Internal Conflict Displacement Galore in the Horn of Africa: Ethiopia on the Radar.

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Abstract

Generally, the world has enjoyed relative peace and stability after the Cold War in 1991, but never the end to insecurity, conflicts, and wars (interstate and intrastate). One outcome of these insecurities is conflict-induced internal displacement. Though not new, its prevalence in recent times has become a hurdle that countries and the international community must reckon with. In fact, conflict-IDPs globally has received about 215 percent hikes in the last two decades, while in Africa, the increase is about 135 percent. However, the Horn of Africa is the hardest hit. As such, the paper provides an overview of conflict displacement and explores the conditions that sustains it, using Ethiopia as a unit of analysis. The paper found several conditions: constitutional, socio-psycho-cultural, political, economic, and human rights abuse as critical to conflict-IDPs deepening. The article further shows the trends of IDPs and its security implications for Ethiopia. Pragmatic solutions have been recommended accordingly.

Keywords: The Horn of Africa; Ethiopia, Communal Violence, Internal Displacement, Inter and Intrastate wars.

1. Background

Security dynamics in Africa have changed dramatically since September 11, 2001, although intrastate security threats are more profound than interstate ones (Williams 2019: 9). Arguably, protracted internal conflicts in Africa have become an important precursor to increasing insecurity and violence, which can be seen in other forms of decentralized confrontation—namely, terrorist activities, vigilantism, and civil unrest (Von Soest/Juan 2018).

The Horn of Africa is one of the key regions in Africa hardest hit by interstate and civil wars after colonialism (Dias 2013, Woodward 1996), and this has had numerous unthinkable and bizarre effects on the region. For example, available data¹ shows Somalia recorded 1,407 battles, 20 riots, 556 explosions/remote violence, and 450 violence against civilians leading to about 3,099 fatalities in the last year. Similarly, Ethiopia recorded 111 battles, 47 riots, 17 explosions/remote violence, and 145 violence against civilians resulting in 3029 reported fatalities (ACLED data 2021). Additionally, South Sudan and Sudan recorded 524 battles, 104 riots, 15 explosions/remote violence, and 660 violence against civilians causing 3,314 reported deaths (ACLED data 2021). Therefore, it becomes intuitive that internally displaced persons (IDPs) will increase once the number of violent eruptions goes up.

Generally, the number of conflict-IDPs worldwide has remained consistently high, although trends have increased after 2011, with slight declines in 2016 and 2017. This observation can be clearly seen from the chart shown below (figure 1):

¹ The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) dashboard provides statistical records on conflict related events across the globe (08.01.2020 – 08.01.2021). Retrieved January 15, 2021 (<https://acleddata.com/dashboard/#/dashboard>)

Figure 1 **source:** Authors, based on Data from IDM XLSL file(<https://www.internaldisplacement.org/database/displacement-data>).

From the chart, conflict IDPs has increased from 21.3 million in 1990 to 45.9 million in 2019, representing about 215 percent². Major contributing countries include, but not limited to Syrian Arab Republic, DR Congo, Burkina Faso, Afghanistan, El Salvador, Yemen, Mali, South Sudan, Nigeria, Libya, Somalia, Philippines, Ethiopia, Colombia, and Iraq³.

Regionally, conflict-IDPs in Africa over the last decade have been on the rise reaching about 135 percent in 2019 (Williams 2019, GRID report 2020). In fact, the literature shows that of the 25 million forcibly displaced people in Africa, around 84 percent have their routes in the following countries: Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Sudan*, Central African Republic (CAR), South Sudan*, Somalia*, Nigeria, Cameroon, and Ethiopia* (Williams 2019). Of these eight (8) countries, half are from the Horn of Africa⁴. Similarly, the report by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) (2019:13) shows the number of newly displaced persons because of conflict exceeded 7.5 million in 2018 alone. The issue of IDPs is

²IDMC Data (<https://www.internal-displacement.org/database/displacement-data>)

³ IDMC Data (<https://www.internal-displacement.org/database/displacement-data>)

⁴ The four countries in question are those marked by asterisks in the preceding sentence.

undoubtedly widespread in Africa, particularly in the Horn. As such, the country of interest for this paper is Ethiopia.

Ethiopia is the most populous country in the Horn of African and the second largest population in Africa, after Nigeria (Statistica 2020)⁵. Geographically, Ethiopia is surrounded by countries that have historically been conflict-prone such as Eritrea (North), Djibouti (East), Somalia (South-East), Kenya (South) and Sudan (West). This creates high level security complexities compounded by ethnic divisions that mark the country⁶. In recent times, profuse occurrences of inter-communal violence and confrontations between Government forces and unidentified armed groups in Ethiopia, especially, the southern and western Oromia is undesirable. According to the Ethiopian Humanitarian Fund (EHF) annual report (2019), late 2018 conflict spilling over into 2019 resulted in over 3.2 million internal displacements. Of major concern is the ethnic tensions and the security fragility created in conflict-affected areas in Dire Dawa (Eastern part of Ethiopia), Western and Southern Oromia, Tigray region and its surroundings, Benishangul-Gumuz, parts of Amhara, among others. This is, because fragility and ethnic tensions have greater chances of escalating into an incessant cycle of violence and conflicts (Lieberman/Singh 2012). Thus, the paper seeks to answer the question: *What is the state of Conflict-IDPs in the HOA, which conditions sustain the insecurity and the increasing number of IDPs in Ethiopia, and how these can be mitigated?*

To answer this question, the paper is structured into five (5) parts. The *first part* constitutes the introduction, argument, and the structure of the paper. Here, the contending issues leading to the research question is highlighted, including how the researchers approached the paper. In the *second part*, the researchers map out the design, nature of the data and method of data collection employed for the paper as well as defining key concepts. The *third part* is designed to provide

⁵ According to the 2020 data from Statistica, Ethiopia's population hovers around 115 million. Retrieved January 13, 2021 (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1121246/population-in-africa-by-country/>)

⁶ Kassa/Mollaw (2017) reports that there exist over eighty-five (85) ethno-linguistic groups in Ethiopia.

an overview of protracted internal displacement in the HOA drawing on examples from Somalia, Sudan, Kenya, South Sudan, and Uganda. The *fourth part* is intended to provide discussions on Ethiopia under the following sub-themes: (a) Overview, Trends, and Implications of conflict-IDPs for Ethiopia; (b) Conditions sustaining the protracted nature of conflict IDPs; and (c) Strategies to offset the conditions and the negative effects of Conflict-IDPs in Ethiopia. The *final part* is the summary and conclusion.

2. Methodology/Key Concepts

This paper is predominantly qualitative, complimented by elements of quantitative data. Both primary and secondary sources were consulted. The primary data sources include but not limited to transcribed interviews, YouTube videos, and eye-witness reports. Meanwhile, the secondary data was collected from books, journal articles, local and international reports on internal displacement and intrastate wars, periodicals, newspaper and news feed, and relevant online sources. The data was reviewed and designed into themes to enhance the readability and clarity of the arguments and findings.

Notably, the paper takes on a descriptive character to draw pictorial views that reflect the realities on the ground. As the literature suggests, a study that recognises potential subjectivity and diverse accounts and experience on a given problem, requires a more direct presentation of data to reflect the true nature of the issues at play (Doyle et al. 2020, Bradshaw/Atkinson/Doody 2017). Likewise, Lambert/Lambert (2012: 256), observed that descriptive qualitative study is desirable and useful when the researcher is interested in knowing the dynamics associated with an event, and in particular, “who were involved, what was involved, and where did things take place”. The authors would, however, argue that the *aftermath of the event* is equally an important element to make Lambert and Lambert’s observation complete. For instance, *protracted internal displacement* as a major effect of internal conflict constitutes *a product of violence*.

Some key concepts are worth conceptualizing. First, *internally displaced persons (IDPs)* should be understood as individuals or groups of people compelled or obliged to flee, vacate their homes or place of residence without crossing an internationally recognized State border, in anticipation of or due to foreseeable “effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters.” (Deng 1998:5, para 2). From this definition, *protracted IDPs* are conceived as the cyclical and perpetual upsurge in the number of IDPs in their country of origin. Second, *intrastate conflict* shall refer to the kind of conflict or violence that happens within the recognized borders of a state⁷. This is distinguished from *interstate conflict* which connotes conflicts between and among recognized states. Third, *the Horn of Africa (HOA)* is considered as the region consisting of the following countries: Ethiopia, Djibouti, Kenya, Sudan, Eritrea, South Sudan, Uganda, and Somalia, although Encyclopaedia Britannica (2019) restricts it to Somalia, Djibouti, Eritrea, and Ethiopia because of their longstanding historical and cultural interconnectedness.

3. State of protracted Conflict-IDPS in the Horn of Africa (HOA)

Stability in the Horn of Africa can save many resources not only for the nationals of the region but also for the international community. However, this remains a utopian dream due to recurring conflicts. The evidence suggests that both past and present wars and serious violence within the HOA are so intertwined that a spill over effect is inevitable (Berhanu 2013, Bereketeab 2013:4). Consistent with this observation, Mengisteab (2013) found that the combination of ethnic conflict and colonial impact has led to both intrastate and interstate wars⁸

⁷ These conflicts could be riots, violent democratic or protests. Further, the term is used interchangeably with communal violence, although communal violence is more precise, narrower, but a better representation of the nature of intrastate conflicts in the Horn.

⁸ These include the outbreak of the border war between Ethiopia and Eritrea (1960-91, 1998-2000), the Kenya and Somalia war of 1963, Southern Sudanese war (1956–72, 1983–2005), and the Ethiopia and Somalia war over the Ogaden (1964, 1977-78, 2006-9). [See also UCDP-Uppsala Conflict Data Program (<https://ucdp.uu.se/conflict>)]

with devastating consequences. Of the many negative consequences, IDPs is a feature that cannot be overlooked. Therefore, this section briefly highlights the state of IDPs in the HOA.

Presently, internal displacement in the HOA is at record high⁹. For instance, the UNHCR 2019 report on “East and Horn of Africa” revealed that IDPs in Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan, and South Sudan totalled 9.5 million¹⁰. Additionally, available data from mid-2018 to end of year shows the number of conflict related IDPs in HOA exceeded 6 million (World Bank Group 2020:32). However, there were no records of internal displacement in Eritrea and Djibouti¹¹, restricting this aggregate to six countries (Ethiopia, Sudan, Kenya, South Sudan, Somalia, and Uganda). The chart below provides a vivid picture and highlights individual country figures:

Figure 2. **Source:** Authors, based on World Bank Group data (2020:32)¹²

It must be stated that the chart above shows both conflict related IDPs and disaster/ climate induced IDPs at the time. However, the subsequent paragraphs provide a brief overview of these countries drawing from their historical conflict situations and linking it to internal conflict

⁹ These displacements could be conflict, unforeseen disasters, and climate issues, but the focus here is more on conflict.

¹⁰ The summary of the report is available at this link:

<https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/pdfsummaries/GA2019-EastandHornofAfrica-eng.pdf>

¹¹ These countries will not be discussed because data is limited and the data available do not match my definition of IDPs.

¹² Retrieved from (<http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/167291585597407280/pdf/The-Borderlands-of-the-Horn-of-Africa.pdf>).

displacements. This is necessary for the reader to understand the nature of the conflict and displacement in the HOA.

Sudan: IDPs in Sudan are not a new thing. In fact, Sudan is marked by highly competitive elite political fragmentations, the use of militias, exacerbated by centralization to the neglect of the periphery (Downie/Kennedy 2011:4). This has become a source of protests, riots, and civil wars¹³, and the conflict between the government and the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF). The literature suggests the SRF¹⁴ and the dreaded Janjaweed¹⁵ which committed several atrocities in Sudan in the early 2000s (Human Right Watch 2005;2015), have been incredibly involved in the state-based violence in Darfur, Kordofan and the Blue Nile since 2011¹⁶. All these conflicts result in new IDPs. For example, the violent outbreak in West Darfur during the late December 2019 into early 2020 led to about 49,000 IDPs (UNHCR 2021: 24). Similarly, the World Bank Group's report (2020) shows the current IDPs in Sudan exceeds 2 million people. On January 15, 2021, intercommunal battles in West and South Darfur caused the displacement of over 100,000 people according to the UNHCR (2021) press release¹⁷. As such, protracted conflict arguably sustains IDPs in Sudan.

Somalia: Historically, the cohesion of Somalia, ethnic differences aside, was distorted by colonialism and the power play of Great Britain, France, Italy, and Ethiopia, particularly between the 1860s and 1890s, until Somalia became a republic on July 1, 1960. In the last three decades (post-Siad Barre government), Somalia has suffered from state collapse, the incursion of Islamic extremists (Al Shabaab) against the ruling government and various forms of local

¹³ This includes the Southern Sudan clashes from 1955–1972, and 1983–2005.

¹⁴ The SRF is a coalition of rebel groups in Darfur, Kordofan and the Blue which gained prominence in 2011—especially in their fight against former President Omar al-Bashir till his overthrow in 2019.

¹⁵ The Janjaweed metamorphosed into the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in 2014 and has since been used by the Sudan National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) actively in the ongoing intrastate conflict (<https://ucdp.uu.se/actor/630>)

¹⁶ UCDP Data: <https://ucdp.uu.se/country/625>

¹⁷ UNHCR: (<https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2021/1/600a93a64.html>)

violence, which escalated in 2011¹⁸. This struggle for power and control over limited resources, clan divisions and livelihood has created tension and uncertainties often leading to inevitable displacements (IDMC 2020a:1). For example, the total number of IDPs at the end of 2018 was more than 2.6 million, while there were 578,000 new conflict related IDPs in 2019, the country's highest in the last decade (IDMC 2020b:30). Again, reports indicate more than 87 percent of internally displaced persons in Somalia have been displaced for more than a year, suggesting a protracted nature (OCHA 2019a: 11). Lastly, the first half of 2020 recorded over 189,000 new conflict related IDPs (IDMC 2020a).

South Sudan: After its independence in 2011, South Sudan has not found the peace which was anticipated, rather civil wars and rise of insurgencies, evident in December 2013 and July 2016. According to Stauffer (2020), political witch-hunting, tracking and maiming ethnic groups deemed anti-government or opposition supporters have become a recurring phenomenon. South Sudan has engaged in two major civil wars besides the one that led to its independence. While the first lasted for about 17 years (1955 to 1972), the second lasted for 22 years (1983-2005) and the fight for independence lasted for 6 year (2005-2011). Displacements in these battles were inevitable. A recent report found that an estimated 4 million people were displaced in the first three months of 2020, where prolonged conflict, intercommunal violence, food insecurity and natural disasters were the primary cause (OCHA's report 2020: 6). In January 2020, the clashes in Western Equatoria (Mvolo County), the dispute in Abyei region, the combat in Maiwut, Yei, and Lainya counties, as well as the confrontations by Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition and the National Salvation Front forces, together resulted in 31,800 conflict IDPs (OCHA report 2020a:7)¹⁹. Also, the IOM Report (2020: 4) observed that of the 1.67 million internally displaced persons as of December 2019, 82 percent were state and

¹⁸UCDP Data: (<https://ucdp.uu.se/country/520>)

¹⁹ In the same vein intercommunal clashes in February and March 2020 regarding the Aboko, Nyirol and Pibor counties, and Jur River County added 14,100 IDPs (OCHA report 2020a:7)

communal conflicts. Interestingly, an overwhelming 90 percent of forced displacements in South Sudan between 2013 and 2017 were conflict-related (IOM 2020). Finally, IDPs trends in South Sudan since the civil war in 2013 have been upwards (IDMC 2019:17).

Kenya: The problem of IDPs in Kenya has existed for more than a century (Kiama/Koome 2014: 92). The main drivers are often politically motivated violence, land ownership and distribution disputes²⁰, communal and clan battles, climate problems and the rustling of cattle (IDMC report 2020c, Kiama/Koome 2014, Kamungi 2011), to list a few. For instance, the electoral violence in 2007/2008 after the controversial election result led to the displacement of nearly 663,921 persons across Kenya (Kamungi 2011: 231). Prior to this, election violence in 1992 and 1997 together led to the displacement of about 420,000 people mainly in the Rift Valley and Mombasa region/Coast province (Global IDP Database 2004:6,7). Beyond these, Rutto (2018) reports that over 2,500 people were displaced following a cross-border clash between West Pokot and Elgeyo Marakwet counties²¹. Additionally, the IDMC report (2020c) found that more than 930 people were displaced in May and September 2019 due to a water and pastureland conflict between the local content and pastoralists in Kitui County. A recent publication by the NRC/IDMC (2018:5), shows that almost 200 people were left homeless and displaced in renewed clashes at ChemChina farm in Trans Nzoia County. Interestingly, the figures for new conflict related IDPs dipped significantly from close to 10,000 in 2018 to 1,800 in 2019 (IDMC report 2020c:1). As such, though internal displacement is prevalent in Kenya, it is better than other states in the HOA.

²⁰ Land and border disputes in the following areas: “Busia/Teso, Migori/Kuria Gucha/TransMara, TransMara/Migori, Meru North/Isiolo, Meru North/Tharaka, Turkana/West Pokot and Marakwet/East Baringo” intermittently result in displaces once there are new clashes (see Global IDP Database 2004:10).

²¹ Relatedly, renewed clashes between West Pokot and Elgeyo Marakwe in 2019 together with a previous in 2016 clash of the same group resulted in about 400 displacement
,(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qy3SKiy-epE&list=PLxmn48_mCThHxHSQkGmNcceT5VIVQnbQ&index=93).

Uganda: The history of internal displacement in Uganda dates to the late 19th century when Britain's pursuit of power and territorial control resulted in thousands of displaced persons, particularly in the Bunyoro region (Kamara / Cyril / Renzaho 2017, Green 2008, Doyle 2000)²². Apart from this, post-colonial governments and their repressive nature, coupled with ethnic division and rustling of cattle, have led to violence that exacerbated displacement in the country²³. For example, the clashes between the LRA and the Yoweri Museveni government resulted in many displacements, particularly in northern Uganda when the group tried to overthrow the Yoweri government, preserve the Acholi culture and rule with the Ten Commandments led to more than 1.8 million displaced persons (UNHCR 2012, IDMC 2014). Apart from this, Uganda recorded 23,000 new IDPs in 2016 following an ethnic clash between the Bakonzo people and the Bamba ethnic groups in western Rwenzori region over political and election related disagreements (GRID report 2018:1). Remarkably, conflict-IDPs in Uganda have reduced drastically due to the absence of major conflict.

Concretely, the HOA is characterized by recurrent violence (domestic (civil and communal) wars and interstate wars) that can be traced back to ethnic division and identity crises, politicized security apparatus, food insecurity, border disputes, weak institutions, insurrections, terrorism, unstable leadership, poverty, inequalities, and diverse form of human abuse. The perpetuity of such triggers creates unbridled chaos and insecurity, which leads to high levels of displacement. As Collier and Hoeffler (2004) stated succinctly, the likelihood of recurring violence in a country with civil war experience, is extremely high. In this context, 90 percent of the civil wars of the past decade are said to have taken place in countries in which civil wars

²² The records show that it took over 50 years for the Bunyoro region to recover from the devastated demographics (Doyle 2000).

²³ Uganda has had both military and pseudo-civilian leadership for years, including Idi Amin (1971-1979), Milton Obote (1966-1971; 1980-1985), Bazilio Okello and Tito Oke (1985), and the administration of Yoweri Museveni (1986- till date)—the Northern Uganda conflict (1990s to 2000s), whose actions and inactions contributed to more displacement.

have taken place, at least in the past three decades (Marc 2014: 10). This suggests that as these conflicts recur, internal displacements will become inevitable. Although the literature suggests some IDPs return home, it is instructive to state that the likelihood of returnees becoming part of the new statistics or repeatedly displaced is remarkably high. Hence, the protracted violence or conflict in the HOA results in protracted internally displaced persons—the correlation appears high.

4. Conflict Internal Displacement (CID): The Case of Ethiopia

Ethiopia as already mentioned is large and populous with many ethnic groups. Just like countries in the HOA, the country has historically been conflict ridden—having engaged in interstate wars against Eritrea (1960-91, 1998-2000) and Somalia (1964, 1977-78, 2006-9) (NRC/IDMC 2012:1-2). In fact, Upsala conflict data summary (n.d)²⁴ shows Ethiopia, in the last 60years, has not only experienced interstate conflicts but also intrastate, non-state, and one-sided violence based on their data categories of coordinated violence. It follows, therefore, the claims of Clapham (2002: 49) and Feyissa (2014: 1) that though complex forms of social relationships and human interaction have existed for centuries in Ethiopia, peaceful coexistence has eluded them. Further, the literature shows Ethiopia has recorded “high fragility scores for its security apparatus” due to series of unending intercommunal violence in the last decade (Rameshshanker/MacIntyre/Stewart 2020:9). This underscores our attempt to discuss conflict IDPs in Ethiopia. The discussion will be done under three major sub-sections (a, b, and c):

a. Overview: Trends and Implications of Conflict IDPs in Ethiopia

Generally, displacement in Ethiopia is caused by several factors such as conflict, political instability, systemic human rights abuse, natural disasters, and the implementation of government resettlement policies (Yigzaw /Abitew 2019, Maru 2017, Van der Ploeg/Vanclay

²⁴ Uppsala Conflict Data Program:(<https://ucdp.uu.se/country/530>)

2017, Terminski 2013, Human Right Watch 2013:1, Lwabukuna, 2011). Briefly, the Ethiopian National Displacement (END) report (2020), revealed drought and floods to constitute a significant cause of displacement in Ethiopia. For instance, the report revealed that prolonged drought since 2015 has led to serious adverse effects on agricultural (drying up of water resources) and pastoral (reduction in pastures for livestock) communities across Ethiopia forcing them to move. Illustratively, floods in the regions of Afar, Somali, Oromia caused the displacement of about 202,202 people (END report 2020:1). However, the focus here will be on conflict-related displacement and trends. This is because several studies and reports point to conflict-induced displacement as a major issue and a facilitator of displacement in Ethiopia (Maru 2017, Yigzaw /Abitew 2019:33, END report 2020).

(i). Conflict-induced IDPs

Currently, there are major conflicts that appear dormant but can escalate given a little spark: Oromia nationalist clashes with the government, the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) and government clashes, the Oromo-Amhara-Tigray clashes, and the Tigray-Ethiopian government conflict. The Tigray (TRPF)-Ethiopian government conflict which started in November 2020 has resulted in over 2.2 million IDPs as of January 2021 (Clarke 2021). More so, aggregated data from the IDMC DTM website shows that about 94, 329 were displaced by conflict in Metekel, SNNP's region²⁵, and Benishangul Gumz areas between December 26, 2020 and January 15, 2021²⁶. Additionally, data derived from new conflict highlights by the IOM DTM between November 15 and December 25, 2020 in hotspots (Tigray, Oromia,

²⁵ Abbreviation for "Southern Nations, Nationalities and People".

²⁶ IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (IOM DTM) reports are available on this website (<https://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/ethiopia>), specifically January 6, 14 and 22, 2021.

Amhara, Afar, Benishangul Gumz, Somali in Ethiopia and SNNP) produced not less than 669,528 conflict IDPs²⁷

Again, violent attacks between September 6-13, 2020 in Benishangul Gumuz, particularly in the Metekel Zone, Bulen Woreda, Apar Kebele, and Wonbera Woreda, Melkan Kebele caused an estimated 300 conflict-IDPs. Similarly, an intercommunal confrontation in Gura Ferda woreda of Bench Sheko zone in SNNP region added close to 6,700 IDPs (OCHA 2020b:3). In line with this observation, violent confrontations from August 2018 to January 2019, in particular, the Gedeo-West-Guji conflict and the clashes between Benishangul Gumuz and East-West-Wallega in the Oromia region alone, resulted in 940,494 IDPs (END report 2020). Further, the agitations of the Wolayta people and Sidam people, Tigray, and the Oromia resulted in the displacements of “tens of thousands of Ethiopians, including leaders of the opposition” (Khan 2020:2, Belay/Ndiaye 2020). Likewise, in September 2018, more than 56,000 people were displaced due to the Amhara and Qemant communities’ clashes (OCHA 2019b:1). This demonstrates how endemic the situation is in Ethiopia.

(ii). Trends of Conflict Displacement in Ethiopia

Displacement in Ethiopia is at record high. Since the last decade, the number of IDPs annually is illustrated in the Charts below:

²⁷ IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (IOM DTM) highlights are available here—New Displacement (<https://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/ethiopia>), specifically November 25, December 2, 9, 17, 23/30, 2020

Figure 3&4. **Source:** Authors, based on Data from IDM XLSL file(<https://www.internaldisplacement.org/countries/ethiopia>).

From the Chart above, generally new IDPs are added every year to existing IDPs, and they peaked in 2018. Interestingly, the years 2010 and 2012 did not record any conflict-IDPs because of conflict. The possible reason for 2010 could be the introduction of the Governments Charities' and Societies' Law in February 2009, which prohibited the free operations of international NGOs due to stringent administrative structures. 2012, on the other hand, was undetermined, because there were no "comprehensive surveys" carried out due to the restrictive access data and information (NRC/IDMC 2012:39). This observation could mean that human rights abuse and conflict displacement were concealed but not absent.

In 2009, the fight against insurgencies in Somalia, Filtu and Hudet border dispute (Oromia and Somali regions) displaced over 100,000 and the Garre Somalis and Borana clan clashes which produced over 150,000 IDPs (IOM 2009:9) may have contributed to the increase. A tentative explanation for the lower number of IDPs recorded in 2011 could be post-2010 parliamentary election spill overs (electoral violence in cases where there are disagreements), while the higher number in 2013 was the results of the clash between the Oromia region and Somali region, particularly in the East Hararghe and Nogob zone displacing about 109000 people (Owusu 2013:3).

The year 2015 marked the beginning of the Oromo protests against the government's Master Plan, which sparked other agitations in Amhara and areas in the SNNP (ECI 2020:2), possibly explaining the increase in IDPs. With respect to the other years (2016-2019), Tsorona border battle between the Ethiopian and Eritrean armies²⁸Gedeo-West-Guji, Benishangul Gumuz and East-West-Wellega, Sidama civil conflict, Amhara and Qemant community clashes, Tigray unrest, among other renewed and ongoing conflicts tentatively led to the hikes in conflict IDPs.

(iii). Security Implications of IDPs for Ethiopia

To begin with, *IDPs are a source of conflict*. The literature agrees that there is a strong correlation between displacement and the furtherance of conflict. The difference, however, is time. For Ruaudel (2013:8-9), not only are IDPs a source of conflict but a space to build a support base for armed groups against their adversaries. That is, non-state actors or state actors under the guise of protecting the IDPs could use them for both insurgent and sub-militia purposes. Relatedly, Choi/Piazza (2016:9,10) found that IDPs have higher chances of being coerced into suicide bombing or terror attacks, especially when their grievances (hunger,

²⁸Eritrean Ministry of Information, Asmara (2016),
(<https://web.archive.org/web/20160821010824/http://www.shabait.com/news/local-news/22014--press-release>)

poverty, marginalization) or the cause of their displacement is directed at the state or certain groups. Likewise, Bohnet/Cottier/Hug (2018:708) conclude their article that “displaced persons can alter the ethnic composition of administrative regions and provide means to convey arms and, thus, have the potential to significantly impact the conflict dynamic.” Thus, given the ethnic polarization and ideological differences in Ethiopia, the likelihood of these attacks and security decadence happening is much higher.

Second, *IDPs create social cohesion deficits*. The UNICEF 2020 report shows that social cohesion among IDPs is rapidly deteriorating especially, in the case of Children—at least 638,944 children are reported to be displaced. This implies that the integration of these children into the new society becomes a problem in the absence of family welfare and protection, education, psychological needs, and a sense of belonging, and in extreme cases leading to child labour and human trafficking. Once these children lose trust in the system due to their experiences, it becomes hard to control and convince them at later stages in life—trust, however, is required for systems to work. More so, these children tend to lose their rich culture and may not recover from the shocks and the trauma that necessitated such relocations. Some are ridiculed and verbally abused. The attempt to revenge may distort the social bonds and sow seeds of disharmony. Lastly, these children become target groups for rebel groups who abduct and train them as child soldiers.

Third, the influx of IDPs *burdens government expenditure*. Ethiopia, according to the UNHCR factsheet (2020:1) is the third largest host for refugees in the HOA (particularly, South Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, and Sudan). Despite the humanitarian aid and support from the UNHCR, more is expected from the government given the rising number of IDPs within its own territory. This is, because the endless flow of IDPs progressively inundates poor communities, worsens economic depredation, and heightens societal tensions (ICRC 2009:15). For example, many IDPs have lost their livelihoods, property, and jobs, therefore struggle to live. In such a

condition, the government needs to come to their rescue to cushion them as much as possible. But this action is contingent on vast resources, thus put pressure on the national purse. According to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Exchange Regional report (2019:8), governments in the HOA have limited financial capacity, and so is sub-national budgets which rely heavily on transfers from national budgets. This suggests in times of donor fatigue and limited humanitarian funding, the government's large-scale projects will suffer budget cuts. Given the growing number of IDPs, Ethiopia is not immune to the burden described above.

Finally, *systemic abuse is deepening*. Internally displaced persons are often a burden for host communities and new settlement areas due to the pressure on resources such as food, water, and health systems (Yigzaw / Abitew 2019: 38, Alogo/Obaji 2016). This to an extent creates tensions leading to further abuse (sexual abuse) and conflict over these resources (UNHCR, 2006). Equally, resorting to coping mechanisms such as early marriages (domestic violence), prostitution, hard drugs, and armed robbery exacerbates insecurity, the spread of sexually transmitted infections and mental illnesses.

b. Conditions Sustaining Conflicts/IDPs in Ethiopia.

The complexities and depth of conflict drivers in Ethiopia cannot be fully covered in this section. As such, we limit the discussion to contemporary conditions, though they all have historical antecedents. These are: Constitutional, Political, Economic, and Socio-Psychocultural and Human Rights Abuse.

(i). Constitutional and Legal Conditions (Ethnic Federalism)

Ethiopia is the oldest independent African country (Taye 2017: 45) but remains one of the most divided countries in the world. It is, therefore, not surprising that the end of the Military Junta (the Derg Regime, 1974-1987) in Ethiopia necessitated power sharing. Accordingly, the

Chapter Four (Article 47) of the 1995 constitution of the Democratic Republic of Ethiopia recognized the ethnic differences and sought to provide grounds that enables power, freedom and right with respect to representation, organisation, mobilization, and associations (Abbink, 1997, Article 47/4 of FDRE constitution 1995:17)²⁹. However, these recognitions of self-determination powers and ethnic federalism have not fully produced the expected peace as violence continues to raid societies with time (Gebre 2020:2). In the view of Dagne (2013: 281), thoughts of ethnic federalism to improve relationships, collaboration, and lessen conflicts has unfortunately become a source of conflict, even among ethnic groups that previously had a cordial relation.

In similar contexts, ethnic federalism purported to lead to ethnic cohesion and nationality in Ethiopia, has only decentralized the ethnic problems but not solved them (Taye 2017:51, Abbink 2006:390). In similar vein, Yusuf (2019:6) expressed that the Ethiopian ethnic federation is contradictory in that it empowers and disempowers ethnic groups—state rule practically takes away self-determination powers of the ethnic groups, a principle upheld by the constitution. The quest to protect self-determination powers is arguably met by violence. Moreover, the current federal system has created a “sharp division between natives and settlers” (Yusuf 2019:4, Kefale 2013) with governing powers concentrated in the hands of a few privileged ethnic groups.

Perhaps, the distribution of power based on ethnicity other than territory in Ethiopian could be leading to these failures. That is, distribution of power based on territory is more likely to produce national cohesion devoid of massive ethnic crystallization. For instance, Taye (2017) and Alemante (2003) agree that federalism in and itself cannot guarantee a stable government

²⁹ Precisely, the Member States of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia are the following: The State of Tigray, the State of Mar, the State of Amhara, the State of Oromia, the State of Somalia, the State of Benshangu UGumuz, the State of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People (SNNP), the State of the Gambela Peoples, and the State of the Harari People. Two additional chartered administrative cities were added in 2004— Addis Ababa, and Dire Dawa,

but the introduction of ethnicity into the picture makes it dicey and more susceptible to national instability. Simply, tensions arising from this constitutional challenge often leads to protests and clashes at local level and sometimes explodes into large scale violence when the state gets involved.

Another problem associated with the Ethiopian federalism is that *regional and administrative borders* intended to give ethnic groups semi-autonomous powers to self-determine the processes regarding resource allocation, political mobilization, and other local affairs has become a key precursor to communal conflict. Grindaker (2020:22) and Feyissa (2014:55) confirm that internal borders in Ethiopia are a source of conflict drawing from the Guji and Gedeo ethnic conflict in 1995, 1998 and 2018, and the 2012 Borana-Garri conflict, which resulted in many casualties and displacement. Thus, Crummey (2003:117) sums up sadly that: “*the Horn (and its content) still struggles to achieve nationality*” after several attempts to build a modern state devoid of factionalism. This failure to achieve nationality, the paper argues, breeds recurring violence.

(ii). Political Conditions

Indeed, power struggles and ideological shifts of political elites cannot be underestimated as causes of violence in Ethiopia. In general Jackson (2002) and Brown (2001:220) contend that domestic elites’ actions, inactions, and decisions are major determinants of peace and conflicts. Crummey (2003) found that elitism has been a major cause of violence in Ethiopia for ages, but it seems to have been given little attention. Indeed, the pursuit of a strict (national) ideology to the detriment of the opposition ideologies certainly undermines the coalition partnerships with political elites that function technically and practically on ethnic lines. Perhaps, this old phenomenon has metamorphosed into the new ideological battle that seems to have fuelled for instance, the Tigray conflict in recent times.

To illustrate, prior to the selection of Abiy Ahmed as Prime Minister by the coalition of government called the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF),³⁰ the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) exercised control over the Ethiopian military, police, intelligence, and government, including drafting and ratification of the constitution in 1994 (Gebre 2020:5, Anna 2020, Vestal 1999: 84). However, unfolding events and the popularity of the Prime Minister (the Prosperity Party agenda) and ideological drift has become a major threat to the future of the TPLF, therefore, they must guard themselves from losing the political and power grounds (Gebre 2020). This idea sinks inch perfect into the observation made by Schneckener and Wolf (2004). They argued that the likelihood of ethnic conflict arising from perception of threats is high, especially, when the interests of minority groups, states, clans or competing parties clash with limited opportunities for compromise and mutual adjustment on their respective interests (Schneckener) / Wolf 2004: 8).

Scarcity of resources and land disposition is a key driver of violence in Ethiopia (Crummey 2003, Wayessa 2019). In this context, political decisions are often marked by civil violence. For example, Wayessa (2019:32-33) observed that an attempt made by the government through its "Master Plan" for development in the Oromia region led to violent confrontation between the state and the Oromia on November 2, 2015. This conflict lasted for more than two years, marked by heavy government crackdown, state of emergency and unrelenting resistance. The fierce resistance, partly due to the fear that Oromia people will lose their lands and properties, forced the government to rescind its decision before calm was partly restored. It is instructive, however, to note that land disposition has been very instrumental in forcing regime change in 1974 (the establishment of the Dergue) and emergence of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in 1991 (Wayessa 2019:33). Moreover, land is a representation of

³⁰ The EPRDF consisted of four political parties, namely Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), Amhara Democratic Party (ADP), Oromo Democratic Party (ODP) and Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (SEPDM), until TPLF redrew in November 2019 ahead of the 2020 elections which is yet to be held (<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ethiopia-politics-idUSKBN1XV24H>).

people's identity, culture, and home (property) and cannot be claimed by any entity without a contest—such contests has contributed to many ethnic-State violence in Ethiopia.

(iii). Economic Conditions

Beyond the political, food insecurity and climatic issues lead to pastoralists and agriculturalists vulnerability which deteriorate into violence. Land and water, since the days of old, have been a source of contestation, protest, and violence in Ethiopia not just among the pastoralists and the agriculturalists but also the ethnic/regional and state clashes (Abbink 2006:408-10). For instance, the southern part of Ethiopia faces recurring violence due to their strategic position and potential resource- rich lands. In areas like Moyale, Suftu (Mandehera) their connections to the Gulf states put them in strategic positions for contests (Ethiopia National Workshop (ENW) report 2002). This somehow links back to politics since the evidence suggests that communal violence caused by pastoralists who do not respect internal borders have ethnic linkages to the states or prominent Elite factions (Dagne, 2013: 280- 282; Kinfemichael, 2014:65). Hence, Brosché (2015:20) concludes that such government bias engenders violent communal conflicts, and Ethiopia is not an exception. Still, the disparities between economic growth and living conditions (poverty and inequality) coupled with youth unemployment create frustrations that incite violence. According to the ECI (2020:4), frustration caused by “joblessness and persistent dependency” drives youth violence, especially those affected, to force structural changes.

Pastoralists in Ethiopia are in a minority of an estimated 15 million people—spread over 122 districts and hold access to about 50% of Ethiopian land mass (Yimer 2015:2, Mohamed 2019:4). Mohamed (2019:3-4) further observed that the pastoralists are dominant in Afar, Somali, Oromiya, and the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's (SNNP) regional states as well as the Gambella and Benishangul areas. In view of this, droughts and unfavourable climate conditions lead to encroachment of lands belonging to agriculturalists or other

pastoralists in different communities. Conflict in this case becomes inevitable because of competition for resources and anxieties clouding land and property ownerships.

(iv). Socio-Psycho-Cultural Conditions/ Human Rights Abuse.

Cultural intolerance and stereotypes within societies, retaliation and resentment are psychological factors that keep violence from dying out. Accordingly, Alemu (2018:1) drawing from the over sixty years conflict between the Afar and Issa borders, revealed that “the memory of past violence has great effects in justifying the continuity of violence” which is manifested in structural, direct, and cultural violence. This confirms Muauz’s earlier finding that the Afar-Issa border conflict has shifted from pastoral resource scarcity to “structural and cultural violence” (Muauz 2017:311). Alemu (2018) further observed that trophy-killing³¹ and cattle raiding are a value that has been consolidated over time. Subsequently, efforts to reform have only exacerbated the violence and made the road to conflict resolution impossible. That is, the socio-psycho-cultural conditions produce fragile cohesion, leaving limited room for successful *mediation* or the implementation of its outcome. Consistent with this, Alemie/Mandefro (2018:7) opined that “weak societal cohesion increases the risk of social disorganization, fragmentation, and exclusion, potentially manifesting itself in violent conflict.”

This, notwithstanding, the Human Right Watch executive summary report (2013:1) lists several human rights violations evidenced in Ethiopia: arbitrary killings, mistreatment of detainees by security forces, arbitrary arrest and detention, infringement on citizens’ privacy rights, allegations of abuses in the implementation of the government’s “villagization” program, restrictions on academic, political, religious, and association freedom, among others. These abuses to a large extent spark violent resistance, protests, and riots across the country especially,

³¹ The culture of victimization is passed on from generation to generation and none is immune, including children.

in Oromia, Tigray Somali, Amhara, SNNP, and Beninshangul Gumuz areas. The end results often are conflict displacements and deaths.

Thus, we have argued that, when ethnic federalism combines with the political, economic, socio-psycho-cultural conditions and human rights abuse, conflict in Ethiopia becomes protracted and so do IDPs.

c. Strategies to offset the Conditions and negative effects of Conflict-IDPs

First, establishing a *hierarchy of competencies* rather than ethnic group is required to solve the Ethiopian constitutional puzzle. In this sense, there should be a clear path for more competent people in the country to succeed in mounting the highest office, regardless of where they come from. After the 1995 constitution came into effect, the EPRDF monopolized power and political space and blocked the chances of real participation. Establishing a hierarchy of competencies will open the political space for competition of ideas and plausible solutions other than ethnic violence. Additionally, this competence hierarchy model should start from the grassroots and organically grow to the national level, laying the foundation for competent people to rise without clientelism, prebendalism, and parantela. This is important because the current chain of power or influence is established on ethnic grounds, and only when this is addressed can a real nationality be established in Ethiopia

Second, is *ideological pluralism*. The government must understand that integration is a gradual process, especially in a country whose cohesion has failed for centuries. There should, therefore, be pluralism of ideological direction that practically brings sufficiently large number of factions on board, not necessarily aimed at impressing the international community. Looking good in the eyes of the international community is desirable but must be coupled with real and meaningful local policies. The boiling frog syndrome illustrates that early realization and consciousness is not only desirable but necessary in the long run. Realities trump fiction!

Third, it is impractical to force a heterogeneous society to become homogeneous without committing grave injustice. However, the possibility exists for the creation of institutions that can foster peaceful coexistence despite competitions. Given the dead-end conflicts in Ethiopia, there is the need to institute an *overarching national mediation taskforce* with branches in all major regions to help settle communal disputes before it escalates into conflicts. For this to be successful, mediation teams should offer balanced representative of both members of the community and other members outside the community, but they must all be locals. This will ensure that mediation does not become a source of conflict as it is sometimes the case.

Fourth, cohesion in many countries is often built on culture and nationhood. However, the sharp ethnic divisions in Ethiopia makes this less possible. Two things are important: (A) Addressing of historical grievances: Unaddressed historical grievances which morphs into insecurity and mistrust has made the Ethiopian cohesion difficult. As such, establishing a system based on justice could go a long way to heal old wounds and build trust which fosters cooperation and development. (B) Building cohesion around themes such as sports, athletics (Olympics), good economic standing, and national success (Ahmed Abiy's Nobel Prize Award) which bridges ethnicity and less likely to incite violence.

Fifth, is human development investment. Government must invest in building irrigation systems, canals, and dams to support agricultural and pastoral societies especially in the neglected northern parts of the country. Again, the government should revive the educational sectors and make room for practical courses that make it possible for people to set up their own businesses or make them employable in emerging and existing MNCs for a better Ethiopia. Moreover, Qoloji, the biggest IDP camp in Ethiopia is a host of about 80,000 people as of 2019, whose main shelter have been cluster of tents and huts with poor living standards. These conditions do not inspire confidence and progress. As such, investing in providing vocational training to empower adults financially and psychologically, while creating avenues for children

to go to school will facilitate decongestion of the camp. In such conditions, people will voluntarily opt for resettlement, returns and integrations because their lives have improved. Otherwise, the numbers, congestions, and security challenges they pose will remain.

Fifth, the establishment of a 27-Member “Zero IDPs Intercultural Center and Forum”³². Apart from the “Agency for Refugee & Returnee Affairs (AARA)” and general World Bank-funded “Development Response to Displacement Impacts Project (DRDIP)”, there is a need for a specific body of experts to deal with conflict IDPs. This Center will devise and implement an intercultural framework that will provide expert help to IDPs and facilitate their integration into the societies or their return. The IDPs in the communities must be provided with both fiscal and psychological support, conscientize and promote intercultural activities while boosting their immunity to the use of violence.

Lastly, human rights violations, particularly against women and opposition parties, have not stopped, despite Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's establishment of the Ministry of Peace in 2018. How does the government respond effectively to IDPs if the root causes are not addressed? The need to create an incentivized system for peace is a worthy course—people should have incentives for choosing non-violence means of addressing grievances. That is, every community should set aside a day in month to award peace promoters. Such recognitions can have a transformative effect on both present and future generations. Therefore, the Abiy government should resist the temptation of aggressively policing opposition and protesters, instead work towards fixing the root causes behind the discontent and riots. Such exhibitions of responsible leadership will go a long way in building trust, a necessary currency for addressing complex societal issues.

³² 3 Experts from each of the 9 states or regions in the areas of medical, policy and economic, and social work.

5. Summary and Conclusion.

The number of conflict-IDPs worldwide has remained consistently high. Apart from the slight declines in 2016 and 2017 conflict-IDPs have been on the rise since 2011. This trend could not be so different from that of the Horn of Africa. Communal violence is a major threat to human survival and security and an essential trigger of civil wars (Fearon/Laitin 2011:199, Sundberg/Eck/Kreutz 2012). It places individuals and groups within the jurisdiction on hibernation—either to run for their lives or stay and fight (to live or die) when the light of violence is dawn. As such, IDPs, inbound or outbound, expand once the light of violence is kept on. It could, therefore, be concluded that the protracted nature of displacement in the Horn of Africa in general and Ethiopia in particular, is the result of the volatility of the region and precuring violence.

Moreover, the countries in the Horn of Africa have been historically conflict prone, experiencing civil wars at least in the last three decades. In this sense, the chances of renewed conflicts and clashes remain extremely high, even with seemingly trivial basis. These triggers cut-across ethnic division and identity crises, politicized security apparatus, food insecurity, border disputes, weak institutions, insurrections, terrorism, unstable leadership, poverty, inequalities, and diverse form of human abuse. The existence of such conditions leads to the furtherance of insecurity cycles and unending violence, and thus explaining partly the high levels of displacement in the HOA.

In the Ethiopian case, the paper found IDPs to be increasingly high as most are linked to incessant conflicts. Accordingly, constitutional deficit (ethnic federalism), political issues (elite struggles and ideological drifts), economic issues (unemployment, poverty, inequality, and land dispositions), socio-psycho-cultural dimensions (retaliations and limited mediation chances), and human right abuse were identified as major conditions that sustain conflicts and by extension IDPs in Ethiopia.

The increased IDPs because of conflict pose security challenges for Ethiopia, the paper found. For instance, IDPs become a source of recurring conflict, and a possible base for terrorists' recruitment and child soldiers. Likewise, IDPs create conditions for deepening systemic abuse as well as social cohesion deficits in their host community. Beyond this, IDPs put pressure of government budgets which tend to affect large-scale government projects.

Finally, the paper recommends the following: (a) Hierarchy of competence in the government structure, (b) Ideological pluralism (c) a 27-Member "Zero IDPs Intercultural Center and Forum, (d) National Mediation Taskforce and others as means of resolving the underlying conditions which necessitate conflict-IDPs. An academic observation from this paper, is that the recent eruption of violence in the Tigray region, elite instigations, and resistance to ideological change is not new. However, if not adequately addressed, it has the potential to spiral into violence that would not be necessarily limited to the Tigray region. The paper pre-empt. Specific studies on Tigrays and a pilot study into changing dynamics of the disintegrating ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) are recommended.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest with the data used or the paper in general. In addition, both primary and secondary data used have been properly recognized, and available links to online sources and articles have been provided in the bibliography section. Relatedly, no sensitive or confidential information was used that requires direct copyright approval. All ethical requirements, as far as we know, have been met.

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