The Nexus in Intra-Party Conflict and Civil War in Ethiopia: An Appraisal

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Abstract

This research paper examines intra-party conflicts and their impact on violent internal conflicts in Ethiopia. It investigates the institutional frameworks used to resolve these conflicts within political parties. The study reveals a threat to intra-party democracy, leading to destructive civil wars since 2018. Data from five Ethiopian political parties was gathered from October 2022 to August 2024. The research reveals a lack of procedures for resolving intra-party conflicts, which often result in violent civil wars. This can lead to party fractures and loss of support, affecting the entire national political system.

Introduction:

Ethiopia, once ruled by monarchs, had a unique political system with a one-party system established through the 1987 constitution. The Workers Party of Ethiopia (WPE) was the sole authorized party to operate in the nation. Unlike many African countries, opposition political parties were not established until the 1991 multi-party democracy at least in principle (Ayele, 2021, p.169; Oloruntoba and Falola, 2018, p.485).

However, the Ethiopian People's Council, founded by three supporters of the 1960 coup d'état, was the first Ethiopian political party in its traditional sense. The Ethiopian Student Movement (ESM) emerged after the coup and dominated political activity until 1974. In 1968, Ethiopian students in Europe founded the All Ethiopian Socialist Movement (MEISON) in Hamburg. In 1972, former ESM leaders founded the Ethiopian Peoples Liberation Organization (later Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party) (Zewde, 2014, p.249; Gebru, 2009, pp.13–63; Kiflu, 1993; Andargachew, 2000, p.9; Melaku, 2019, p.172).

In post-1991 party politics, the power imbalance between opposition and ruling parties is evident due to the ruling's mandate to use state resources to outperform rivals. This results in opposition parties being trapped by a dominant party that doesn't allow them freedom (Berhanu, 2009, p.1). Intra-party conflict led to inadequate institutionalization and fragmentation of political parties before and after multi-party politics in 1991 and the fall of the military dictatorship, resulting in a lack of institutional procedures to address these issues (Berhanu, 2003, p.115).

Ethiopia's democratic quagmire is attributed to ethnic politics and a lack of clear demarcation between ruling parties and state institutions. Power sharing is seen as a solution, but party mergers and structural defects hinder democratic transition which all lead to internal violent conflicts. This study aims to provide a comparative analysis of intra-party conflict and their immediate consequence as a civil war in Ethiopia, examining the nature, causes, and repercussions of these conflicts in various political parties. This will

shed light on how these conflicts affect the country's democratic dynamics (Kassahun, 2020, p.91; Gemechu, 2023, p.33; Bayu, 2019, p.20593).

The study aims to analyze internal conflicts within political parties and their impact on intra-party democracy and civil war in a country. It examines how these conflicts are managed and how they lead to violence. The study also examines the institutional frameworks used to resolve conflicts, as well as the country's legal frameworks.

The main research questions that the study attempted to address are on the differences in intra-party conflict resolution across political parties in Ethiopia, its implications for democratic governance, its role in shaping political dynamics, and its contribution to recurrent civil war and political economic consequences.

The core argument of this study is that intra-party conflict has a considerable impact on the quality and stability of democracy in Ethiopia by leading to violent civil wars. As a result, political parties that violate democratic principles to resolve intra-party conflicts are less devoted to societal democracy while promoting violent political culture, which leads to violent civil wars.

Methodology

The study employs a qualitative methodology to explore intra-party conflict resolution, civil war, and its implications for Ethiopia's democratic society. Data is sourced from both secondary and primary sources, with primary sources supplementing secondary sources. The review includes party literature, documents, manifestos, and programs, mostly in local languages, to understand the dynamics of intra-party conflict resolution in Ethiopia (Hancock, 2001, p.4).

The study interviewed 16 key informants from various backgrounds, including party presidents, deputy chairman/chairwoman, executive committee members, rank-and-file members, a party researcher, high court judge, and NENE officer, in Addis Ababa, Hawassa, and Bahir Dar, in two rounds from October 2022 to April 2023. This research employs a comparative case study design to examine party conflicts' similarities and differences, drawing conclusions representative of non-included parties, and employs thematic data analysis for easy identification of themes (Bhattacherjee, 2012, p.93).

In 2021, Ethiopia's National Electoral Board registered 53 political parties, with 20 national and 33 regional. The sample parties reflect the nation's changing socio-political landscape. Ethnic based opposition parties include the National Movement of Amhara and Oromo Federalist Congress, while multi-ethnic parties Ethiopian Citizens for Social Justice and the Ethiopian Social Democratic Party, along with the ruling coalition Prosperity Party.

The 2019 Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Front (EPRDF) merger case provides a valuable case study for investigating internal conflicts leading to the country's rebranding as PP and civil war. The 2019 EZEMA election was criticized for intra-party power struggles, and the National Movement of Amhara (NaMA) has faced disagreements. The Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC) and the Ethiopian Social Democratic Party (ESDP) are also examined for their internal governance.

Conceptual and theoretical perspectives

The choice of theoretical perspectives for this research is dependent on how their suppositions lead to realize internal party democracy because good theories are assessed based on their predictive abilities on the issue. In light of this, it is important to keep in mind what Downs (1957, p.21) stated: "Theoretical models should be tested primarily by the accuracy of their predictions rather than by the reality of their assumptions."

The study utilizes deliberative democratic theory, specifically the Intra-Party Democracy model, to promote internal discussions and debates within a political party, aiming to involve constituents in resolving intra-party conflicts before escalating to national level (Wolkenstein, 2016, p.9). Deliberation is crucial for democratic political decisions to be legitimate, as it provides a public forum for debate, enhancing the likelihood of reaching a consensus (Bevir, 2007, p.204).

Resource-based conflict theory explains the relationship between party conflict and financial and non-financial resources. In Ethiopian political parties, conflicts stem from disagreements over resources like funding, influential networks, power positions, and expertise. Marginalized factions can lead to internal strife, power struggles, and disputes (Das and Teng, 2000, p.32).

Given their function in a democratic government, political parties must operate demo-cratically, at least legally. But whether parties are committed to intra-party democracy or not depends on how they handle internal conflict (Salgado, 2020, p.116).

Mair (2002) argue that empowering party members weakens the position of activists and militant critics, benefiting the party's leaders. Intra-party politics involve conflictual interactions among party subgroups, similar to politics, where internal actors compete for influence over party strategy, program, and apparatus (Maor, 2005, p.140). Party conferences typically serve as an expression of the party as a single, cohesive body, which is at least partially why most parties hold them, even when their actual power is rather small (Pettitt, 2014).

Results and discussion

The nexus of intra-party conflict and internal party democracy

The bylaws of most Ethiopian political parties reveal various sources for establishing dispute resolution entities, indicating a desire to make the party internally democratic. The EPRDF's internal conflict following PM Meles Zenawi's death led to the resignation of the party's chairman and PM. Tensions over power imbalance between TPLF and ANDM-OPDO escalated, leading to competition between ANDM and OPDO for chairmanship. TPLF leaders were removed from various positions, forcing them to resign from the proposed coalition (Kefale, 2019, p.1).[1] The PP, formed on December 25, 2019, was criticized by the TPLF due to procedural and legal issues, leading to political contention and a civil war that devastated the economy (Geremew and Alamineh, 2021, p.12).

The TPLF's opposition to the postponement of the national election and the establishment of a regional election led to tensions, resulting in the federal government printing a new national currency and military preparations, resulting in the war that began on November 4, 2020.[2] As a result of this intra-party conflict, the civil war broke out between November 2020 and December 2021, a conflict in northern Ethiopia that caused $22.7 billion in infrastructure damage and an additional $6 billion in productivity losses, accounting for 26% of GDP.[3]

The Prosperity Party's by-laws state that its inspection and ethics commission oversees constitution and resolves conflicts, but it's often used for leaders' interests at the expense of rank-and-file members.

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[1] Interview with an executive committee member of the PP, March 2023, Hawassa, Ethiopia

[2] Interview with a researcher at the federal government office, March 2024, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

[3] Available at https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2023/08/01/boom-bust-fallout-war-and-drought-leaves-ethiopians-mired-poverty#:~:text=The%20conflict%20in%20northern%20Ethiopia,to%20an%20Ethiopian%20government%20assessment.

Intra-party conflict-resolution committees often face challenges in safeguarding individuals who oppose leadership. "Prosperity Party officials were removed from their posts due to criticism of lack of transparency in candidate selection during the party's organizational congress, which took place from March 11 to 13, 2022, causing fear of retaliation among rank-and-file members." [4]

Ethiopian political parties face intra-party conflict due to lack of transparency and publicity, with members only informed of dismissals and the party's inspection and ethics committee never opposing decisions favoring party members. [5]

Members who are facing disciplinary action should be given enough time to submit their defense. Since actions made against leaders or members of the rank-and-file are essentially orders from presidents, it is doubtful that the accused will have the chance to offer evidence refuting the accusations. The outcome will be against them if it is carried out. When the ruling party and government figures were ousted from the EPRDF in 2001, this was the case (Gebru, 1999).

Because of the lack of transparency and impartiality in Ethiopian parties and because of the fear of reprisals, neither the defendant nor other members are informed of rulings in writing. The PP has an ethics and audit commission, which must serve as the party's court when disputes arise within the party. When there is injustice, party leaders and members typically petition the commission. The majority of the appeals' content concerned dismissals from appointment. One regional PP office's 2022 annual report states that the commission has dismissed 75% of the claims proving unfitness. [6]

Ethiopian political parties faced external challenges but internal conflicts led to their collapse. The ruling party EPRDF's internal crisis and split caused a loss of influence over the larger political system, despite the concentration of power and the absence of significant opposition. "Despite facing pressure from various groups, the EPRDF's 27-year rule remained unimpeded. However, internal conflicts eroded its influence, leading to a loss of political control in 2018. The party relied on undemocratic tactics to suppress dissent."[7]

As one interviewee from EZEMA said, "party presidents always need to give their approval and instruction for final approval when it comes to implementation. Because the laws are naturally copies of those in other democratic countries, they cannot be flawed in general". The party's inspection committee appears to support top leaders, believing their authority is unchallengeable. They make decisions based on bylaws, and certain leaders, like the former AAPO, financially support the party during economic deficits. [8]

Party procedural laws often copy foreign laws, requiring leadership approval. Faults are acknowledged, and incorrect actions tolerated. Independent conflict adjudicating organs ensure standards. Members should file appeals against convictions, but inspection committees are unlikely due to potential manipulation.[9]

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[4] *Interview with PP official, May 2023, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia*

[5] *Interview with a former PP Central Committee Member, November 2022 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

[6] *Interview with PP official, May 2023, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia*

[7] *Interview with a former PP Central Committee Member, November 2022 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

[8] *Interview with a former executive member of EZEMA, October 2022 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

[9] *Interview with an official at the OFC, October 2022, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

One OFC respondent gave the assurance that NEBE or the court would rule in favor of party presidents if such matters were brought before them. There is no way to bring such intra-party conflicts to such institutions given this culture.[10] Additionally, when intra-party conflict emerges and is brought before the state institutions that are supposed to strengthen democratization, they favor the devoted party leaders who pledge to work with the government, as one EZEMA respondent remarked. One instance worth bringing up is the situation of CUD, which was handed over to Mr. Ayele Chamiso at the expense of those leaders who were imprisoned following the 2005 election.[11]

The committee investigating disciplinary infractions in Ethiopian political parties is often an ad hoc group, becoming distracted when major offenses occur. "Presidents activate inspection committees to take action against undesirable groups or individuals in the party." [12]

In a nutshell, the process of democratizing the internal functioning of political parties is significantly impacted by intra-party conflict resolution processes. It follows that a party cannot be expected to be responsive, open, and capable of addressing societal disputes once it reaches public power if it is unable to overcome its internal conflicts with its rank-and-file and leaders.

Post-conflict Ethiopian political parties are fragmented, with dispute resolution processes benefiting party officials. Former PP leaders often fled abroad or supported armed organizations, leading to their detention for sparking civil war. Institutional processes benefit party officials.[13]

According to Shomer and Gedalya (2016:510), internal conflicts within political parties have a significant impact on the nation's democratic transition in terms of how voters view parties and how they vote. Once their confidence in the internal party's functioning is damaged, this encourages voters who are disengaged to take part in a national election. Such public images have contributed to the low turnout in the national elections. For instance, out of more than 110 million individuals, 37,408,600 votes were expected to be cast in the national election of 2021, of which almost 60 million people are major voters.

Causes of intra-party conflict

Intra-party conflict in Ethiopian political organizations often stems from the desire to exclusively exercise power within the party. In 2018, the EPRDF was divided into two groups, with the TPLF on one side and the OPDO/ODP and ANDM/ADP on the other. The top leadership of SEPDM was split between the TPLF and ADP/ODP. A new organizational structure was formed in December 2019, in which all 45 TPLF CC members and 13 ANDM CC members opposed the reform agenda.[15]

This intra-party conflict is exceptional in the history of the nation because it initially arose in opposition to one party's domination (unilateral exercise of power) over the state apparatus and subsequently resulted in a protracted civil war between political parties that had previously been united that cost the country more than $28 billion[16] in less than two years since November 4, 2020, killing more than 600 million people.[17]

[10] *Interview with an official at the OFC, October 2022, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

[11] *Interview with a former executive member of EZEMA, October 2022 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

[12] *Interview with an Executive Member of the ESDP, October 2022 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

[13] *Interview with a former PP Central Committee Member, November 2022 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

[14] *Available at https://www.usip.org/publications/2021/06/why-ethiopias-2021-elections-matter*

[15] *Interview with an executive committee member of the PP, March 2023, Hawassa, Ethiopia*

[16] *Available at https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/rest-of-africa/cost-of-ethiopia-war-in-tigray-fuels-search-for-a-lasting-peace-3716668*

[17] *Available at https://www.ft.com/content/2f385e95-0899-403a-9e3b-ed8c24adf4e7*

The Amhara Democratic Party and Oromo Democratic Party, two of the founding members of the PP, have experienced various levels of conflict; for example, both were considered to be at odds shortly following the Bahir Dar assassination of ANRS leaders in June 2019.

"Widespread evictions and killings of the Amhara ethnic group in the Oromia and Benishangul regions, violent clashes in the Attaye region of the North Shoa of Amhara, disputes over the reclaiming of Wolqait-Raya-Metekel, the Pretoria agreement to end hostilities on October 24, 2022, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church's internal pope appointment concerns and the restrictions on free entry to the Capital City, and the distribution of political positions across Addis Ababa offices all feed simmering tensions and intra-party conflict inside the Amhara-Oromo PP. There have been irrational justifications for not resolving the aforementioned problems and other problems that weaken intra-party cohesion." [18]

Differences in coalition building make it difficult for Ethiopian political parties to preserve continuity and democracy. EZEMA, as it claims to be a modern party, has implemented new structures to control internal operations, such as decentralized structures, a leader and chairmanship, local unit authority for finance and recruitment, and a line ministry within the party. The party has since suffered a significant loss of its founding leaders and the bulk of its previous executive committee members, who have formed new parties or joined others. [19]

The internal conflict in EZEMA stems from a significant portion of the leadership supporting Abiy Ahmed's government, while others opposed it, fearing it would betray their party. On July 2-3, 2022, crucial positions were open for internal competition, leading to intra-party contests for leader and chairman. The country's political culture of a "winners-take-all game" deteriorated the relationship between these groups, leading to the loser withdrawing and forming another party. Accusations and defamation continued, leading to tagging each other as a betrayal of their initial promise. [20]

NaMA has also had to resolve an internal conflict that sprang from a coalition choice. The party's stance on whether to form collaboration with the government by accepting offers for some government positions after the election in June 2021 became a topic that significantly divided the leadership circle. The practice of two distinct parties based on government policy actions persisted as well; while some appointees continued to oppose decisions made by the government, others continued to support them. [21]

Internal party conflict in Ethiopian political parties can be attributed to a variety of pretexts. A response from OFC revealed that the ruling party has infiltrated parties in the past to foment discord. He emphasized the procedural situation the Oromo National Congress encountered during the 2005 election. [22] Most of the time, the reasons why party mergers fail to last for very long are akin to the reasons why there is intra-party conflict. For instance, when the Ethiopian Democratic Forces Union (EDFU) was founded in North America in 2003 by 15 political parties, the majority of the parties expressed their displeasure with the EDFU leaders as soon as it became clear that financing and member recruitment would be centralized through EDFU. Therefore, internal party strife inside the EDFU had two main causes: political funding and the scrambling of party members by each party (Lidetu, 2006; Kiflu, 2006).

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[18] *Interview with PP official, May 2023, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia*

[19] *Interview with EZEMA's executive member, October 2022 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

[20] *Interview with a former executive member of EZEMA, October 2022 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

[21] *Interview with NAMA's executive member, November 2022, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

[22] *Interview with an executive member of the OFC in November 2022 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

In ESDP, internal conflict among leaders arose because of coalition choice, where some leaders are sympathetic to staying allied with the Ethiopian Federal Democratic Unity Forum (ye'tiyop'iya fēdēralawī dēmokirasīyawī ānidineti medireki), while others advocate departing owing to OFC's admission of renowned activist Jawar Mohammed as vice chairman of the party. The ESDP's incumbent leaders stand against OFC's decision, arguing that it would deteriorate Medirek's relations with the ruling party.[23] Owing to these disagreements with the OFC, the ESDP is now in a position to dissolve the MEDREK [24] and claims no affiliation with it.

MEDREK was founded in 2008 by the Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement, the Somali Democratic Alliance Forces, and Arena Tigray (the Union of Tigrians for Democracy and Sovereignty). Currently, MEDREK's members are the Oromo Federalist Congress, the Ethiopian Social Democratic Party, the Union of Tigrayans for Democracy and Sovereignty (Arena), and the Sidama Liberation Movement.

Intra-party conflict and the nature of party coherence

Ethiopian political parties, despite their democratic commitment to resolving internal disputes, have a disintegrated organizational structure. Organizational coherence, the degree of congruity in party members' attitudes and actions, is crucial for settling conflicts through dialogue and consensus. Parties' coherence will disintegrate if they cannot resolve internal conflicts over ideological matters, coalition building, financial management, and candidate nomination.[25]

Conflict inside the EPRDF's party has been a result of loose or nonexistent party cohesion. The then-ANDM and OPDO, which were influenced by the popular uprising against the regime from 2015 to 2018, were profoundly influenced by the mass uprisings of Fanno and Qerro, respectively. These then started to cause disagreements among the EPRDF ally parties in the upcoming leadership election to install Abiy Ahmed, when 13 ANDM members voted against him working with the TPLF. [26, 27]

Accepting appointments from the ruling party in October 2022 was not based on the party's leadership selection rules, as one EZEMA respondent discovered, with the exception of the case of the party's principal leader, whose case was decided by Congress. Others who held regional and local administrative positions were chosen based on their permission and the generosity of the ruling party, which could jeopardize the party's cohesion. [28]

Some observers question if the appointment procedure is legitimate. In this light, some think that the PP took this action during the non-competitive election in the Oromia region in order to resolve its legitimacy crisis with the international world. In addition to these allegations, the nomination process was rife with anomalies to restore the lost legitimacy. As a result, some people saw that the selection process was not as transparent as it had appeared to be. The process was manipulated by state officials to produce the desired result (Yusuf, 2022, p.12).

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[23] *Interview with the top leader of the ESDP, April 2024, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

[24] *MEDREK was founded in 2008 by the Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement, the Somali Democratic Alliance Forces, and Arena Tigray (the Union of Tigrians for Democracy and Sovereignty). Currently, MEDREK's members are the Ethiopian Social Democratic Party, the Union of Tigrayans for Democracy and Sovereignty (Arena), and the Sidama Liberation Movement.*

[25] *Interview with an executive member of the OFC in November 2022 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

[26] *Interview with a political researcher, February 2023, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

[27] *Interview with an executive committee member of the PP, March 2023, Hawassa, Ethiopia*

[28] *Interview with a former executive member of EZEMA, October 2022 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

In the experience of the Ethiopian parties, factionalism results in significant party division and the formation of a new party. For instance, after being finally ousted from the party in June 1996 because they were dissatisfied with the leadership, a youthful group of AAPO members established their own party, the EDP, in October 2000 (Tamirat, 2007; Lidetu, 2006).

According to Ostrogorski (1902, p.79), parties that have legislative representatives who are subject to the direction of a membership organization are more cohesive than parties that are predominately made up of parliamentarians. Since the 2005 elections, there have been no parties in Ethiopia with a significant number of MPs, and the affiliation of MPs with membership organizations is uncertain. One ethnic-based political party (NAMA) and one multi-ethnic (EZEMA) have five and four MP [29] respectively in the presently sitting federal parliament. However, it might be claimed that the coherence of the parties is reliant on the will of their leaders because the party presidents are not MPs.

For instance, once chosen as the winner of an internal leadership election, the leader will have the authority to choose his cabinet members as members of the party executive, according to a high-ranking EZEMA official.[30] In this situation, it is possible that the party leader will decide who to keep in his inner circle and who to reject in order to maintain party cohesion. It is also argued that organizational weakness typically equates with low party cohesion in the legislature, whereas parties with substantial mass membership organizations tend to have cohesive parliamentary groups (Maor, 2005, p.140).

Intra-party conflict and party factionalism

Political parties are groups of people that have a common objective, but disagreements about how to achieve these goals lead to conflicts that have an impact on party behavior. Additionally, individual actions and the political culture of the nation fuel internal party strife in Ethiopia. As a result, some people have a stronger loyalty to their ethnic group than to all other ethnicities combined. While some behave in the opposite manner to show greater loyalty to their nation than specific ethnic needs. When it comes to how the party operates within, friction breaks out.[31]

A typology of factions is developed by Sartori (1976, p.1) based on the interests (power or spoils) and guiding principles (ideas and ideologies) of each group. According to Sartori's dichotomy, Ethiopian political groups frequently split into factions because each leader has a natural tendency toward power-seeking. One may categorize the internal grouping inside the ruling party (EPRDF) that has been strengthening ANDM and OPDO youth leaders against TPLF dominance since September 2016 as a drive-by-power clique.

A lack of internal democracy within parties has a significant impact on factionalism, or the effectiveness of parties in winning elections. This was evident in the EPRDF following the change in leadership in 2018, when the three ethnically anchored coalitions (ANDM/ADP, OPDO/OPD, and SEPDM) joined forces with five former allied parties to establish one national party (PP) in opposition to the TPLF.

Ethnic representation is a significant consideration in Ministerial and Addis Abeba city administrations, particularly among former

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[29] Available at https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/LEOME%20Report%20of%20the%20June%2021%20Elections.pdf

[30] Interview with EZEMA's executive member, October 2022 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

[31] Interview with a former PP Central Committee Member, November 2022 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

EPRDF members. Ethnic parties often mobilize ethnicity for political power representation, even outside their local boundaries. For example, NAMA claims to represent the Amhara ethnic community but maintains offices in various regions.[32]

This paper examines the collaboration between EZEMA, NAMA, and ESDP after the June 2021 national election. The ruling party appointed appointees, but conflicts arose due to deviations from rules. Some nominees showed greater loyalty to the governing party, and some appointees were reluctant to respond, potentially leaving the party if resignation was requested.[33]

There is no real distinction between ethnic parties and multi-ethnic parties in Ethiopian party politics, with the exception of nomenclature. One of the sample parties, ESDP, which is a coalition of numerous ethnically organized parties with names like Hadiya People, Dawaro People, etc., may serve as an empirical example of this since the majority of multi-ethnic parties are a merging of ethnically formed organizations. Additionally, ethnicity is taken into account when allocating positions of leadership among claimants under the term 'ethnic composition' (ye biher tewatsio). One of the sample parties, PP, is a good example of this.[34]

According to Zariski (1960, p.33), a faction is any intra-party combination, clique, or grouping whose members are structured to operate jointly (as a distinct bloc within the party) in order to accomplish their objectives. In Ethiopian parties, faction formation is ingrained because it is a requirement for establishing another party. A notable case in point was the 2001 TPLF schism, during which 12 central committee members

with considerable support were dismissed. A few of these former prominent party figures joined other political organizations, such as AEUP. OFC was formed after a splitter group was granted the name of the old party ONC in a court order following the 2005 national election.[35]

When we use Sartori's second typology as the foundation for faction, we find that Ethiopian parties place less importance on ideological beliefs. This is due to the fact that political parties are typically not founded on the basis of ideas or ideology, but rather out of animosity for a certain group. The NaMA is against the TPLF's persecution of Amharas; the TPLF was established against the allegation of Amhara supremacy in the state; the OLF stood against the alleged Abyssinian domination; the ESDP is against the regime's repression of its founding members' social base; and the OFC calls for a true representation of the Oromo people based on its size.[36]

Implication of party conferences as a unifying tool

Important hints about the degree of IPD can be found in the type of membership participation in the party congress. Participation in the party congress may not meet the inclusivity condition in some parties. Local groups and membership applications are entirely under the central party's supervision. As a result, the local party congress's makeup is easily under the control of the central party.

Party conferences are regarded as the only venues where members of all party hierarchies will congregate in one physical location. Ethiopian parties also hold party conferences or congresses if they believe it is necessary to do so or if the NEBE

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[32] *Interview with members of NAMA, November 2022, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

[33] *Interview with a former executive member of EZEMA, October 2022 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

[34] *Interview with an Executive Member of the ESDP, October 2022 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

[35] *Interview with an executive member of the OFC in November 2022 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

[36] *Interview with an executive member of the OFC in November 2022 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

[37] *Interview with a former PP Central Committee Member, November 2022 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

orders them to do so. Due to tight NEBE membership requirements, the number of Ethiopian political parties was reduced from 130 [38] to 53. The NEBE followed up with these parties to have congresses and conferences with their members. [39, 40] Disgruntled members approach the NEBE rather than relying on internal appeal mechanisms after disciplinary actions to seek redress. The weak internal demand for responsibility and the ineffectiveness of external regulating authorities in guaranteeing adherence to party constitutions contribute for the lack of internal accountability in some opposition parties. [41]

The NAMA, a sample party required by the NEBE to hold its congress, convened 580 members from local units. The main agenda included hearing the executive's report, amending the party's bylaws, reorganizing leadership, and implementing party reform. However, internal discord among members demanded genuine opposition to the ruling party, with the main justification being the need for reconfiguration. [42]

Ethiopian political parties lack consistent institutional frameworks to address intra-party conflicts, despite the fact that conflict is unavoidable. Others even prefer using prominent people and arbitrators to arbitrate disputes between parties than employing the parties' institutional systems. This is somewhat related to the political culture of the nation, which promotes compromise following a conflict. [42] ESDP also included this traditional conflict resolution instrument in its by-laws.

As it was observed in the 2000 election, where the ruling could only win 42% of the total votes cast in Addis Abeba while the remaining 68% was divided among opposition parties, the founders of the influential party in the 2005 national election known as CUD initially tried to resolve the disagreement among party leaders of AAPO and EDP who refused and pushed the arbitrators to come up with a new party-EDP. The well-known maxim 'let you cooperate or disintegrate' (translated as 'tebaberu woyim tesebaberu' in Amharic) was then used to urge parties to cooperate, merge, form an alliance, or unite in order to successfully oppose the ruling party, which unilaterally presents itself as stronger by relying on state institutions and resources (Kefale, 2011, p.693). [44]

Above all, parties may become weak and even split if they don't have internal dispute resolution processes based on democratic values of bargaining and compromise. Most political parties in Ethiopia are associated with this culture.

Political parties in Ethiopia should first attempt to resolve conflicts within their own party through democratic processes outlined in their internal by-laws, rather than immediately resorting to legal action. By doing so, they can demonstrate their ability to handle internal disputes and work together to find resolutions. A federal high court judge who has experience hearing intra-party conflicts taken to court shared her observation as follows:

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[38] Available at https://nebe.org.et/en/political-parties

[39] List of Registered Political Parties Amharic and English Final. https://nebe.org.et/sites/default/files/List%20of%20Registered%20Political%20Parties%20Amharic%20%26%20English%20Final.pdf last accessed on 28/09/2022.

[40] FDRE Federal Negarit Gazeta (2019). The Ethiopian Electoral, Political Parties Registration and Election's Code of Conduct Proclamation No.1162/2019. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

[41] Interview with an expert in NEBE, November 2013, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

[42] Interview with NAMA's executive member, November 2022, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

[43] Interview with the top leader of the ESDP, April 2024, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

[44] Interview with a former executive member of EZEMA, October 2022 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

"If political parties cannot effectively resolve their own internal conflicts, it raises doubts about their capability to address the complex issues facing the Ethiopian society. When they cannot handle disagreements and conflicts within their own ranks, it indicates their lack of unity, leadership, or problem-solving skills that are necessary for governing a country effectively. Therefore, they should possess the necessary skills and mechanisms to resolve internal conflicts, as this would reflect their ability to manage and address broader societal challenges if they were elected into power. The society's trust in political parties is contingent upon their demonstrated capacity to handle complex issues both within their party and in the broader context of governance." [45]

Findings and study suggestions

The study found that the most destructive civil war of the 21st century that took the lives of more than 600,000 people and cost more than $28.7 billion was caused by intra-party conflict within Ethiopia's ruling party, the EPRDF, that later split into the PP and TPLF, which fought for nearly 24 months.

Intra-party conflict within the sample political parties was attributed to various factors. The first one is a power struggle within the party leadership, where different factions within EPRDF in March 2018, EZEMA in March 2022, NaMA in February 2020, OFC in 2007, and ESDP in 2019 were seen to compete for control over decision-making processes, resources, and party direction, leading to conflicts. Secondly, disagreements over ideological stances and policy directions fueled intra-party conflict where party members have divergent views on fundamental issues such as party governance in the PP since its formation, coalition formation in EZEMA, NaMA, OFC, and ESDP, financial transparency, or social issues that

were leading to internal strife. Thirdly, ethnic and regional cleavages in this diverse country with various ethnic groups and regional identities have been leading to intra-party conflicts arising due to tensions related to ethnic or regional representation in NaMA since its establishment within the party structure, where competing interests based on ethnicity in the PP or provincial affiliations in OFC escalated conflicts within a party. Fourthly, conflicts over resource allocation, including funding, positions, and access to networks, were seen as significant factors in intra-party disputes. When party members feel that resources were unfairly distributed or that certain factions receive preferential treatment, it leads to internal strife in all sample parties to varying degrees. Fifthly, the leadership style of key party figures contributed to intra-party conflict. Authoritarian leadership, lack of transparency, or failure to consult with party members on important decisions breed resentment and opposition within the party ranks, as seen in the PP, EZEMA, and NaMA. Sixthly, past grievances or unresolved conflicts within the party's history resurface and contribute to ongoing intra-party tensions, as seen in the PP. Issues such as past leadership struggles as seen in EZEMA, betrayals in OFC where a faction aligned with the ruling party, or ideological rifts can continue to impact party dynamics and lead to conflicts. Lastly, external influences such as pressure from interest groups, as is seen in the ESDP, from other parties against the incumbent leader, foreign entities like the diaspora intervention in NaMA, or government interference in OFC to split the former ONC, played a role in fueling intra-party conflict. External actors may seek to manipulate internal party dynamics for their own agendas, exacerbating existing tensions.

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[45] *Interview with a federal high court judge, November 2023, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

According to the study, Ethiopian political parties have significant internal governance issues that can be attributed to a dearth of intra-party democracy. One significant issue revealed by the research is that when disputes arise within the parties, people often split the party apart into factions or cliques rather than staying inside and realizing that politics is a fight of competing interests. The five political parties used as examples, in this case, have engaged in a variety of intra-party conflicts, some of which have led to the expulsion of groups that helped to create their parties.

Another result is that in order to prevent political parties from having a strong institutional foundation to oppose its rule, the ruling party has been adopting either cooptation or repression. Some respondents said that infiltrating the opposition has finally caused the party to break apart and that some organizations favorable to the ruling party would continue to use the name and resources of the original party. One example in this direction was CUD, whose key leaders were jailed after the 2005 election, leaving the party without a leader until, following a legal battle, the NEBE recognized a faction claiming the party. The kind of cooptation has persisted to this day, as the ruling party was able to appoint some party officials to the cabinet without having them stand for election in the national election of June 2021.

The study also discovered that the appointment of opposition political party leaders by the ruling party caused a major split among party leadership and membership structures in the wake of the 2021 national election. This occurs in part as a result of the appointed officials' growing loyalty to the government or ruling party rather than to their background. This gets worse because the appointment by the party congress was not approved by their respective parties. Worst of all, if these appointees choose to stand against the party, there are no rules that would hold them accountable for the party (or the nation as a whole). The paper concluded that institutional procedures are necessary for all of these processes to resolve.

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