Preventing violent extremism in the Horn:
The case of ethnic extremism in Ethiopia

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July 2019

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Abbreviations/Acronyms

ADP	Amhara Democratic Party
ANDM	Amhara National Democratic Movement
ANM	Amhara National Movement
EBC	Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation
EPRDF	Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front
ETV	Ethiopian Television
FGD	Focus group discussion
IDI	In-depth interview
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
ONLF	Ogaden National Liberation Front
OPD	Oromo People's Party
OPDO	Oromo People's Democratic Organisation
PM	Prime Minister
SEPDM	Southern Ethiopia Peoples' Democratic Movement
SNNPR	Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region
TPLF	Tigrayan People's Liberation Front

1. Executive summary

Dr. Abiy Ahmed was elected as Prime Minister by the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) – the ruling party – on 2 April 2018. In his first year in office, Dr. Abiy has executed sweeping political changes, including thorough reform of the security services and the release of political prisoners. Nevertheless, Ethiopia faces daunting challenges. One of these challenges is ethnic extremism, which is the topic of this report. The study investigates ethnic extremism within the broader framework of violent extremism as a phenomenon that has both global and local characteristics; it also notes the capacity for increased inter-ethnic violence to de-stabilise Ethiopia, which would have severe consequences for the stability of the wider Horn of Africa; and explores the current as well as emerging challenges emanating from and in response to the profound socio-political transformation underway in Ethiopia under the premiership of Dr. Abiy. The study argues that the primary existential threat, which represents a clear and present danger for the survival of Ethiopia as a nation, is *ethnic extremism*, an offshoot of the political philosophy that the EPRDF pursued since 1991 as a panacea for all of Ethiopia's past problems.

Ethnic extremism has been caused and driven*, inter alia,* by *political factors*, for example territorialising ethnicity and "ethnicising" territory through federal and regional constitutions, which led finally to the fracturing of the coalition of four ethnic parties that formed EPRDF; *economic factors*, such as corruption, poverty, youth unemployment and marginalisation of the majority of Ethiopian people from the equitable share of resources and economic activities by the ruling party in favour of political elites and their supporters; *social factors*, such as human rights abuses, gender discrimination irrespective of the current positive change, the internal displacement of persons, as well as irresponsible use of social media, and a lack of critical thinking skills in the education system, which was heavily influenced by the EPRDF ideology of revolutionary democracy; and finally, *security factors*, such as disproportionate representation within the security sector favouring select political elites, wide-spread availability of illicit arms and weapons across the country, human trafficking as well as money laundering. The list is long and complex, and many of these factors are interlinked. Fully exploring all of these is beyond the scope of this report: only the most prominent of the root causes are addressed here.

With the potential to significantly destabilise Ethiopia, in particular in the lead-up to the elections, addressing ethnic extremism must be one of the government priorities. Strategies for prevention include a revision of the federal as well as regional constitutions, reforming security sector governance, institutionalising reform, entrenching rule of law, holding accountable those who abused human rights (including through using state security apparatus to stay in power as they wished), providing peace education, and encouraging the

development of critical thinking as well as communication skills to build a culture of peace in Ethiopia.

For this to take place, there are different roles for different stakeholders to play:

- The **Government of Ethiopia**, and all political parties represented within that government, have to do their level best to address the root causes of ethnic extremism, as well as engage all parties in dialogue to diffuse tensions that appear in the country on the basis of ethnic identity. Constitutional reform is the most ambitious, but potentially also the most effective option to institutionalise reform.
- Dealing with root causes and drivers of ethnic extremism systematically necessitates deep institutional restructuring. This entails reforming the security sector, including the judiciary, the police, as well as the civil service are essential – and should be conducted at the federal, regional, zone, *woreda*,[1] and *kebele* levels. Creating a whole-of-government strategy for dealing with violent extremism would facilitate bringing relevant government actors together to address the issue of ethnic extremism.
- The government should continue to increase accountability, in accordance with the law of the land, by holding officials accountable for abuses they have committed in the past twenty plus years, and enhancing and modernising local and regional government services, making current leaders accountable and answerable to the people.
- The government should, furthermore, focus on addressing the high levels of internal displacement across the country, as it has already started at the time of writing. This entails empowering the Commission for Administrative Boundary Affairs, and accepting its findings as the basis for dealing with current violent conflicts related to administrative boundaries.
- There is a need to institutionalise reform processes by operationalising the meaning and applications of *medemer* (synergy or inclusivity) and *yiqirta* (forgiveness) at all levels. One way of doing so would be through dialogue and peace education. To prevent the dislocation and eviction of citizens from towns, the Federal Government should explore the option of running the administration of cities across Ethiopia (Addis Ababa, Dire Dawa, Bahir Dar, Hawassa, among others) in a similar way as it runs all of the federal universities in the country; it should also redefine the relations between regional states and the federal state accordingly.
- The **Ethiopian people** should engage in the ongoing process of political reform individually as well as through grassroots organisations, civil society, and academia. There is an urgent need to observe what is happening in the Middle East and remember what happened in Rwanda, and take lessons from these contexts to continue dialogue on the issue of extremism and its societal costs. "Peace by peaceful means" must be

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[1] *Woreda* roughly means district, whereas *kebele* refers to the smallest administrative/political unit in the Ethiopian administrative/political system.

the value underlying all peacebuilding and violent extremism prevention efforts. People will have to say "no" to violent extremists in their community and region, work with the government in order to entrench a culture of peace in the community, and engage directly in peace activities in their own localities.

- **International development partners** should support the Ethiopian government bilaterally as well as multilaterally in its efforts to create jobs for its youth, provide quality education, and reform the political process more efficiently and inclusively, so that ethnic extremism in Ethiopia will be countered and prevented, and social movements transformed into non-violent organisations. Contributions can be made by availing resources, expertise, and advice to the government and by supporting academic debate on the issues under consideration; it is quite evident that this tremendous challenge requires significant resources and expertise.

2. Reform and extremism

The debate on violent extremism has left a strong imprint on national and international politics in the decades since the attacks on the United States (US) that took place on 11 September 2001.[2] To date, the challenges presented by violent extremism or terrorism have been evaluated primarily through military and security lenses.[3] However, the number of people killed in terrorist attacks every year across the globe has been minor when compared with other leading causes of death[4] – including traffic accidents,[5] diabetes, or air pollution.[6] This holds true for Ethiopia as well, where casualties of traffic accidents and diabetes far outweigh the terror victims.[7] Although the number of victims of extremism has increased as of late, in Ethiopia as much as anywhere, one could ask why we are more concerned about – and prepared to invest in responses to – violent extremism or terrorism than any of the causes listed above?

One of the justifications put forward is that violent extremists are masters of the mind, who combine major dread with minor harm.[8] Extremism is the acceptance of violence, including against civilians, as a legitimate means, engendering fear to achieve a political goal;[9] violent extremists are those that not only support this in theory, but carry out the violence themselves. Extremism involves categorical us-versus-them thinking, and can be based on a variety of

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[2] The terms "violent extremism" and "terrorism" are used interchangeably by many authors. See for example Pankaj Mishra (2017) *Age of Anger: A History of the Present*. UK: Allen Lane; UNESCO (2017) Preventing Violent Extremism through Education: A Guide for Policy-Makers; Yuval Noah Harari (2018) *21 Lessons for the 21st Century*. London: Jonathan Cape; Steven Pinker (2018) *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism and Progress*, UK: Allen Lane.

[3] Between 2001 to 2017, the United States government alone spent approximately US$1.78 trillion to fight terrorism. The European Union has spent in the range of €5.7 million in 2002 to €93.5 million in 2009. See UNESCO (2017).

[4] Since 11 September 2001, every year terrorists have killed only about ten people in the United States, about seven people in China, and up to 25,000 people globally (mostly in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria, Somalia and Syria).

[5] In contrast, each year traffic accidents kill about 80,000 Europeans, 40,000 Americans, 270,000 Chinese, and 1.25 million people in total; according to African Daily Voice, about 5,118 people died in traffic accidents in Ethiopia during the 2017/18 fiscal year. See for example Teferi Abagaz & Samson Gebremedhin (2018) "Magnitude of road traffic accident related injuries and fatalities in Ethiopia",
https://www.biorxiv.org/content/biorxiv/early/2018/08/01/382333.full.pdf

[6] Diabetes and high blood sugar levels kill up to 3.5 million people annually, while air pollution kills about 7 million people every year. Harari (2018) p. 125.

[7] For example, it was also reported that the number of diabetic cases in Ethiopia to be 800,000 in 2000, and the number is expected to increase to 1.8 million by 2030. See Yewenhareg Feleke and Fikre Enquselassie (2005) "An Assessment of the health care system for diabetes in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia", *Ethiopian Journal on Health Development*, Volume 19 (3), p. 203,
https://www.ajol.info/index.php/ejhd/article/viewFile/9999/2253

[8] Pinker (2018) p. 191

[9] Literally, "extremism" means the "belief in and support for ideas that are very far from what most people consider correct or reasonable". "Extremism" thus refers to attitudes or behaviours that are deemed outside the norm. This basic dictionary understanding highlights the inherently subjective nature of the term, which can take on different meanings depending on who defines the norm and decides what is acceptable or not accordingly. See UNESCO (2017), p.10.

ideological convictions, including political, religious, and ethnic – the latter being the main concern for Ethiopia, and as such the main concern of this paper.

While extremism may kill only small numbers of people, extremist attacks are often targeted at civilians, pose grave challenges to human rights and human dignities, and affect the security and well-being of individuals. As a strategy, extremism is almost always adopted by intolerant and ethically dwarfed actors who do not believe in dialogue, negotiation, education, or communication to deal with differences of ideas in any civilised manner.[10] The only way for extremists to succeed is by inducing fear, causing havoc and terror by terrifying innocent civilians. Fear – the dread of another attack – is the main story, and there is an astounding disproportion between the actual strength of extremists and the fear they manage to inspire.[11]

This creates the potent perception of violent extremism as a subversion of established political processes: the concept that a violent action can induce a change in the political situation by spreading fear. By managing to terrify billions and creating the image that violent extremism poses an existential threat to the stability of states, it manages to shake political structures a large as the European Union or the US. In some cases, the severity of such extremism may be exaggerated, but in others – including in Ethiopia – the dangers of extremism ripping apart a society at the seams are very real, with potentially devastating consequences.

Reform in Ethiopia

Ethiopia is at the centre of the Horn of Africa both physically and politically, home to well over 100 million people and one of the fastest growing economies in the world. The country is a prominent development partner of both the West and the East, internationally seen as an important ally in the fight against terrorism. It also hosts a large number of refugees from various countries across the Horn of Africa, and, bordering chronically unstable countries such as Somalia and South Sudan, Ethiopia's stability is closely intertwined with the stability of the wider region.

Since 2014, Ethiopia has seen protests of different ethnic groups, including the Oromo and the Amhara, the country's two largest ethnic groups. At the root of these were the perceived marginalisation of ethnic groups by the ruling EPRDF party – in power since 1991 and widely seen to be dominated by ethnic Tigrayans – and a socio-economic climate in which the population did not seem to benefit from the country's economic growth that for many years was over 10%. A state of emergency was instituted in 2016 and kept in place for nearly a year: to some extent, this restored peace and calm, but as protests continued a large number of arrests were made in an attempt to quell the popular unrest. In the end, in February 2018, Haile-Mariam Dessalegn, Prime Minister and Chairman of the EPRDF, stepped down, saying

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[10] Mishra (2017) p. 275
[11] Rogers (2016) p. 5; Harari (2018) p.163.

his resignation would be "vital in the bid to carry out reforms that would lead to sustainable peace and democracy".[12] A state of emergency was re-instituted as the EPRDF commenced, behind closed doors, a process of self-reflection and considered who to nominate as the new party chairman and Prime Minister. Various parties put forward candidates, and the process culminated in the election of Dr. Abiy Ahmed as the new Prime Minister on 2 April 2018.[13]

When the EPRDF conducted a process of self-criticism in the period leading up to the ascension of Dr. Abiy to the premiership, phrases such as "corrupt practices", "corrupt elites", and "corrupt leaders" were used by the members of the party with a view to changing and overhauling the political economy of the EPRDF. The officials confessed this in public to the Ethiopian people in the mass media, for example on Ethiopian Television (ETV), and asked the whole society for forgiveness. They admitted that corruption, bad governance, ill-treatment of persons, lack of rule of law, and inequality, among others, were rampant in the country. Corrupt practices were not limited to one ethnic group, but were systemic, as this was stated by the party leaders. "We are the corrupt elite" was the phrase used by the very authorities themselves.[14] It was not attributed to only one region, or one ethnic group, but to all EPRDF member parties and authorities: they clearly and publicly stated that they would take responsibility and compensate society for the mistakes they made. When the phrases "corrupt leaders" or "corrupt elites" are used within this report, it is done so within the same context of those EPRDF statements.[15]

With the coming to power of Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed Ali, the government of Ethiopia set itself on a course of profound socio-political and economic reform, which is seen by many as the *sine qua non* for peace, security, and development of the country. It took bold measures such as the release of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience;[16] reviewing, repealing and replacing various laws that contradicted basic human rights of citizens; involving women in the highest leadership positions (including the presidency and key ministerial positions);[17] engaging opposition parties and other marginalised sections of society in the political

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[12] "Ethiopia's Prime Minister Hailemariam resigns", Al Jazeera, 15 February 2018, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/02/ethiopia-prime-minister-hailemariam-desalegn-resigns-180215115215988.html

[13] The state of emergency was not lifted until 5 June 2018, see "Ethiopia lifts state of emergency two months early", CNN, 5 June 2018, https://edition.cnn.com/2018/06/05/africa/ethiopia-lifts-state-of-emergency/index.html

[14] "Ethiopia and EPRDF: reform or perish", Soderetube, 3 March 2018, https://www.soderetube.com/2018/03/ethiopia-and-eprdf-reform-or-perish/

[15] Ibid.

[16] "Ethiopia offers amnesty to recently freed political prisoners", Reuters, 20 July 2018, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ethiopia-prisoners/ethiopia-offers-amnesty-to-recently-freed-political-prisoners-idUSKBN1KA1U0

[17] "In Ethiopian leader's new cabinet, half the ministers are women", Washington Post, 16 October 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/ethiopias-reformist-leader-inaugurates-new-cabinet-half-of-the-ministers-women/2018/10/16/b5002e7a-d127-11e8-b2d2-f397227b43f0_story.html

leadership; and reforming the military.[18] Most importantly, the government of Ethiopia acknowledged and addressed state-sponsored terrorism that was inflicted on its own citizens, which included human rights abuses, extra judicial killings, torture, waterboarding, sleep deprivation, and castration. These are all inhuman acts, using the very state apparatus and machinery that existed between 28 May 1991 up until 2 April 2018.[19] Most focus group discussion (FGD) participants in the study – many of whom were lawyers and policy analysts – mentioned these acts repeatedly as examples of the steps taken by the government of Ethiopia.[20] They also said that there is mass support for the change, which is seen as people-centred.

At the international level, the government of Ethiopia has so far pulled back the country from a number of international conflicts in which it was involved. Most significantly, Ethiopia made peace with Eritrea, which has far-reaching implications for regional peace and security, and started bringing to justice corrupt military and civil leaders, as well as abusers of human rights who were free-riders on political power in Ethiopia for the last twenty-seven years. Dr. Abiy has strengthened relations with various regional powers, including Saudi Arabia and the UAE, and offered to mediate in crises in Sudan and South Sudan. The country also has improved its relations with Somalia, as a part of a larger agenda of regional integration in the long run, to effectively address the issues of violent extremism in the Horn of Africa.

Hence, appreciating the current reform process and preventing further violence and terrorism in Ethiopia are crucially important for reliable development and sustainable peace and stability in this troubled part of the world. This is the objective of this paper, and one that is particularly timely considering the recent increase in ethnic violence in the country.

Spikes in ethnic violence
An aspect of identity involving "common consciousness of shared origin and traditions", *ethnicity* can be defined in terms of blood relations, territorial location, and linguistic as well as cultural affinity. It could also be defined in terms of gender as in some western societies, or by religion as in Northern Ireland, Lebanon and the Balkans, or by language as for the Basques, Welsh or Georgians.[21] More than religion or gender, however, the politically institutionalised markers of ethnicity in the post-1991 Ethiopian context are blood relations, territoriality, linguistic and socio-cultural features. The Ethiopian census lists more than 90 distinct ethnic

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[18] "Ethiopia: Deep Reform Well Underway in Defense Forces, Says General Seare Mekonen", All Africa, 13 February 2019, https://allafrica.com/stories/201902140326.html

[19] This was broadcast in state media in January 2019, available here at
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IRTqDOsAzdI

[20] Focus group discussion with lawyers and policy analysts, January 2019, Addis Ababa.

[21] Allison, Lincoln (2003) Ethnicity, In: McLean, Ian and McMillan, Alistair (eds.), Concise Dictionary of Politics: Oxford University Press, p. 177.

groups, and with more than 80 distinct languages, it is a highly diverse country.[22] These ethnic markers have been at the root of considerable internal violence – or *ethnic extremism* – in contemporary Ethiopia.

Three examples of ethnic extremism that occurred in 2018 in Ethiopia are worth mentioning to illustrate the political climate in the country.[23] First, mass rallies had occurred in Addis Ababa for a number of months since April 2018, signalling strong support for Dr. Abiy's reform agenda. On 23 June 2018, however, a grenade was thrown during one of these rallies, in an attempt to assassinate the Prime Minister. The attack killed two – and wounded almost a hundred – unarmed innocent civilians, who were rallying in support of the Prime Minister's civic and citizenship-based politics, which stood in strong contrast to previous ethno-linguistics-based politics. Initially, suspicion fell on the "old guard" of the regime, and many allegations were made that the attack had been due to Dr. Abiy's ethnic background, and the story was quickly cast in the mould of ethnic conflict. Eventually, alleged Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) operatives were charged by the Federal Attorney General.[24]

Second, there was widespread havoc and terror induced in September 2018 in Ashewa Meda, in Burayu town of Addis Ababa, where scores of civilians were killed and a five-year old girl was raped, and later died. This followed the return to the country of members of the previously outlawed OLF rebel group, by the invitation of the Prime Minister, with a view to establishing an inclusive and citizenship-based political system.[25] On the day, Oromo youth, frequently referred to as *qeerro* (which loosely translates to "bachelors") had replaced national flags in Addis Ababa with the OLF flag. This led to clashes between Oromos and non-Oromos in and around the capital, involving Guraghe and Gamo people, among others.

Third, across the country, between 2017 and 2019, there was a sharp escalation in community tensions and local clashes that led to a spike in internally displaced persons (IDPs).[26] There was ethnic violence in the Oromia and the Somali regional states, especially along the border. Tigrayans were forced out of Amhara and elsewhere in Ethiopia; Amharas were expelled from Oromia and Benishangul. Violent conflicts between the Oromo and Gedeo ethnic groups

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[22] Minority Rights Group International, *World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Ethiopia*, January 2018, https://www.refworld.org/docid/4954ce295.html

[23] After completion of the study, two other incidents occurred: first, in June 2019, the killing of the Amhara regional state President Ambachew Mekonnen and chief of staff of the armed forces Seare Mekonnen, among others, in what was said to be a regional coup attempt; second, in July 2019, the unrest over the referendum on autonomy in Sidama, in which at least 17 people were killed.

[24] "Ethiopia attack: Five charged for trying to kill PM Abiy Ahmed", BBC, 28 September 2018, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-45678760

[25] The BBC reported after the incident that 1,200 people had initially been detained for involvement in the clashes. "Ethiopia detains 1,200 after deadly Addis Ababa clashes", BBC, 25 September 2018, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-45638856

[26] "Power shift creates new tensions and Tigrayan fears in Ethiopia", The New Humanitarian, 14 February 2019, http://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2019/02/14/Ethiopia-ethnic-displacement-power-shift-raises-tensions

displaced approximately 970,000 people in the western Guji and Gedeo zones of neighbouring Oromia and the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region.[27] On the whole, by January 2019, at least 2.33 million – but reportedly as many as 3 million – people had been internally displaced because they are not part of, nor do they belong to, an ethnic group in a certain territory of Ethiopia, even though they had been living together since long before ethnic politics were introduced to the country in 1991 by the EPRDF.[28]

These are by no means the only examples of violent ethnic extremism in Ethiopia over the last years, but it should be clear that ethnic extremism can create devastating internal social instabilities, far-reaching political crises, and serious peace and security concerns. In fact, when asked, during a workshop on ethnic extremism, a large majority of participants (82%) saw the risk of ethnic extremism as considerable, with 44% rating the risk as "high" and 38% as "very high".[29] This is consistent with media reports, some of which observed: "Ethnic tensions are the biggest problem for Ethiopia right now" or that "You've got millions of people displaced – it's a humanitarian crisis, and it could get out of control."[30] Reports further stated that even though Dr. Abiy's aggressive reform agenda has won praise, the impact of inter-communal tensions and ethnic violence presents a serious challenge for the new leadership across the country.

Table 1. Summary of validation workshop participants' views on ethnic extremism

Descriptors	1 Very low	2 Low	3 Medium	4 High	5 Very high	Total
Risk of ethnic extremism in Ethiopia	0%	5%	11%	44%	38%	100%

Beyond its internal repercussions, a disturbance of security in Ethiopia could have grave consequences for the region, as well as the global community. Bordering South Sudan, which has seen years of instability, and Somalia, where the violent extremist organisation al-Shabaab has for years had a foothold, violence can quickly spill across the country's borders; similarly, internal instability in Ethiopia has the potential to add fuel to the fire in an already unstable region.

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[27] Ibid.

[28] Official sources list the figure of 2.33 million, but in the workshop in Addis Ababa in January 2019, figures as high as 3 million people were repeatedly mentioned as most accurately reflecting the rate of internal displacement. See International Organization for Migration, 2019, https://displacement.iom.int/ethiopia

[29] Joint workshop organised by the European Institute of Peace and the Institute for Peace and Security Studies, Addis Ababa, 23 January 2019.

[30] "Power shift creates new tensions and Tigrayan fears in Ethiopia", The New Humanitarian, 14 February 2019, http://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2019/02/14/Ethiopia-ethnic-displacement-power-shift-raises-tensions

Nevertheless, despite its internal and external challenges, Ethiopia has not yet developed a comprehensive strategy to prevent or counter violent extremism (P/CVE), which has been recommended by the UN.[31] The practice and principles of the current government appear to be peace, security, and development, as well as forgiveness, inclusivity, and participation, all of which are essential components for effective P/CVE approaches. Considering the rise in violence and the political opening in the country, it seems there is both a need and a window of opportunity to effectively address the issue of ethnic extremism through comprehensive government action.

To contribute to such an exercise, this study focuses on investigating the causes and consequences of and the cure for violent extremism – specifically ethnic extremism – in Ethiopia. Literature is available on the challenges of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia, yet little has been done to translate this understanding of the systemic challenges into a comprehensive discussion of the prevention of ethnic extremism in the country. This study aims to provide a contribution to this field. It will first outline the research design; second, discuss the drivers and root causes of ethnic extremism in Ethiopia; and lastly, offer strategies and recommendations for preventing ethnic extremism in Ethiopia – a challenge that is one of the country's most significant, and most immediate – to ensure the success of the ongoing political reforms, and address one of the most formidable challenges Ethiopia will face in the years to come.

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[31] United Nations General Assembly (2015) "Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism", https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/674

3. Research overview

Qualitatively designed, the current study is an attempt to fill gaps that need an immediate response; it also aims to contribute to long-term strategies for preventing and countering violent extremism, which is epitomised in Ethiopia by ethnic extremism and presents a significant challenge to the current political reforms.

Following from the background discussed above, this study raised the following questions:

- Why has ethnic extremism prevailed in post-1991 Ethiopia?
- What are the causes and drivers of ethnic extremism?
- What reforms should be undertaken by the government, and what roles should academia, civil society and other stakeholders play to prevent ethnic extremism?
- What strategies need to be put in place to prevent and counter violent extremism in Ethiopia?

In order to respond to these questions, primary data was collected across Ethiopia, using in-depth interviews with selected respondents from all regional states, with focus on Oromia, the Somali region, Tigray, Amhara, and SNNPR. Approximately 50 in-depth interviews were conducted upon which the study draws. In addition, ten focus group discussions were organised with selected key informants, many of whom had government experience at federal as well as regional state levels.

For both, participants were selected on the basis of their expertise and unique insights. The sample included political leaders of the federal and regional governments, as well as (former) EPRDF members: it also included military and police officers, journalists, academics and students, civil society leaders, and human rights activists. The discussions were semi-structured, organised to address various research themes, including the current politico-security context in Ethiopia; the causes and drivers of ethnic extremism in Ethiopia; stumbling blocks of political reform, and expected political changes; potential strategies to prevent and counter violent extremism in Ethiopia; and reforms to be undertaken by the government, academia and civil society, and the international community.[32]

Information obtained from the interviews and focus group discussions was triangulated by analysis of documents such as government proclamations, news reports, press releases, and reliable online sources. The data was thematically and critically analysed and presented. Finally, the initial findings of the research were presented in a validation workshop in Addis Ababa in January 2019, on the basis of which policy recommendations were made in four areas: what the Ethiopian government, the Ethiopian people, academia and civil society, and international

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[32] See appendix A for the full list of guiding questions.

development partners ought to do in order to prevent and counter ethnic extremism – "before it is too late".[33]

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[33] Workshops, 23 January 2019, Addis Ababa and 4 March 2019, Mekelle.

4. Causes and drivers of ethnic extremism in Ethiopia

Four major factors have been identified as causes and drivers of ethnic extremism in Ethiopia. The most fundamental source of extreme behaviour is ethnic competition embedded in, and promoted by, the EPRDF's political and security structure since its establishment in 1991. This is reinforced by the fracturing of the EPRDF ruling party; youth unemployment combined with propaganda; and the effects of porous borders. Each of these are dealt with in turn below.

The flaws of ethnic federalism

Ethnic competition is the consequence of the political philosophy of ethno-linguistic federalism, as engineered by the Tigrayan Peoples' Liberation Front (TPLF) within the broader coalition of the EPRDF.[34] This philosophy was meant to address Ethiopia's pre-1991 problems, which had themselves sprung from two millennia of feudal rule, followed by fifteen years of bloody authoritarianism under the Derg regime. The threat posed by the Marxist-Leninist military dictatorship was one of totalitarianism, corruption, abuse of power, and crimes against humanity.[35]

Over the past decades, the country has sought to come to terms with this period. Since 1991, ethnic politics have been the leading political philosophy of the EPRDF. This promoted identity politics, for example by decreasing the importance of a national Ethiopian identity as part of civic citizenship. This philosophy was enshrined in the constitution. According to Article 39 (3) and (5) every ethno-cultural community has its own territory and the right to "a full measure of self-government which includes the right to establish institutions of government in the territory it inhabits".[36] Under Article 39 (1) and (4), the constitution conferred the right to self-determination to ethno-cultural communities – up until secession (although it would involve a lengthy process).[37] Ethno-cultural communities were defined as "a group of people who have or share a large measure of culture or similar customs, mutual intelligibility of language, belief in a common or related identities, a common psychological make-up, and who inhabit an identifiable, predominantly contiguous territory".[38] As one author posited, the federal constitution did not just recognise ethno-linguistic identity but created regional states based

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[34] J. Abbink, "Ethnicity and Conflict Generation in Ethiopia: Some Problems and Prospects of Ethno-Regional Federalism", *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, Volume 24 (3), p. 392.
[35] It is estimated that over 150,000 students, academics, and political opponents were killed during the Derg's "Red Terror". During the rule of the military junta, there were illicit flows of money out of the country of up to 20 billion USD, according to a UNECA Report of February 2019. This was reflected in FGD with lawyers and policy analysts (March 2019, Addis Ababa)
[36] "Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia", https://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/et/et007en.pdf
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.

on those identities.[39] Moreover, it was the ethno-cultural communities, rather than the Ethiopian people, that were made into the constituent units of the Ethiopian federation.[40]

What was written down in the constitution was reinforced by social programmes. Large segments of people growing up during this period were, as one participant put it, "brainwashed" and taught, by school curricula, about "territorialising identity" and "ethnically identifying with territory". [41] As a result, they have found thinking about other regions of Ethiopia "very difficult or nearly impossible".[42] The underlying point, interview subjects said, is that ethnic federalism made people think in terms of their ethnic identity: not as Ethiopian, but as Oromo or Somali, as Bertha or Gumuz. From this follows the thought that everyone should live in their respective *killil* – region – only.[43] It underpinned the notion that certain ethnic groups belong in certain parts of the country (and not in others), and in turn, that specific parts of the country belong to specific ethnic groups (and not to others). Ethnic federalism favoured native ethno-cultural communities over those who settled there: settlers were seen as migrants whose rights could (and often would) be violated on ethno-linguistic grounds.

Political mobilisation along ethnic lines, supported by the constitution and the country's political structure of power-sharing between ethnicities, increasingly became the norm. This has frequently led to expulsions and forced evictions, including of people that for generations had lived in those parts of the country, as well as mass violence. Minority ethnicities that were not expelled, or that did not voluntarily leave, often lived in near-constant fear of being killed. In parts of Ethiopia, the clashes and the uprooting of people from their indigenous areas have continued to this day: Amhara and Oromo populations being evicted from Benishangul Gumuz and Somali *killil*, incited by the political leaders of these areas, are only some examples of this wider trend.[44]

Exploiting opportunities
Ethnic competition has not emerged purely by chance: it is also a political strategy. Interview results show that many authority figures in the post-1991 era – some of whom were responsible for corruption, bad governance, arbitrary detention, and even suspected of crimes against humanity – now promote ethnic nationalism. Ethnic competition is utilised by elites intent on devising mechanisms of subverting the rule of law and the current reform process,

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[39] Mehari Tadelle Maru, "Federalism and conflicts in Ethiopia", *Africa Insight*, Volume 39 (4), March 2010, p. 132.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Focus group discussion with in-service teachers from Oromia, South, Amhara and Afar regional states, August 2018, Addis Ababa.
[42] Ibid.
[43] *Killil* is an Amharic word to indicate administrative region or regional state in the 1995 Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.
[44] In-depth interview with former head of Security and Administrative Affairs of Benihsangul Gumuz, December 2018, Assossa, and in-depth interviews with residents of Jigjiga, January 2019.

by which they sense themselves at risk of being held accountable for part abuses.[45] According to focus group discussions, some of the former EPRDF leaders create every possible obstacle to stymie the new socio-political change which is taking place now in the country.[46] One such obstacle has been the hiring for pay of unemployed youth as "hit squads", as was shown between September and December 2018 in Benishangul/Gumuz, as well as in other areas, including southern and northern Ethiopia.[47] Another illustration of this was the group of military officers marching to the Prime Minister's palace at the end of October 2018, under the guise of demanding a salary increase: Dr. Abiy has said the soldiers intended to kill him.[48] The case is still under investigation by the military courts and some of the soldiers involved have been imprisoned at the time of writing, but it is rumoured that this was a coordinated action, and ethnic politics may have been at play here as well. The incident may have been a response to the Prime Minister's decisions to shake up the top brass of the military and security services, which has long been alleged to be dominated by ethnic Tigrayans.[49] Moreover, sporadic periods of instability have occurred across the country, caused mainly by and expressed in terms of ethnic politics. This has led to violence on sports fields, and in marketplaces, churches and mosques, universities, colleges, and schools.[50]

The reform championed by the government of Dr. Abiy has explicitly focused on addressing past abuses. The Prime Minister appeared in front of parliament, and admitted that Ethiopian security services have tortured prisoners, which he branded "our form of terrorism".[51] The government ended the labelling of long-term opposition groups such as the OLF, the ONLF, and Ginbot7 as terrorist, paving the way for a return to the country of these groups, many of which pledged to disengage in favour of a "peaceful struggle at home".[52] Thousands of political prisoners were released, and various former senior security officials were arrested for human rights abuses and corruption.[53] Some saw an ethnically motivated agenda in the reform

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[45] Focus group discussion with journalists, lawyers and policy analysts, January 2019, Addis Ababa.

[46] Focus group discussions, Addis Ababa, Hawassa, Gambella, September 2018.

[47] Interviews with former head of Security and Administrative Affairs of Benihsangul Gumuz, December 2018.

[48] "Abiy Ahmed: Protesting Ethiopian soldiers wanted to kill me", BBC, 18 October 2018, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-45903244

[49] While Tigrayans have for a long time held many significant positions at the top of the military and security services, their perceived dominance is reinforced by various rumours and conspiracy theories among the population, some of which alleged that for years after the fall of the Derg, the military was led almost exclusively by Tigrayan generals.

[50] Focus group discussions, Addis Ababa, Hawassa, Gambella, September 2018.

[51] "Ethiopia PM: Security agencies committed 'terrorist acts', Al Jazeera, 18 June 2018, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/06/ethiopia-pm-security-agencies-committed-terrorist-acts-180619051321984.html

[52] "Ethiopia signs peace deal with former Ogaden rebels", Al Jazeera, 13 April 2019, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/04/ethiopia-signs-peace-deal-ogaden-rebels-190413150450692.html

[53] "Ethiopia arrests ex deputy intelligence chief in corruption, rights crackdown", Reuters, 15 November 2018, https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-ethiopia-politics/ethiopia-arrests-ex-deputy-intelligence-chief-in-corruption-rights-crackdown-idUKKCN1NK09W

process: for example, the chair of the TPLF, Debretsion Gebremichael, spoke of a "witch hunt" that was "used to bring Tigrayan people to their knees".[54]

The reform process also looked forward. PM Abiy has spoken of *medemer*, which in Amharic refers to "inclusivity" and "unity" – a philosophy of collaboration and peaceful co-existence – and *yiqirta*, meaning "forgiveness", which he has demonstrated in the various peace agreements that brought home political groups previously banned. The government has created independent commissions on reconciliation and administrative boundaries: the former with a mandate to restore peace, resolve clashes, and promote peaceful co-existence; the latter, accountable to the Office of the Prime Minister, aimed at bringing lasting remedies to administrative boundary claims among nations, nationalities, and regions of Ethiopia.[55] The bill passed in the House of People's Representatives, but was heavily contested, in particular by representatives from the Tigray region.[56]

Although the Ethiopian government has welcomed back former rivals, such as Ginbot 7 and the OLF – something unthinkable just a few years ago – this has raised various thorny questions, most pressing of which is what to do with the armed wings of the returned political movements. Some of these were gradually being settled as a result of the traditional *Aba Geda* governance system in Oromia, and the successful reconciliation process to disarm and demobilise in Somali *killil* of the ONLF troops. Nevertheless, much work remains to be done for the demobilisation to be effective. The demonstrations in September 2018 in Addis Ababa that turned violent showed that poorly managed disarmament programmes can quickly spiral out of control.[57]

In addition to engaging political opposition movements, the government – by necessity rather than by desire – has relied on the existing political system for the implementation its reforms. This is a system that consists of old institutions and long-serving EPRDF personnel, many of whom have been in office throughout the twenty-seven-year period since the overthrow of the Derg. As such, one of the continuing challenges is the lack of functional and functioning institutions. In an attempt to overcome this, the Prime Minister re-shuffled the ministerial responsibilities, creating a new Ministry of Peace under the leadership of Muferiat Kamil. The

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[54] "Ethiopia PM conducting political, ethnic witch-hunt - Tigray chair", Africa News, 11 November 2018, https://www.africanews.com/2018/11/20/tigray-chair-says-ethiopia-pm-conducting-political-and-ethnic-witch-hunt/
[55] "Government proposes creation of Reconciliation, Administrative Boundaries commission", The Reporter, 1 December 2018,
https://www.thereporterethiopia.com/article/government-proposes-creation-reconciliation-administrative-boundaries-commission
[56] "Ethiopia PM to regulate border and identity disputes in regional states", Africa News, 20 December 2018, https://www.africanews.com/2018/12/20/ethiopia-pm-to-regulate-border-and-identity-disputes-in-regional-states//
[57] "Rallies held in Oromia over threat to disarm OLF", Ethiopia Insight, 30 October 2018, https://www.ethiopia-insight.com/2018/10/30/rallies-held-in-oromia-over-threat-to-disarm-olf/

new ministry is responsible for many aspects of the country's security provision, including the Federal Police, conflict prevention and early warning, and peacebuilding. It also oversees the response to internal displacement. But despite the re-shuffle, many challenges and various structural limitations to implementation of the reform remain.

Perhaps the most significant challenge is the lack of competent state officials with a clear understanding of the new *medemer* and *yiqirta* principles, and much of the reform is driven directly by the office of the Prime Minister (and reportedly by the PM himself). Meanwhile, many ministries and government institutions continue to be staffed with officials that have been in office for decades, who are themselves products of twenty-seven years of EPRDF political rule. One participant referred to the process as putting "new wine in old bottles", a situation in which the old institutions and personnel fit for the purpose of "ethnic politics and revolutionary democracy" fail to shoulder the new responsibility and thinking.[58] The bureaucracy clearly has direct links with the previous leadership and has obstructed change from taking place, as has been witnessed in the Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority, in colleges and universities in July to November 2018, in most of the regional states, and in public places such as churches, mosques, markets, to take but a few examples.[59] The true aspiration of the ethnically aligned old institutions, according to the participants in the study, is to retain or to regain political power in order to bring back the old system of post-1991 ethno-linguistic politics to 21st century Ethiopia.[60] There also is an apparent lack of institutions to bring the ideas of *medemer* and *yiqirta* to the grassroots level, with much of the reform not experienced beyond Addis Ababa or the regional capitals. In turn, the lack of effective institutions is reflected in the lack of the rule of law, a lack of effective public service, and the inability of the justice sector to promote and enact the current profound reform process.

Many of these reforms will take time, and some resistance to change is to be expected in transitional societies. One may recall how during the transition from a traditional to a "modern" society in the 1950s and 1960s in Ethiopia, a "new" activity such as going to the cinema was regarded as an act of evil or worshipping *Satan*. To this day, the hall at the heart of Addis Ababa, which was used to show the movies, is spoken of as "*Satan bet*" or "House of the Devil". Change is often initially resisted, and it should therefore not be surprising that the current reform is resisted by some parts of society. It may be "just for the time being" as was the case with "the cinema" in Ethiopian context. Nevertheless, there is a real risk that the structural imbalances of ethnic federalism will be exacerbated in the near future, and translate into further incitement and violence between Ethiopia's ethnic groups. One of the factors increasing the risk is the fracturing of the ruling party, the EPRDF, which the next section addresses.

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[58] In-depth interview, Addis Ababa, January 2019.
[59] Focus group discussion with lawyers and policy analysts, March 2019, Addis Ababa.
[60] Focus group discussions in three rounds with 21 students of the summer school, Addis Ababa University, August 2018.

A fracturing ruling party

The four coalition members of the EPRDF – the Tigrayan Peoples' Liberation Front (TPLF), the Oromo Democratic Party (ODP), the Amhara Democratic Party (ADP), and the Southern Ethiopia Peoples' Democratic Movement (SEPDM) – each of which used to carefully toe the party line, at present are making their internal disagreements visible. Since coming to power in 1991, the EPRDF's decisions have typically been made following supposedly freewheeling internal debates leading to binding decisions, which the coalition's four parties have then obeyed closely. However, since Dr. Abiy took office on 2 April 2018, Ethiopians have witnessed something unusual in their country's politics: the constituent parties of the ruling coalition have been openly in disagreement with one another.

Since the July 2016 rally in Gondar, Amhara region, over the alleged annexation of the Wolkait area by Tigray state, unrest has continued unabated, up to the time of writing. The protest, which was extremely critical of the TPLF, appeared to have been facilitated by the party then called Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM), now ADP; yet both of the protagonist parties are members of the ruling coalition.[61] In Bahir Dar, then Regional President Gedu Andargachew (replaced by the late Dr. Ambachew Mekonnen on 7 March 2019) and party leader Demeke Mekonnen oversaw a rally in which the old Ethiopian flag, a once-banned political symbol, was on display. Former political prisoners were also paraded.[62]

Two of the EPRDF's parties, ANDM and OPDO, have changed their names recently, another sign of their new-found autonomy. The OPDO, led by Dr. Abiy, officially became the ODP. The ANDM followed suit soon after to become the ADP led by the Deputy Prime Minister, Ato Demeke Mekonnen. The ADP has been particularly outspoken in asserting its views. It has said publicly that it wants to redraw administrative boundaries and has pushed for the Sudanese border agreement to be re-examined.[63] The party has even hinted that it wants to discard the EPRDF's ideology of "revolutionary democracy". In another sign of shifting dynamics, some parties within the EPRDF have merged with opposition parties, or have been openly planning to do so. For instance, the ODP and the ODF (Oromo Democratic Front, led by Dr. Dima Negeo and Ato Lencho Letta, who were former founders of the OLF) have officially merged.[64] In its home region, the ADP is under pressure from the Amhara National Movement (ANM), but a likely merger of the two is yet to be confirmed at the time of writing. This newly-formed party is gaining popularity by appealing to those who believe the Amhara region was exploited under the previous TPLF-led government and now faces the threat of being subservient to an

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[61] Tom Gardner, "Ethiopia's Great Rift", *Foreign Policy*, 20 February 2018, https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/02/20/ethiopias-great-rift/

[62] In-depth interview with former prisoner as an OLF member, who was released under the new government of Dr. Abiy Ahmed, October 2018, Addis Ababa.

[63] Elias Gebreselassie, "As EPRDF bonds loosen, fresh coalitions may lie in terra incgonita", Ethiopia Insight, 10 October 2018, https://www.ethiopia-insight.com/2018/10/10/as-eprdf-bonds-loosen-fresh-coalitions-may-lie-in-terra-incognita/

[64] Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation, evening news, 29 November 2018.

ODP-led administration under Dr. Abiy. The ADP has responded to this challenge by giving airtime to ethno-nationalist voices on its television and radio stations.

Meanwhile, as some of the participants in the study underlined, TPLF-friendly actors are looking for potential allies in Oromia regional state.[65] They are pushing for alliances with the ethno-nationalist wing of the ODP and even with the previously-banned OLF. This is apparently part of a strategy to bolster support for Ethiopia's system of ethnic federalism against demands from those calling for a more "unitary" system. This view was critically reflected on by one of the participants in the research as follows:

> We should not be deceived by the Amhara regional leaders' approach to the Oromia leadership; it is mainly because they want our rich resources, particularly land as well as other resources from the region. It was not solely meant for Ethiopian unity or prosperity of the peoples. Their hidden agenda and main purpose are to fight the Woyane that annexed their land. We must not be fooled again.[66]

With the unity of EPRDF fraying, its parties are also looking to regions not directly represented in the coalition. When the federal government ousted Abdi Ille, the head of the Somali regional state in July 2018, for instance, the ruling coalition's constituent parties responded differently. As President of the Somali region, Abdi Ille inflicted severe atrocities upon Somali, Oromo, and other nationalities of Ethiopia that lived in his region. The abuses of his *Liyu* police were notorious. As a result, many did not see the government intervention as an Oromo retaliating against a Somali leader for the displaced Oromo; instead, they understood that it was Abdi Ille's illegal activities that led to his arrest. The ADP made a statement supporting the move as broadcast on Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC).[67] As one participant said:

> The number of victims and the degree of human rights abuse, reported by international human rights organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch for several years, and the international attention it attracted, together with the nature of current EPRDF government, necessitated the quick intervention. It was successful mainly because there are supporters of the President's [Abdi Ille's] arrest and him facing justice from the Somali killil leadership and the people. The victims were real people who were terrified by "snakes, leopards, lions, etc." while they were in prison... many of them were made disabled, some were killed as a result of the severity of torture: similar action to Makelawi [a notorious detention and investigation centre, now closed] in Addis Ababa. I can give you a living testimony. The current leader of the killil

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[65] In depth interviews, Adama and Bahr Dar, November 2018.
[66] In-depth interview, Adama, December 2018.
[67] Elias Gebreselassie, "As EPRDF bonds loosen, fresh coalitions may lie in terra incgonita", Ethiopia Insight, 10 October 2018, https://www.ethiopia-insight.com/2018/10/10/as-eprdf-bonds-loosen-fresh-coalitions-may-lie-in-terra-incognita/

and his family were all terrified by Abdi Ille, and one of the current leaders – Ato Abdullahi – was one of the victims who lost his brother, while he himself escaped death and detention by leaving the country altogether with his family. He only came back when the new change came to Ethiopia.[68]

Yet the view that Abdi Ille should have been held accountable for past abuses was not universally supported. The TPLF condemned the arrest of Abdi Ille and the federal government's military intervention, which it framed as an Oromo assault on Somalis. Ethnic violence ensued, and as many as 140,000 people were displaced, most of them non-Somalis living in the Somali *killil*.[69] As events unfolded, various rumours circulated of Tigrayan military officers leading pro-Ille forces in an attempt to salvage his position.

Other leadership changes have followed since, although none so contested as the one in the Somali region. When Gambella regional state changed its whole leadership following the recent reform, except for a few incidents in Gambella town, the TPLF could not push with the same strength as it had done for the maintaining of the regime in the Somali region. The Afar region also changed its entire leadership, which according to participants had previously been structured primarily for the benefit of TPLF.[70] The restructuring took place following incessant requests and protests by the Afar youth, who came to Addis to appeal to the media as well as to the Prime Minister's office. A new election was conducted in Afar in the presence of the Minister of Defence Ayisha Mohammed and other military and political officials of the federal government. The new leadership is no longer seen as an ally to the TPLF.[71] Even though there were hiccups, the change was assessed as positive, as a former official of the *killil* observed both before and after the election of the new leadership in Afar. It was underlined that the major reason for the positive nature of the change is that it is locally initiated and supported.[72]

Ethnic instability and disarray have been particularly widespread in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region (SNNPR). Home to a large variety of ethnic groups, and one of the four Ethiopian regions that is multi-ethnic (without a *de jure* dominant ethnic group in the region), the region has recently seen a large drive for increased autonomy.[73] This has been the case in particular in Sadama, which is seeking to be recognised as a fully-fledged independent region, but others have pursued similar objectives, spurred on by the centrifugal

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[68] In-depth interview, academic from Somali *killil*, December 2018, Jigjiga.
[69] "Ethiopia – Somali Region inter-communal conflict: Flash update Number 1 (17 August 2018)", OCHA, 17 August 2018,
https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/ethiopia-somali-region-inter-communal-conflict-flash-update-number-1-17-august-2018
[70] In-depth interview with a former member of regional council of Afar regional state, January 2019, Addis Ababa.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Focus group discussions with summer students at Addis Ababa University, August, 2018.
[73] The other three multi-ethnic regional states are Gambella, Benishangul/Gumuz, and Harari.

forces unleashed in the new climate of political reform. One interviewee observed the consequences of this process:

> The questions of autonomous status by most zones of the killil is the most challenging phenomenon for the new leadership. Each region wants to be independent and an autonomous killil; at the same time asserting Hawassa as a common city for all. There are activists in all zones that fan and fuel the fire of ethnic violence in the region; they are all related to and in some ways supported by the former corrupted EPRDF leaders of the region. This situation puts the region in shambles. There is a lack of rule of law and one can think of [a return to the] "state of nature". The youth in Hawassa would go around and mark "in red" a fence or door of a house or building to be demolished because the residents do not belong to a desired ethnic group or groups; hence, they should be terrorised and live in fear – or leave the area.[74]

Ethnic extremism has proliferated throughout the region. Many have seen this as a direct result of the fraying of the ruling party, which has opened up the opportunity for centrifugal forces. The SEPDM has recently reconfirmed its commitment to the political reform, as reported in various media, but it remains to be seen if this commitment will be sufficient to quell the potential for serious violence in the volatile region.

Meanwhile, TPLF power has solidified in the Tigray region. Many of the TPLF officials have left Addis, and spend considerable time up in Mekelle charting potential responses to the reform process. There have been various shows of support for the TPLF. An early January 2019 rally in Mekelle, as seen by many observers and political analysts, expressed support for former officials who were wanted by the Federal Prosecutor General's Office, and for whom arrest warrants had been released.[75] The slogans they carried, as observed in the media and later with interview respondents, were a call for "the rule of law" and "safeguarding the constitution". This seemed an expression of support and sympathy for officials under arrest and those who were wanted by the Federal Prosecutor. In-depth interviewees argued that the mentioning of "rule of law" and "respect for the constitution" is controversial, as these calls are made from the very region where the suspected officials who allegedly broke the law and failed to respect the constitution are currently residing.[76] At the time of writing, the most wanted former officials who were allegedly responsible for human rights atrocities had not been handed over to the Federal Government by the regional government of Tigray. Many analysts and former federal as well as regional officials said that it is an indication of rebellion against the federal government.[77] This view is almost identical to comments and responses

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[74] In-depth interview with a member of the Council of Regional State, Hawassa, February 2019.
[75] "Ethiopia arrest warrant for ex-spy chief, Getachew Assefa", Africa News, 3 January 2019, https://www.africanews.com/2019/01/03/ethiopia-arrest-warrant-for-ex-spy-chief-getachew-assefa/.
[76] Focus group discussion with lawyers and political analysts, January 2019, Addis Ababa.
[77] In-depth interviews with authors, leaders, and analysts, Addis Ababa, January 2019.

received during the research for this study from other participants in Addis and elsewhere in Ethiopia.[78] As the analyst James Jeffrey reported, there "is resentment toward them [Tigrayans] when other Ethiopians hear of rallies in Tigray supporting the TPLF, because that seems like they aren't supporting reform efforts."[79]

The defiance of regional governments and the fracturing of the formerly cohesive and coherent EPRDF inevitably mean there will be various challenges to maintain unity between the ethno-cultural groups of Ethiopia that constitute the building blocks of the federal state. While it creates opportunities for groups to assert autonomy and dominance in a way that was previously impossible, the increased political space may give rise to centrifugal forces that could be difficult to contain. It may mean groups pushing for formal autonomy, as has been the case in the SNNPR; it may mean disputes over ill-defined boundaries, such as between Oromia and the Somali region, or between Tigray and Amhara; and it may intersect with existing tensions between religious groups. If managed poorly, it may mean widespread ethnic violence.

The national elections, currently scheduled for 2020, will present both opportunities and challenges to address these ethnic political issues. There are a number of ongoing public debates over the timing of the election. Some political analysts and observers express their concern that the country is not ready to conduct an election given the instability, internal displacement and fractured relations among the EPRDF's coalition members.[80] There are others who argue that delaying the election for a year or two would send the wrong signal to the Ethiopian people as well as international development partners: a signal that the new leadership does not deliver on its promises and continues the legacy of the pre-2 April 2018 EPRDF's political manipulation.[81] The recent postponement of the population census – very sensitive in the current climate of ethnic tensions – due to "security concerns" further underlines the questions over preparations for the 2020 elections.[82]

In general, despite a more open discourse, there is no clarity yet as to whether this new era will see an end to the EPRDF's monopoly on power, or perhaps even its dissolution. What appears to be clear though is that Ethiopia is veering towards a new form of coalition politics defined not by quiet obeisance but by open political competition.[83] This will likely result in an

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[78] It should be noted, however, that opposing a political party or "front" should not be equated with and extended to opposing the people or the community.

[79] "Power shift creates new tensions and Tigrayan fears in Ethiopia", The New Humanitarian, 14 February 2019, http://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2019/02/14/Ethiopia-ethnic-displacement-power-shift-raises-tensions.

[80] In-depth interviews with political analysts, Adama, Addis Ababa and Bahir Dar, November 2018.

[81] Ibid.

[82] "Ethiopia delays census again despite looming election", Reuters, 10 June 2019, https://af.reuters.com/article/ethiopiaNews/idAFL8N23H2T3 .

[83] Focus group discussion with civil society leaders and opposition party members (November 2018, Addis Ababa).

increase of ethnic violence, as political elites mobilise large parts of the young population, many of whom are looking to find a job and a place in a rapidly changing society.

Unemployment, propaganda, and social inequality

Ethiopia's population is growing rapidly. The fertility rate is 3.9 children per woman.[84] In 2017, 63% percent of Ethiopia's 105 million people are in the youth bracket (below 24 years of age).[85] The country's population is expected to grow to 190 million by 2050 and 250 million by 2100,[86] and while the economy has seen (near) double-digit growth, it is unlikely to keep pace with the rapidly increasing population.[87]

Each year, the 49 universities in Ethiopia produce an army of youth that joins the job market, many with unreasonable expectations of future employment and earnings. As yet, the number of opportunities available are not commensurate with the number of young people entering the job market. Youth who do not have the opportunity to join higher education institutions or training centres – or even unable to complete high school education – are even greater in number. Farm land is limited. Despite the transformation in Addis and regional capitals, the majority of Ethiopia's economy has remained rural and agrarian.[88] In recent years the economy has shifted slightly from agriculture towards manufacturing, including through industrial zones such as the Hawassa Industrial Park, and services, trade, and tourism, yet these sectors still have limited capacity to absorb the growing youth population.[89]

The youth bulge alone would be cause for concern. Combined with the structural ethnic competition that is embedded in Ethiopia's political system, the fracturing of the EPRDF, and the high levels of internal displacement, in many cases as a result of deliberately planned instability, there is a serious risk of violent conflict. Interview respondents identified a small number of "former corrupt leaders", "human rights abusers", and "free-riders", who have amassed wealth inside and outside the country and have established possible channels of communication with some of these youth groups. This has been demonstrated as well by recent police investigations.[90] The pitting of one ethnic group against another is often done under the cover of demands for new ethnically homogeneous regions, or stating that other ethnicities do not belong to the local areas. In fact, they may have been used as a pretext to re-entrench clan politics, and create safe havens for the accused and "wanted" former officials.

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[84] World Population Dashboard: Ethiopia, UN Population Fund, https://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population/ET#
[85] Ibid. The number of 105 million is an estimate in the absence of an up-to-date population census.
[86] "World Population Prospects: Key findings & advance tables", United Nations, 2017 Revision, https://population.un.org/wpp/Publications/Files/WPP2017_KeyFindings.pdf
[87] World Bank, https://data.worldbank.org/country/ethiopia
[88] John Harald Sande Lie & Berouk Mesfin, " Ethiopia: a political economy analysis", Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325869690_Ethiopia_A_Political_Economy_Analysis_Ethiopia
[89] Ibid.
[90] Police report on Sheger radio broadcast on violence related to ethnic extremism, 2 April 2019.

Furthermore, the lack of public outreach by the government and the failure to implement concepts such as *medemer* and *yigirta* may confuse young people, who hear about political reform but discern no visible change in their material needs. These may make them vulnerable to propaganda questioning identity, promoting respect for the constitution, or pursuing regional autonomy. Some of the propaganda used to rally youth against political reform includes analysis such as:

> *The new leadership stands for the Oromo only; it excludes other nationalities; it is anti-Tigrigna (TPLF); it securitises the TPLF and the Tigrayan people; it does not respect the constitution and ethnic federal system; it is a neoliberal and western satellite government; Ethiopia is a failed state; it cannot provide basic security to its citizens; there is no rule of law in the country... therefore, the previous leaders and system should be back in power.*[91]

Sports fields, colleges and university campuses, and social gatherings are used to disseminate the above propaganda, and occasionally themselves become a theatre for the violence seen across the country. In universities, as a result, youth identify and socialise increasingly along ethnic lines: in canteens, "the Oromo would sit with the Oromo, the Amhara with Amhara, etc."[92] In itself, this mirrors the fracturing of the EPDRF, where similar dynamics of congregating along ethnic lines have been observed.[93] Youth are made to disseminate false propaganda and hate speech over social media, to spread fear and uncertainty among the public as well as among diplomatic circles. This trend was witnessed in a number of places in Ethiopia recently: in most cases, youth are paid a small amount to spread information on social media, especially on Facebook.[94]

While unemployment creates the opportunities for recruitment, propaganda acts as a motivating factor. Certain youth are easily persuaded by those who are against the current political reform pursued by the government, which may bring (or threaten to bring) them to court and hold them accountable for alleged abuses of power committed over the last twenty-seven years. In Benishangul Gumuz, for example, it was reported that young men were hired as "hit squads", many of whom had received higher education but were unable to find employment.[95] A large number were said to have been involved in "criminal acts".[96] As in-depth interviews have shown, in an attempt to nip reform in the bud, these individuals

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[91] In-depth interview with one of former leaders of the EPRDF, Addis Ababa, March 2019.
[92] In-depth interviews, Adama, Addis Ababa, Assosa and Bahir Dar, September 2018.
[93] In-depth interview, Addis Ababa, January 2019.
[94] In-depth interviews, Adama, Addis Ababa, Assosa and Bahir Dar, September 2018.
[95] In-depth interview with former head of Security and Administrative Affairs of Benihsangul Gumuz, December 2018.
[96] Ibid.

apparently use the youth, "brainwashing" and paying them to demonstrate, stir up riots, and in some cases, commit acts of ethnic violence. In short, these are ongoing efforts to recruit and manipulate young and unemployed people – most often men – into violent extremism.

While men are most likely to commit the acts of ethnic violence, women primarily suffer attacks. There are a number of reasons for this.[97] First and foremost, women suffer from sexual violence. Female rape has been used as an instrument of ethnic extremism. This was the case in Ashewa Meda, near Addis Ababa, in the demonstrations that sprung up when the OLF returned to the country in September 2018. Various other cases of rape used as a weapon of ethnic violence have been reported; women have also been used as sex slaves, often based on ethnicity, hence bearing the brunt of violent ethnic extremism.[98]

Furthermore, traditional practices in many parts of Ethiopia are a burden on women. Women, for example, do not have rights equal to their male counterparts in the inheritance of property of their fathers or even of their husbands; even if a woman is married, if she does not have any children, her husband's family will not allow her access to the property of her husband in case of his death. She is not entitled to inherit her father's properties because once she is married, she is considered to be out of her father's line and continues with her husband's family line, and so is seen as an outsider to the family. Only the male children are favoured as they continue the line of their father uninterrupted, unlike the female whose line is broken once married. Nevertheless, when their husbands, brothers, fathers, or sons die in bouts of (ethnic) violence – a phenomenon that has been witnessed in Ethiopia throughout the last four decades – women are forced to raise their families by themselves and provide for the household. As such, ethnic violence – and indeed any violent conflict – constitutes a double jeopardy for women.

Porous borders

A final driver of ethnic extremism are the various illicit flows that pour into Ethiopia from the various countries in the Horn of Africa. Porous borders facilitate the flows of small arms and heavy weaponry alike, and other illicit trade, including in cattle, gold, and other natural resources, as well as illicit flows of cash, available for criminal acts. Main routes include across the border with Somalia into the Somali regional state of Ethiopia; from Sudan and South Sudan into Gambella and Asosa; and through Moyale on the Kenyan border.[99]

The easy access to and availability of these weapons serves as a reinforcing factor for violent extremism. Most recent killings and attempts of killings in Hawassa, Guji, Gedo and Western

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[97] Focus group discussion with Ethiopian Women and Youth Affairs Ministry officials, February 2019, Addis Ababa.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Focus group discussion, Hawassa, February 2019.
See also: "Small and light weapons in the Horn of Africa", The Free Library,
https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Small+arms+and+light+weapons+in+the+horn+of+Africa.-a093792351

Wellega in Oromia, as well as elsewhere in Ethiopia, have been linked to wider availability of these weapons.[100] Control mechanisms, permission systems, and ownership rules are not yet enshrined in law, much less implemented. As a result, weapons are widely available in most parts of Ethiopia for any political agitator who would seek to sow fear and terror, or mobilise people along ethnic lines.

It is worth noting at this juncture that even though ethnic extremism is mainly characterised as internal (intra-Ethiopian) violence, there is a possibility of linking it to external extremists such as *al Shabaab* in Somalia, as it emerged in the in-depth interviews with colleagues from Ethiopian Somali *killil*.[101] Ethnic extremism can intersect with religious tensions, in particular between Christians and Muslims. Attacks have taken place a number of times in 2019. In Alaba Kulito, in the multi-ethnic SNNPR, it was reported that around ten churches were attacked by Muslims after fake news had spread about attacks on churches.[102] Three mosques were torched in two separate woredas in South Gondar.[103] A little later, a mosque on the outskirts of Addis Ababa was destroyed.[104] These are only a couple of examples. Many of the attacks, however, occur in the areas that are home to multiple ethnicities, making a convergence of religious and ethnic extremism a real possibility.

Furthermore, there are allegations that former EPRDF-affiliated Somali *killil* leaders are in Somalia-proper to recruit extremist individuals and facilitate their entry into Ethiopia. According to these sources, former Ethiopian-Somali officials who left the country for Somalia-proper and the most wanted former leaders of EPRDF are already in discussion on how to facilitate the entry of *al Shabaab* members into the country to destabilise Ethiopia.[105] Al Shabaab and, by affiliation, al Qaeda have a history of capitalising on ethnic and religious tensions that already exist in the country, including in Iraq and Syria.[106] Demonstrating the risk, the Ethiopian Attorney General in April 2019 said that the country's intelligence services had intercepted and prevented an al-Shabaab plot in Addis Ababa.[107]

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[100] Ibid.

[101] In-depth interviews, locations withheld, October 2018 and January 2019.

[102] "Religious tension mounts after attacks on Ethiopian churches over fake rumours", Globe Afrique, 12 February 2019, https://globeafrique.com/religious-tension-mounts-after-attacks-on-ethiopian-churches-over-fake-rumors/

[103] "News: Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council condemns two separate attacks on mosques in South Gonder", Addis Standard, 12 February 2019, http://addisstandard.com/news-ethiopian-islamic-affairs-supreme-council-condemns-two-separate-attacks-on-mosques-in-south-gonder/

[104] "News" Islamic Affairs Supreme Council Denounces Security Forces' Attack on Mosque, Worshipers", Addis Standard, https://addisstandard.com/news-islamic-affairs-supreme-council-denounces-security-forces-attack-on-mosque-worshipers/

[105] In-depth interviews, locations withheld, October 2018 and January 2019.

[106] It should also be recalled that while the 1994 assassination attempt on Hosni Mubarak of Egypt in Addis Ababa was coordinated by external actors, the June 2018 attempt on the Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed were coordinated by internal agents.

[107] "Ethiopia intel intercepts al Shabaab's terror plot in Addis Ababa", New Business Ethiopia, 14 April 2019, https://newbusinessethiopia.com/ethiopia-intel-intercepts-al-shabaabs-terror-plot-in-addis-ababa/

In short, porous borders could offer opportunities for those in the region that aim to exploit the ethnic tensions that already exist in Ethiopia. It is clear that an effective whole-of-government response to these is necessary to prevent further violence.

5. Charting the way forward

Between the systemic limitations of ethno-federalism, the political exploitation of ethnic competition, the fracturing of the EPRDF along ethnic lines, an unemployed population susceptible to propaganda, and porous borders, Ethiopia faces monumental risks in the years to come. Ethnic violence can have serious consequences, and once unleashed the spirit of ethnic extremism is very difficult to contain. The implication of the analysis is that there is a need for strategies that address ethnic extremism in Ethiopia in a sustainable manner. In charting the way out of the current unstable situation, the government, academia and civil society, the Ethiopian people, and the international community all have a role to play, each of which is briefly examined below.

The government: institutionalising reform

Institutional reform is one of the most important measures by which the government of Ethiopia can address the current surge in ethnic violence. To deal with root causes and drivers of ethnic extremism systematically and scientifically, a balance should be struck between ethnic identity and citizenship politics. That is to say, the *ethnic identity* of every Ethiopian should be respected, while at the same time *national identity* must be stressed in order not to repeat the previous mistakes of over-emphasis of either ethnicity or nationality.

The state machinery is in need of profound reform. In doing so, it may be counterproductive to pour "new wine into old bottles". One of the ways is which this could be achieved would be a revision of the constitution.[108] The 1995 constitution insufficiently sets out the divisions of power between the federal and regional levels, leaving much open about the right to self-determination, which potentially ranges from autonomy to independence. Any reform of the constitution would be expected to address these questions. It would furthermore be expected to answer the question around "Ethiopian-ness": what are the building blocks of the Ethiopian federation, and what place will there be for the different ethnic groups within it? On the other hand, any type of constitutional reform would need to be very carefully managed, in order not to embolden centrifugal forces or increase the ethnic competition it aimed to alleviate.

Less ambitious than constitutional reform would be the establishment of institutions that can breathe life into the processes of societal change. This would include repealing terrorism laws that were issued by the previous EPRDF to suppress people's voices inside and outside Ethiopia;[109] and reforming public institutions that look like family-enterprises, run predominantly by one ethnic group.[110] This has been a source of grievance and resentment in

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[108] Focus group discussion with religious leaders, March 2019, Addis Ababa.
[109] Focus group discussion with journalists and policy analysts, March 2019, Addis Ababa.
[110] Focus group discussion with lawyers and former parliamentarians, March 2019, Addis Ababa.

the last twenty-seven years, culminating in violent internal conflicts since 2015.[111] Former corrupt leaders would undoubtedly leave no stone unturned to stop the change and as a result, challenges are inevitable.[112] However, at the time of writing there is a broad base for the reform as it is supported by the majority of the Ethiopian population as mentioned above. Most opposition parties including Ginbot 7 are also supporting the current processes of reform.[113]

This would also institutionalise reform processes by operationalising the meaning and applications of *medemer* (synergy or inclusivity) and *yiqirta* (forgiveness) at all levels. One way of doing so would be through dialogue and peace education. Such courses could be given from kindergarten to the university levels to entrench a culture of peace in Ethiopia. Its contents have to pinpoint sources of conflict, peaceful ways of handling conflicts, communication strategies and skills, the meaning and ways of preventing violent extremism and other pertinent components of peace and conflict studies. It would contribute to transforming Ethiopia's political culture from clan- and ethnicity-based to civic- and citizen-based politics. The country should strive for pan-Ethiopianism, within a spirit of pan-Africanism. Conflict early warning and response mechanisms should be introduced and put in place in all administrative structures throughout Ethiopia. The current Ministry of Peace, in cooperation with other ministries, would be the designated ministry to lead such a broad societal programme for the development of a "culture of peace".

Reforms in the security sector, including the judiciary, the police, as well as the civil service are essential – and should be conducted at the federal, regional, zone, *woreda*, and *kebele* levels. The intention of Dr. Abiy to "restructure the security forces" and "dissolve the Liyu police" of the Somali region may be a step in the right direction.[114] These reforms may be considered in other regions as well. However, deeper reform in the security sector may be needed to ensure that the complex configuration of security forces – military, federal police, regional police, regional special police, and militia – will effectively cooperate in addressing ethnic violence, rather than fanning its flames. The creation of a whole-of-government strategy for preventing and countering violent extremism would offer an important contribution to this. It would bring together the relevant government ministries and institutions, and outline clear responsibilities and priorities to address the issue of ethnic extremism.

The government should continue to increase accountability, by removing from office and holding accountable officials that have committed past abuses, and enhancing and modernising local and regional government services, making current leaders answerable to the people. This would also mean working with the opposition, civil society, and academics in

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[111] Focus group discussion with youth representatives, Addis Ababa, October 2018.
[112] Focus group discussion with lawyers and policy analysts, March 2019, Addis Ababa.
[113] Ibid.
[114] "Are Liyu Police's days numbered?" Indian Ocean Newsletter, Africa Intelligence, 7 June 2019.

addressing inter-ethnic violence. Regional states, and civil society organisations should be encouraged to do the day-to-day work of peacebuilding and preventing violence. It would ensure the transition processes receive broad popular support.

The government should, furthermore, focus on addressing the high levels of internal displacement across the country. This means empowering the Commission for Administrative Boundary Affairs, and committing to accepting the findings of the commission as the basis for dealing with current violent conflicts related to administrative boundaries. In order to prevent the dislocation and eviction of citizens from towns, the Federal Government could consider running the administration of cities across Ethiopia – such as Addis Ababa, Dire Dawa, Bahir Dar, Hawassa – in the same way that it runs the federal universities across the country. Economic development, job creation, and support for entrepreneurship would also have beneficial effects on society as a whole, and by virtue of reducing unemployment and resentment against the system, likely address one of the main drivers of ethnic extremism in the country.

In organising the national elections of 2020, there is a real need to carefully balance the debate over holding or postponing the elections with the situation on the ground. For instance, a middle ground could be found through conducting the election as planned where stability is assured, and delaying other areas where security problems are too challenging at that time. Even at the best of times, conducting elections at different intervals has been customary practice in areas like the Somali *killil*. It may, therefore, be instructive to learn positive lessons from past experiences so as to hold credible, free and fair elections as promised, yet do so in a pragmatic, flexible, and secure way.

Finally, there are positive changes that should be reinforced, such as the proportion of women in positions of authority, including to fifty percent of the ministerial positions, Sahle-work Zewde as the first female President of the Republic, Meaza Ashenafi as the President of the Supreme Court, and Birtukan Mideksa as the head of Electoral Board. The intention and spirit of the process of reform that the government has embarked upon under the leadership of Dr. Abiy needs to be reinforced and given the institutional tools to flourish.

Civil society and academia: activism and research
As has already begun, the government needs to break the barrier between itself and academia, which was very common during the previous EPRDF as well as military and imperial governments. This entails trusting academia and civil society, involving them in different policy issues, and using the research output for policy formulation. Such a stance will pave the way for academics as well as civil society organisations to contribute in preventing violent extremism. Civil society and academia would be responsible for conducting peace policy research, with both immediate and long-term impact. Academia need to engage in applied

peace research, which can serve as input for peace policy formulation, including in the fields of ethnic extremism, conflict prevention and resolution, and peace building.

Focussing on the underlying causes of violent extremism, disseminating the results through media, workshops and international as well as national conferences, academia and civil society can play an active role. They should engage in peace activism, using the electronic, print, as well as social media, and engage in political debates on issues related to peace and the prevention of violent extremism. They should undertake public engagements as part of public opinion formation, setting the peace agenda, and guiding the media and society in the direction of constructive engagement in peacebuilding and nation building. Equally importantly, by making use of indigenous knowledge, academics and civil society organisations can teach peace at various levels and to those most vulnerable to recruitment by anti-reform and anti-peace forces.

The people of Ethiopia: stand united against extremism
Extremism is predicated on hate and fear that are instilled in populations. To avoid empowering extremist voices, the Ethiopian people should hold to their heart the age-old and precious values of peaceful co-existence, tolerance and mutual respect. They should take part in local activities and participate in identifying problems and coming to solutions through discussion, and engage in intra- and inter-communal dialogues. People will have to denounce the poisonous propaganda of "ethnically superior" ideologies that are widespread in Ethiopia today. This will mean promoting tolerance and mutual respect between political and ethnic groups – including on social media.

They need to observe what is happening in the Middle East and remember what happened in Rwanda, and take lessons from that to continue dialogue on the issue of extremism and its costs. "Peace by peaceful means" must be the guiding value! This entails saying "no" to violent extremists in their communities and regions, working with the government in order to entrench a culture of peace in the community, and engaging directly in peacebuilding activities in their own localities. It also means using cultural mechanisms to prevent violent extremism and help the government to widen the democratic political system without encouraging hate speech. Violent extremists are very few in numbers in Ethiopia and the world at large; the problem has always been that the general populace who love peace are very large, but passive. It does not have to be this way.

International partners: avail resources for sustainable reform
Finally, Ethiopia's international partners have an obligation to recognise the current ethnic tensions as a most dangerous and destabilising trend. They should provide and share resources and knowledge for programming on preventing and countering violent extremism in Ethiopia in general, and ethnic extremism in particular. It would also entail making further

resources available for research, for there are many aspects of ethnic extremism that remain poorly understood, and that this study has not been able to sufficiently address.

Furthermore, the international community should continue to support a security sector transformation firmly anchored in rule of law and human rights. Assistance is required for the disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration of fighters that have returned from exile. Security sector reform could also involve engagement between Ethiopian leadership and other leaders/governments with experience in managing transitions.

International partners could further support the government in building democratic institutions, delivering services to the people, improving inclusive governance, job creation in all sectors, and reform programmes. In particular, expertise would be needed to assist the Ethiopian government in limiting hate speech and false information that is disseminated over (social) media, while taking care that freedom of speech would be respected.

Appendix A

Guiding questions for In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):

1. *How serious a security threat is ethnic extremism in contemporary Ethiopia?*
2. *Why do you think has ethnic extremism prevailed in Ethiopia since EPRDF came to power?*
3. *What do you think are the causes and drivers of ethnic extremism?*
4. *How do you assess the current politico-security situation in the country?*
5. *In your view, what are the expected changes to happen in the country as a result of the reform?*
6. *How satisfied are you with those changes taking place at the moment both as an individual citizen and a community member?*
7. *Who do you think are stumbling blocks or challenges of the reform? Why do you think so?*
8. *What strategies do you suggest to prevent and counter violent extremism in a sustainable manner in Ethiopia?*
9. *Could you recommend specific measures to be undertaken by the government, academia/society and international community to effectively prevent/counter ethnic extremism in Ethiopia?*

Appendix B

Partial response of participants who took part in the workshop: "Preventing Ethnic Extremism in Ethiopia" organised by EIP & IPSS, 23 Jan 2019, Hilton Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Descriptors	1 Very Low	2 Low	3 Medium	4 High	5 Very High
Risk of ethnic extremism in contemporary Ethiopia	0%	5%	11%	44%	38%
Usefulness of the workshop	0%	0%	16%	27%	55%