The Quest for Security Sector Reform in the Ethnically divided and Politicized Ethiopia: the cases of Regional Special Forces in harnessing the balance of Local Security and National Unity

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is calling attention on the quest for security sector reform in balancing the local security and the national liability, the case of regional special force (Liyu Hail) in Ethiopia. The study employed a qualitative approach and designed as a case study. The data are collected from primary and secondary sources mainly through key informants and document analysis. The personality of security sector institutions and governance systems decisively determines the liability of local security and national unity. Ethiopia is in a paradox of ethnically charged federalism with extreme ethno-nationalism and contentious regional states relation with continual huge special force building and counterbalance. Nevertheless, regional states have organized the special forces since 2007, out of constitutional mandate, neither local security in many localities has promoted nor the national liability and unity is certainly guaranteed. Indeed, regions are in contentious interactions, territorial claims with their adjacents, and competitive central power seeking. Moreover, the monitoring capacity by the central government about the roles, sizes and weapons of the regional special force have questioned their legitimacy and popular support. To that end, local security, national unity and nation building at large are jeopardizing. Therefore, the different lessons and incidents that Ethiopia has been experiencing are warning and calling more cautious regional states special force reforms in balancing local security and national liability.

Key Words: Region, Ethnicity, Special force, Security, SSR

Background

As a term and concept, the birth of security sector reform (SSR) has been introduced in 1990's and tremendously fueled in post-Cold war period with a paradigm shift of world politics and new thinking on security. SSR has first inaugurated in 1998 by Clare Short, the then United Kingdom Minister for International Development, a vision with addressing the security sector related complications. These are, on the one hand, improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the sector charged with the provision of security, and on the other hand, reduction and redirection of funds and financial expenditures to development programs (Medhane, 2010). Then onwards, SSR is the technical process of improving security provision, management and oversight more effectively and accountably through institutional and

structural reforms within a framework of democratic civilian control, rule of law and respect for human rights (Brozoska, 2003).

The political upheavals and peoples' everyday claims and resistances for wellbeing everywhere makes security a fascinating and essential topic of all the time in world politics (William, 2012). Arguably, peace and security as a public good operates by security sector institutions with necessary reforms along the changing circumstances. Security sector is an institution which composed of all the structures and personnel responsible for security provision, management and oversight from national to local levels (Wulf, 2004). Therefore, establishing and reconfiguration of good security sector governance through security sector reform become pivotal to the broader political and socio-economic development and stability of the state (Sedra, 2010).

In African, SSR had been understood as one-dimensional practices of rebuilding conflict torn societies that even enforced by foreign interventions. Indeed, since African security institutions were a prototype of their former colonial security institutions (Brozoska, 2003); in post-colonial Africa the security forces continued as apparatus of the regime (Medhane, 2010). However, the persistent vulnerability of insecurity and unescapably experience of fragile democratization process with emerging protracted ethnic conflicts warn many of African states to adopt SSR programs aimed to create strong security institutions (England and Boucher, 2009).

Ethiopia introduced SSR under the Justice System Reform Program in 2002 authorized by the Ministry of Capacity Building Office which renamed as the Comprehensive Justice Sector Reform Program (JSRP) in 2005 (Walelgn, 2018). The year 1991 has considered as a seminal moment of profound political system transformation from highly centralized unitary state to a federal states arrangement given arises to the birth of new structures and restructuring of institutions including the security sectors. Following that, Ethiopian security sector restructured directly aligned with the new thinking of internal and external security threats (Mulugeta, 2017). Constitutionally speaking, in post-1991 Ethiopia, the main security institutions and structures charged with security responsibilities are the national defense force (NDF), intelligence service, federal police force, and regions public police (FDRE, 1995). In fact, in post transition the TPLF led government had faced intractable political challenges of dissidents groups from different ethnic which threaten the political power (Gebru, 2009). Thus, as counterinsurgency to the rebel groups, the repressive regime has created new unconstitutional security body in the federating regions, called special force (*Liyu Hail*, locally). Accordingly, in no constitutional basis (Adem, 2020), since 2007 first in Somali, all regional states have continued to organize, train, and build-up huge regional special force.

In contrary, in the ethnically divided federal Ethiopia, ethnic politics and power competition in the existing historical discontent and contentious interactions have been enforcing regions to compete of training and build-up huge *Liyu Hail.* Consequently, the balance of power between federal government and federating units is therefore up for debate (African Business Magazin, 19 Aug 2019). Moreover, beyond the very nature of their birth, in some regions *Liyu Hail* are much more that *(*Africa report*,* 11 Oct 2019), including rarely being disobedient to the federal government, sided in ethnic based violence, attempt to overthrow the government and attempt to secessed forcefully. Currently, in the extreme ethno-nationalistic politics, regional states are in competition and have continued to build-up their special forces. Moreover, the current observed empirical security crisis and situation that Ethiopia has been experiencing let and make the topic more momentously sensitive and timing. Therefore, this study would like to investigate whether regional special forces are liabilities or assets particularly in balancing and harnessing local security and national liability in the ethnically divided federal Ethiopia.

Generally, this paper attempts to address the following questions;

Methods and Materials

This study employed qualitative research approach since the problem at hand needs a qualitative investigation and exploration of ideas and views in-depth. As Creswell (2003), qualitative approach is recommended in social sciences to explore and investigate events, ideas, and human behavior in the natural setting. The data were collected from both primary and secondary sources through key interview

and document analysis. The interviewees were selected through purposive sampling techniques so as to access the required data from concerned bodies. To that end, the participants were security personnel, concerned officials at different level, elites, and some other residents. In addition, secondary data were collected from written documents like recent reports, magazine, minutes, and published materials. Finally, the collected data were translated in to English, thematized, interpreted and finally set findings accordingly.

Security Sector Reform and its Rationales

However, SSR is a dominant discourse in the field, despite little variations ascribe, there has been consensus that different states have interchangeably used SSR with security sector development, management, transformation, and justice sector reforms on the practice and general outline of its normative framework (Bryden and Olonisakin, 2010). More specifically, they stated the variations between SSR and SST in that the first draws a specific and narrow approach of reviewing the security system whereas the latter dictates the complete change of the system. To that end, this notion plausibly justifies to use SSR in this paper.

The rationales behind undertaking SSR varying in countries existing realities though dominantly first coined aimed to balance the development program and professionalization of the security forces at judicial personality. Accordingly, some of the conditions for SSR are post-conflict rebuilding, transition from military, independence, disregard for the rule of law, conflict-exacerbating by the security sector, difficulties in the management of scarce resources, and inadequate civilian capacity to manage and monitor the security forces (McCartney, Fischer, and Wils, 2004). States in condition of post-conflict, post-authoritarian, and a transition to new democracies have shared a common fragility of security sector thereby needs to take SSR as new approach and state policy at large (Hanlon and Shultz, 2016). Reform of the security sector is intended to enhance the efficiency of the security forces through conforming to standards of legality, transparency and accountability (Bendix and Stanley, 2008). SSR is concerned to have a positive impact not only on the security of the regime but also on the security of communities and individuals by guaranteeing security provisions. In fact, security sector reform is a relatively recent concept in state transformation, development and post-conflict peace-building (Brozoska, 2003). However, the task of security sector reform could have comprised and encompassed multidimensional aspects: political (civil control), economic (resource utilization), social (guarantee of citizen's physical security), and institutional (professionalization of actors in the security sector) dimensions (Sedra, 2010).

Discussion and Results

Overview of Security Sector Institutions and Reform in Ethiopia

In post-1991 Ethiopia, the deliberation of ethnic based federalism, the overall political structures and the project of nation building has shifted and operating in ethnically charged identity politics and ethno-nationalism political thinking. Above all, the institutions have developed and reflected contentious ethnic relations which further escalate ethno-nationalist rivalry in disregard to the national unity (Semir, 2017). From security sector perspectives, in pos-1991, the political settlement has influenced by emerging factors which determine and shape the organization of security institutions (Mulugeta, 2017). The major juncture was the partial transition of TPLF from insurgent liberation to political party which controlled the structure of the military and their professionalization and the security institutions in general (VanVeen, 2016).

As the interviewee disclosed that the personality of security sector institutions could be viewed in to two phases in the context of interaction between the central and regional states (interview, 2021). First, the *de-facto* decentralization in which high centralized party political domination and nominal self-governance of the federating units until 2018 political transformation. In TPLF-led rule, overriding constitutionally granting powers to the regional states there had centralized monopoly of power with making null the regional states (Temesgen, 2016). The second phase, reversely, has heralded the transition from *de-facto* to *de-jure* decentralization of autonomy to regional states with the coming of PM Abiy in office.

Consequently, the federating units become autonomous and powerful by organized their security forces which changes the interaction with the central government. Moreover, the new political transition that could have promised reforms in opening political space let to claim free expression of multitude and longstanding complains and grievances over land, border and perceived security threats of their ethnic groups (Australia Red Cross, 2019). Nevertheless, these allowed regional states and ethnic groups to develop mutual mistrust and security dilemma in the existing ethno-national political tension.

The major constitutional security organizations in Ethiopia are the national defense force, federal police, national intelligence and security service (administered at federal level under Art51), and regions public police forces, Article 52 (FDRE, 1995). Accordingly, the FDRE defense force consists of ground force, air force, naval force, special operation force and may include space and cyber forces mandating with protect and defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state and constitutional order (Proc. No.1100/2019). Concerning to NDF, almost they were an insurgent army fought against the military Derge regime and with no/little changes had continued as party army to advance parties political program in TPLF rule (Mulugeta, 2017). Moreover, the defense force was guardian of the revolutionary democracy in the years of TPLF dominated government (Abiy, Jun 9, 2018). As a result, PM Abiy has taken measures on transforming and restructuring the defense force to non-political personality. Besides, Federal Police Force with a judicial personality has created to maintain law and order through controlling riots, investigate organized crimes and violation of the constitutional order (Proclamation No. 207/2000). Again, Ethiopian National Intelligence and Security Service were established in 1995 primarily charged with protection of national security via gathering and investigating required information (Temesgen, 2017). Finally, Article 52 of the Constitution guaranteed the powers to establish and administer a regional public police to maintain order and peace within the region (Proclamation No. 1/1995).

The Birth of Special Force (Liyu Hail) Vis-à-vis Current Realities!

The new thinking of existed and perceived security threats of the regime and the political power of the ruling government had urged to review the security sector. Among others, the threats were the politically disappointed and dissident internal groups like the OLF and ONLF which had connection with the terrorist Alshibab (Mulugeta, 2017). Accordingly, including Ginbot-7, the then government designated these groups as terrorist which received support from the Eritrean regime (Detch Council of Refugee, 2016). Consequently, for counterinsurgency against these groups, regional states have established and continued to organize the Special Forces since 2007, out of constitutional mandate.

The regional special force was first emerged in Somali regional state in 2007 in response to the insurgent Ogaden National Liberation Front, a group fighting for the self-determination of the region. Consequently, Ethiopian national defense force was replaced by this newly organized regional special force with local government-affiliated militias in the frontline against ONLF (Africanews, 5 Sep 2019). Similarly, since then other regions have continued to organize special force so far. Indeed, the special force played imperative roles in fighting the combatants particularly in Somali regional state though limited in others like Oromia in fight against OLF/*Shene (Interview, 2021)*.

However, the nature of state structure with conspired and contradicts political narration and existing inter-ethnic tensions have endangered the personality of regional special forces in balancing local security and national unity. Unpredictably, now a day the growing of the special force as more prolific armed groups could posing the greatest threat ever to the country's federal unity (HRWE, April1, 2019). Arguably, their legitimacy and popular support could subject to debate because of the monitoring and administrative systems.

Monitoring and administrative trends of the Regional Special Forces (Roles, Size, Weapon, Recruitment)

As Randazzo (2011) stated that local security forces are undoubtedly and indispensably could contribute security to the communities as long as they are: small and defensive, under the strict controlled and monitored of central government, and perceived as legitimate with popular support. Likewise, the

researcher has examined the case of regions special forces in Ethiopia by considering these perspectives in the existing realities.

To begin with, as informants disclosed that the legitimacy of regions special forces in Ethiopian has failed between loyalty to state's unity and existing realities of local security. From Randazzo (2011) limited size perspective, the size of regions special force has not limited and continued to train their army building project. Regarding to this, HRWR (2019) revealed that numbers of *Liyu Hail* ranges from thousands to tens of thousands which vary in regions. Evidently, months before it got to war, TPLF was organized a military trite of outnumbered special forces in Mekele to show its power and warn its perceived competing powers including the central government. Likely, though the number is secret, others also train and graduating huge forces for many rounds out of central government control (Interview, 2021). Along with the size, child solider is the chronic problem particularly in TPLF led Tigray *Liyu Hail.* According to UN declaration, child military recruitment below the age of 18 is strictly prohibited (Doek, 2003). Indeed, unlike others, TPLF has forced children to war in violation of international law (Interview, 2021). Besides, the types of arms and weapons the local security armed could determine the monitoring interface of the central government. Markedly, weapons have used by regions special forces are not limited and in some way equated with the national defense force. Indeed, this is empirically observed in TPLF led Tigray special forces while betrayed and attacked the national defense force of northern command. In their long time rule, TPLF have organized and build huge and heavy armed forces with weapons which are not allowed for regions. Evidently, TPLF force released rockets to Amhara region (Bahirdar and Gonder) and Eritrea during its attack (Officials, 2021). In fact, for counterinsurgency response and local security, states may organize security forces in respective local levels which abide in balancing local security with the overwhelming power of the central government in keeping liability of state sovereignty and unity (Randazzo, 2011). However, the lose control and monitoring system of the central government has undermined the legitimacy and popular support of regions special forces in balancing national unity and local security. Arguably, Fitz-Gerald (2019) revealed that unlikely in Ethiopia any mandate charging with formal and informal regional security forces must build a professional culture and ethics across all security forces primarily in promoting the liability of the national unity at large.

Why Regional Special Forces subject for SSR in Ethiopia?

Contentious inter-ethnic/regions/ relations with Adjacents and Security Dilemma

Ethiopia is a federal state of ten constituent regional states, Sidama since 2019, divided predominantly along ethnic line, and two city administrations (Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa). Markedly, the reconfiguration and arrangement of state administration along ethnic basis has discredited historical interaction which causing inter-ethnic tensions and rivalries over the newly redrawn boundary and resources (**Interview, 2021**). Moreover, as informants revealed that the debilitating crisis is not only for piece of land but also identity claims which have been taken and enforced to belong to other regions. Here, Semir (2017) strongly contended that the rising of contending nationalism in identity politics has been crystalizing suspicious interaction between regions and ethnic-based violence. Thus, under the illusion federalism, ethnically charged and conspired administration has resulted extreme ethno-nationalism and disputed territorial claims and conflict between regions, which endanger the national unity at large.

Consequently, in the perceived security dilemma, regional states have been competing in special force army building beyond the mandate given by the constitution. The chronic tensions which have caused security dilemma arise over geographic contiguity stemmed on divergent positions to preserve and re-own that land. In fact, this has the failure of the House Federation which is responsible and charged to mitigate constitutional disputes and emerging ethnic tensions between the federating units (FDRE, 1995). Moreover, the more ethno-line federation of institutional arrangements have continued to be an engine for blistering of contending ethno-nationalist competition (Gebru, 2009). Finally, in one way and otherwise, the competition feed by ethno-nationalist sentiments led and enforce regional states to the logic of army

power building and counter-balance in sense of frustration-protection security dilemma (Tezera, 2021). Let's seen some of the major scenarios;

In the northern Ethiopia, tensions and antagonism has developed in the ethno-nationalist political ramification of ethnic mobilization and counter-mobilization involved the Amhara with Tigray, Benishangul, and Oromo (Semir, 2017). The birth and boom of Amahara nationalism in 2018, by the National Movement of Amhara, has not only sharpened Amharan ethnic consciousness but also paved the hell-way of the evil TPLF dominated government. Moreover, as Semir, this is an internal irredentism on territorial claims which historically possessed but now administering by others. Markedly, as informants disclosed that Amhara-Tigray nationalist contention and competition relies on the changing power dynamics and disputed territories over Wolqayt and Raya, where previously part of Gonder and Wollo respectively, and forcefully taken and demarcated to Tigray in post-1991. Since then, the people of Wolqayt and Raya have continued to claim their identity though repressed by the repressive TPLF regime. Arguably, this has taken as the epicenter of Amharan mass protest against the regime of TPLF alongside its failure of democratization and human right violation. Most importantly, protests and violent resistance in Gonder which mobilized Amharan began when security forces attempted to arrest Colonel Demeke Zewudu in 2016, who is the leader of Wolqayt campaign (Davison, 2016). Then, serious of rivalry and competition has developed through hands-on regional special force army build-up between Amhara and Tigray regions. Eventually, former chief of the Amhara region security office, B/G Assamnew, was repeatedly heard revoking the liberation of Wolqayt and Raya. As counterpart, TPLF had organized and marched huge special forces around there and Debretsiwon said this is to keen the Amhara (_). Evidently, the two regions go and are in the inevitable war now a day.

Likewise, the Amhara and Gumuz are in full of suspicion in the revanchist rhetoric of settlers and natives grounded over the issues of in-land possession and property rights, which monopoly give to the so called natives, and dispossess others (Semir, 2017). As he further pointed the question of Amharan political representation has claimed and reclaiming of Metekel, where demarcated to Benshangul-Gumuz in post 1991, as part of Amhara land. In general, the ethno-national movements has fascinated the demand over metekel and continued to be a disputed area. The other most contentious relation and suspicious interaction is between Amhara and Oromo which has infused by ethno-national politics over longstanding divergent and disputed historical narrations in the rhetoric of oppressor and oppressed. Indeed, the rise of Amharan nationalism accorded with other contending Oromo nationalism to fight against the TPLF led regime. Nevertheless, as Semir disclosed the contending nationalists' cooperation has failed because of computed and contravened interests on historical rhetoric, boundaries, collective rights, and balance of power. Moreover, the discontented interface has been exacerbating over the question of Addis Ababa, and Dera (drawn to Oromia regional state in post-1991 but now claiming by Amhara). Besides, the local security situation of ethnic based violence on who have living outside the region has continued to be source of tension (Semir, 2017). As informants revealed that ethnic based violence and mass continual displacement have repeatedly exhibited against Amharan origin in different localities of Oromia.

Similarly, Oromia has recorded discontented territorial tensions and violent conflict with its adjacent ethnic groups with Somalia, SNNP (Gedeo, Burji, Sidama) and Benshangul-Gumuz (Semir, 2017). Moreover, he further stated that the Oromo were seen as harbouring plans to incorporate parts of the Benshangul-Gumuz region (Asosa) into Oromia aimed that engaged in security army power building. On the other hand, as he also contended the settler-revanchist rhetoric against Oromo in Somalia also encountered and faced Gedeo in Oromia (Guji) and in Benshangul on Oromo. By and large, they have lived in competition over boundary and access to resource thereby moving to army building and counter-balance in the ethinicised identity politics which caused mass displacement (Interview, 2021).

Volatile Local Security

Following PM Abiy's attempt of opening the political space; Ethiopia has experienced sever outbreak of identity based violence and discontents with 2.4 million people displacement (Global security, 9 July 2019). Consequently, Ethnic based violence and displacement have sporadically explode and alarmingly escalating in some regions of Ethiopian with native and highlander rhetoric. Article 32(1) of the FDRE stated that any Ethiopian has right of liberty of movement and freedom to choose his/her residences within the national territory (FDRE, 1995). But regional state constitutions are considered as structural cause for violence in their exclusionary nature of power holder which infused native-*settler rhetoric*. Typically, the Benshangul Gumuz revised constitution Art (2) clearly declared that Berta, Gumuz, Shinasha, and Mao are owners of the region by excluding other ethnic groups (Benshangul Gumuz constitution, 1994). Likewise, the constitution of Oromia has introduced with "we the people of Oromo" are the power holder of the region (Oromia regional state constitution, 1995). Surprisingly, many Amharans and other non-Oromo have been living in Oromia but they have denied their political representation and prohibited to freely own property at large. Due to this, ethnic based violence is usual and many have been displaced due to their ethnic origin (**Interview, 2021**). In contrary, Amhara regional state constitution is an inclusive that has welcomed diversity by guarantee all residents as power holder of the region. For instance, unlike in Oromia, the Oromo minorities (Kemise) in Amhara region have special zone of self-administration. To that end, the constitution in its preamble clearly introduced "we the people, settling in the Amhara regional state" would be able to foster democracy and perpetual peace (Amhara Regional Constitution, 2001).

Therefore, the structural and systemic nature of the constitutions and week administration have continued to be causes for ethnic based violence in different regions of Ethiopia. Arguably, though regions have highly organized security forces including the *Liyu hail*, they have failed to promote local security and mass ethnic based violence. Indeed, the major hotspots of ethnic based violence and continued internal displacement are Oromia, Benshangul-Gumuz, SNNP and Somalia (in 2018) of 2.9 million displaced (Amnesty International, 2020). Until the end of 2018, the number of inter-ethnic conflict affected internal displaced people reached 3.2 million in which more than half being displaced in the same year mainly Gedeo from Guji, Oromo from Somali, Amhara from Oromia, SNNP and Benshangul (Africa Report, 11 Oct 2019). In fact, though 2018 had the highest number of new internal displacements, ethnic based violence and local insecurity has continued with massive displacement of people until recently.

The major local insecurity and cruel violence in the presence of regions security force include: the protests and violence that had broken out across Oromia region in that 86 people killed due to Jawar's, Oromo activist, social media post of false accusing of the authorities threatening his security, on October 23, 2019. Second, following the death of Hachalu Hundessa on June 29th, 2020, crimes against humanity was committed by individuals and groups over 40 localities for several days in Oromia region which caused the death of 123 and 500 injured (EHRC, Jaun1, 2021).

> *The finding shows that the attackers moving in groups used axes, knives, machetes, sticks and other weapons to kill and injure civilians in gruesome ways that involved beheadings and torture. The attacks meet the elements of a crime against humanity with large numbers of people, organized in groups, having selected their victims on the basis of their ethnicity when conducting a widespread and systematic attack in several areas over the three days* (Ibid).

Thirdly, many people have been killed and displaced from Benshangul Gumuz by members of Gumuz ethnic group particularly on ethnic Amharan.

> *"More than 40,000 people fled their homes due to the fighting. The death toll from an attack in Ethiopia's western region of Benishangul-Gumuz rose to at least 207. On December 23/2020, more than 100 people have been killed in fires and shooting perpetrated by armed men (Amnesty international, 2020).*

Generally, the findings of the reports assured that regional security forces were reluctant and had failed to promote local security and cease such ethnic based mass killings and crime against humanity in that several days of the violence. Therefore, there is a paradox between the continuing regional special force building and the failure to halt identity based local violence in the ethinicised Ethiopian politics.

Liability Threat to National Security and Unity: lessons learned

Security sector structures must be designed aimed to balance the local security and liability of national security and unity simultaneously. In Ethiopia, the liability of national security and unity calling attention for SSR in the emerging powerful hand of regions and their unconstitutional outnumbered regional special force building. Indeed, this has been assured by incidents and lessons ranging from attempt of overthrow the government to secession (like TPLF force) at the expense of national unity (Interview, 2021). Evidently, as informants revealed TPLF was born aimed to establish the republic of Greater Tigray thereby attempted to disintegrate Ethiopia by offensively attacked the national defense force of the northern command on October 30, 2020. To that end, TPLF leaders have trained and organized huge and heavily armed regional special forces particularly after they pulled out from the center. Consequently, TPLF and its special force declared horrific genocide and atrocious massacre against Amharan ethnic at *Maikadran* inconceivably by organized informal group of Tigrayan youth called "*Samri*" on 9 November 2020. The EHRC disclosed the cases as follows:

> An atrocious massacre of civilians has been committed by an informal group of Tigrayan youth known as 'Samri', aided and abetted by members of what was then the local administration and security establishment in Maikadra. The local militia and police security apparatus joined forces with members of the Samri group to carry out door-to-door raids and kill hundreds of people they identified as ethnic Amhara Wolkait origin, by beating them with sticks, stabbing them with knives, machetes and hatchets and strangling them with ropes. We have confirmed the massacre of a very large number of civilians till 600 confirmed deaths and could be more, who appear to have been day labourers in no way involved in the ongoing military offensive (EHRC, Nov 24, 2020).

Moreover, as TPLF member and spokesperson Getachew Reda said they are just fighting to disintegrate Ethiopian thereby they have been continuing to fight with the national Army and other Ethiopian regions that stand to promote Ethiopian unity (Getachew, July 2021).

The other lesson goes back to the year of 2018's violence erupted in Somalia regional state which caused death and displacement of thousands. Indeed, the special force in Somali regional state was very effective in weakening of ONLF and keeping the border from terrorist Al-shabab. Nevertheless, they were tended to support and sided to their clans particularly the Ogaden in flare up of various clan conflicts (Landinfo, 2011); with frequent extrajudicial killings, torture, rape, and violence in the region (Africanews, 5 Sep 2019). Evidently, the special forces which directly commanded by the regional president Abdi Mohammed Omar, known as 'Abdi Illey, was the prominent actor in the violence flare up in 2018 that resulted mass killings, destruction of churches, and displacement of several thousands (Landinfo, 2011). Arguably, the other scenario also remembered the June 15, 2018 crisis and killing of officials in Amhara region. The crisis was happened due to political conspiracy charged disagreements and disputes between the regional officials and the regional security office over the survival of Amhara (Interview, 2021).

Therefore, the aforementioned facts and failures regarding to regional Liyu Hail provide a lesson to reconsider their monitoring and administration through SSR in harnessing national unity.

Development Program

Markedly, one of the rationales for SSR measures is reducing and redirection of public finances and expenditures from the military to development programs (Brozoska, 2003). Accordingly, in 2002, the Ethiopian government was introduced the '*white paper*' on the security and foreign policy shifts by taking

poverty as a threat and its reduction (Mulugeta, 2017). But, paradoxically, regional state's huge finance and expenditure has been flowing to regional special force army building than advancing the public development programs so far. Evidently, PM. Dr. Abiy said that regions have been investing much finance to their special force building and training that allocated to other public development programs (Abiy, Jun 15, 2019).

Policy Implications and Recommendations

Indeed, reforming the armed security forces become challenging in the ethnically politicized states like Ethiopia since the security sector is politically charged and sensitive. Accordingly, the reform processes and measures will come across critical challenges and dilemmas which require ultimate commitment to sustain the national liability and unity.

Accordingly, there must be positive national measures through critical policy reforms and structural adjustments. Some of these include; one: constitutional amendment to de-radicalize ethno-nationalism through deconstruct the ethnic federal arrangement. Second, systematic and strategic restructure and balance core leaders in the national defense force to build mutual trust and reduce suspicion across regions. Thirdly, reduce national political conspiracy and power rivalry through making the national institutions to have a public trust. Fourthly, management and monitory mechanisms of the special forces under the central government have to be revisited. Finally, reduce the regional special force by incorporate to the national defense force aimed to strength their number and composition that have endangered by the TPLF force attack. To sum-up, security sector practices need to assure peace, security and development in balancing local security and national unity at large.

Conclusion

The post-conflict situations could open window of opportunity for reform though pose critical challenges. The task of security sector reform undertakes in considering to perceived and existing security threats of the people and the very existence of state. In Ethiopia, the current political upheavals and security situations enforce to review the security institutions and its governance system particularly regional special forces through SSR.

The ethnic based political administration has infected the personality of security institutions particularly regional special forces in harnessing local security and national liability. Regional special forces have been operating in a disputed ethnic federalism which has created security dilemma among regional states with continuing army build-up and counter balance. The political landscape of Ethiopia which exceedingly inflicted by competing ethno-nationalists mobilization feed suspicion and contentious interaction between regions. Markedly, in post-transformation, regional states are powerful and have exercised extreme autonomy and even disobedient to the central government. Arguably, the logic of regional special force army building is a defensive security agenda for the existing and perceived security dilemma among themselves. Indeed, in some cases, the regional special forces neither promoting local security nor harnessing national liability. Therefore, the current ethnic politics urges the need to take SSR on the personality, professionalization, legitimacy and monitoring system of regional security forces and its governance system in due attention to balancing the local security and the national liability at large.

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