decentralization

	Privatization	Delegation	De-concentration	Devolution
Economic				
Administrative				
Political				
Fiscal				

### Why decentralize?

The link between decentralization and poverty reduction as well as development has been a point of departure for scholars and there are no conclusive findings whether the presence of decentralization would result in poverty reduction and development. decentralization improves governance and enhances accountability and examination of government officials, thus resulting in minimized corruption. But a mere existence of decentralization does not guarantee poverty reduction (Alene Agegnehu & Worku Dibu, 2017).

Scholars like Bekele & Kjosavik (2016) point out that decentralization of power to sub-national administration is considered an essential instrument for augmenting local economic development, and others like Lee (2015) state that decentralization is aimed at improving social,

political and economic efficiencies of both the central and regional government. Another scholar Mulugeta Debebe (2012) also indicates that decentralization is deemed to be one of the programs that would ensure the autonomy of states and hence drive development.

Again, Tegegne et al (2011) argue that decentralization has provided space and opportunity for local governments to determine their future and spearhead their development and the decentralization environment has created an enabling environment to undertake local economic development in Ethiopia.

United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (2016) report on the State of Local Economic Development [LED] in Ethiopia also indicated that the existence of conducive policy frameworks like decentralization helped implement local economic development.

But this is not a consistent understanding that one finds across literature as other scholars such as Nasser & Donsimoni (2012) argue that “although decentralization is fundamental, yet it is not a sufficient factor by itself to assure the success of development projects. Decentralization fails in many cases especially when local decision and policymakers lack the necessary expertise to manage the development of their regions.”

Hence, we can see that the results of decentralization are mixed and the link between decentralization and development is problematic (European Commission, 2016). The commission argues that empirical evidence of the link between decentralization and development is limited and inconclusive adding that the very concept of linking the two is questionable. But as decentralization is politically driven, there is “inevitably no direct link between it and the promotion of local/ territorial development.

But Bulti Terfassa (1994) discusses that with widespread criticism of top-down approaches of governance and the need for a reciprocal relationship between various entities of the state, decentralization gained traction in a belief that it would improve planning and implementation of development projects.

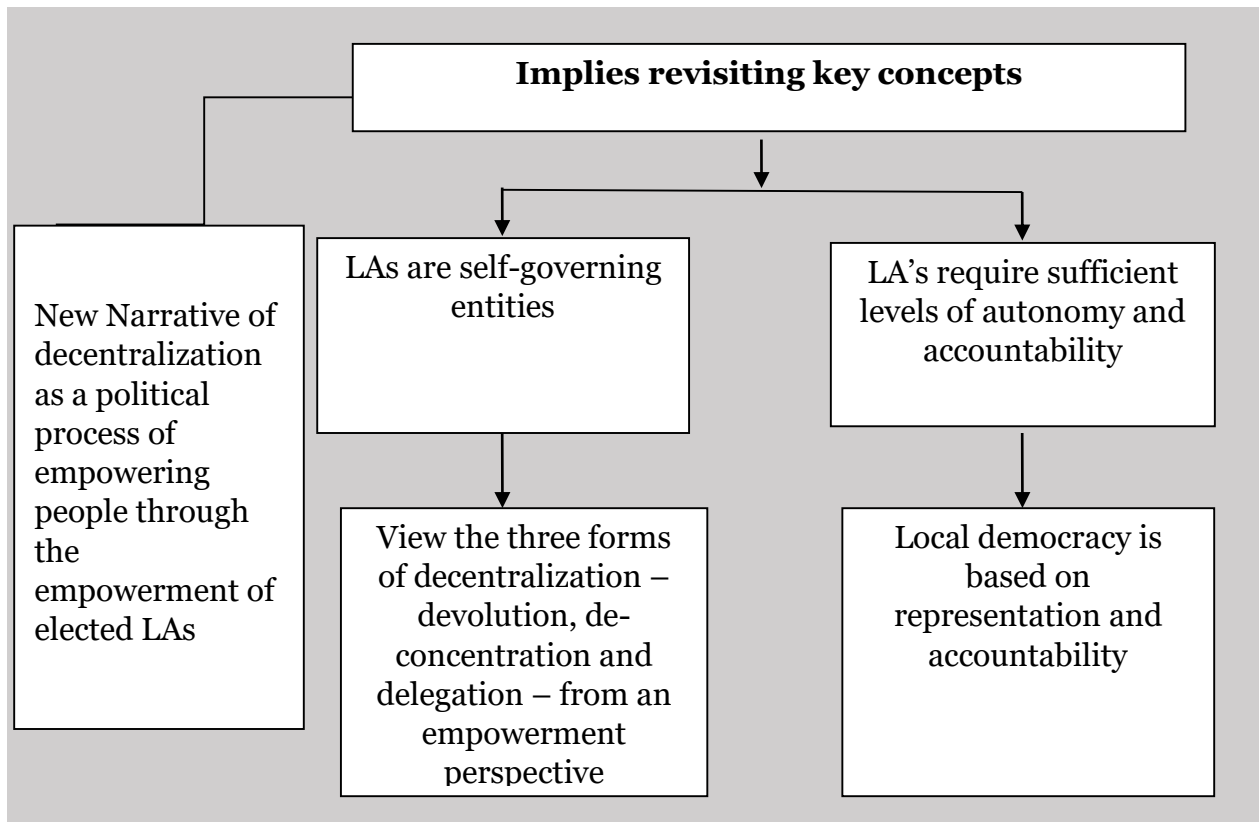
Despite these varying findings and arguments around the link between development and decentralization, many developing countries including Ethiopia have opted for implementing decentralization. And the devolution of economic growth efforts to local authorities everywhere has resulted in the search for an effective division of powers and responsibilities for an effective

division of powers and responsibilities among central, regional, and local governments (Özcan, 2000).

Furthermore, the economic development program at the local level is a preferred development approach for countries like Ethiopia (United Cities and Local Governments of Africa, 2016).

**Figure 1 Understanding decentralization as a process of empowerment**

**Decentralization:**



Source: European Commission (2016)

Steiner (2005) argues that local governments or local authorities have the informational advantages regarding local needs and preferences compared to the central government which is important for decision making. And when it is when the power given to the local authorities includes decision making power in the fiscal matters that we can say the local governments have full discretion.

This implies that local governments are well-positioned in a more suitable condition to make decisions and prepare development plans aligned with the developmental needs of the local community.

## **Theories of Decentralization**

### **The Sequential theory of decentralization**

The sequential theory of decentralization conceives decentralization as a process which brings administrative, fiscal and political aspects of decentralization in varied orders depending on the prominence of either national or sub-national interests. Hence, whenever the national interest prevails at the initial stages of decentralization, the administrative decentralization comes first followed by fiscal and political decentralization. On the contrary, if sub-national interests prevail over the national interests at the early stages of the implementation of decentralization, the assumed negotiations between the entities results in a different sequential implementation of the three forms of decentralization. In this case, political decentralization would come first followed by fiscal and administrative forms of decentralization (Falleti, 2004). Accordingly, this creates a different balance of power between the national and sub-national entities in a decentralized system.

The first sequence of decentralization that comes as a result of dominance from sub-national interests creates “a policy ratchet effect: a group of supporters who—in this case—will continue to push in the direction of further decentralization. Political decentralization will enhance the power and capacities of subnational actors for the next rounds of reforms.” This will push for more power to the sub-national entities. But on the other hand, “the outcome of [the] trajectory of reforms that conforms to the preferences of the national executive is likely to be little or no change in the redistribution of power to the subnational authorities.” (Falleti, 2004).

From this competition, we can deduce that both levels of administration always push for more power at their disposal.

### **The Evolution theory of decentralization**

Another theory that deals with decentralization borrows the thinking from institutional change and discusses it as involving periodical emergence of institutions either deliberately or random that “undergo some kind of decentralized selection process as they compete against alternative

institutions” (Kingston & Caballero, 2009). This evolutionary process involves learning where successful ones replicate and the unsuccessful ones die out.

North (1990) reinforces this thinking by indicating “the evolution of institutions that create hospitable environment for cooperative solutions to complex exchange provides for economic growth.” However, “‘evolution’ is used loosely to describe change or as a metaphor to describe familiar themes in the policy literature. It may have no direct explanatory value” (Cairney, 2013).

Depending on this thinking, decentralization was introduced across the world with a view that it would provide answers to almost all of the problems “under the sun” (Erk, 2014). Accordingly, this implementation of a decentralized system has its own evolutionary patterns as Erk found out.

These patterns are: symmetrical recentralization; differentiated performance; legitimizing traditional authority structures and indigenous conflict resolution; politicization of local conflicts over land, water, and other natural resources; and federal extinction. These patterns can coexist and influence each other.

### **Symmetrical Recentralization**

According to Erk (2014) the first evolutionary pattern that defines the state of affairs after the reforms is across-the-board recourse to centralization. Twenty years after the reforms, decentralized institutions remain in pro forma terms, but the workings of politics have reverted to back to nation-wide terms. “Symmetrical recentralization also happens to be the picture where the new subnational units have been numerous.”

*Subnational entities which lacked the administrative capacity to carry out their new competences, became dependent on patronage networks to manage the day-to-day affairs, and subsequently witnessed the erosion of their ability to balance off the center in intergovernmental relations. (Ibid)*

### **Differentiated Performance**

This concept carries that, with a limited human as well as material differences in the sub-national entities, the performance across the board becomes varied; as is the case in the use of the Afar

language as government working language in Afar Region of Ethiopia because of lack of trained personnel that can employ the language.

In this case, other channels of matching the development of other equivalent entities are used.

*If you are a 'have-not' province, and lack infrastructure, trained bureaucracy and personnel, and requisite financial resources – and want things to be done in your province – you look for benefactors within the ranks of the dominant party. It is through the informal networks of the dominant national party that a form of opaque inter-regional equalization takes place. This is a characteristic that has influenced the workings of federalism in South Africa, Ethiopia, and Nigeria at various degrees during different phases of their political history ... Especially when party membership and bureaucracy are separated by fairly permeable boundaries, we see more of this pattern. This is different from the symmetrical recentralization covered in the previous section. Internal party politics and informal networks come to play a role simply because subnational units differ in their governing capacities. Regional differences play a key role here. The type of centralization ... on the other hand, is a pattern that applies across the board to all subnational units (Erk, 2014).*

### **Legitimizing Traditional Authority Structures and Indigenous Conflict Resolution**

This point in the evolutionary concept of decentralization brings a new form of state of affair that “is the resurgence of traditional authority structures in some local governments, especially in the peripheries; and the new life decentralization has blown into customary law – in particular to indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms for managing dispute between ethnic groups” (Erk, 2014).

But this process is not smooth and follows uneven pattern and diffuses with a “complex mix of factors behind the processes of when and how traditional authority and customary law sweep into the workings of regional and local governments” (*Ibid*).

Erk further emphasizes that the decentralization projects of the 1990s did not undo such challenges and Nowhere in Africa did indigenous legal traditions in managing diversity and settling disputes find their way into the formal design of decentralist institutions. The institutional/constitutional blueprint was often carbon-copied from the West. But the processes

and mechanisms of adjudicating federalism disputes within the newly adopted constitutional set-up did not receive much attention.

Hence, federalism, as a result decentralization, are bound for contentions. Many agree that federalism needs safeguarding although there are no agreements as to whether this safeguarding should be political or judicial (Adem Kassie Abebe, 2013).

This gap is filled through traditional means of resolving conflicts both for the ailments happening at horizontal and vertical relations of a federation/ decentralized system.

### **Politicizing Local Conflicts over Land, Water, and Other Natural Resources**

This idea of evolutionary theory of decentralization questions, in some federations, the recognition of the ethnic identities as political mobilization tools while trying to manage them as well as the debate concerning individual and group rights.

Erk reminds that, “While the pro and cons of formal recognition of ethnic identities continue to be debated in scholarly circles, it is self-evident that in its most basic form it disenfranchises individuals of mixed backgrounds of various group rights, ranging from formal political representation to informal ethnic quotas in employment. This is also the case for individuals who hold other identities – be it regional, political, ideological, or religious – higher than ethnic ones ... For both federal-decentralized and unitary-decentralized states, the establishment of a new level of local government with new competences has also engendered often ugly conflicts over who is a local, who is a settler, and who is entitled to control the land. Instead of politicizing pre-existing local conflicts, this second type of conflict is rather recent and seems to have direct links to decentralization, the high stakes involved in the competition over the control of local government, and the potential material benefits that accompanying such control” (2014).

### **Federal Extinction**

Although federal solutions were high on the agenda during the early phase of post-colonial politics in Africa as potential ways to reconcile unity and diversity, these experiments are rather short-lived. Some even considered decentralization as a path to a more decentralized system of government (Erk, 2014; Rothchild, 1966). The propagators of the concept of decentralization during the 1960s have abandoned the subject and gave way to unitarist forms of government.

Hence, Africa's decentralization practice did not carry on any previous efforts to introduce such a system even during the colonial periods in British and French occupied territories.

Therefore, Erk stresses that "Federations might go extinct, or their organizing logic and set-up replaced by new institutions."

### **The Principle of Subsidiarity**

Because of "variety of interpretations attributed to the word, its philosophical rather than legal nature, and the varied and incomplete ways in which it has already been included in existing legal traditions," it is difficult to precisely define subsidiarity (Delcamp, 1994).

However, the concept of the principle of subsidiarity in decentralization is an old concept that dates back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. But recent uses like in the Single European Act of the 19<sup>th</sup> century point out that, "the principle of subsidiarity relates to the question of the assignment of powers to governing" and this "makes clear that the principle of subsidiarity relates to the question of the assignment of powers to governing bodies located at different jurisdictional tiers in governmental systems" (Breton, Cassone, & Fraschini, 1998). While this concept is understood to relate to decentralization, it is not clear as to how this principle could be put in practice.

Garrick (2018) on the other hand discusses that, "The subsidiarity principle suggests that adaptation decisions and associated governance responsibilities should occur at the lowest level at which they can be performed competently." In this regard, subsidiarity is defined as "the assignment of 'each [governance] task to the lowest level with the capacity to conduct it satisfactorily'."

This assignment of responsibilities to the lower levels of a decentralized system assume that the tasks are devolved for effective exercising of the same at the lower levels.

This principle of subsidiarity has its roots in the Catholic social theory and it is treated as "a strictly devolutionary principle compelling the reallocation of social functions from higher to lower government bodies, or from government to non-government entities" (Vischer, 2001). This lends itself to the idea that subsidiarity is equated to devolution.

This principle gained popularity in Europe and even dominated political debates in the United States of America. It later became become “incorporated into the political, economic and public administration understandings of decentralization” (Ryan & Woods, 2015).

Quoting Vischer, Ryan & Woods (2015) list the following points as “issues’ to consider while dealing with subsidiarity as a principle of governance.

- *Application of the principle is closely associated with particular areas of law, such as constitutional law.*
- *Consideration of the principle draws attention to (central) government, the individual, and the mediating structures which are which are bulwarks against government authority. Subsidiarity calls both for the recognition of mediating structures and for their empowerment.*
- *Subsidiarity places greater value on mediating structures than it does on megastructures, but this implies that any policy that purports to apply the principle needs to draw a meaningful dis- it does on megastructures, but this implies that any policy that purports to apply the principle needs to draw a meaningful dis- tinction between the two. The role of corporations is particularly salient here, since they may function as megastructures as they increase in size and power.*
- *Subsidiarity mandates the localization of societal problem-solving, including the obligation to ensure that individuals are equipped to participate fully in collective decision-making regarding issues that affect them and their communities.*

The new reliance on the principle of subsidiarity can thus be seen as an attempt to respond to the numerous new problems of state organization. However, the principle of subsidiarity could not be seen separately from unity of action, efficiency, unity of application, and solidarity (Delcamp, 1994).

### **The Decentralization Theorem**

The decentralization theorem was created by Oates with the assumption that the government is a benevolent agent. This theorem argues that within decentralized systems, local governments could increase citizen welfare in the presence of diverse preferences and needs in different

jurisdictions because they are proximate to the local population and their information helps them in achieving this (Martinez-Vazquez, 2011).

But the government in both decentralized and centralized systems are not benevolent and they prefer to maximize their own interests, argues (Greco, 2012). And this theorem assumes that there is no interregional spillover hence hindering the uniformity of central policies. This assumption is supported by local governments' advantage over information which they presumedly use to provide better services.

*“[T]he central government could design optimal contracts to extract locally available information... [If] local and central governments are benevolent, hence there is no reason for local governments not to fully and truthfully reveal their information to central government, since there is no conflict between local and central governments' objectives.” (Ibid)*

With an understanding of such strong criticisms of the theorem, Oates (2005) also clarifies the decentralization theorem as a straight forward proposition that could function under certain prescribed conditions and the theory constitutes for the first generation of theory of fiscal decentralization.

“A varied level of local outputs in accordance with local tastes will be Pareto superior to an outcome characterized by a centrally determined, uniform level of output across all jurisdictions... the theorem presumes that the alternative to local provision is a centrally determined, uniform level of public outputs. This is a strong, and not-so-obvious, assumption,” Oates argues.

But, the second generation of theories on fiscal decentralization disregard the question of whether to decentralize certain public activities by considering two assumptions: political agents are interest maximizers by themselves and do not necessarily strive to maintain or enhance public welfare and outcomes from collective choice institutions depend in fundamental ways on the information that the various agents possess (Oates, 2005).

Therefore, the second generation of Oates decentralization theorem “examines the workings of different political and fiscal institutions in a setting of imperfect information and control with a basic focus on the incentives that these institutions embody and the resulting behavior they

induce from utility-maximizing participants.” Hence, it recognizes that, these second-generation theories of fiscal decentralization “are moving beyond a purely static view of the incentive structure and potential performance of federal institutions to a broader consideration of the evolution of federal structure over time with attention to the stability of institutions and their capacity to be “self-enforcing.” (*Ibid*)

In addition to this, **Administrative Theory** observes that decentralization has benefits such as reducing costs, improving services and outputs, and effective utilization of human resources. This is also conceived into participatory democracy through representation (Hart, 1972).

## **2.2. Decentralization and federalism in Ethiopia: Empirical Review**

Decentralization/ federalism in Ethiopia came into practice following the 1991 constitution and it took two steps/waves/phases of implementation. In the 1990s the first wave of decentralization took place devolving power from the center to the regional states and in the early 2000s the second phase which is termed “district-level decentralization” devolved power from the regional government to the district level (Alene Agegnehu & Worku Dibu, 2017).

The 1990s wave of decentralization devolved power from the central government to the regional governments while the second wave in the 2000s devolved power more to the district level (Tegegne Gebre-Egziabher et al., 2011). The regional governments enjoy powers that stretch to “enacting state constitutions, establishing state administration, formulating and executing economic, social and development policies, administering land and natural resources, levying and collecting taxes and duties, enacting and enforcing a state civil service and establishing and administering the state police force” and the powers of the woreda (district) emanate from the regional constitution. The woreda is “key autonomous self-governing units to which power and resources are devolved.”

Demelash Neda Mheretu (2011) indicates that the first phase of decentralization was done at once and was centered on creating and empowering national/ regional government and hence was termed as mid-level decentralization. During this period, national/regional state governments were established with changes in the local and central government system.

And, the second phase of decentralization that devolved power further to the district/woreda level was implemented in two major phases based probably on the regions’ level of development and political maturity. Thus, relatively developed four regions embarked on the program first and then followed by emerging regions (*Ibid*).

Hence, the zones in most regions are considered as the arms of the regional states of government whereas the Woredas are considered the key local government units in each region, with significant responsibilities for providing basic services (Deribe Assefa, 2015).

Although the governance structure in Ethiopia carries various shapes, some literature put it in a manner that could capture these variations. Yilmaz & Venugopal (2008) put the Ethiopian

governance structure in the following figure in a manner that captures the variations in the structures from a regional state to another regional state.

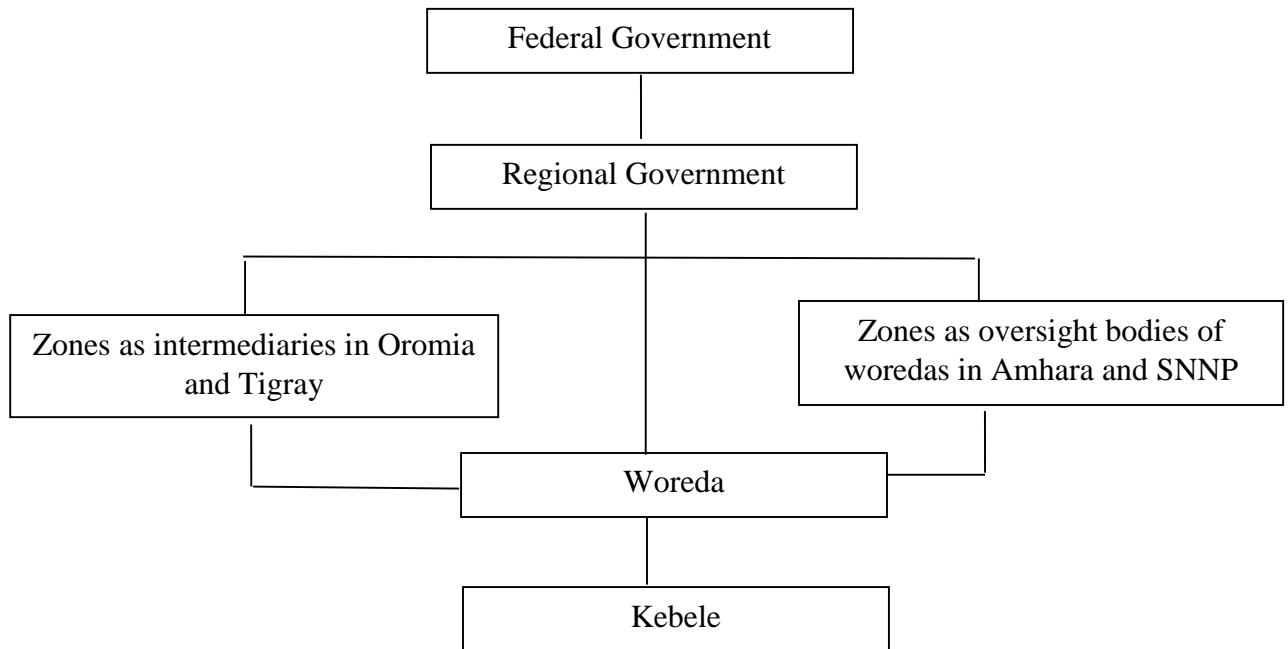


Figure 2 Ethiopian Governance Structure

Source: Yilmaz & Venugopal (2008)

Although the Kebele level is the lower end tier in the governance structure in Ethiopia, it also has its own structure. The lower level Kebele structure has a council, chairperson, manager, social court, local security, and sectoral coordination unit as presented below.

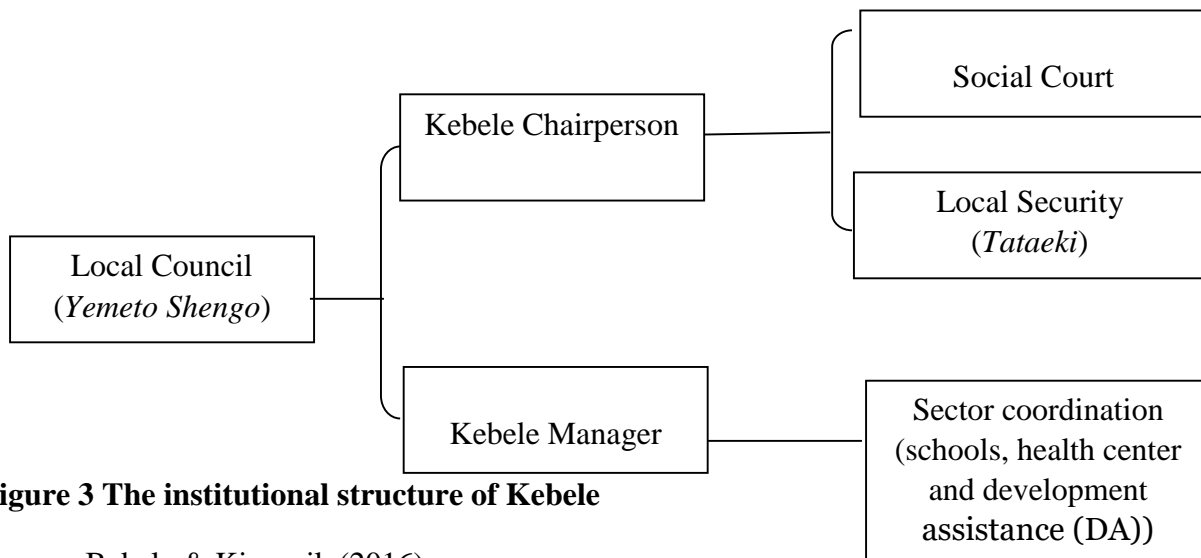


Figure 3 The institutional structure of Kebele

Source: Bekele & Kjosavik (2016)

### **2.2.1. Legal frameworks for decentralization in Ethiopia**

The Ethiopian constitution is the foundation for decentralization in Ethiopia. However, there are subsequent legal frameworks adopted to govern resource and power-sharing between the regional and central governments in the country with the inclusion of regional constitutions (Wubshet Loha, 2018).

In addition to the constitution, proclamation 7/1992 established National/Regional Self Governments “which are entrusted with broad powers, including, inter alia, planning and directing economic and social establishments; preparing, approving and implementing their budgets; borrowing from domestic sources, and levying taxes and dues. Another legal framework was Proclamation 33/1992 that provided for revenue sharing between the regional government and national/regional self-governments consequently providing for fiscal decentralization (Bulti Terfassa, 1994).

This indicates that, apart from the constitutional determination of decentralization within the federal structure, Ethiopia has put in place the proper legal frameworks to govern and effect decentralization.

### **2.3. Region-Center relations**

Decentralized systems developed as a result of the growing mistrust in governments following the growth-oriented economic development models of the 1950s and 1960s (Hailu Belay, 2001). In this regard, sub-national entities within decentralized nations pushed for more autonomy to run their states of affairs. In the long run, this would become enshrined in various laws that would devolve power from the center to the sub-national entities as was the case in the United States in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century (USA Constitution, n.d.).

With this decentralization came requirements to define how the centers and regions interact with one another and each other. This, mostly referred to as intergovernmental relations, can be cooperative or conflictual. The former is characterized by co-decisions, coordination, and consultation. The features of the latter are collusion, competition, control, and coercion (International IDEA and Institute for Autonomy and Governance, 2019).

In order to facilitate a coordinated relationship between the center and regions or between competing sub-national entities, mechanisms like constitutional frameworks can be drawn. This

kind of practice can be found in India's decentralized system with clear constitutionally defined roles to be played by the president in such conflictual relations. While constitutional or other legal frameworks are formal mechanisms of dealing with such relations. Informal mechanisms like Premiers' Council of Canada can be formed to deal with competing intergovernmental relations (International IDEA and Institute for Autonomy and Governance, 2019).

Although there is a constitutionally guaranteed self-determination to the ethnonational regional states, there is strong central control over them through different mechanisms. This extends to the judiciary body and supreme courts at regional levels have "have little judicial autonomy from a dominant executive whose policies and acts are rarely subject to legal review." This coupled with the creation of local elites loyal to the central government that play significant roles in the regional satellite parties significantly affect the relations center-region relations (Hagmann & Abbink, 2011).

Besides, because local administrations are not fully empowered because of a lack of resources at their disposal and lack of legal/constitutional recognition to the woreda levels of administrations. Hence, "local government remains the institution which is used to keep political opponents at bay" (Zemelak Ayele, 2008, 2011).

### **2.3.1 State-Party Relations**

The lynchpin in a balanced and decentralized state structure is the smooth functioning of the checks and balances of the government (Bardhan, 2002). With centralized government lacking legitimacy, decentralization is believed to have the benefits of reducing the role of the state, by devolving power to the lower levels of administration and introducing more intergovernmental competition and checks and balances.

This nature of decentralization, however, is hindered by single, and dominant party systems that result in the "non-observance of constitutional rules" (Treisman, 2002). Similarly, presenting an example out of the Republic of South Africa, (Saunders, 2018) points out that "the dominance of a single party, the African National Congress, also means that, in practice, the premiers of provinces controlled by the ANC are centrally appointed."

This dominant party system, according to (Assefa Fiseha, 2013), has also created a “cabinet dictatorship which in itself is a product of party dictatorship” in Ethiopia. Hence, it is intraparty politics that defines the relationship between the state functions and the party functions.

Although there were efforts to bring about grassroots, bottom-up and participatory policymaking in the TPLF dominated party system in the 1980s, the advent of the democratic centralism hindered this process resulting in fewer outcomes from lower-level administration engagements (Vaughan, 2011). Later, civil service reforms and local administrators’ recruitment was spearheaded by the EPRDF. The EPRDF trained cadres in multiple rounds to take charge of local administrations intended to outcome inefficient bureaucracies. This way, it instilled its satellite agents to all levels of local administrations.

The EPRDF also controls key federal government entities like the House of the Federation (HoF), the lower chamber of the bicameral parliamentary system of the country. The HoF, entrusted with interpreting the constitution, draws its members from nations and nationalities across the country depending on the electorates in the House of Peoples’ Representatives (HoPR). This house is controlled by the EPRDF so far, its roles like conflict resolution arising between ethnic groups, are conducted by the executive body The Ministry of Federal Affairs (now the Ministry of Peace). This indicates “the continued objective of the central government to manage the ethno-regions” (Abbink, 2016).

The party in Ethiopia, mainly led by the TPLF, did not bring about the promised autonomy to the ethnically formed regional governments, and controlling the peripheries has been easier than securing control at the center (Clapham, 2009). And, although the regional governments are led by parties that represent their respective ethnicities, these parties are satellite parties to the EPRDF.

### **2.3.2. State Capture**

In every part of the world, especially in the developing world, corruption is the main institutional hurdles to businesses and the broader governance framework. When states fail to provide the proper bureaucracy as well as protection of legal rights, corruption happens. This corruption is often understood as abuse to public office. But the grand level of corruption involves paying to high level government officials to manipulate a certain law whereby “key state institutions can

be "captured" by private interests to skew the policy-making process in favor of particular firms and render the operation of government non-transparent" (Kaufmann, Hellman, Jones, & Schankerman, 2010).

Transparency International (Zúñiga, 2019), state capture is a situation where "powerful individuals, institutions, companies or groups within or outside a country use corruption to influence a nation's policies, legal environment and economy to benefit their own private interests".

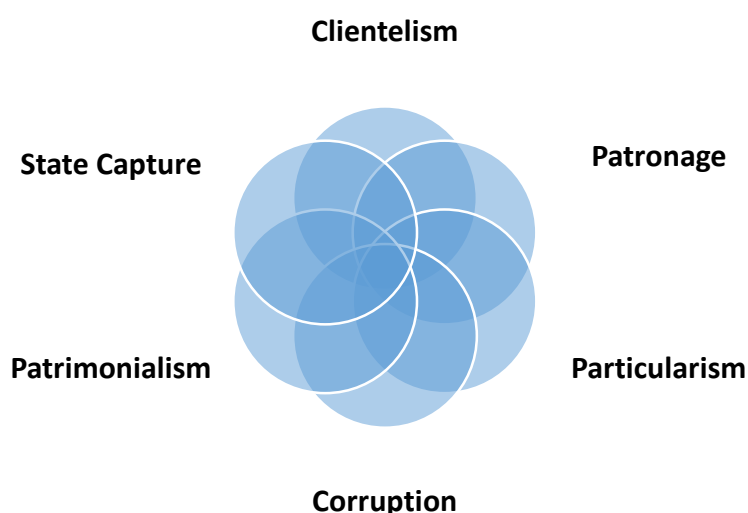
Corruption, which is often conceived in terms of bribery and embezzlement, state capture is also another form of corruption. But this understanding came after a long debate that it is a lead factor for corruption rather than a corruption itself. While there are various modes of state capture depending on every country's context, state capture is also considered as a legal corruption. Most corruptions focus on changing how existing laws, rules or regulations are implemented in favor of the bribers while state capture is corruption in an effort to influence how these laws, rules and regulations are formed (Sitorus, 2011). Accordingly, state capture can affect the legislature, executive, regulatory agencies or public works ministries either by large private firms, political leaders, high ranking officials or interest groups.

While legal corruption or any other form of corruption influences how certain laws are implemented, state capture requires the change in these legal or operational frameworks in total with an intention of favoring the corruptors. For a certain corrupt practice suffices the label state capture when three criteria are fulfilled, according to Zúñiga (2019). These criteria are: i) a policy goal must be defined; ii) the captor must intend to extract rents; iii) the policymaking process, including laws and regulations, must have shifted away from the goal in the public interest towards the captors' interest.

The grand corruption of state capture, hence, results in unfair collection of rents by capturing state officials hence gaining 'privileged benefits from government' (Myburgn, 2017). This can take various forms that lead to unusually "high profits derived from owning licenses and permits that can only be obtained from particular government entities, and which are needed by companies or individuals to partake in certain sectors of the economy". These benefits are referred to as rents.

Another line of argument regarding state capture indicates that state capture is not just a widespread corruption. It rather refers to a distinct structure of networks that “cluster around parts of the state allowing them to act collectively in pursuance of their private goals to the detriment of the public good.” While some groups of business or political elite appropriate parts or functions of the state, the society’s public good is affected (Fazekas & Tóth, 2016).

Varraich (2014) observes that, as corruption is a multidimensional and umbrella subject, this nature of corruption can best be presented by Venn-diagram. Accordingly, the following diagram by Varraich draws attention to the different forms of corruption including state capture.



Source: Varraich (2014)

#### **Figure 4 Dimensions of Corruption**

From the diagram above, we can deduce that state capture is one among the various forms/ dimensions of corruption. This young form of corruption, which could be perpetrated both by actors within or outside of the state, focuses on the input side of corruption expressed by directly influencing the rules of the game. This form of corruption is more harmful than the rest because of its exclusion of all of the citizens from any political process (*Ibid*).

#### **2.3.3. Elite Capture**

With an assumption that decentralization brings development because of the proximity of decision making to the local people, various countries across the globe pursued devolution of

power to the lower levels of administration. Institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank through their flagship Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) became proponents of decentralization especially in the developing world (Saito, 2011).

However, as Musgrave & Wong (2016) stipulated, despite the theoretical predictions, the outcomes of many development projects have not met with expectations. And this mismatch between these unmet expectations is highly related to the widespread elite capture at the local level administrations. This resulted in the misappropriation of disproportionate level of resources to a small circle of elites affecting the general public. Although this emerged to be a concept related to the widespread decentralization and devolution, no clear solution of circumventing the problem has been discovered so far.

*[T]his is partly due to a simplistic characterization of elite capture that does not take a nuanced or contextually aware approach to the role of elites in the societies of developing countries ...perceptions about the role of elites emerges from a misunderstanding between discourse and how real issues of power, culture and social relations affect policy implementation in rural traditional or religious societies where the role of elites is entrenched in local custom and tradition. (Ibid)*

Elite capture has been facilitated by decentralization policies because the devolution of power gave local elites increased access to resources and “paradoxically by the role of political parties” (Lucas, 2016). In some cases, direct links can be found between state capture and official positions and corruption.

The potential of state capture by the few seems to also have been envisioned by the three Federalists who wrote subsequent articles in support of the ratification of the US constitution in 1778. In their 85 articles, Madison, Jay, & Hamilton (2001) stressed that electors should not be discriminated based on their wealth or other status and educated people in the society should not receive any status in such decision-making processes.

According to Post (2008), elites are “actors who have disproportionate influence in the development process as a result of their superior social, political or economic status.” And elite capture refers to “situations where elites shape development processes according to their own priorities and/or appropriate development resources for private gain.”

But Post highlights that state capture is not just a negative phenomenon as its presence could enhance the effectiveness of Community Driven Development (CDD) initiatives. However, precautions should be made in order to benefit the general public before these elites garner the benefits ahead of the intended beneficiaries, i.e., the community.

Rajasekhar, Babu, & Manjula (2018) state that elites who have “superior social, political and economic status” are present in development programs. While there are various factors that contribute to elite capture, elite capture is almost certain to occur in the absence of effective empowerment of the weak groups in highly unequal and caste-based societies, they detailed.

Although Post (2008) indicated that elite capture is not all in all harmful as it could result in effectiveness of programs, increased satisfaction as well as momentum by creating community ownership, the following are indicated to be the downsides of elite capture.

Negative elite involvement is particularly likely to occur when:

- Elites have significant control over community decisions and/or the autonomy to craft rules which discourage community involvement in the project.
- There are higher levels of inequality at the village level, which gives elites more influence over community decisions and a greater ability to co-opt influential members of the community. Communities which are heterogeneous and/or have large populations, both of which act as barriers to collective action, are also more prone to elite capture.
- Outside “development brokers” from urban-based NGOs or other organizations are able to obtain leadership positions at the village level and gain control of development resources.
- Projects are initiated before sufficient capacity-building measures have been implemented to ensure that community members have the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively advocate for their position with local elites.
- Community facilitators are not trained well enough to increase community participation, educate citizens about their rights, and empower people to guide the development process.

- The project moves forward with implementation before clear rules and processes have been established to guide its activities. (*idem*)

Decentralized development projects as even in a unit as small as a neighborhood or village and hierarchical structure exists and local leaders are dominating the community decisions which could be managed through the empowerment of community-based organizations (Arcand & Wagner, 20102).

#### **2.4. Federalism: origins and definitions**

The traditional classification of countries is as unitary and federal. Unitary governments have central and local tiers of administration while federal states have regions in between the central and the local administration. And, an increasing number of countries are adopting federalism with regions that undertake various responsibilities which they did not enjoy in the past (Bosch & Durán, 2008).

Federalism is a system of government that became popular following the WWII especially in the British commonwealth as the most viable option of administration for most diverse nations. While there are various reasons for nations to adopt federalism, it especially became attractive to nations with large population and geographical expanse (Babalola, 2019). Africans were also optimistic towards federalism in the 1950s which later evaporated as a result of failed federations on the continent.

In many of African countries, federalism was “was both promoted and championed as an instrument of unity in diversity” (Ibid).

Olaiya (2016) found out that 25 countries from across the globe are federal states constituting 40 percent of the world population. Some findings indicate that federal states are 33.

Wondering whether the definition represents present day federal states, Olaiya (2016) quotes K. C. Wheare saying, federalism is “is a political formula in which the ‘general’ and the ‘regional’ governments ‘are each, within a sphere, co-ordinate and independent of one another.’”

Federalism connotes the dual concepts of governmental and ethical division of powers among autonomous and semi-autonomous governments in a state. Hence, a state system may differ peculiarly in function, but all federal states feature a government at the center with exerting

detailed exclusive powers that covers the entire country and federating units exercising certain powers, within a defined jurisdiction in the polity, jointly and severally with the Central Government over the same body of citizens. (Ibid)

In federations, the existence of the constituent entities and their autonomous powers are constitutionally entrenched; that is, they cannot be created, merged, or abolished by ordinary legislation passed by the central government (Erk, 2014).

But federalism is not a monochromatic subject matter that can be embraced in a single definition and context. “Federalism, however, is a complicated and technical subject, and it should be considered carefully and designed with an understanding of the context in which it will operate” (International IDEA and Institute for Autonomy and Governance, 2019). Hence, when it comes to the understanding, definition, and implementation of decentralization, there is no “one size fits all” kind of approach.

Erk & Anderson (2010) on the other hand indicate that federalism has come to be seen as a way to accommodate territorially based ethnic, cultural and linguistic differences in divided societies, while maintaining the territorial integrity of existing states. Here, however. we have a paradox that puzzles students of federalism. Further, federalism provides opportunities for conflict between regions and centers that might not exist otherwise.

The reasons for nations to adopt federalism has varied reasons, especially when it comes to political reasons of adopting it which include ethnic, religious, linguistic causes (Filippov, Ordeshook, & Shvetsova, 2004). In addition, it can be adopted to decentralize conflicts so that sub-national conflicts do not disrupt the national politics. It could also emanate out of the institutional design of the state.

### **The Ethiopian Experiment**

While adopting federal systems is the first step towards a decentralized system of governance, such systems operate in multifaceted environment (Chattopadhyay, 2010). These could be increasingly globalized world as well as regional integration issues in the case of Africa. Countries emerging out of conflicts pursue the path of devolved governments and federalism so as to build institutions that are responsive to their local population. Although federalism is not a

panacea, such systems are usually suitable to promote unity in diverse nations in terms of ethnicity, culture, languages as well as religion (*Ibid*).

There are two main viewpoints concerning the set-up of a federation: some scholars and practical specialists believe that it must be based on the ethnic principle, and some others advocate the territorial principle (with or without regard for the ethnocultural factor) in Ethiopia (Ismagilova, 2004).

In this regard, Ethiopia's "experiment with democratic federalism... must thus be seen as one in a line of attempts to achieve unity in diversity", according to former Prime Minister Meles Zenawi who spoke at the fifth International Conference on Federalism in 2012 (Meles Zenawi, 2012). Thus, the experiment is an intention to right past wrongs, and "Just as our failure to embrace our diversity had been, over the centuries, one of the primary causes of our retreat from the front ranks of human civilization, the successful management of our diversity through democratic federalism has become one of the pillars of ongoing Ethiopian renaissance (*Ibid*).

Kassa Tekleberhan (2012) also highlights that, "While Ethiopia was, for a long time, a unitary state encumbered by centralism and poverty, today Ethiopia is characterized by federalism, democracy and development."

The Ethiopian federal system is based on the sovereignty of nations and nationalities rather than regional states, and these "nations and nationalities have constitutionally guaranteed right to self-determination, a right which, in the extreme case, includes the right to secede and to form an independent state" (*Ibid*). Kassa attributes the overall social and economic successes of the country to the equal rights granted to nations and nationalities.

But the Ethiopian federal system is highly criticized for paying significant attention to ethnic and linguistic identities and ignoring others. Accordingly, this is the main drawback of the country's failure which became political mobilization force since the EPRDF took power in 1991 by overthrowing the Derg regime (Yonatan Tesfaye Fessha, 2017). Yonatan (2017) refers to this failure as the original sin of the Ethiopian federal arrangement.

Building up on Donald Levine's observation that the "evolution of the multi-ethnic Ethiopia is an Amhara thesis, an Oromo anti-thesis and an Ethiopian synthesis," Merera Gudina (2017) explains the current federal system in Ethiopia has two objectives. first, to create a country of

equal nations, nationalities and peoples; and second, to put an end to authoritarian rule by democratizing the Ethiopian state and society as a whole. However, because of ethnic elites' contradictory interpretation of history, "the perennial Ethiopian quest for peace, democracy and development remains as elusive as ever" (*Ibid*).

Picking up from the constitutional stipulation that gives the impression that the Ethiopian federalism is a "coming together" federalism, Assefa Fiseha (2017) argues that it also has a practical nature of "holding together" federalism. This is because of the lack of autonomy that the members of the federation enjoyed prior to the formation of the existing federal system. On the other hand, the federal system was introduced with an intention of decentralizing power to the lower echelons in response to high concentration of power at the center (*Ibid*). But the "withholding federation" describes the nature of Ethiopia's federation. Federations are withholding federation, according to Yash Ghai (2000) quoted in Assefa Fiseha (2017), when they "start with a central structure and because there is unease about the political implications of devolution, national powers tend to be dominant and not infrequently do have the power to suspend regional governments."

Hence, more emphasis tends to be on self-rule rather than shared-rule (*Ibid*). However, federalism has to be targeted on creating strong self-rule in regions and give wider power of the subjects of a federation and civil equality of all ethnic groups regardless of their numerical strength and development (Ismagilova, 2004).

## **2.5. Intergovernmental Relations**

A nation is stable when there is a sharp democratic process and intergovernmental relations proceed and evolve according to constitutional rules. A state that exhibits cessation movements as well as military uprising against a civilian rule is on the other hand considered unstable (Filippov et al., 2004). Hence, one of the defining factors for a federation or any other kind of state to be considered stable is a system of functioning intergovernmental relations. And for its proper functioning, an ongoing intergovernmental bargaining is important for a uniformly health federal features that do not lead to destruction. While this relation in a federation needs to be bargained, institutions like parliaments and constitutional courts provide venue for the bargaining (*Ibid*).

Even through arguments to the level of negotiations in a federation arise, it is a fact of life for federations to negotiate (Norman, 2006).

Federations or their political systems are peculiar in nature that the federal government is not superior to the rest of the constituent units or vice versa and each entity has its own constitutionally guaranteed sovereignty. The diverse nature of federations, their features also differ, including their intergovernmental relations. In some instances, it is institutionalized organization that governs/facilitates intergovernmental relations within federations (Karmis & Norman, 2005). Other authors also argue that Federalism means wider power of the subjects of a federation and civil equality of all ethnic groups regardless of their numerical strength and development level and it must conform with strong local government (Ismagilova, 2004).

In this regard, one of the prerequisites for a state to be classified as a federation is having mechanisms to facilitate intergovernmental collaboration in those areas where government powers are shared or inevitably overlap (Ross, 2002).

These intergovernmental relations within a federation could be both formal and informal as well as controlled and collaborative system of intergovernmental relations. However, although intergovernmental relations concern institutional setups, intergovernmental relations are also influenced by party politics and impacted by ideologies. The ideological impact can be seen in the definition and formulation of policies for these relations. Political patronage of constituent units governed by the same political party is also another factor linked to intergovernmental relations. On the other hand, political integration through party moves to balance out of the decentralization can affect intergovernmental relations (CREUS, 2004, Gitleman, 2004).

A general consensus among scholars of federalism is though, the importance of intergovernmental relations and of the institutions that guarantee the participation of federated units for the smooth functioning of the federation (Requejo, 2005).

In general, a relation between constituent units of a federation with such benefits is defined as “the working connections that tie central governments to those constituent units that enjoy measures of independent and inter-dependent political power, governmental control and decision-making” Agranoff as quoted in Auel (2014).

These intergovernmental relations have also become more politicized and conflict ridden (Benz, 2009).

Olaiya (2016) on the other hand argues that Intergovernmental relations as a pattern of political concept, characteristic of a complex political system, had always existed before its modern emergence typified by the America's political arrangements and government layering. And the presence of these intergovernmental relations allow for a reciprocal control of entities within a federation. Hence, creating a well-functioning intergovernmental relations is the whole essence of federalism.

Assefa Fiseha (2007) states that intergovernmental relations is a very broad notion which could be both formal and informal established either between the central government and regions or among regions.

In Ethiopia, pursuant to the argument whether intergovernmental institutional and legal frameworks should be incorporated within the constitution or should be separate, there has not been any formal federal-state or interstate mechanisms for intergovernmental relations (*Ibid*).

*The federal government heavily relies on party lines rather than on formal institutions of intergovernmental cooperation. Intergovernmental relations are important in installing the culture of negotiation between the federal government and the states, checking the trend of centralization and thereby enhancing the bargaining power of the states. Institutionalizing intergovernmental relations could further facilitate resolving potential center-state conflicts (Assefa Fiseha, 2007)*

Similarly, Kena Deme Jebessa (2017) argues Ethiopian Federal-States intergovernmental relations are dominated by the federal government and its executive institution because of ruling political party, existing political culture and absence of practical institution that manage and guide the relationships between the two orders of government which has influence on constitutionally given states autonomy.

*in the same party organization that controls both federal and state orders of governments and has a centralized structure, it weakens the power of the state governments in a way that undermine states autonomy in the goings-on of both orders of intergovernmental relations (Ibid).*

In Ethiopia, the federal government is predominant and relationships between levels of government are largely informal; and the effect of the dominant-party system is reflected in the intermixing of party activities in the realm of public administration and service delivery, which makes governmental functions and party business inseparable (Wakjira, 2017).

Although the constitution of the federation does not give the federal government to monitor regional states, the practice shows that the federal government and its executive branches do so. However, there are no constitutional or other legal frameworks that allow such monitoring from the center (Yitages Alamaw, n.d.). Hence, the Ethiopian federation is facing problems related to information flow and oversight of the implementations of laws and policies at state level.

Although intergovernmental relations attend to the existence of different levels of governments that communicate and collaborate each other, this system had been hampered by different factors in Ethiopia. And that is why, in the presence of excessive reliance on political party lines, Nigussie Afesha (2016) wonders what will happen if opposing parties manage to win elections at federal and regional levels, and whether under such settings the collapse of the Soviet Union could be a prophesy to the Ethiopian federalism as well.

*Establishment of permanent forums of intergovernmental bond has crucial roles in negotiation, non-hierarchical exchange of information as well as facilitation of cooperation between the institutions of the two levels of governments... because intergovernmental cooperation is both an inevitable and desirable feature of federal political systems (Ibid)*

However, intergovernmental relations is a notion which is given relatively little attention within the constitution of the federation.

## Conceptual Framework

Decentralization is a concept differently understood by different scholars as indicated in the above section. And it involves state-party and center-region relations. The center-region or party-state relations either at a national, sub-national, or intra-sub-national entity could also spill over to other sub-national entities of a nation. The following figure illustrates the interrelatedness of these factors.

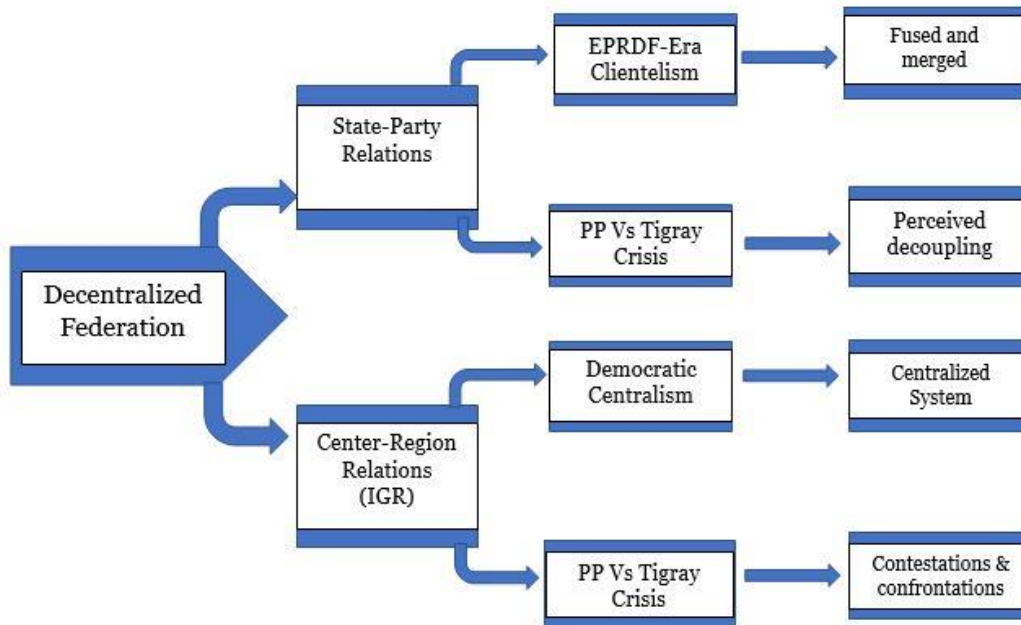


Figure 5 Framework of decentralized federal system and state-party, center-region relations.

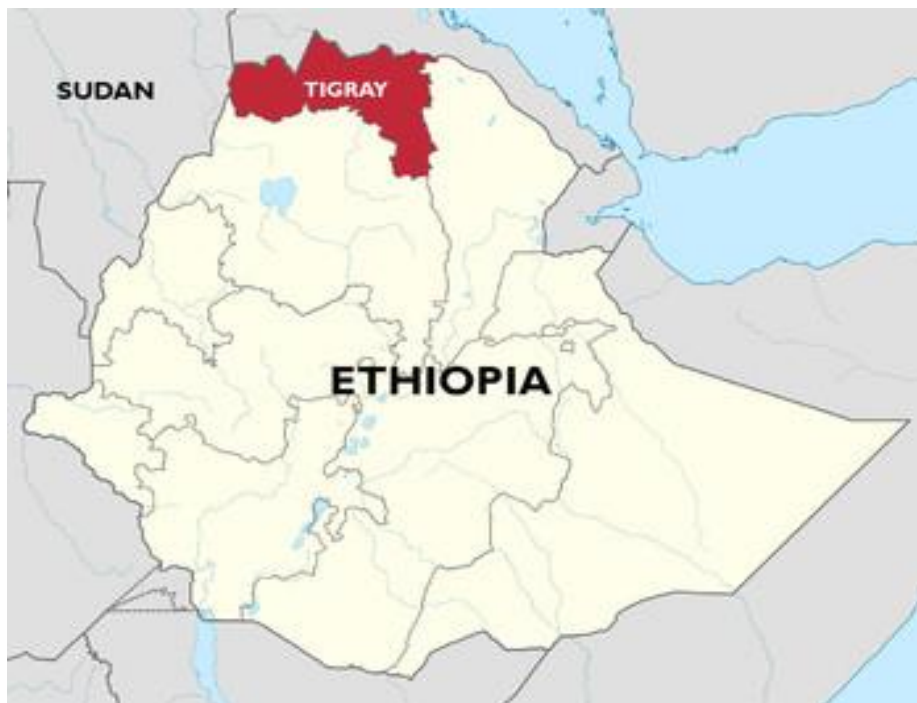
In all aspects of the framework, there is a link between decentralization and the resultant factors like party-state relations and center region relations. While these relations could be negative or positive, their outcomes, positive and negative, also affect the general practice of decentralization in multiple aspects. The party-state relations are also determinant factors to the center-region relations. The effects of party-state and center-region relations are related to the quality of the decentralized federalism exercised in the country.

## Chapter Three: Research Method

### 3.1. Description of Research Area

Decentralized federalism in Ethiopia is implemented following the adoption of the 1995 constitution that formed nine regional governments and two city administrations. Since then, one regional government, the Sidama Region, has been added to the membership of the federation after ceding from the Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples' Regional State.

While a study of Ethiopia's decentralization could concern every member of the federation, this research specifically focused on the rowed relations between Tigray and the Federal government and the implication this would have on the overall decentralized federal system in the country. Hence, the research areas for the study are the Tigray regional state and and the seat of the Federal government, i.e., Addis Ababa.



Source: Wikipedia

*Map 1: The Map of Ethiopia and the Tigray Regional State*

Tigray is one of the members of the federation that is home to the erstwhile dominant member of the EPRDF, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). Tigray region is located in the

northern part of the country neighboring Eritrea in the north, and Amhara and Afar regions in the south and southeastern parts. While the Tigre are the majority of people living in the region, there are also the minority people of Kunama. According to the Central Statistics Agency's 2007 Census, the population of Tigray is about five million. Tigray is also characterized by a rapid and it is "aggressively" expanding at a rate of 4.6 percent annually (UNICEF, 2019).

Addis Ababa, the other research area, is a seat of the federal government and also hosts the three branches of government – the legislative, the executive, and the judiciary. As the political and economic center of the nation, Addis Ababa also plays a key place in the country's socio-economic and -political lives. Besides, Addis Ababa is where the headquarters of most of the political parties registered in the country are located, including that of the ruling party, Prosperity Party. With residents amounting to three million according to the 2007 Central Statistics Agency Census.

### **3.2. Research Approach and Design**

The research approach employed to seek answers to the above-indicated research questions is the qualitative approach with event case study methodology. The advantage of a qualitative approach and case studies in this kind of research is "Qualitative methods provide insights into the setting of a problem, generating ideas and/or hypotheses" and such methods "provide results that are usually rich and detailed, offering ideas and concepts to inform your research" (Macdonald & Headlam, 2008).

According to Hammarberg, Kirkman & De Lacey (2016), qualitative methods of research are "used to answer questions about experience, meaning and perspective, most often from the standpoint of the participant" and 'verification', research integrity and robustness are as important in qualitative studies. To this end, Kothari(2004) adds that the Qualitative approach to research is concerned with the subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions, and behavior. Research in such a situation is a function of the researcher's insights and impressions.

This type of research, hence, is suitable for the questions and objectives of the research put above. Data for qualitative research can be gathered, according to Kothari, using the techniques of focus group interviews, projective techniques, and depth interviews.

### **3.2.1. Research Design**

The research is an in-depth analytical presentation of the research problem and discussion with exploratory design.

Exploratory questions are best suited to topics that have not been studied and in explanatory research, the researcher is trying to identify the causes and effects of whatever phenomenon they are studying (DeCarlo, 2018).

The goal of exploratory research is to formulate problems, clarify concepts, and form hypotheses, and such methods employ qualitative data which are gathered from people who are knowledgeable about the subject matter being studied. On the other hand, the primary purpose of explanatory research is to explain why phenomena occur and to predict future occurrences. (Sue & Ritter, 2015).

Hence, depending on the research objectives and research questions of this study, these methods were employed. The research hence, explained in detail what the feud between the federal and Tigray regional states is, how it would affect the party-state and the center-region relationships as well as draw scenarios to show the possible direction of such behaviors in the federation.

### **3.2.2. Sources of Data and data gathering tools**

The research used both primary and secondary data that collected through interviews and secondary data gathered through a review of prior interviews and opinions on TV, YouTube as well as newspapers and books. The content gathered from online sources are focused on owned platforms by official sites.

Data from the samples were gathered using semi-structured and in-depth interviews as it helps the interviewee get the most out of his/her interviewee. On the other hand, the “output depends upon the ability of the interviewer” when using structured interviews for data collection (Kothari, 2004).

In-depth interviews are interviews designed to discover underlying motives and desires (Kothari, 2004). This will be suited with the semi-structured interview as it “follows a framework in order to address key themes rather than specific questions. At the same time, it allows a certain degree of flexibility for the researcher to respond to the answers of the interviewee and therefore

develop the themes and issues as they arise” (Macdonald & Headlam, 2008). Hence, the researcher will employ these methods of data collection along with the secondary data to conduct the study.

### **3.2.3. Sample selection procedure and techniques**

The data for this research were collected from samples drawn using the methods of judgmental and snowball methods. The snowball method is mainly employed to locate informed people on the subject matter rather than because of the secrecy of the matter. The judgment method of sampling can be “used for selecting items which he considers as representative of the population” whenever a researcher desires to “develop hypotheses rather than to generalize to larger populations” (Kothari, 2004).

The informants were selected from the federal House of Peoples’ Representatives and House of the Federation, political parties, experts in the field, federal entities like the Ministry of Peace and the Attorney General, etc.

The researcher used judgmental identification of key informants for interviewing and will use the snowball technique to identify and interview key informants that might miss out on the researcher’s judgment.

The interviewees were selected based on the researcher’s judgements as well as snowball methods. The principles of this sampling method include the identification of interviewees by the researcher based on specific reasoning, and which in their turn, shall indicate (recommend) other respondents which will make the object of the research (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

The researcher intended to conduct 25 to interviews for the research. But due to the redundant information the researcher started to receive from the interviewees, the number of interviewees was limited to 18. However, the number of people consulted, discussed, and assisted various manners exceeds this number as they have also informed the research. These interviews, the researcher believes, suffice the research’s intention for the explanatory and exploratory findings. Moreover, representativeness has been achieved by sifting through interviews, opinions as well as discussions all sides gave in open spaces. This decision follows in the long-standing debate among scholars regarding sample sizes in qualitative researches. Many scholars have however concluded that data collection from samples should follow the principle of saturation- when no

new insights are found out of the interviews conducted. While saturation could be affected by different factors including time, budget, heterogeneity or homogeneity of the population, selection criteria and so on, many researchers avoid discussing how many interviews are enough. Hence, many say something between five and 50 participants are adequate (Dworkin, 2012).

Because this study tends to conceptualize the data, it also employs grounded theory. In grounded theory, saturation level is expected to be reached after 25-30 participants (Mason, 2010).

But the standard answer as to how many interviews are required for a qualitative research is that it depends on the purpose of the research as Baker & Edwards indicated (2012).

**The composition of potential interviewees is indicated in the table below:**

**Table 3: Composition of Interviewees**

<b>No</b>	<b>Origin of the Interviewees</b>	<b>Number of the interviewees</b>
3.	The House of Peoples' Representative	3
4.	The Ministry of Peace	2
5.	Political Parties – opposition	4
6.	Experts in the field	5
7.	Regional State Officials	1
8.	Others/ miscellaneous	3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>

#### **3.2.4. Methods of data analysis**

The method of data analysis employed in the research is thematic analysis, a method that is “flexible, and increasingly popular method of qualitative data analysis” (Braun & Clarke, 2013) and it “allows the researcher to identify the need to be important in relation to the particular topic and research question being explored.”

Hence, the researcher will employ this method of data analysis for the list of research questions raised.

### **3.3.Ethical considerations**

While conducting this research, the researcher adhered to the necessary academic ethical standards including voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, the potential for harm, and strict use of data collected for the research purpose for the said purpose only.

The researcher is committed to the academic ethical high standards in terms of producing an original work and avoiding any plagiarism. The researcher provided sources for all of the materials quoted or paraphrased in the research work. The analysis was also based on the research data gathered from interviews and other secondary sources and the researched tried his best to avoid biases.

## **Chapter Four: Results and Discussion**

### **4.1. Introduction**

This section of the research presents the discussion of the findings from the interviews conducted. Accordingly, it will be divided into four sub-topics which will address the respective research questions presented elsewhere in the report. Hence, these topics will present the findings on how the feud between the central government and Tigray region emerged, how the feud and its developments would affect the state-party relations in the country, how the feud would impact the relations between the federal government and the remaining constituent units as well as the precedent this feud would set for the remaining units of the federation.

### **4.2. The Genesis of the Tigray-Federal feud**

Following widespread protests in the Oromia and Amhara regions leading to the change in administration in Ethiopia in April 2018, the political dynamics in the country had seen shifts, especially in terms of national narratives and discourses. While the mainstream narratives and discussions were focused on national unity and integration of the people deemed disenfranchised during the past two and half decades, the other side of the political development saw a new trend in the country's decentralized federal system. While the main element of this trend is different political parties leading at the federal level and regional level in Tigray, it is also characterized in its feud between the two levels of government. This had finally led to a military confrontation between the Tigray region and the federal government. Contributing to this feud are various factors ranging from the merger of the EPRDF, power, and resentment to constitutional and autonomy questions. The researcher identified four core factors of the feud which as discussed below.

#### **4.2.1. Merger of the EPRDF and Emergence of the Prosperity Party**

Although the merger of the EPRDF had been on the agenda for more than a decade, it was in the 11<sup>th</sup> General Congress of the Front that it was decided with the power to finalize this given to the Central Committee. This merger also involved the development of new ideological orientations shifting from the Revolutionary Democracy to an arguably new pragmatic orientation. While the political program and party by-laws of the Prosperity Party, created by the merger of the three (3) member parties of the EPRDF and five allies, remained silent on the party ideology, it had

been stated in the book *Medemer* that the party had been liberated from ideological imprisonment (Pp. 33).

Critiquing that Revolutionary Democracy created a single dominant party than a multi-party system as promised by the constitution, dwarfed the private sector, became anti-elitist, and created a strong party than a strong bureaucracy, *Medemer* (Pp. 22-34) recommends a homegrown thought which takes lessons out of global trends.

When the Prosperity Party was formed excluding the TPLF, the TPLF started to question the need for the formation of a national unified party. The TPLF even produced a full document condemning the intentions of the formation of the unified party, saying it would be a return to the “brutal earthly hell” of the Derg era (Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front (TPLF), 2019).

With the overarching narrative that Prosperity Party and its leader Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed wanted to create a unitarist state, the TPLF argued that the merger was intended to extend the power of individuals rather than creating a strong party that would effectively serve the public. Getachew Reda argued that the merger of the EPRDF should not have happened while there is no consensus among the parties to form the Prosperity Party.

*It is no less than to satisfy power thirst few people’s interests to merge the parties that could not agree on various aspects of understanding challenges and suggesting solutions. Unless, the TPLF does not believe that there could be a unified national party that could resolve the country’s problems (BBC, 2019).*

But many agree that this merger had created the crack between the federal government and Tigray regional government, henceforth, between the newly created Prosperity Party and the TPLF. One of the reasons for this difference is the ideological shift that this brought within the party consequently leading to the loss of power in a country that the TPLF created in its form (*Interview with a political analyst, July 12, 2021*). Accordingly, this merger of the party brought Abiy Ahmed to power, “such an unusual character both as a politician and characters of the EPRDF.” This simmered the power friction between the two sides.

While the merger was the final culmination of the divorce between the TPLF and the members of the Prosperity Party, this had been developing within the party throughout the three years of protest leading to the year 2018.

*The party ideology was demised along with the party structure. Therefore, there is a power struggle that was manifested in confrontations especially following the formation of the Prosperity Party ... The power relation shifted when the Tigrayan elites lost control of security and political power (Interview with a political analyst, July 12, 2021)*

On the other hand, fueling the feud between the two was that, while the Prosperity Party was the ideological “moral child” of the EPRDF, it sidelined the TPLF in various aspects of decision making and it was “born with opposition narratives that started to emerge in the country since 2005” (Interview with rights and democracy activist, June 5, 2021).

*The Prosperity Party sidelined the main ideological father of the party, which is the TPLF along with similar ideological orientations from the OPDO and the ANDM ... The current people holding to power brought about an ideological shift (Ibid).*

While the ideological orientation of the two sides led them to part ways and later enter into a feud that led to a military confrontation, in the pretext of the ideological clashes were power struggles between the two. This power struggle, as the results show, was at the center of the feud between the two sides leading both sides to fight for dominance both at the national and sub-national levels. This shift in power relations started within the EPRDF, before the formation of the Prosperity Party, and it caused the divide. This struggle finally left the TPLF out of the new Prosperity Party leading to its loss of power at the central government.

*The feud came when new ideas began to emerge and resistance from within started to show. When this development pushed the TPLF out of the system especially with the formation of the Prosperity Party sending TPLF to its initial stages, it resorted to nurturing itself in a way it grew at the very beginning (Interview with a government official, June 15, 2021).*

This independent growth of the TPLF through the empowerment of its members and ranks of leadership made it stronger in various aspects than the rest of the member parties within the defunct EPRDF as well as the Prosperity Party and the government it leads at the center. And in effect, the member parties of the EPRDF, as well as its five allies, could not match this growth even in unison under the auspices of the Prosperity Party. Some also agree with this statement. One way the Tigray case differs is with the presence of politically aware, organized, and armed

government and people who took it up to war with the forces that posed either perceived or real threats to them. But the others do not have the same capacity (*Interview with a political party leader, July 10, 2021*).

However, although the pronouncement from the side of the Prosperity Party is that it has abandoned the EPRDF era Revolutionary Democracy or the Developmental State ideologies, some argue that the current ideological orientations of the Prosperity Party lack clarity. Some even argue that it did not abandon the ideology in practice. Therefore, rather than ideological differences, the feud was intensified by the shift in real political power within the TPLF. Therefore, they observe that since the Prosperity Party did fully detach itself from Revolutionary Democracy (*Interview with a political party leader, July 28, 2021*). Similarly, others agree that the Prosperity Party did not change in substance but name and structure; hence the EPRDF is in effect in power (*Interview with a politician, author, economist, July 26, 2021*).

Hence, the TPLF's previous dominance at the center created hubris which did not enable it to accept that it would be one among equals within the EPRDF. And because of its control over the past 27 years in every state apparatus, the TPLF had the leverage to contest the federal government.

*The real power was in the hands of a small circle of people within the TPLF which enabled them to control every political and bureaucratic activity of the state through patrons appointed in every region. But with the merger of the EPRDF and the creation of the Prosperity Party, they felt threatened because they could not place a puppet leader that waits for their blessing. They did not want to be like the rest of the parties that dissolved themselves to form the Prosperity Party (Interview with a federal government official, August 24, 2021).*

The TPLF also felt threatened because of the abandonment of the Revolutionary Democracy and its replacement with “Medemer”, which is a path than an ideology (*Ibid*). However, “Medemer” is a contested idea and the lack of a clear definition of the terminology made some question what it meant. Although Abiy Ahmed's (2020; Pp. 36) book titled መደመር/ “Medemer” states that the idea is an objective of gathering, developing, and enhancing the positive aspects of the country's experiences and improving on the weaknesses. The TPLF on its side had repeatedly bashed the

idea of “*Medemer*” for its lack of clarity. Similarly, Teshome Berhanu Kemal argued that “*Medemer*” had not been clearly defined by the Prime Minister and it confuses the readers of the book (Reporter, V 25; No. 2034, 2019).

Nonetheless, the TPLF officials argued that, if regions say that the TPLF did appoint patrons to control what they are doing, it is not a mere betrayal of the TPLF but history itself (Zemen Magazine, No. 85, 2020).

The TPLF on the other hand was adamant that its struggle with the Prosperity Party was a danger to the multinational federalism in the country and self-government. Therefore, the merger and its proponents were “hell-bent on destroying the multinational federal arrangement” and “The Prime Minister, the leader of Prosperity Party, resolve to roll-back on the gains of the federal arrangement, and to establish a one-man unitary state” (Getachew Reda on Dimtsi Woyane, June 28, 2020).

This idea of lack of trust in the federal government’s intentions especially when it comes to living by the constitutional promises of self-determination for nations and nationalities of the country is also shared by a political party leader interviewed for this study (July 10, 2021). The leader argued that the source of the differences between the TPLF and the Prosperity Party as well as the Federal Government and the Tigray Regional Government is ideological and because of this the TPLF and other political groups started to have trust issues on the groups leading the reform especially when it comes to the rights to self-administration of nations and nationalities.

However, some outliers observe that the crack between the TPLF and the Prosperity Party was not a result of ideological factors, rather of power. “It is when people think of it in retrospect that they say it was ideological. The TPLF could not accept the outcome of the power struggle,” (Interview with a thinktank leader, June 3, 2021).

Hence, although the merger of the party and the shift in the party ideological orientations was one of the causes of the feud between the two sides, each side was rather concerned about the power relations that followed the merger and its contestations as discussed in the section below.

#### **4.2.2. Power struggle and the general elections**

While respondents in the study have highlighted the sheer importance of the ideological shift for the feud, some of the respondents have also attached the factor to the power struggle that ensued within the EPRDF leading to the degradation of the loss of significant power by the TPLF at the center. In the TPLF, “ideologies were used to consolidate power within the party and later impose domination at the state level (Tefera Negash Gebregziabher, 2019).

In a manner that conforms to this, the TPLF was not willing to submit to defeat at the center when its previous allies and ideological off-springs turned the table. Although the TPLF was not content with the removal of high-level officials in the state bureaucracy as well as the security sectors, the loss of ideological control over state affairs was one main point of departure of the two sides.

The EPRDF was hugely dominated by the EPRDF which had control over every aspect of the bureaucracy both at federal and regional levels. This had given the TPLF unchecked power, which was immediately lost with it became an opposition party to the federal government and other regions controlled by the Prosperity Party. In this regard, the party was more powerful than the state and goes to the extent of amending the constitution without following the constitutionally stipulated means of amending it (Interview with a federal government official, August 24, 2021).

In addition, the “TPLF was not willing to the merger of the EPRDF into Prosperity Party” because it was a threat to their power that used to give them unfettered access to state apparatus and resources (Interview with a federal government official, July 9, 2021).

*The disagreements became public when real talks to merge the EPRDF and form a single national entity. The Tigrayan elites have aired their concerns regarding the changing power relations; that they were pushed aside and targeted ... There was anger due to the shift in power relations (Interview with a political analyst, July 12, 2021).*

However, moves by the federal government to establish the Identity and Boundaries Commission and the Reconciliation Commission by issuing a proclamation intensified the differences between the two sides. These two institutions were deemed illegal by the TPLF as well as the Tigray Regional Government they challenged the federal government to pursue the constitutional

means to resolve the crises the two commissions are empowered to look into. Hence, the establishment of the boundary commission, laws enacted, institutions formed, the election, and so on aggravated these ideological and power relation cracks. The TPLF was afraid of the merger of the EPRDF because it won't suit the small circle of cliques within the TPLF as this might lead to merit-based politics than ethnic centrism. That won't be favorable for the TPLF (*Ibid, Interview with a federal government official, August 24, 2021.*)

And because the TPLF dominated EPRDF crafted the constitution to suit its interests, it immediately found refuge within the constitution when it lost power at the center. And because of its dominance, people were afraid that it would lead to the disintegration of the country when it lost power (*Interview with a think tank leader, June 3, 2021.*)

*There was a skewed power distribution within the EPRDF. In principle, the four parties had equal say within the Front's affairs. But because of a smart approach from the TPLF, they empowered the Southern region within the Front by preventing the Oromos and the Amharas from forming alliances, which could have challenged the power the TPLF had. The TPLF already secured a 50 percent vote within the party because it does not expect any opposition to come from the South. Hence, the crack started to widen with an alliance between the Amhara and Oromo elites. The Prime Minister (Hailemariam Dessalegn) from the South was being harassed by the TPLF leading to a compromise of the 25 percent vote which the TPLF used to easily enjoy. Hence, these dynamics led to the loss of power by the TPLF at the center (Ibid).*

And, because of their ideological privilege that enabled them to mobilize forces from different parts of the country, the TPLF was the guarantor of the EPRDF coalition. When this ideological leverage the TPLF had over the coalition was lost, it failed to accept the outcome of the power struggle that followed. As they were not prepared for the change, and their expectation that a person that they would control would come to power failed, the TPLF resorted to discrediting the power at the center (*Interview with a political party leader, July 28, 2021.*)

*It is the power loss by the TPLF that led to this feud. But even though they lost the power, they were expecting to get a puppet government at the center. They missed both (Ibid).*

A lawyer and political commentator interviewed for this study (July 25, 2021) argued that the TPLF was the biggest obstacle to the national reform agenda since 2018 because of its power interests as it controlled the bureaucracy as well as the security sector including the military. Because of its unchecked power, it was the only group that remained with its power to mobilize military forces. Finally, TPLF lost its power and went to administer Tigray alone and then started to resist the actions of the central government. One instance of such resistance was seen during the postponement of the sixth general elections.

The sixth general election was postponed by the House of Peoples Representatives (HPR) through a constitutional interpretation process carried out by the Council of Constitutional Inquiry (CCI) under the auspices of the House of the Federation. This was done at the request of the National Elections Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) to the House of Peoples' Representatives (HPR) to postpone the sixth General Elections because of the coronavirus pandemic discovered in Ethiopia on March 13, 2020 (NEBE, 2020). Based on recommendations from the CCI, the House of the Federation and House of Peoples' Representatives decided to postpone the elections by one year.

Immediately after the postponement of the elections, the TPLF said it will consider the federal government illegitimate starting from October 5, 2020, based on the constitutional provision that every five years the powers of the HPR and the government will be over and a new government should be established by the end of September in the Ethiopian calendar.

The TPLF led Tigray government established a regional Elections Commission to conduct elections at the regional level, intending to “establish a law that enables government power to be elected by the representation of the people by conducting a participatory, free, peaceful, democratic and legal election,” and this is meant “to clear the demarcation of public power (*Office of Electoral Commission of the National Regional State of Tigray, 2020*).

While the narrative from the side of the TPLF and its administration in the Tigray region strongly argues that conduction a regional level election was the exercise of the people's right to self-determination, respondents to this study argue otherwise saying that this is standing against the “the parliament which is referred to as a constitutionally organized expression of the people” (*Interview with a lawyer and political commentator, July 25, 2021*).

But the TPLF deemed the dalliance of the elections a means to create a “corona dictatorship” (Getachew Reda, 2019). In addition, the question of self-administration which led the Tigray region to hold its elections is an extreme manifestation of the conflict it had with the federal government. And even before the regional elections were held, the idea of a *de facto* state had been promoted making an example out of Somaliland and other states. But this is not allowed both within the constitution and IGR. “They wanted to be a state short of recognition” (*Interview with a government official, June 15, 2021*). Another federal government official (*Interview, July 9, 2021*) agrees that the TPLF ignored the decision by the HoF and HPR to hold elections and call the federal government illegitimate starting from October 5, 2020.

This is on the one hand caused by the interpretation of the constitution to their convenience by both sides. Although conducting elections is one of the constitutional powers of the federal government, the Tigray region did not want to accept this and live by it and went to hold a regional election. But whenever this is inconvenient to some group of people, they cannot ignore it and proceed with their way (*Interview with a former employee of the Pastoralists and Federal Affairs Ministry, August 10, 2021*).

Although the elections were the ultimate manifestations of the power struggle between the two sides, the TPLF had been showing its positions on power since the EPRDF was demised. For instance, it had been appointing prosecuted former officials to regional positions. They also deemed illegal/ unconstitutional the Boundaries Commission and Reconciliation Commissions through the regional council (*Interview with a rights group leader and rights activist, June 5, 2021*).

On the other hand, a respondent argues that the disputations because of factors as elections are not the problems themselves contributing independently to the feud but aggravating factors exposing the country’s existing structural problems. The events that preceded or succeeded the elections did not create the problem by themselves but underlying problems were aggravated by them leading to exposure of Ethiopia’s structural vulnerabilities (*Interview with a consultant, political commentator, July 12, 2021*). Hence, factors such as the elections hardened the relations between the two sides leading to debates about whether there is a constitutional crisis in Ethiopia.

*When the elections in Tigray happened, it was very much clear that military confrontation was going to happen because both sides have deemed each other illegal. So, from this escalated war of words, not if the military confrontation would occur, but when* (Interview with a consultant, political commentator, July 12, 2021)

However, for Meresa Tsehay and Fiseha Asgedom, (Tigray TV interview, 2020) the election held in Tigray were meant to ensure the self-administration rights of the people of Tigray as the federal government failed to deliver on its constitutional mandates before its term was completed. Therefore, the elections were meant “to broaden and deepen self-rule and also to ensure people’s sovereignty.” But because this could be exemplary for the rest of the reasons, the Prosperity Party could not accept it as a legitimate election (*Ibid*), they argued.

Nevertheless, as elections are federal mandates, the Tigray government should have pursued the legally established system to challenge the federal government rather than evade the constitutional power of the federal government (*Interview with lawyer and commentator, August 10, 2021*).

Hence, from the discussions above, it can be deduced that the whole fight was to have dominance both at the party and government dispensations as the legal provisions including the constitution and institutional processes were exploited to concerned bodies’ interests. Accordingly, other factors such as unrecognizing one another intensifying the struggle for dominance among themselves.

#### **4.2.3. Mishandling of the Reform: The Eritrea Peace Deal Factor**

During the final days of the EPRDF, one of the central agendas of reform was the acceptance of the Angiers Agreement which was reached between the Ethiopian and Eritrean to demarcate the borderline contested since the wars the two nations waged in the early 90s. The EPRDF’s acceptance of the border decision was made while the EPRDF was still intact and in the presence of the TPLF within the coalition (Addis Standard, 2018).

However, following the rapprochement with Eritrea, the peace deal was criticized by the TPLF for being a relationship between Abiy Ahmed and Eritrean President Isaias Afeworki rather than being institutionalized. Getachew Reda argues:

*We don't know the contents of the agreement the two sides agreed. Let alone us, the Minister of Foreign Affairs does not know what the agreement signed between the two countries says (Dimtsi Woyane, 2019).*

Similarly, Seyoum Mesfin argued in an Ethio Forum interview (2020) the Eritrean rapprochement did not happen because of the call from Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed during his inaugural speech. Rather it was because of prior links he had with the former Patriots Ginbot 7 party leadership, who helped persuade Isaias to talk to Abiy Ahmed.

*It is President Isaias that benefited from the demise of the EPRDF although it is not clear how this would benefit the Eritrean people. Isaias is discussing matters while the border is still closed with the motto of 'the enemy of my enemy is a friend.' They have sent in their security apparatus to Addis Ababa to dismantle the constitution and erase the federal arrangement. Abiy's government is living with this. This does not serve the national sovereignty as it is clear that the country has already lost its sovereignty, (Ibid)*

A federal government official (August 24, 2021) on the other hand agrees that the TPLF was not content with the way the rapprochement with Eritrea was handled. Then they started voicing concerns of security threats coming from the side of Eritrea and blocked the relocation of military forces stationed in the Tigray region.

This was tolerated and no action had been taken by the federal government to ensure the constitutional rights given to it. This in turn fueled the feud by heightening tensions leading the two sides to stage display of force at different times (Interview with a think tank leader, June 3, 2021).

But a lawyer and consultant (Interview, August 25, 2021) argues that these developments were manifestations of the shifting power relations between the two and the struggle for dominance through a display of force. The TPLF did not want to risk losing the military's weapons stationed in its region as it was preparing for military action on the forces of the federal government as was evidenced later.

However, for a parliamentarian (*Interview, August 28, 2021*), such acts were clear interventions into the constitutional powers of the federal government. Such trends of intervening in the affairs of the federal government are also noticed by a high-level government official (*Interview, June*

15, 2021), with the TPLF hindering the military mobility directed by the federal government as well as preventing the implementation of an international pact to demarcate the border with Eritrea. The TPLF demanded the involvement of the Tigray region in deals with Eritrea, mistrusting the federal government's handling of the matter.

#### **4.2.4. TPLF's Resentment**

The formation of the Prosperity Party by the merger of three member parties of the EPRDF viz. the Oromo Democratic Party, the Amhara Democratic Party, and the Southern People's Democratic Movement, and their five allies, the Somali People Democratic Party, the Gambela People Democratic Organization, the Benshangul Gumuz People Democratic Party, the Harari National League, as well as Afar National Democratic Party.

Because of the factors discussed above, the TPLF did not dissolve itself as the rest of the parties did to merge into the Prosperity Party. In a letter addressed to the EPRDF Central Committee (November 20, 2019) the TPLF Central Committee announced that it does not have the right to dissolve the TPLF in the name of an illegal merger as this is the mandate of the General Assembly following through discussions with its ranks and members.

Following this merger, the TPLF lost representation within the ruling circle and it then started to stand against the governmental functions of the federal government. For a political party policy affairs head (*Interview, July 26, 2021*), the TPLF was sidelined from the national politics by parties that were created by itself and it was blamed for all mistakes made during the EPRDF's rule despite the admittance by the Front. They would take responsibility for the mistakes made during the 27 years of EPRDF's rule and they promised to mend those mistakes by working on development and human rights protections.

But the TPLF was squarely blamed for the wrongdoings during the 27 years of rule in the country although it was the whole leadership to blame (*Interview with political party policy affairs head, July 26, 2021*). The TPLF also started to blame the Prosperity Party because it was sidelined from the power play at the center.

This created resentment within the leadership of the TPLF who went to the extent of discussing *de facto* state at the regional level. It also gathered "federalist forces" that are believed to have aligned interests with it, especially when it comes to the safeguarding of the multinational

federation. It also motivated other political groups to pursue its path which the central government saw as a threat to the federation and national integrity (*Interview with a government official, June 15, 2021*).

With these factors at the backdrop, the TPLF also blamed the central government for selling the country out by giving away its national interests especially when it comes to the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) and the Ethio-Eritrean peace deal.

Promising that the TPLF will do everything in their power to work with like-minded parties and peoples in Ethiopia to try to maintain the multinational federal arrangement, they warned that any efforts to reverse the gains of this arrangement will result in the protests of the wider people, according to Getachew Reda (Dimtsi Woyane, 2019).

In another interview with Tigray TV (2020), Getachew Reda also argued that the central government is trying to subjugate the people of Tigray as was the case during the imperial period and the Derg regime.

### **4.3. Examining center-region relations**

One of the elements that the separation of the TPLF from the merger of the EPRDF member parties and their allies to form the Prosperity Party exhibited was the introduction of two separate political parties leading at the center and a regional level. After parting ways with the Prosperity Party after denouncing it as a gathering for mere power, the TPLF went to administer the Tigray region while the newly formed party continued to run the rest of the country.

This introduced a new trend in the country's federal arrangement which was characterized by its highly centralized system of one dominant party administering at every echelon of the federation. This being a new experience for the country coupled with the friction caused by the merger of the EPRDF into the Prosperity Party, created a situation that some wondered would look like (Negussie Afesha, 2016).

With calls from the TPLF and the administration, it governed in Tigray for other regions (nations and nationalities) to join forces to defy the federal government, especially following the postponement of the sixth general elections from 2020 to 2021. Declaring the central government as a “corona dictatorship”, the TPLF said the central government is not legitimate as its legal mandates expire after five years since the last elections held in 2015. The TPLF then started creating coalitions with other “like-minded” political forces to fight and win the central government which it said was “hell-bent to dismantle the multinational federation (Getachew Reda on Tigray TV, 2019). To this end, it invited various political parties to the regional capital, at times up to five members from each party, to discuss “Constitutionalism and Multinational Federal System” in 2019 (The Government of Regional National State of Tigray, Public and Government Relations Bureau, 2019).

A government official interviewed for this study (June 15, 2021) argues that this mobilization of forces around its interests and pushing other regional governments such as the Sidama and the Wolaittas to follow suit is no less than dismantling the federal arrangement. Some also argue that the proliferation of statehood questions in Southern Ethiopia is part of this agenda and even the Wolaitta representatives within the SNNPR council dropped their membership motivated by the actions of the TPLF.

Especially the election Tigray held is an indication that it could set a negative contestation between the federal government and regions given the correspondence between the federal government and Tigray region involved threats of forceful actions. In a response to the HoF's letter ordering the Tigray region to halt its election preparations with repercussions of intervention from the federal government unless heeded to, Tigray regional council declined to adhere to the "unconstitutional means of staying in power." Stating that this is the constitutionally guaranteed right of the people, it argued that the decision by the government of Tigray to hold elections was constitutional. And the decision by the federal government to postpone the elections has created a constitutional crisis in the country (Tigray National Regional Council, 202).

Abronet, a coalition of Ethiopian National Movement, Hibir Ethiopia, and Ethiopian Democratic Party stated that (2020) the efforts to postpone the elections by the federal government and unconstitutionally extend its terms has caused a constitutional crisis in the country. Because the federal government does not have any constitutional mandate to govern after the expiry of its term, Hibir called for an "extra-constitutional" to resolve the crises. Hence, it called for the federal government led by the Prosperity Party to not act unilaterally in addition to calling for a halt of the unconstitutional election Tigray was preparing to hold.

Although a certain level of misunderstanding is expected in federations, the ethnolinguistic nature of the country's federalism complicated matters in the country argues a lawyer and a government official at a regional level (*Interview June 15, 2021*). The way the Tigray region's contestation with the federal government manifested is a dangerous development that shows that the constituent units need to be handled carefully.

Because of the party ideology by which the regional governments were created by the TPLF led coalition, potential conflicts with the federal government that could destabilize the state functions were resolved through party discipline. This had even enabled the EPRDF coalition to suppress and dissent from regional governments which extended to the amendment of the constitution without following the due process of law (*Interview with a lawyer and consultant, August 25, 2021*).

Through the party structure, the TPLF/EPRDF administration created a unitary system despite the constitutionally stipulated federal arrangement. As ideas came from only the TPLF and other

regions were recipients, new thoughts and resistance to old ways start to come from other regions represented within the coalition, the system itself started to crumble. This is in part because the TPLF created an Orwellian state in its image and form. (*Interview with a lawyer and a government official, June 15, 2021; Interview with a lawyer and consultant, August 25, 2021; Interview with a consultant and commentator, July 12, 2021; Interview with a lawyer and former government employee, August 10, 2021*).

The Ethiopian federal system was perfect on paper but in practice it was centralized. The EPRDF decides at the center and the rest are passive recipients of the decisions made. This is because the central government controls the finance which it distributes in the form of rent to impose its wills across the nation (*Interview with a think tank leader, June 3, 2021*).

*When the regions were constituted, it was the federal government that demarcated borders and formed the regional governments. The winning party found allied forces and decided on the formation of regional governments. And the dominant party in this endeavor was the TPLF. The constitution was drawn as if the regions were the ones with sovereign power who shared it with the federal government. But that is not what was in practice (Ibid).*

Hence, when the federal government tried to do its will in the Tigray region, the TPLF said sovereign power rests with the regions and it found a refuge in the constitution as it was crafted to suit such times. And through the allied parties, the TPLF controlled the regional governments which are not represented by member parties of the EPRDF. The TPLF also used to have a significant role in the administration at the center and it administered its region in Tigray while the other regions had caretakers from Tigray (*Interview with a political party leader, July 28, 2021*).

But with the creation of the Prosperity Party, the center-periphery relation in this country had been redefined because regions have representations within the centrally governing party which give the perception that they have an equal role in national issues. This is the positive aspect of the Prosperity Party. One of the reasons for doing this is to widen its political based and legitimacy (*Interview with an opposition political party policy matters head, July 26, 2021*). A government official in the Amhara region (*Interview June 15, 2021*) also believes that the creation of the Prosperity Party had the potential to redefine the relations between the central

government and the regions. However, the lack of clarity in the merger and whether the former ethnic parties had dissolved themselves to form the new national party is creating a problem among constituent units as well as with their relations with the federal government. This is manifested especially when it comes to the naming of the branch offices of the Prosperity Party and the statements these branch offices issue on national matters after exclusive regional meetings.

A political party leader also observes that, during the EPRDF, the central government maintained the trait of centralized systems observed in this country, and changing this would improve the relations between the center and the regional governments. However, the Prosperity Party's tendencies to enter into conflicts with regional governments during disagreements shows that it is not willing to see strong regional states. Therefore, the approach from the center is "crush and rule". Although the Prosperity Party does not have the leverage of democratic centralism as the EPRDF used to enjoy, there will not be regions that want to act off-grid the center. If they try, they would be crushed by force (*Interview, July 10, 2021*).

*Politically, this shows that the federal government under the current leadership is willing to engage militarily - but already the Somali case before Tigray had established a precedent. The regional and federal governments will continue to use the party structure as the primary way of resolving disputes. Nevertheless, the Tigray situation has shown that the party structure is not sufficient and calls for collapse. So it may be that regional governments will push for a more independent dispute resolution mechanism as noted above ... The manner with which the conflict erupted has revealed the dire need to find appreciate and relatively autonomous arrangements for the identification and resolution of intergovernmental disputes. So, I think the conflict could hasten processes to establish at least formally independent constitutional adjudication mechanisms (*Interview with a constitutional lawyer and a scholar, July 3, 2021*).*

However, with the recent trends of militarization of the police forces in the regional governments, such efforts by the federal government could mean a direction to the disintegration of the federal government. With the growing strength of regional governments in terms of armed forces, it would be a challenge to bring a balance between the federal and regional governments that would lead to a system that would accommodate differences. An interviewee for this study

argues that one of the preferable traits of federalism is creating constituent units with their unique feature having inherent power; not a devolved power. It should enable regions to have strong lawmakers, executives, and judiciaries and deal with its matters. Its relations with the federal government can be framed through legal and institutional means (Interview with a lawyer and former employee of federal office, August 10, 2021).

But, on the other hand, another interviewee believes that what happened in Tigray will impact the relations between the central government and other regional governments. Because:

*Other regions came together in support of the center to support their Tigrayan brothers and sisters during and following the law enforcement operation. The distaste for support for the TPLF has also hardened in other regions and clear messages have been issued as to what belligerents will face if they seek to destabilize the legitimacy of the state (Interview with a security analyst and Ethiopia expert, June 9, 2021).*

On the other hand, future events such as a win by an opposition party at the regional level could pose a challenge to the federation because of the precedent posed by the federal government, unless a conflict resolution mechanism is put in place. This challenge even could go to dismantling the federation (Interview with a government official, June 15, 2021). Unless a concrete measure of managing such times is put in place, it could prove difficult to stop if another constituent unit intends to do so.

Similarly, if a dominant ethnicity controls the federal power along with unchecked powers at a region of its ethnic origin, this could also pose danger for the unity of the country. Hence, any lack of cooperation among constituent units as well as between the federal government and the regions could significantly affect the viability of the federal system.

Regions that contend with the federal government should emerge as it is not the objective of federalism to creating a single strong central government. Regions should stand strong and the lack of it was one of the problems of Ethiopia's federalism. One area of a serious failure of the system was democratization; which resulted in centralism through party lines (Interview with a lawyer and former federal government official, August 10, 2021). This lack of experience in federalism with an opposition controlling one or more regional units was one of the failures of

the exercise of a decentralized federal system in the country which could have given a lesson of how to deal with conflicts at such times.

However, a political party leader believes that this had been the case in some zonal administrations in the SNNPR where the center suppressed by suspending budgetary support to punish the public for electing other than the ruling party. Hence, a regional government will not confront the federal government even if the opposition wins there because of the budgetary leverages and the monopoly of violence the center has (Interview, July 28, 2021). A rights activist and commentator (*Interview, June 5, 2021*), also concur that, although it is preferable to have different parties governing different levels of administration in the federation, smaller constituent units will be suppressed. However, the lessons to the federal system are worth the challenges.

*Had the leaders been tolerant, the TPLF leading in Tigray while the Prosperity Party leads at the center, this was a good opportunity to set examples for future center-region interactions. Therefore, an opposition winning at a regional government would positively improve the federal system (Ibid)*

But, while the regional governments continue arming themselves with military-grade weapons and personnel, confrontational relations between the federal government and regions could emerge, especially in an event of a win by an opposition party at the regional level and this is inevitable. Nevertheless, a constitutional lawyer and political commentator argue an emergence of an opposition-held region could also lead to more robust engagement and even better outcomes from the federal arrangement where states will exercise their powers, and also serve as laboratories of democracy and governance (*Interview, July 3, 2021*).

Regional armed forces that are proliferating in all of the constituencies are, however, challenges for a balanced relation between the federal and central government, i.e., a legally framed binding power-sharing and conflict resolution. If a political view on something at the regional level was at odds with the view on the same issue at the federal level – and it was something for which security forces could be deployed – then this creates conditions for conflict, similar to the one we have witnessed in Tigray.

Therefore, centralization of warring capabilities is one of the important priorities so that the relations between the national and sub-national governments can be based on legal grounds than a display of force. And the lack of an independent conflict resolution mechanism to channel and address center-region disputes has so far hindered conflict resolution, including Tigray-Federal conflict (*Interview with federal office director, July 9, 2021; Interview with a constitutional lawyer and political commentator, July 3, 2021*). A political party head (*Interview, July 10, 2021*) also believes that a mechanism governing the intergovernmental relations in the federation as well as a proper implementation of the same helps avoid conflicts in the federation, even in events of different political parties administering at different regions.

To create a cooperative relationship among constituent units as well as the central and regional governments within the federation, a new legal framework had been enacted by the House of Peoples Representatives. A System of Intergovernmental Relations Determination Proclamation intends to create a rule of engagement between the federal government and regional governments as well as among the constituent units of the federation. This relation is important for different aspects as it can bring about economic growth, minimizes conflict, beings about cooperation, and helps to initiate cross-border development initiatives involving people living on the borderlines of two or more regional states within the federation. But even though the constitution speaks of power division between regional and federal governments, it is silent on the IGR (*Interview with a federal government official, July 9, 2021*).

The Preamble of the proclamation states the objective of the proclamation as:

*Whereas, although the individual and collective powers and responsibilities of both the federal and state governments have been duly identified and set out in the constitution by virtue of the federal system of state organization in operation, it is believed that the governments at each level need to be backed by a cooperative relations framework that would assist them perform the tasks separately vested in them in joint collaboration and with one another beyond those powers and duties assigned to them collectively and thereby effectively function by having formulated shared policies and strategies, where deemed appropriate (Proclamation 1231/2021).*

Such legal frameworks, apart from enabling the constitutional vision of creating one political and economic community, it is believed that enables conflicts and misunderstandings within the

federal system through the maintenance of the system's ideals and its basic principles by strengthening intergovernmental relations institutions (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Intergovernmental Relations Policy Framework, 2016).

The Proclamation, therefore, envisioned avoiding future conflicts. According to a director at a federal institution (*Interview July 9, 2021*), the system of IGR is meant to bring conflicts between central or regional states or among the states to the table through forums. When this kind of platform is lacking it leads to conflicts as we have seen between Tigray and the federal government. So, one of the institutional deficiencies of federalism was this – the lack of institutional mechanism. Because power was held by the ERPFD at the center and its allies in regions, the friction with the federal government was less. Even if frictions appear, they are resolved through party lines. But this is not sustainable and stops somewhere as party smooth relations could break.

*There is a system deficiency in this country such as the lack of IGR which could have enabled the country resolve differences through peaceful means. Institutionalization could have avoided conflicts in the federation without leading to further damage. If an opposition wins in a regional government and has a different policy orientation than the center, there could arise conflicts. But the IGR is a guarantee for the resolution of the differences (Ibid).*

However, this proclamation issued by the federal HPR had faced criticisms for evading the powers of the regional governments and was seen as a tool of centralization by the federal government. The key point of contention during the discussions concerning the proclamation was to avoid the imposition from the center on the regions and the difficulty to govern every aspect of relations within the federation. However, the need for out of court resolution of matters arising from the relations within the federation as well as the equal bargaining power it supposedly gives for every level of government was one aspect of the enactment process (*Interview with federal government official July 9, 2021; Interview with a government official, June 15, 2021*).

Hence, the Tigray and federal government feud that led to the war would set either a positive or negative precedent given the strength of regional governments in their military capabilities. Although legal frameworks to govern the relations between the two entities had been put in

place, the fact that the federal system itself is being questioned would pose a different challenge to the relations between the center and the regions. On the other hand, the willingness by the federal government to engage militarily in the regions in events of conflict has created trust issues, which could be exacerbated in events of an opposition leading at a regional level. However, a parliamentarian (*Interview, August 28, 2021*), believes that the regions rather would learn not to take the path of the TPLF as it set a bad precedent risking the national unity.

Notwithstanding, others also argue that no other regional government could challenge the federal government like the TPLF did as the TPLF did so through its tentacles left in the state apparatus it dominantly operated. Although there are signs that regional governments could challenge the central government in a confrontational manner, the powerfulness of the federal government given its budgetary and violence capabilities would give it control over the regional governments (*Interview with a think tank head, June 3, 2021*).

A consultant with a think tank also argues that (*Interview, July 12, 2021*), Ethiopia before 2018 was over-centralization more like unitary. The transition of the decentralization was abrupt from a quasi-unitary highly centralized federal structure to highly decentralized and privatized power, narratives, and violence which led to mob justice as a result of this abruptness. The party structure, administrative units, and security became decentralized. It was unintentionally decentralized. It was done not through power but by violence. Then regions became stronger than the center with potential confrontational capabilities.

#### **4.4. Effects of the feud on the state-party relations in Ethiopia**

Among the elements of the EPRDF era government was a “catholic marriage” concluded between the state and the party, where the party is more powerful than the bureaucracy. The ideological orientation of the TPLF which other parties leading different regions accepted without questioning was incorporated into the constitution finally resulting in pseudo-federalism. The forced indoctrination of the ideology hindered the lack of proper implementation of federalism. Following the change in administration in 2018 and the restructuring of the EPRDF to form the Prosperity Party, as well as the internal divisions within the Front, exposed the party for fractures. Following this, the party affairs threatened to disintegrate the nation because the party was “too big to fail” for the federation could not afford to lose. The country’s integrity hanged over party security. This party conflict was transferred to a government feud. This shows that the parties are everything that the government should have to be. (*Interview with a political party policy affairs head, July 26, 2021; Interview with a high-level government official, June 15, 2021; Interview with rights activist and commentator, June 5, 2021, Interview with a parliamentarian, August 28, 2021*).

Hence, one of the characteristics of the TPLF/EPRDF administration was the fusion between the party and state. Major policy decisions are made by the party before getting to be seen by the governmental bureaucratic system. This dominance by the party reached the lower levels of administration through the democratic centralism principle it follows. Because of the intertwinement of the party and the state, appointees to lead government entities even considered party-approved policy documents more important than the constitutional provisions (*Interview with a constitutional lawyer, August 25, 2021*).

Hence, the use of state apparatus to achieve party interests and directing people’s complaints to party offices were normalized during the EPRDF. During the TPLF/EPRDF rule, all parties used to conduct party meetings during government working hours, election campaigns were conducted using government properties, and party decisions are more respected than government decisions. Even when citizens come to the government for complaints, they would write a letter to a government entity and copy the party heads as their instinct tells them where power lies. This became a trend and party office heads started entertaining complaints, and some of them call directly to the governmental entities to follow up on the progress of these complaints (Ibid).

*This is not the mandate of party offices. This had distorted the perception of the public's perception. The public was made to believe that the party serves them than the government (Interview with a government official, June 15, 2021).*

The democratic centralism aspect of the party, which requires final policy decisions by the executive committee of the party to be implemented at all levels of government was also one aspect of the party-state fusion during the EPRDF era. Because of its lack of democracy, it encourages totalitarianism as people at the core decide on big issues with opaque procedures. And it is not possible for a very small circle of people to address all issues. They haven't distributed the tasks and they do not accept an opinion from experts. It was also insulated from external influences. This also creates epistemic gaps as a small circle of people will have limitations. However, had it been properly implemented, democratic centralism itself would not be a problem; and the lack of the democratic element in it hindered the full implementation of the federal arrangement despite constitutional provisions. The practice of democratic centralism and its strict implementation through the party and state channels enabled to lead a centralized system of government despite having a constitutionally guaranteed federal structure that divides power between the federal and regional administrations. This created a perfect system on paper and a centralized government in practice (*Interview with a lawyer and political commentator, July 25, 2021; Interview with a government official, June 15, 2021; Interview with consultant and political commentator, July 12, 2021; Interview with a thinktank leader, June 3, 2021*).

This practice of democratic centralism prevented the full implementation of federalism on the ground and both administrations at the lower echelon and federal institutions wait for directions from the party's core leadership before embarking on any activity and this prevented them from becoming visionary and creative. The regions take directions from the central government and implement them. The federal system was here just as a symbol; it was non-existent practically (*Interview with a political party leader, July 28, 2021*). And because of this, the party and the state were two sides of one coin during the EPRDF.

And because the small circle of people that controlled the TPLF was at the core of major decisions, this practice is often termed as state capture, as Berhane Tsegab argued indicated in *የኢ.ሕ.ዲ.ዎ የቁልቁለት ጉዞ* (*Ye'ihadeg Yekulkulet Guzo/ The Downward Spiral of the EPRDF*) (2019). In an interview with PMO platform Policy Matters, Mustefe Oumer, the President of the

Somali region argued that the control of the state apparatus including the military and other security sectors by a small group of people is a state capture (2021). In a congruent manner to this, a lawyer and political commentator argue that the EPRDF was said to be the leader, it was fully under the control of the TPLF. The defense and security all had been controlled by it showing the presence of state capture. Because of this, while other political parties will be held accountable for any activity perceived to be against the law, they will be held accountable. But the same does not apply to TPLF/EPRDF.

However, a political party leader (*Interview July 10, 2021*) argues that the TPLF was by far a dominant party, but there was no state capture. They rather created a responsible and functional government despite all its deficiencies.

However, the riddance of democratic centralism and the expressed intentions of the Prosperity Party to separate party functions from government bureaucracies, as well as the promised diversion from the previous TPLF era practice of federalism coupled with the narratives from the central government against the principles of engagement during the EPRDF, the state-party relation in Ethiopia is given a cautious optimism of improvement (*Interview with a federal government official, July 9, 2021; Interview with a federal government official, August 25, 2021*).

But the developments seen in relation with Tigray, in one part linked to the dominance the TPLF had in the bureaucratic processes of the country, it is imperative that the separation of state and party functions needs a reassessment and reexamination of future engagements. However, the lack of a widened democratic space enabling opposition parties to have the chance to take power at any level of government creates a conducive environment for the dalliance of such measures. As the constitutional means of changing the government remains un-institutionalized, independence of the state apparatus remains elusive.

*The constitutional means of changing the government were not implemented. This is because of the Party's dominance of political life as well as its efforts to maintain power. All institutions are not independent and they are loyal to that regime or individual. A government in the hands of EPRDF or the Prosperity Party becomes the party property. The party is the state itself (Interview with a lawyer and political commentator).*

Like the EPRDF era, people still believe that the party is more important than the state and government bureaucratic apparatus. Although this was expected to change during the reform period, one area that the Prosperity Party stuck to is the strong intermarriage between the state and the party. And “Still, party and state are one; and even if one has to choose, it is the party that comes first” (*Interview with a government official, June 15, 2021*). Therefore, the Tigray incident and the way it developed to create a feud with the federal government should lead to a reexamination of such marriages. The strengthening of the fusion between the state and party has continued. Unless the TPLF/EPRDF era administration should not be blamed for this mistake while the same practice is upheld by the current party and administration.

The detachment of the functions of the state and party is an important element for democratization and parties should not create states in their images, as was during the EPRDF era. This has dwarfed the practice of a multi-party system and the public was made to believe that the state and party are not separate. As the number of political parties winning seats within the parliament increases, it would eventually lead to decoupling the state and the party. As far as the rent distribution comes through the party, and the party is dominant, it would be difficult to achieve separation of the state and party (*Interview with consultant and political commentator, July 12, 2021*).

Although there were commitments at the federal government level to achieve separation of the state and party functions, the sixth general elections have shown that it would be a long road to achieving it (*Interview with political party leaders, July 28, 2021; Interview with political party policy affairs head, July 26, 2021*).

Two interviewees from political parties said that (*Ibid*) from the sixth general elections, it was clear there was no change in terms of state-party fusion in the country. During the EPRDF era, there was a clear marriage between the party and the state. But during the Prosperity Party, there is pretending that the party and the state are separate. However, in real terms, it remained similar. “I say the state and the party concluded a catholic marriage” (*Interview with a political party, leader, July 26, 2021*)

Another interviewee on the other hand believes that there were no efforts made to separate the state and party during the EPRDF era.

*Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed had repeatedly spoken of separating party and state affairs. This gave me the hope that things would improve in the future although it could be difficult to achieve this overnight. But probably this could be one of the issues the reform tightened its grips on. Therefore, it is important to fight not just the flesh of the TPLF but also its beliefs. This state-party affair is becoming ugly ... It is a must that this Tigray crisis should lead to a reexamination of such relations. Because, one of the main features of the TPLF's administration was this merger of state and party affairs (Interview with a government official, June 15, 2021)*

A federal government official (*Interview August 25, 2021*) and a parliamentarian (August 28, 2021) rather are optimistic that the party and state are getting separated and there is optimism that the boundaries of the state and party will be understood by all personnel across the bureaucratic establishments. This is being seen at the federal level after the formation of the Prosperity Party, argues a parliamentarian.

However, the fusion between the party and the state will remain the same because, despite the general provisions for the separation of the state and party in the country, there is no clear legal framework that would govern these relations. Hence the fusion would remain as long as this is sorted out (*Interview with a think tank leader*). And, despite some improvements at the appointment of officials at democratic institutions, the fusion between the party and state is more prevalent now than in the past (*Interview with rights activist and commentator, June 5, 2021*).

However, an optimistic consultant and political commentator argue, there is a good chance that the federal system could back down from imposing decisions on regional governments, but with a balance. There should be limitations to the decentralization of power and it should not be loose (*Interview, July 12, 2021*).

But, the structure of the Prosperity Party is seen as a rather “one-man” party where the Prime Minister runs the show without participation. Hence, his will is implemented as government policy, replacing the previous collective leadership the system was accustomed to. The party lacks democracy and it functions as a pyramid. During the EPRDF's democratic centralism, there were debates on policy matters; now there is no such practice. The President of the Party determines the agenda and that is not debated at all.

*The institutional setup is still intact and the power of the PM is what it was given to him within the constitution. But now, because of the change in the party arrangements, the PM has more power. The PM is a king who leads by his will but not through organizational systems (Interview with a thinktank leader, June 3, 2021)*

Similarly, two political party policy affairs heads (*Interview July 26, 2021; August 2, 2021*) argue that, although the Prosperity Party has changed its name, it maintained the EPRDF era system and function. Similar to that of the TPLF era, the same state-party relations remain intact during the Prosperity Party.

*Nothing has changed and the state is not free from political influence. This is one of the main problems of the federation. The Prosperity Party only had a name change and the substance has not changed. The party controls the government. Except for the structure and person change, the EPRDF is still in power. Unless the constitution changes, there can't be real change both in the federal system as well as ethnolinguistic-based political mobilization (Interview with a political party policy affairs head and author, August 2, 2021).*

A lawyer and political commentator (*Interview July 3, 2021*), also agrees that not much has changed in terms of state-party relations during EPRDF and Prosperity Party. The party-state link at the level of the bureaucracy remains pervasive and nothing much has been done to liberate the bureaucracy from the yoke of the party.

The discussion above indicates that the TPLF crisis is an alarm for the federal system to work on the separation of state and party affairs. Initial signals of separating the state and party did not continue as promising as they were, and although there is a general distaste for the fusion state-party affairs during the TPLF/EPRDF administration, concrete targets to separate the two had not been achieved. Hence, in order not to create a “draconian” party whose failure does not pose danger to the federation as well as national unity, it is imperative that lessons are taken from the Tigray crisis which was in part related to the control to state apparatus the TPLF had at the center and at all regional levels. As a federal official believed (*Interview, July 9, 2021*), if the promises being made by the Prosperity Party are implemented on the ground, it could be a positive step for the separation of the party and the state.

## **4.5. Implications to vertical IGR and future scenarios**

### **4.5.1. Implications**

Hence, with such concerns with the federal government's approaches, conflicts could arise between one or more regional governments and the federal government. And, because of the military strength regions are building, this could prove detrimental to the decentralized federation as well as power relations among constituent units and in their dealings with the federal government.

It is arguable whether there would be regional governments that could take lessons from the Tigray region and TPLF actions and challenge the federal government, especially after witnessing where it led to. One side of the argument goes that the TPLF and the administration went this far to challenge the federal government because of the forces it built as well as the state apparatus it exploited while it was at the center. On the other side, however, because of the increasing number of forces being trained and armed in different regions, the possibility of similar trends continuing is high and this could endanger the peaceful coexistence within the federation.

Because of the absence of principles and norm-based engagement between entities, when there is a problem in one region, the other speaks blaming the other rather than allowing that region to deal with its problem. There is arrogance and hubris among the elite causing the internal conflict between the Amhara and Oromo Prosperity Party members (*Interview with a think tank leader, June 3, 2021*).

A consultant and political commentator (*Interview July 12, 2021*) similarly believe that, because of the intrastate security dilemma in Ethiopia, similar incidents like the Tigray crisis could happen. A sign of such development was observed during the Somali operation in the early days of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's administration while Abdi Omar was in power; which is a small flashpoint that this could happen. However, a major confrontation with the federal government could come from two regions: Amhara and Oromia regions. But this will completely change Ethiopia and it won't be like the Tigray war because of the population, and their contribution to the army. Minor issues might emerge from the peripheries but they won't cause major conflict.

The power struggle and inter-party fissure within the Prosperity Party display that the federation has become of two regional governments – the Amhara and Oromia regions where the two regions contend for dominance. Hence, regions other than the two cannot come out as contenders to federal power because they will face the fate of Tigray and immediately get peripheralized (*Interview with rights activist and commentator, June 5, 2021*).

*In the future, the power struggle and dominance within the federation will be exchanged between the two ethnic groups. One dominates, and they negotiate to balance it and this circle continues. But if the two enter into a real conflict, the state would collapse. In this federal arrangement where the Oromo and Amhara remain dominant, no other regional states could come to challenge the federal government (Ibid)*

The accumulation of huge fighting forces in regions is a risk to such incidents and could lead to the disintegration of the federation. Because of the lack of trust between the federation, which is also the reason for the clash between the former ethnic-based parties that joined the Prosperity Party, especially between the Amhara and Oromia regions, it would be difficult to check the forces administered under regional governments. This confrontation between the two regions could lead the other to resist the federal government while one of them is in control of the center. Hence, the current trends at regional levels are more like the country is heading to a confederation than a federation. The required level of trust is not available to bring the regional military forces into the center and interact based on the legally stipulated framework. And regions have seen from Tigray that, the military forces give them political leverage as they believe it is their safety. Whenever regions feel things are unfavorable for them, they will become confrontational because of the trust they have in the military forces they build (*Interview with a lawyer and former federal government employee, August 10, 2021*).

The accumulation of military-grade forces at regional governments has made them stronger and the weaponry and the training of personnel are already eroding the federal government's constitutionally guaranteed power to form and leading military power. This signals that Ethiopia is much closer to confederation than federation is being witnessed. Regions have become more assertive the power of the federal government is shrinking from time to time because of bulging power at the regions. Although much of the challenge to the federation comes from Tigray as had been witnessed since 2018, it is evident that other regions could also pose similar challenges

to the federation. We have seen signals of the same in the Somali region during Mohammed Omar's administration (*Interview with a political party policy affairs head, August 25, 2021*).

Another political party policy head and author (*Interview August 2, 2021*) also agrees that the military power that the regional governments are building and the show of force they are displaying is not a trait of a federal system. This is like a confederation. It is not natural for regional governments to form defense forces as we are seeing in a federation. This trend by the regional governments which are maintaining military-grade security forces will undermine the functioning of the federal system and would eventually lead to feuds and conflicts as seen with Tigray.

On the other hand, a federal government office director (*Interview July 9, 2021*) argues that other regions will not take the same course as the TPLF's Tigray region did and there will be a balanced relation between the federal and regional governments. And any friction that happens in the course will be resolved through the legally stipulated means helping balance the relationship between the federal and regional governments. At times of failure of such institutional mechanisms, the federal government could use its budgetary and other leverages to tame regions.

A parliamentarian (*Interview August 28, 2021*) argues on the other hand that the rest of the regions have learned that the path taken by the TPLF is dangerous and endangers the federation itself. It is also dismantling the country they belong to. Therefore, no other regional government or forces would pursue that path to stand against the federal government's actions and decisions.

Hence, if regional governments take positive lessons from the Tigray crisis, the federation can remain intact and if they take a lesson from it that they can confront the federal government to make it do what they want, conflicts could arise and escalate.

#### 4.5.2. Future Scenarios

From discussions with respondents, the following possible scenarios for future state-party and center-region relations are drawn.

Table 4 Possible scenarios for Ethiopia’s decentralized federal system

Theme	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Challenges
Separate Party-State relations	If the promises of the Prosperity Party are fulfilled, the state and party functions could be separated. This could also benefit from a legal framework enforcing separation of party and state functions	The electoral win by the Prosperity Party could make it continue the EPRDF era administration because of the lack of any political force in the federal and regional houses to challenge this practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A strong culture of party-state links within the bureaucrat</li> <li>- The public’s perception</li> <li>- The party commitment</li> <li>- Formulating law governing this relation</li> </ul>
Center-Region Relations	Strong and confrontational regional governments could emerge if the trend of building military-grade forces continues. Or the center to periphery governance will continue if regional	A balanced relation could emerge if the constitutionally stipulated power divisions are respected and regions downgrade their military-grade forces. Hence, stronger federal and regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Centralization of warring capabilities</li> <li>- The acceptability of the constitution as a neutral arbiter</li> <li>- The Interparty conflicts between the Amhara and Oromia branches</li> </ul>

	governments are not demanding to ascertain their power and the federal government is not checked	governments with balanced relations could happen if both sides abide by the IGR proclamation and the constitution.	of the Prosperity Party -
Tigray Region	If a political settlement can be achieved, Tigray could remain in the federation more like a confederate member as it won't be willing to disarm its forces	With no amenable political settlement, Tigray's fate could be cessation despite who wins the war. Hence, this could lead to cessation of in the long run	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Closed doors for dialogue</li> <li>- Increased mobilization of forces</li> <li>- Lack of initiatives for negotiation</li> <li>- The increasing role of the international community</li> </ul>

\*A contribution by the author drawn from result and discussion

The table above presents the possible scenarios the future of Ethiopia's decentralized federalism would look like. The scenarios are presented according to the research objectives as well as in line with the case study raised. These are drawn based on the discussions the researcher had with the interviewees and review of various sources.

Accordingly, the State-Party affairs have a promising future when one looks at the promises by the administration. However, a win in the sixth general elections as well as challenges such as the strong culture of linking state and party affairs could hamper this.

On the other hand, the center and region relations is stretched between strong regional governments that could challenge the federal government compromising the federation or a balanced norms based relation. However, the military buildup in the regions as well as the lack of dependability of the constitution as a neutral arbiter could be challenges for this.

In addition, concerning Tigray region, as the region will not be ready to disarm its forces, the possible relation it would have with the Ethiopian federation is in a confederate arrangement given amenable political settlements. Unless, the possible future of Tigray is cessation with the Ethiopian state despite the outcomes of the war. But mobilization of forces by both sides as well as lack of initiatives for negotiation and the involvement of the international community could prove challenges for amenable political settlements.

## **Chapter Five: Conclusion and Policy Implications**

### **5.1. Conclusion**

Ethiopia was restructured as a federal state with a central and nine regional governments following the adoption of the FDRE constitution in 1995. Since adoption of the federal system, the EPRDF and its allies have been controlling power at the federal and regional levels. Throughout these years, the federal system was characterized as a paper-perfect federalism as decisions and state function were centralized because of the party's ideological hegemony and the democratic centralism principle.

Through the principle democratic centralism, the administration effectively centralized the constitutionally decentralized system. The pervasive dominant party system the EPRDF created allowed it control state apparatus to the level the state and the party became inseparable. This dominance in turn gave the Front a control over the relations sub-national entities made with the center or among themselves to the level disputes were given interparty solutions without passing through government structures.

The fusion between the state and the party which some say is a “catholic marriage” did not create a system of inter-governmental relations in the country. As conflicts or public demands are given solutions from the party, the public also believed that real power lied within the party than the state apparatus. To the extent, the party was “too big to fail” for Ethiopia's federalism whose demise could lead to the disintegration of the nation.

However, following the change in administration in 2018 in the wake of widespread protests across Ethiopia, the country's federal system witnessed a new trend where different political parties lead at the federal and regional levels. In the EPRDF era, all regions and the federal government were led by the EPRDF or its allies. The four member parties of the Front, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the Amhara Democratic Party (formerly the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM)), the Oromo Democratic Party (formerly the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO)) and the Southern Ethiopian Peoples' Democratic Movement (SEPDM) run Tigray, Amhara, Oromia and Southern regions respectively. The other five regions were governed by the EPRDF ally parties in Afar, Gambella, Benshangul Gumuz, Harari and Somali regions.

Following the change in administration from within the EPRDF, the merger of the EPRDF into a national Prosperity Party (PP) left out the TPLF, the ideological mastermind of the Front; and the senior of the four members. The others were joined by the five allies of the EPRDF to form the national unified one party. This led to the TPLF lose power at the center and administer only Tigray region while the rest of the country is under the leadership of the Prosperity Party; unseen in the history of federalism in the country since 1995.

The disagreement and division within the EPRDF became public when the TPLF declined the merger reasoning that there is no unity of thought within the parties to the merger. It also deemed the merger a move intended to extent the power of the administration that overtook from the EPRD. This created a long feud between the two parties as well as the administrations they governed finally leading to war.

The nature of administration created in the country because of separate parties leading at a regional and federal levels as well as the new party's structure and resolve to separate party and state affairs were the triggers for this study. The researcher's objectives were to find out how and what caused the feud between the two sides, how this would impact the center-region relations in the country, to what level it would impact the state-party relations in the country as well as what lessons this would give to the remaining members of the federation. The researcher also tried to draw the possible scenarios pertaining to the research objectives and questions.

The research found out that, while the feud has multiple causes and fueling factors, the differences and disagreements on the merger of the EPRDF, the mishandling of the reform process and the Eritrean peace deal the new administration was engaged in, power struggle and the sixth general elections as well as resentment from the side of the TPLF side were singled out as the main factors for the disagreement.

Having disagreed with the rest of the members of the EPRDF on the merger of the party, the TPLF had declared the merger illegal. The TPLF questioned the need for a unified national party and said its intentions were to restore the brutalities of the Derg era. Many agree that this merger had created the crack between the federal government and Tigray regional government henceforth, between the newly created Prosperity Party and the TPLF. One of the reasons for this difference is the ideological shift that this brought within the party consequently leading to the

loss of power in a country that the TPLF created in its form. This led to the sidelining of the TPLF from central roles of decision making.

While the TPLF's did not want to accept the merger and be part of the new party because of ideological differences, the Prosperity Party on the other had announced it won't be a prisoner of ideologies and pursue "pragmatism," which some argue was not the fact on the ground and it did not abandon the EPRDF era ideological orientations.

On the other hand, this merger of the party led to loss of central power for the TPLF and it started to administer a region with an opposing view to the centrally governing party. Although the TPLF was not content with the removal of high-level officials in the state bureaucracy as well as the security sectors, the loss of ideological control over state affairs was one main point of departure of the two sides. Because the TPLF was the guarantor of the EPRDF coalition, when this ideological leverage the TPLF had over the coalition was lost, it failed to accept the outcome of the power struggle that followed. As they were not prepared for the change, and their expectation that a person that they would control would come to power failed, the TPLF resorted to discrediting the power at the center.

This was especially intensified with the postponement of the sixth general elections in the event of the global coronavirus pandemic. Immediately after the postponement of the elections, the TPLF said it will consider the federal government illegitimate starting from October 5, 2020. The federal government also exploited the constitutional and institutional mechanisms to justify the need for the postponement of the elections, which would eventually lead to the extension of terms for the parliament and the executive.

However, Tigray established a regional level election commission and conducted a regional election. The federal government in its part deemed the elections illegal, escalating the feud between the two sides.

The mishandling of the reform process, especially that of the Eritrean peace deal, was not welcomed by the TPLF which was a major bone of contention between the two sides. While the TPLF argued the process excluded them from engaging in a process that would directly affect through the demarcation of Ethio-Eritrean border, the federal government was content with the peace process that ended a 20-year war. This demand from the Tigray governing party was also

seen as an intervention in the constitutional powers of the federal government while the Tigray administration questioned the genuineness of the deal as the text of the agreement the two sides signed was never publicized by the government. The TPLF also went to defy the federal government's decisions to change leadership within the army and to transport arms and personnel from Tigray region.

On the other hand, the blame given to the TPLF for the mistakes over the 27 years until 2018, including grave human rights violations and suppression, was at the center of the contention between the two sides.

Although these factors are immediate factors for the feud, the real sources of the problem are, it was found out, rather the structural deficiencies in the country's federalism and state making.

The feud seen between the federal government and a regional government led an opposition party, also proved to have an impact on the center-region relations of the federation. The researched found out that the feud is an indication that it could set a negative contestation between the federal government and regions given the correspondence between the federal government and Tigray region involved threats of forceful actions. Hence, it warrants that the constituent units of the federation need to be handled carefully.

While the creation of the Prosperity Party redefined the center-periphery relation in this because regions have representations within the centrally governing party which give the perception that they have an equal role in national issues, the recent trends of militarization of the police forces in the regional governments, such efforts by the federal government could mean a direction to the disintegration of the federal government. With the growing strength of regional governments in terms of armed forces, it would be a challenge to bring a balance between the federal and regional governments that would lead to a system that would accommodate differences.

In the absence of the TPLF at the center, the Prosperity Party repeatedly promised to separate the state and party affairs in departure from the previous practice of fused relations that dwarfed the full implementation of the federalism stipulated within the constitution. The abolition of democratic centralism and the expressed intentions of the Prosperity Party to separate party functions from government bureaucracies, as well as the promised diversion from the previous TPLF era practice of federalism coupled with the narratives from the central government against

the principles of engagement during the EPRDF, the state-party relation in Ethiopia is given a cautious optimism of improvement. This optimism in one part is linked to the escalation of the feud as the TPLF/EPRDF was more than the state, which the Prosperity Party said the truth should be the reverse. With a strong multi-party system and democratization of the system, the decoupling of the system could happen. But, because of the huge irregularities during the sixth general elections held in June 2021, this is a long way to go.

The Tigray-federal feud is an indication that the federal government is willing to engage militarily in such situations. Hence, both levels of administration within the federation would seek to establish a norm-based relations through a legally binding framework. However, the increasing militarization of regional security forces as well as the interparty disagreement within the Prosperity Party would challenge the practicality of this. The huge difference between the Oromo and Amhara Prosperity Party members coupled with the lack of clarity on the merger of the EPRDF would make such feuds detrimental to the federation.

In order to create a norm-based relations between the federal and regional governments, a new for inter-governmental relations had been issued by the federal HPR. However, this law is contested because of the perception that it encroaches into the powers of the regional governments. Apart from this, the fact that the constitution itself is being questioned could also pose to the implementation of such initiatives created based on the constitution.

## **5.2.Policy Implications**

Based on the findings of the study, the following policy implications had been identified:

- ♣ While contestations are common in federations, acceptable and agreed upon platforms to resolve such disagreements should be put in place. Hence, a norm-based relation should be established for center-region relations in Ethiopia
- ♣ Political settlement of problems needs to be developed and the culture of dialogue should be built among the new generation. This could be integrated in the civic education at schools.
- ♣ A culture of accepting differences needs to be built through national dialogues so that the federation can be tolerant of diversity of thought without leading to confrontations

- ♣ The constitutional provisions of the division of power between the federal and regional governments have to be respected by all levels of government. Doing so needs to be rewarding in a manner that leads for more respect to the constitution
- ♣ Regions need to develop cooperative relations among themselves as well as with the federal government for a better development as contestations and confrontations in an immature democracy could immediately escalate into conflicts
- ♣ The federal government needs to empower regions so that they act independent of it. This would eventually create a strong federal government, as strong regions form strong central government
- ♣ As the militarization of regional security forces could immediately escalate contestations into armed confrontation, centralization of warring capabilities should be given priority. This needs to be done through discussions with regional governments as impositions might have unintended results
- ♣ The resolve the federal government showed to separate the state and party needs to be put in action and proper training and professionalization of government bureaucracy should be prioritized for the proper functioning of the federal system. party and state power should be a main target for improvement.
- ♣ Top priority needs to be given to the territorial integrity of the nation so that such confrontations and contestations won't lead to disintegration of the country
- ♣ The fissure within the Prosperity Party needs to be resolved as soon as possible as this could result in anarchy in an event of lack of unity of action within the party. A failure to lead the country in a unified manner in the absence of a proper multi-party system might create a vacuum of leadership
- ♣ Prosperity Party needs to clarify the confusions regarding the merger of former EPRDF member parties and allies, a point of confusion for the public
- ♣ The inclusiveness of the federation needs to be realized by creating a proper representation and acceptability of the system by the rest of the members

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## Annexes

### List of Interviewees

No.	Name	Date and place of interview	Remarks
1.	Mr. Abdu Ali Hijira	July 2021; Phone, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	
2.	Adem Kassie (PhD)	July 2021; Email	
3.	Mr. Amaha Dagneu	August 2021; Phone; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	
4.	Mr. Amanyihun K Reda	July 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	
5.	Ann Fitz-Gerald (Prof.)	June 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	
6.	Anonymous person	June 2021; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	
7.	Mr. Befekadu Hailu	June 2021; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	
8.	Dr. Mengistu Assefa	July 2021; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	
9.	Mr. Hailemichael Lemma	July 2021; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	
10	Hirut Bekele (PhD)	August 2021; Phone, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	
11	Mr. Merhatsedk Mekonnen	June 2021; Phone; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	
12	Mr. Misgana Mulugeta	August 2021; Phone, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	
13	H.E. Mr. Petros Wolde Senbet	August 2021; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	
14	H.E. Degefa Tolossa (Prof.)	July 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	
15	Rahel Bafie (PhD)	July 2021; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	
16	Mr. Solomon Goshu	August 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	
17	H.E. Ato Tesfaye Daba	August 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	
18	Mr. Tsegaberhan Tadesse	July 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	

**N.B.** Identifiers and specific dates of interview had been intentionally removed by the researcher to avoid direct implications to the codified quotations and paraphrased usages of the interviews with the above listed informants.

## **Interview questions**

### **Questions to experts**

1. In what terms could the Tigray federal feud will have impacts on the party-state relations in Ethiopia?
2. What about its effects on the relations between the central government and regional governments?
3. What lessons could this have to the remaining regional governments in their dealings with the central government?
4. What does this show about the post EPRDF relationship between the state and the ruling party/parties?
5. Do you think this feud in some way is linked to the lack of party leverages that the EPRDF used to enjoy pre-2018? What are these changes?
6. What possible forms of relations could we see in the long-run in terms of party-state and center-region relations?
7. What could happen to the state-party as well as center-region relations in an event of a win by an opposition party at a regional council?
8. What could be the impact of oppositions winning some seats at the Parliament in terms of party state relations although these seats do not enable them to form a government?
9. How do you evaluate the institutional setups of the government that help govern center-region as well as party-state relations Ethiopia?

### **Questions to governmental institutions**

1. What mechanisms are in place to manage party-state relations in the country?
2. How is the relationship between the central government and the regional governments governed?
3. What kind of mechanisms and instruments do you have to monitor and evaluate these relationships?
4. What kind of relationship did you notice between the ruling party and the state in the country?
5. What kind of relations have been witnessed between the regional and central governments?
6. How is the case of the TPLF and the Tigray government seen in this context? Is it an isolated situation or an indication of problematic center region as well as party state relations?
7. Throughout the two years and a half leading to the war in February 2021, there have been various tit-for tats and disagreements between the two levels of government and the parties. What kind of assessments do you make in such situations and how was it handled?
8. What kind of lessons could other regional governments learn out of the feud between Tigray and the federal government?
9. What lessons does this have for the state party relations in the country?
10. Will a central party have that much significant role like the EPRDF enjoyed?

11. What will a win by the opposition at regional level councils mean to the state party relations as well as the center region relations?

### **Questions to opposition political parties**

1. How critical is the Tigray-Federal feud to the country's decentralization/federalism?
2. How does it relate to the previous state party relations in the country in the time of the EPRDF?
3. In what ways could this help in rethinking the state-party relations in the country?
4. What kind of change do you expect in terms of party state relations in Ethiopia following the demise of the EPRDF?
5. Do you think the structure and institutional set up of the PP would create a different form of state-party as well as center region relations?
6. How does the feud relate to the center region relations of the federation?
7. How can this affect the relations between the federal and the remaining regional governments in the country?
8. Will this be a source for a significant change in the relation between the center and the region?
9. What effects could a win by different political parties at the center and one or more regional states have to the state-party relations as well as center-region relations in the country?
10. In what ways could the merger of the EPRDF as well as the formation of the PP change the country's state-party as well as party state relations?
- 11.
12. OPP and APP differences and accusations of each other affect the relations between those regions and the relations the two have with each other?
- 13.
14. What form of center region relations do you expect to happen in the country at a time where some regional governments are becoming more assertive of their powers?
15. What pros and cons could these changes have on the federation as well as its decentralized form of governance?