



**The Rise of Amhara Nationalism: Identity Construction,
Ethnic-based Federal Order, and Societal Security in
Ethiopia**

Yared Debebe Yetena

Dissertation

**Submitted in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of
Philosophy (PhD) in Peace and Security Studies**

To

The Institute for Peace and Security Studies at Addis Ababa University

January 2024

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

The Rise of Amhara Nationalism: Identity Construction, Ethnic-based Federal Order, and Societal Security in Ethiopia

By

Yared Debebe Yetena

**Submitted to the Institute for Peace and Security Studies in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
Peace and Security Studies**

Supervisors

Busha Taa (Ph.D.) (Principal Supervisor)

Sisay Mengistie (Ph.D.) (Co-Supervisor)

January 2024

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this PhD dissertation is my original work, has not been presented for a degree in any other universities and that all sources, and materials used for the document have been duly acknowledged.

Yared Debebe Yetena

Student Number: GSR/0096/10

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Confirmation

This Ph.D. dissertation has been submitted to the Institute for Peace and Security Studies, Addis Ababa University for defense with my approval.

1. Busha Taa (Ph.D) (Principal Supervisor)

Signature: _____

Date: _____

2. Sisay Mengistie (Ph.D.) (Co-Supervisor)

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Approval of the Board of Examiners

External Examiner

Name: Dr. Jan Záhořík, Associate Professor of African Studies

Signature: 

Date: January 17, 2024

Internal Examiner

Name: Dr. Dereje Feyissa, Associate Professor of Social Anthropology

Signature: 

Date: January 3, 2024

Acknowledgments

Let me start by thanking all individuals and institutions who have supported me in conducting and completing this dissertation, too many to list them all. Let me make a special mention to the following, special thanks to my supervisors, Dr. Busha Taa and Dr. Sisay Mengistie, for their invaluable advice, continuous support, and patience during my PhD study. Their immense knowledge and plentiful experience have encouraged me throughout my research and daily life. Their insights and expertise have challenged me to think critically and creatively, pushing me to explore new ideas and approaches.

I would also like to express my deepest gratitude to Dr. Fana Gebresenbet, Director of the Institute for Peace and Security Studies, for the encouragement, opportunities, the continued feedback on the draft chapter, and support throughout my study. I have indeed gained a great deal of experience from Dr. Fana that will be beneficial in my future academic endeavors. I have to also extend my heartfelt thanks to Seble Mulugeta and the entire IPSS staff for their support and encouragement. Many thanks also to the Institute (IPSS) for granting me a three-month research visit in Germany, which created an opportunity to make much more progress in my dissertation write-up. The Wilson Center's Africa Program fellowship has also come at the right time, creating the chance to undertake interviews with activists and prominent individuals in the Washington, DC, area. The Open Society Foundation has also supported my data collection, for which I am grateful.

I am grateful to Atrsaw Necho, Tezera Tazebew, Getahun Kumie, Yetwale Mequannit, Aytnew Fenta, Asiresahegn Berhanu, and all the others who assisted with data collection and provided insightful feedback. Your willingness to engage in lively discussions and debates on the topic has helped me refine my ideas and strengthen my arguments. I am also deeply indebted to all my informants for taking their time and providing me with the necessary data, which informed the major parts of the study.

Last but not least, I must give a special mention to my family, especially my wife, Tizeta Desalegn, and our children, Tsion, Eliana, and Fikremariam, and my father, Debebe Yetena, for their unwavering support and understanding during this demanding period. Their encouragement

kept me motivated when things got tough. Overall, this dissertation is a testament to the collective effort of many individuals and institutions who played a vital role in its completion.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	i
List of Tables	vii
List of Figures	vii
Abbreviations and Acronyms	viii
Abstract	x
Chapter One: Introduction	1
1.1. Background.....	1
1.2. Research Problem	8
1.3. Research objectives	11
1.4. Research questions	11
1.5. Scope of the study.....	12
1.5. Significance of the study	13
1.6. Limitations of the Study	14
1.7. Structure of the Dissertation	15
Chapter Two: Ethnic nationalism: Conceptual and Theoretical Perspectives	17
2.1. Introduction.....	17
2.2. Making Sense of Nationalism.....	18
2.3. Ethnicity: Conceptual Clarification	22
2.4. Existing Debates on the Origin and Development of Nationalism	26
2.4.1. Economic transformation	27
2.4.2. Political transformations	29
2.4.3. Social/cultural transformations	31
2.5. Varieties of nationalism: civic versus ethnic dichotomy.....	34
2.6 The national question and self-determination	37
2.7 Theoretical Frameworks	39
2.7.1. Discursive Formation	40
2.7.2. Hegemony.....	44
2.7.3. Copenhagen School: Societal Security Theory	46
2.8. Ethnic nationalism in Ethiopia: An empirical literature review	48
2.8.1 The construction of ethno-national identities and ethnic nationalism in Ethiopia.....	54

2.8.2. Amhara nationalism	58
Chapter Three: Research Methodology	61
3.1. Introduction.....	61
3.2 Research Philosophy.....	61
3.3. Qualitative Approach.....	63
3.3.1. Case Study.....	63
3.4. Sampling Methods.....	64
3.5. Data Collection	66
3.5.1. Interview.....	66
3.5.3 Observations.....	68
3.6 Data Analysis.....	70
3.6.1. Thematic Analysis.....	71
3.6.2. Discourse Analysis.....	72
3.6. Strategies to attain the trustworthiness of findings.....	73
3.7. Ethical Considerations.....	73
Chapter Four: A discursive construction of Amhara identity.....	75
4.1. Introduction.....	75
4.2 The notion of Amhara identity	75
4.2.1 Searching for the genealogy and homeland.....	76
4.2.2 Etymology of the word “Amhara”	81
4.2.3 The Amharic Language	81
4.3 Debates in defining the Amhara identity: Ethnicity, Religion, Province...?	82
4.3.1 Amharaness and Ethiopianness: Two sides of the same coin?.....	86
4.4 Discursive formation of Amharaness	89
4.5 The “victim thesis” as uniting factor	95
4.6 Summary.....	97
Chapter Five: The rise of Amhara nationalism: discourses and counter-discourses	100
5.1. Introduction.....	100
5.2. The national oppression discourse: roots and developments.....	100
5.2.1. Proliferation of ethnic nationalist organizations and the “Amhara enemy” narrations	106

5.1.2. Institutionalization of Anti-Amhara Discourse: Post-1991 Ethiopia	111
5.2. Amhara Nationalism as a “counter discourse”	115
5.2.1. The All Amhara People’s Organization (AAPO) and the idea of Amhara ethnic nationalism	117
5.2.2. The Diaspora-based protests and the birth of Amhara resistance at home (c. 2010- 2018).....	119
5.2.3. The birth of the National Movement of Amhara (NaMA).....	124
5.2.4. Role of print and press media in shaping the discourse of Amhara nationalism	131
5.3 Summary	139
Chapter Six: The ethnic-based federal order and the Amhara question	141
6.1. Introduction.....	141
6.2. The Peace and Democracy Conference (PDC) and the Amhara representation	142
6.3. The Amhara questions in the ethnic-based federal Ethiopia	146
6.3.1. The Amhara “ethnic homeland” and the quest for “ancestral territories”	148
6.4.1 The roots to the Welkait problem.....	158
6.4.2 Establishment of Welkaite-Tegede Amhara Identity Restoration Committee.....	162
6.4.3. Maps and travelers account as justification.....	167
6.5. Summary	169
Chapter Seven: Societal (In)securities and mobilization in Amhara nationalism	171
7.1. Introduction.....	171
7.2. The Amhara in Ethiopia: “Our survival is under threat”?	171
7.3. The societal security of the Amhara in the contested territories	173
7.3.1. Welkait and Raya	173
7.3.2. Metekel and Dera/Shoa	180
7.2.3. Amhara in Oromia, Benishangul-Gumuz and SNNPs.....	183
7.3. “Depopulation” of the Amhara.....	186
7.4. Causes and responses to the societal security threats	189
7.4.1. State oriented responses	191
7.4.2. Societal Responses	193
7.5. Summary.....	196
Chapter Eight: Conclusion and Recommendations	198

References	205
Annex 1: List of Publications	233
Annex 2: List of informants.....	234
Annex 3: Distribution of Ethnic Groups in Ethiopia	236
Annex 4: Ethnic-based violence against the Amhara, 1991-2020	237

List of Tables

Table 1- Population by Ethnic Group, Gondar Province, 1984 Census.....	175
Table 2- Population by Ethnic Groups, Selected Contested Tigray Woredas, 1994 Census	176
Table 3: Ethnic composition in contested territories, 1994 and 2007 Census.....	180
Table 4: Amhara population in Ethiopia across three censuses	187

List of Figures

Figure 1. Diagnosis, Prescription and the vectors of National Action.....	42
Figure 2: The Amhara Ethnic Security Dilemma.....	190

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AAA	Amhara Association in America
AAPO	All Amhara People's Organization
ADFM	Amhara Democratic Forces Movement
ADP	Amhara Democratic Party
AESM/MESION	All Ethiopian Socialist Movement
AEUP	All Ethiopian Unity Party
ANDM	Amhara National Democratic Movement
CSA	Central Statistical Agency
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
ANRS	Amhara National Regional State
ASC	Amhara Scholars' Council
ASRAT	Amhara Satellite Television and Radio Media House
ASU	Amhara Students' Union,
AYA	Amhara Youth Association,
BETEAM	Bete-Amhara
EDU	Ethiopian Democratic Union
EFFORT	Endowment Fund For Rehabilitation of Tigray
EHRC	Ethiopia Human Rights Commission
EHRCO	Ethiopian Human Rights Council
EPDM	Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement
EPLF	Eritrean People's Liberation Front
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
EPRP	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party
ESAT	Ethiopia Satellite Television
ESM	Ethiopian Student Movement
ESUE	Ethiopian Student Union in Europe
ESUNA	Ethiopia Students Union in North America
ETB	Ethiopian Birr
EZEMA	Ethiopian Citizens for Social Justice
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

HoF	House of Federation
HPR	House of People's Representatives
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
ISEN	Institute for the Study of Ethiopian Nationalities
MLLT	Marxist-Leninist League of Tigray
NaMA	National Movement of Amhara
NNP	Nations Nationalities and Peoples
ODF	Oromo Democratic Front
OFC	Oromo Federalist Congress
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
ONLF	Ogaden National Liberation Front
OPDO	Oromo People's Democratic Organization
TGE	Transitional Government of Ethiopia
TPLF	Tigray People's Liberation Front
UoG	University of Gondar
USUAA	University Students Union of Addis Ababa

Abstract

The second half of the 20th century has witnessed the proliferation of ethnic nationalist movements in Ethiopia demanding more autonomy, secession, and so forth. At the heart of these competing nationalism lies the question of nationalities and the Amhara domination discourse. After years of struggle, the ethnic nationalist organizations established an ethnic-based federalism in post-1991 Ethiopia as a panacea to the question of nationalists. The institutional and political measures implemented after 1991, however, incited growing discontent among the Amhara, resulting in the 2016 outbreak of Amhara resistance and nationalistic sentiment. The purpose of this dissertation, therefore, is to explore the origins and development of Amhara nationalism in Ethiopia, 1991–2020. Through an examination of historical, political, and sociocultural factors, this study seeks to shed light on identity construction, dominant discourses and counter-discourses, questions and mobilization of Amhara nationalism.

To address the objectives of the research, a qualitative case study is adopted. A constructivist philosophical worldview has informed the overarching research design. In doing so, the research draws on a range of primary and secondary sources. Data have been generated through focus group discussions, participant observation, and interviews with purposively selected informants from different political, social, and economic backgrounds. Furthermore, data have been extracted from archival materials such as journals, newspapers, political programs of different political parties, scholarly works on ethnic nationalism in Ethiopia, etc. Additionally, discursive formation, hegemony, and societal security theory have all served as theoretical foundations for the data analysis. In doing so, the major findings of the dissertation are as follows:

The study indicated that Amhara ethno-national identity has been constructed from outside for the greater part of the last century and contested from within. However, recently, Amharaness has been embraced among the nationalists through re-imagining historical, heroic, material, and spiritual symbols. With all of the internal provincial divisions, the last decade has demonstrated the momentum of the discursive construction of Amharaness as a result of the dominant discourse that construes Amhara as "oppressor", "chauvinist", "settler", "neftegna", etc. The victimhood narrative espoused by Amhara nationalists throughout the years of ethnic-based federalism, especially the question over "ancestral territories", the establishment of Amhara-based political parties, a surge in publications on Amhara identity and resistance, the formation of civic societies, print and press media, the resistance movement that sparked in Gondar, etc., have contributed to the cultivation of collective identification among the Amhara.

The study also illustrated that the rise of Amhara nationalism is both a resistance movement and an assertion of the place of Amhara in Ethiopia politics. It is a resistance or counter-movement to the hegemonic anti-Amhara discourse, which was introduced during the short years of the Italian colonial occupation, transformed in the years of the ESM, and institutionalized under TPLF/EPRDF rule. Amhara nationalism adopted a counter-discourse strategy aimed at deconstructing the dominant narratives and reclaiming them by systematically providing a suitable connotation. In terms of asserting the Amhara question, initially AAPO and later NaMA and other Amhara-based organizations strongly argued for the "Welkait question", or return of ancestral Amhara territories; amending the FDRE Constitution; altering the dominant

ahistorical anti-Amhara narrative; ensuring the societal security of the Amhara to live and work in different parts of the country, etc. However, Amhara nationalism has been marred by various events that have checked its progression, such as the June 22, 2019 incident and strong provincial sentiment within the two major political parties, i.e., NaMA and ADP. What is more, the linkages between continuous ethnic-based profiling and assaults against the Amhara since the early 1990s were a major factor in mobilizing the Amhara mass to organize under the umbrella of a nationalist movement to ensure protection from future attacks. Lack of action from the ruling TPLF/EPRDF to stop the continuous attacks has fueled the Amhara nationalists' efforts to rally the masses into the movement. Political parties such as NaMA have, as a result, declared in their political programs that the Amhara are facing a survival threat in Ethiopia.

In conclusion, Amharaness and Amhara nationalism are the products of assemblages of grievances emanating from a sense of marginalization in Ethiopian body politics, the ahistorical institution of the anti-Amhara narrative, and the repercussions that followed the ethnic-based federalism in post-1991 Ethiopia. With unabated identity-based attacks against the Amhara and unresolved questions, it is evident that Amhara nationalism will continue to play a significant role in shaping the political dispensation of the country. As such, further research is needed to better explain the dynamics of Amhara nationalism vis-a-vis the northern war that broke out in 2020. An ethnographic and political economy approach will also help to shed light on the cultural dimensions and economic elements that fueled the development of Amhara nationalism.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Background

The world has witnessed the production and reproduction of nationalism as a central "discursive formation" in the last two hundred years. It has been shaping our consciousness and keeping on generating more issues, questions, talks, and debates about how to think about it (Calhoun, 1998). Eighteenth-century western Europe is where the long-protracted road of modern nationalism is believed to have started clinging to the aim of crafting a nation-state (Kohn, 1968; Gellner, 1983; Hobsbawm, 1992; Guibernau, 2013). During the nineteenth century, it spread all over Europe; in the twentieth century, it became a worldwide movement. Still, the concept of nationalism exhibits significant variation across different contexts, contents, ideologies, and processes of nationalist movements. However, the discourse within which the struggles to settle the questions of nations are commonly waged—too often with bullets and bombs as well as words—binds all nationalist movements (Calhoun, 1998).

As a discursive formation, nationalist agendas throughout history have benefited from historically specific contexts, philosophical presuppositions and ideological praxis of the Enlightenment, Romanticism, Marxism-Leninism, the anti-colonial movement, COVID-19 vaccine nationalism (see Zhou, 2022), etc. As such, for instance, one can easily pick up the influence of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's liberal and humane idea of popular sovereignty by looking at France and the American nationalist movement. In this regard, Breuilly (1993) argued that the "religious-cum-political oppositions" resulted in the formation of new nations in line with republican principles in Europe and America.

In contrast, Romantic thinkers like Herder and Fichte informed the nationalist movements in Central and Eastern Europe, such as Germany, Italy, and Poland (Kedourie, 1961; Breuilly, 1993; Kohn, 2017). This has been recorded as an immediate reaction to the French Revolution. A move away from "the state has created the nation" conception to "the nation and its peoples have created the state" was adopted as the Eastern version of nationalism (Ignatieff, 2006). Here, nationalism became a movement to redraw and unify political boundaries to fit the contours of ethnic groups, i.e., unification and separatist nationalism (Breuilly, 1993).

Such a dichotomous understanding of nationalism as West versus East continues to stimulate scholarly debates and literary works (see Tabachnik, 2019; Tamir, 2019; Tinsley, 2019; Blackburn, 2022). As Calhoun (2017: 8) put it, "the contrast of civic to ethnic nationalism, liberal to organic, Western to Eastern, is so habitual today that it is hard to recall that it was invented."

In contrast, Marxism lacks systematic theory to understand nationalism. National consciousness is considered to be pseudo consciousness (Anderson, 2006). Luxemburg (1976) vehemently disputed the idea of nationalism by favoring internationalism— as the saying goes “Working men of all countries, unite!” (Marks & Engels, 1848). Connor (1984) also asserts that Marxism and nationalism are philosophically incompatible. Karl Marx’s support for the "Polish Question" has, however, influenced various nationalist movements (Hobsbawm, 1992; Anderson, 2006). The works of Marxist such as Lenin have reinserted Marxist assumptions into the nationalism ideology. A Marxist-Leninist conviction has introduced the national question and national self-determination that hugely influenced national movements in different parts of the world, including Ethiopia, since the 1960s (Connor, 1984).

Moving on to the dominant modernist theory of nationalism, as Gellner (1983) argued, through engendering national consciousness, nationalism has buttressed the passive existence of people to the highest instrument of power, which is self-determination. Anderson (2006: 6), with some nuance, explained nationalism as a sentiment that fosters a collectively imagined political community of individuals who have never met before: "In their minds, each lives the image of their communion". As a modern phenomenon, the emergence of nationalism has been attributed to multiple factors, including the rise of industrial capitalism (Gellner, 1983), print capitalism (Anderson, 2006), urbanization, uneven development (Nairn, 2003), internal colonialism (Hechter, 1975), the emergence of the state (Kohn, 2017), etc. Indeed, counter explanation have occupied the academic discussion, particularly from the primordial and ethno-symbolism schools (see Hutchison, 2012; Smith, 2009).

During the struggle against colonialism, nationalism has also been a driving force in the anti-colonial movements based on the political mobilization creeds of domination, westernization, collaboration, and resistance (Breuilly, 1983) in Africa and elsewhere that changed the political map of the world (Bayly, 2003). As a force to reckon with, nationalism, for Brubaker (1996), has

been a factor in national unification, dismantled multinational empires and states such as the Ottoman Empire, Ethiopia, the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia. Today, nationalist movements, especially sub-nationalism, to use Anderson's (2006) word, have also afflicted or challenged contemporary multinational states such as Spain (Catalan and Basque nationalism), Canada (Quebecois nationalism), Nigeria (such as Igbo and Yoruba nationalism), Ethiopia (manifold, for example Oromo, Tigray, Amhara nationalism), etc. These various nationalist struggles have inspired scholars to explore and examine the underlying essence of the phenomenon. This has led to the production of immense literature in nationalism scholarship since the time of Hayes (1926), Kohn (1944 [2017]), Kedourie (1960), and Seton-Watson (1977). Yet, the field has suffered from articulating unified theoretical and methodological approaches (Smith, 2012). The scholarship has always been confronted with the complexities of changing socio-political, economic, and cultural realities, yet the “nation” as an imagined community (Anderson, 2006) has remained a constant denominator.

Moving on to the Ethiopian context, in light of the foregoing basic overview of the genesis of nationalism and the inherent complexity of the matter, nationalism in Ethiopia, according to Levine (2004), predated European nationalism by a millennium. By drawing from the work of Gorski (2000), Levine (2004) presented Kebra Negast (*The Glory of Kings*) as momentous evidence conspicuously depicting land = people = nation = polity that confirms the pre-modern attributes of Ethiopianness and fits into the modernist explanation of nationalism (nation = people = state) (see also Levine, 2011). Ostebo (2020) also characterized Kebra Negast as comprising three important dimensions of Ethiopian nationalism: genealogical, spatial, and confessional. Cheikh Anta Diop (1974: 275) stretched further the notion of Ethiopia statehood to ancient times with its peculiar history and civilization. "It was first the Ethiopians and then the Egyptians who created and developed to an extraordinary degree all the elements of civilization at a time when all other peoples, and the Eurasians in particular, were plunged into barbarism."

In contrast, the widely held modernist approach downplays the historicity of Ethiopian nationalism in the 19th century. Ethiopian statehood is also considered a modern phenomenon that resulted from the state-building process of Emperor Menelik II (1889–1913) (Teshale, 1995). Indeed, the making of the Ethiopian state started earlier in the first half of the 19th century by Kassa Hailu (later Emperor Tewodros II) (Bahru, 2002). With the advent of European

colonialism in Africa that coincided with Menelik's expansion, the academic discourse of modern Ethiopian state formation confronted "contested interpretation"—colonial, national oppression, and nation-building (Merera, 2006). In light of the modernist theories, the modern Ethiopian state could be explained as necessitated by historical responsibility to unity since it is a God-chosen nation (Tekletsadik, 1983); economic exploitation, including access to more land (Markakis, 1978; Teshale, 1995; Gemedo, 2002; Mohammed, 2002); the necessity of transferring or imposing the north's "high culture" (Gebru, 1991; Trimmingham, 2013); and so on.

The Amhara or a hyphenated Shoa-Amhara as a unified group has been continuously recited in the contested interpretation continuum. Teshale (1995: 41), for instance, argued “the chief protagonists and beneficiaries of the drama *Pax Menelika* were predominantly *Amhara*”. On top of this, political power has been centered on the Amhara elites. Thence, they had aspired to homogenize or “Amharize” non-Amharas. At this juncture a mention of concept of “Amharanization” or “Amhara domination” is crucial. It has been vastly served as the rule of thumb in the Ethiopian politics since the 1960s. Hizkias (1996) sees the idea of “Amhara domination” as an explanatory thesis of the conflict that has gripped Ethiopia since 1960s is very inadequate and misleading for two reasons. First, to define the actors in ethnic terms is very difficult (for instance, who are the Amharas?). Second, with a presumption of defining the actors in ethnic terms (if one were to define easily who the Amharas were), practically the premise does not verify what was witnessed in Ethiopia was ethnic conflict (see also Crummey, 2003).

Nonetheless, such narrations were reiterated over and over to eventually become a discursive rule in the Ethiopian political dispensation by the Orientalist scholars of Ethiopian Studies, student activists, and ethno-national scholars (see Getahun, 1975; Gebru, 1977; Holcombe & Ibaso, 1990; Asafa, 2020). The legacy of Italian "divide and rule" colonial policy has tremendously resonated, pointing out the diversity, differences, and what they considered the Amhara domination over other ethnic and religious groups (see Sbacchi, 1975). As much as the anti-colonial struggle against Italians provoked Ethiopianness sentiment, after 40 years, Italians succeeded in instituting a divisive policy (Alemayehu, 2013). In this regard, Mamdani (2002) argued ethnic and racial categories in Africa are colonial imports, albeit needs further investigation in the Ethiopia context.

The anti-colonial occupation struggle, beginning of modernization and centralization, the end of the Solomonic Dynasty, the socialist revolution, ethnic nationalist struggle, and ethnic-based federalism have all tarnished Ethiopia's "short twentieth century," to use Hobsbawm and Cumming's (1995) phrase. The events are quite interlinked and have changed Ethiopian politics forever. The famous Ethiopian Student Movement (ESM) serves as an upshot of the assemblage of opportunities and problems that preceded it and a bridge or defining moment of the future. ESM, with the guidance of Marxism-Leninism, challenged the *ancien régime* or the great tradition (Clapham, 2002) by raising the questions of "land to the tiller" and "the nationalities question". In doing so, student activists further solidified ethnic or nationalistic discourses in Ethiopia. Marcus (1992) pointed out that Ethiopian students' unions at home and abroad unanimously pronounced "class oppression, national oppression, female oppression, separation between city and countryside, separation between mental and physical labor, and all other social ills" as evils haunting the working people. The contradiction here is that Ethiopia never experienced an industrial revolution in order to have a critical working mass (Tumtu, 1971).

In terms of the nationalities question, the students' activism clearly divided the nations into "oppressed" versus "oppressors.". The Amhara is the "oppressor" (Walleign, 1969). The students' have also provided solutions to the national contradiction, i.e., self-determination including secession (Messay, 2008), albeit never contemplated the territoriality of the imagined nations. These narratives were cemented with the proliferation of ethnic nationalist political groups such as the Eritrean People Liberation Front (EPLF), the Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF), and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), to mention a few. Indeed, a pile of problems are used to justify the establishment of ethnic nationalist organizations, from cultural domination to uneven development to the memory of ethnocide to internal colonialism, and so on (TPLF, 1976; Gebru, 1991; Holcombe & Ibasa, 1990; Mohammed, 2002; Assafa, 2020). For Asnake (2013), almost all political groups established in the 1970s were vocal about their *unqualified* right to exercise self-determination up to secession.

Following the 1974 Revolution, Derg paid due attention to the question of land and nationalities. At the outset, the military regime appeared to introduce radical and progressive changes like the nationalization of land, industries, and financial establishments and the creation of a mass-based organization, but the state remained unitary and centralized (Clapham, 1987; Markakis, 2011). In

the historical trajectory of the question of nationalities in Ethiopia, Derg laid the foundation by taking further steps by recognizing the equality of all ethnic groups in 1976 to study and document Ethiopian nationalities. To facilitate the process, Derg set up the Institute for the Study of Ethiopian Nationalities (ISEN) in 1983 to make an inventory of Ethiopian nationalities and their territories (Markakis, 2011). Maps and ethnographic profiles thereof were duly produced (Abbink, 2011). As Anderson (2006) succinctly posited, maps and censuses are key to lamenting the recognition of nations or ethnic groups.

The failure of the military to make meaningful decentralization of power to the autonomous self-administrative structures exacerbated the tension, and a full-scale war unfolded in the country. The ethnic nationalist movements established in the 1960s and 1970s put an end to the *Derg* regime in 1991. This marked the crackdown on one formula and heralded the beginning of another, the Transitional Government (1991–1994) and FDRE from 1995 onwards (Clapham, 2009).

The assumption of power by TPLF/EPRDF ushered in the restructuring of the state along "ethnic lines", de facto in 1991–94 and de jure since 1995 (Abbink, 2011). Given hitherto failed nation-building projects through "assimilation", "centralization", "modernization", and "Ethiopia First" (Clapham, 2009; Markakis, 2011), the architects claimed to find a formula to build a multi-ethnic state through conferring ethnic or regional autonomy¹ (Alem, 2003). The new political dispensation actively institutionalized the ethnicization of political culture, identity, territory, and the creation of ethnic-based political parties (Vaughan, 2003; Merera, 2004). Taking the "new project" as a noble quest for redemption of Ethiopian nation-building conundrums like Andreas (2003), the fault line of ethnic politicization, once it is born, will not go away for the simple reason that it mobilizes strong emotional forces (Smith, 2013). The ethnic-based federal experiment further radicalized the ethnic problem by turning ethnic demands into political principles rather than providing a remedy or cure (see Brown, 2007; Horowitz, 2002). Further, the rise of a "dominant party", EPRDF, which monopolized power throughout the country via molding satellite parties, restrained the growth of genuine democracy (Abbink, 2006; Samatar,

¹ Since December 8, 2006, each year has been designated for the purpose of commemorating the NNPs equality and incorporation of these principles into the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) Constitution. This opulent festival is dedicated to the commemoration of diversity. Nevertheless, in practical terms, certain ethnic groups are often categorized as "civilized", while others are deemed "backward" and thus require specific attention.

2008; Merera, 2011). Here, it looks like EPRDF has been insistently living up to the Commandment of Lenin, "Keep the party centralized" and check the nationalist proclivities (Connor, 1984).

Ironically, the denominator predicament, i.e., the question of nationalities, has since the 1960s continued to be re-framed in the ethnic-based federal order of Ethiopia. As Aregawi (2008:4) posits, "with the seizure of power by an ethnic nationalist force, one might assume that in post-1991 Ethiopia, ethnic-based conflicts would have a better chance of being resolved" (see also Asnake, 2013). Nonetheless, a simmering contestation over territory and identity unfolded throughout the newly instituted *Kililes* following the "re-configuration" of the country along ethnic lines, "to make ethnicity and territoriality congruent" (Asnake, 2013; Fekadu, 2016). This has created two problems, (1) failure of establishing pure ethnic homelands has engendered violent territorial making in Ethiopia, (2) resistance against newly established regional states such as the Amhara region (Tegegne, 1998).

Furthermore, infringements of human rights have become the feature of the the ethnic federal order. The crux of the issue revolves around the presence of ethnic enmity, religious extremism, the increasing prominence of ethno-nationalism, and related factors, in conjunction with the dynamics of memory politics. In this regard, the Amhara have faced records of identity-based violence, including mass displacement in different part of Ethiopia since 1990s. A good example at this point is the 1992 Bedeno Massacre of Amhara (HRW, 1992). To deal with such identity-based attacks, the All-Amhara People's Organization (AAPO) was founded in 1992, with Professor Asrat Woldeyes assuming leadership of the organization. Nevertheless, the ethnic mobilization of the Amhara led by the AAPO has proven unsuccessful in its attempts to curb identity-based assaults.

After nearly two decades in 2016, the Amhara protest joined the Oromo protest against the TPLF/EPRDF rule. An attempt to imprison Welkait-Tegede Amhara Identity Restoration Committee member, Colonel Demeke Zewdu, sparked the first whistle of the resistance. However, cyber-based resistance and mobilization have been going on since the 2010s, both in the diaspora and at home. This eventually heralded the advent of an ethnic nationalist mobilization of the Amhara to resist the ensuing actual or perceived threats posed up on them.

The recent rise of Amhara nationalism with a bunch of political parties including the National Movement of Amhara (NaMA) claiming vanguard status in Ethiopia needs a scholarly investigation. It is, therefore, the aim of this dissertation to explore the recent rise of Amharaness and Amhara nationalism in Ethiopia. The dissertation centers its attention on the analysis of the modern discourse pertaining to ethnic identity formation and mobilization, the institutionalization of ethnicity and national question within the framework of ethnic-based federal order, and the aspect of societal security in Ethiopia during the period from 1991 to 2020.

1.2. Research Problem

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the rise of Amhara nationalism by specifically focusing on the construction of Amhara identity, the interplay of hegemonic political discourses against the Amhara, the ethnic-based restructuring of the Ethiopian state, and the societal security threats against the Amhara from 1991 to 2020. Amhara nationalism is a recent phenomenon and a new addition to the existing ethnic nationalist movements that crystallized following cascades of political resistance that started in the 2010s in cyberspace and in 2016 in Gondar. The protests that flared up since 2016 in the major cities of the Amhara region unequivocally voiced a lack of political and civic freedoms, prevailing social injustice, ongoing identity-based attacks, and the issue of regional state boundaries (Amnesty International, 2016; BBC, 2016; Adem, 2022).

The genesis of ethnic nationalism in Ethiopia dates back to the 1970s. For some, it goes back to the 19th century (see Merara, 2003; Yonatan, 2010; Markakis, 2011). Including its dating or periodization, ethnic nationalism has always been a contested topic both in praxis and academia. Among others, the contested interpretation of Ethiopian history remained the persuasive explanation for the rise of various ethnic national movements (Merera, 2006). To be precise, the following competing discourses– "colonial question", "national oppression," and nation-building (Gebbru, 1977, 2009; Holcombe & Ibaso, 1990; Alemseged, 1998; Mohammed, 1991; Merara, 2003; Asafa, 2010), sum up the existing research works on ethnic nationalism in Ethiopia. Notwithstanding the existence of such important studies on ethnic nationalist movements in Ethiopia, the recent development of Amhara nationalism needs scholarly attention. With limited

research works a scholarly investigation into Amhara nationalism is timely in terms of bringing the topic into the academic debate of ethnic nationalism literature in Ethiopia.

For decades, a panacea to the contested questions of ethnic nationalists' questions ostensibly appeared far from reach. War and violence have continued to define the modus operandi to attain these questions. The EPRDF's ascension to power and the restructuring of the state actively politicized nations and nationalities as the main constituents of the state. The ethnic-based federal experiment further radicalized the ethnic problem by turning ethnic demands into political principles rather than providing a remedy or cure (Horowitz, 2002). Above all, "nation, nationalities, and peoples" are constitutionally pronounced as fundamental social categories from the overarching categories of statehood and citizenship.² The regime's predilection for the "national question" accentuated the politicization of more ethnic enclaves such as the "Oromo nation", "Amhara nation", "Tigray nation", etc. This instigates, as Nnoli (2007: 15) remarked, "if a common denominator does not exist, which is exactly the case with segmented multicultural societies, no tolerance is viable in terms of a major pattern of behavior." A case in point here is the recent rise of Internally Displaced Persons³ (IDPs) owing to violent conflict in the country. In 2018 alone, according to IDMC (2018), there were more than one million Amhara IDPs in Ethiopia. Such identity-based attacks on Amhara have been common ever since the institutionalization of ethnic federalism (Bekalu, 2018; Tesfaw, 2018; Bitew, 2023).

In terms of studying Amhara nationalism, Takkle (1994), for instance, considers Amhara as supra-ethnic Ethiopia identity. Tegegne (1998) also objects the presence of collective Amhara identity and downplays the mobilization of Amhara in ethnic terms implying the threat it may pose to the task of nation-building in Ethiopia. Admasu (2010), in his dissertation, explained Amharaness as a "social status". Recent publications, such as Tezera (2021), in his briefing, borrowed a phrase, "empire strikes back", from the Star Wars trilogy movie and construed Amhara nationalism as a "reverse discourse". Bekalu (2018) and Bitew (2023) described the "ethnic cleansing" and "genocide" waged against the Amhara in post-1991 Ethiopia.

² Brubaker (1996) in his assessment of the factors on the demise of the Soviet Union unequivocally mentioned active institutionalization of the existence of nations and nationalities.

³ About 2.9 million new displacements associated with conflict were recorded in 2018, the highest figure recorded worldwide.

Adem (2022) presented the causes of the Amhara protest that sparked in 2016. Sonja (2021) also examined the Welkait question as a litmus test of democratization in Ethiopia. Bantayehu and Ishiyama (2021), on the other hand, explained Amhara nationalism as an upshot of the security dilemma that heralded in the TPLF/EPRDF rule. Yilkal (2022), in his dissertation, also explored the debates surrounding Amhara identity, the factors, and institutional implication of Amhara nationalism. However, these research works barely touched upon the the embedded nationalist discourses and counter-discourses and societal security dimension of the Amhara nationalist movement.

Without dismissing the relevance of the existing discussion, this dissertation approaches the rise of Amhara nationalism by focusing on the overarching discourses on ethnicity, particularly its historical origins, institutional responses, political ideology, the perceived and actual societal security threats from 1991 to 2020 in Ethiopia. As such, the dissertation adopted a historically informed broader constructivist theoretical approach to the research that draws theoretical underpinnings from Foucauldian discursive formation (Foucault, 1971; Calhoun, 1997; Wodak *et al.*, 2009), Gramscian hegemony theory (Bates, 1975; Gramsci, 2011; Laclau & Mouffe, 2014), and Societal Security of the Copenhagen School (Buzan, Waever, & de Wilde, 1998). Methodologically, this dissertation departs by generating data from multiple sources without underplaying the macro or elite and everyday or micro level, both primary and secondary, to capture the complexities, portray a holistic picture and an in-depth explanation of Amhara nationalism.

Furthermore, going beyond the Ethiopian context, although there is a wide array of publications and defined theories in nationalism studies, there has always been a lack of agreed-upon ontological and epistemological assumptions in the field (Smith, 2012). This dissertation is not interested in devising solutions to the theoretical and methodological ambiguities in the field of nationalism. Instead, the research attempted to expand on the macro theories of nationalism and explore Amhara nationalism through the lenses of discursive formation, hegemonic theory, and societal security theory to capture the multiplicity and complexities of Amhara ethnic nationalism.

Generally, the Ethiopian polity has never been immune from the centrifugal forces of ethnic nationalism since the 1960s and 1970s. The socio-political reality of ethnic nationalism has been Ethiopia's political predicaments. The "nationalities question" is not settled and has continued to shape the Ethiopian political dispensation. As a new addition to the ethnic nationalist camp, Amhara nationalism, with its features and sudden crystallization, needs scholarly investigation to capture the identity construction, the emergence of the nationalist movement, the questions and mobilizations. To do so, this dissertation is framed on the dynamics of the institutionalization or reification of ethnicity as a discursive construction, guiding ideology, the presence of continued societal security threats aimed at ethnic Amhara (including others), and the implication of institutional arrangements or structures in post-1991 Ethiopia to investigate the case under study.

1.3. Research objectives

The general objective of this inquiry is to explore the rise and development of Amhara nationalism in post-1991 Ethiopia.

The specific objectives are:

1. Explore the construction of Amhara identity in post-1991 Ethiopia.
2. Explore the roots, the dynamics, and the discourses that shaped the rise of Amhara nationalism.
3. Investigate the contribution of the ethnic-based restructuring of Ethiopia in shaping the Amhara questions.
4. Explore the linkages between societal security threats and the Amhara nationalist mobilization.

1.4. Research questions

The main research question of the proposed research is: why and how the Amhara nationalism evolve in post-1991 Ethiopia? Specifically, it aimed to address the following questions:

1. How is the Amhara identity constructed in post-1991 Ethiopia?

2. How does Amhara ethnic nationalism emerge in the 2010s? How does the underlying ethnic nationalist discourses and counter-discourses shaped the dynamics of Amhara nationalism in Ethiopia?
3. How the ethnic based federal restructuring and institutionalization of ethnicity engendered the Amhara national questions?
4. How societal security threats facilitated the Amhara nationalist mobilization in post-1991 Ethiopia?

1.5. Scope of the study

This dissertation is exploratory in nature and focuses on the origin, dynamics, and implications of the rise of Amhara nationalism in Ethiopia. In doing so, the inquiry was specifically delimited to explore the socio-political, historical, and institutional factors and dynamics that contributed to the rise of Amhara nationalism. Further, the role of ethnic nationalist discourses, the nature of the state, political protest or resistance, and the unfinished "national question" of identity and territory in shaping the contents and processes of Amhara nationalism are interrogated. The period of the inquiry is framed to deal with the political developments between 1991 and 2020 without underplaying the period prior. The year 1991 marked the end of socialist-military-unitary rule and the advent of restructuring the state along ethno-linguistic lines. Starting in 1991 is crucial to framing the rise of Amhara nationalism in light of the institutionalization of ethnicity as a political ideology and how this facilitated an ethnic nationalist mobilization of the Amhara in the later years. The year 2020 is selected since the period marked the outbreak of the war in the North, leading to a different political trajectory in Ethiopia, requiring a separate research project to capture the new developments.

A constructivist worldview has informed the dissertation. Which presumes, according to Crotty (1998), that reality is multiple and socially constructed. Specifically, the paradigm emphasizes the importance of context, sees knowledge as being co-constructed by both participants and investigators, and asserts that it is impossible to completely separate the observer from the observed.

Methodologically, the inquiries depend on a qualitative case study approach to investigate the research problem. The research data was collected from purposively selected informants using

interviews, observation, Focus Group Discussion (FGD), and secondary data sources. The primary data generation has been undertaken in Gondar, Bahir Dar, Woldiya, and Debre Berhan. Further, thematic and discourse data analysis and interpretation have been carried out by drawing theoretical underpinnings from discursive formation, hegemonic theory, and societal security theory of the Copenhagen School.

1.5. Significance of the study

Building on the "discursive formation" of identity and nationalism literature, this dissertation attempted to fill the gap in the study of Amhara nationalism. Given Amhara nationalism as a recent phenomenon and the dearth of research works, undertaking a scholarly investigation on Amhara nationalism is found to be interesting to capture its complexities and unique features. To be precise, the dissertation has the following significance; firstly, this study will have academic significance in its diagnosis of the underlying historical and socio-political factors in the construction of Amhara nationalism in post-1991 Ethiopia. Moreover, by addressing the dynamics and implications of Amhara nationalism, the study aimed to contribute to and challenge the extant literature on ethnic nationalism.

Ethnic nationalism in Ethiopia has been conceived as something imposed from above, emphasizing the role of elite manipulation (Vaughan, 2003; Aregawi, 2008) and the extreme assumption of ethnic identities as given or natural (Gemetchu, 1996). Moreover, the research intends to contribute a new perspective to studying ethnic nationalist movements in Ethiopia from the vantage point of Foucauldian discursive formation (Foucault, 1972) and the crystallization of hegemonic discourses in the emergence of Amhara nationalism. The study also contributes to the existing literature by locating the Amhara nationalist movement in security studies, specifically by drawing theoretical assumptions from the Copenhagen School.

Secondly, in the era of cultural pluralism, ethnicity and nationalism have gained greater attention in Ethiopia and elsewhere. The institutionalization of an ethno-linguistic based federal arrangement by the incumbent EPRDF regime in 1991 with the "intention of pacifying once and for all" the nationalities question has eventually created more difference than unity in the country. As Baubock (2003) remarked, a multinational federation that fails to build effective common citizenship or a central government that lets down the trust of the public is very likely

to crumble into distinct states once democracy is entrenched in its constitutive units (see also Glenn, 1997). In this regard, the study has policy implications for the Ethiopian government to rethink its nation-building policy orientation. As Connor (1972) stated, nation-building efforts may ultimately result in nation-destroying.

Thirdly, the methodological approach of this inquiry departs from previous research works by employing a qualitative case study. In doing so, the inquiry attempted to investigate the case or phenomenon of Amhara nationalism by generating empirical data from multiple informants. Interviews and FGD engagement at a grassroots level helped to explore what Hobsbawm (1990) suggested: nationalism should be analyzed from below, though constructed from above. Moreover, undertaking this research is timely given the phenomenon that has surfaced in the Ethiopian political dispensation since 2015/16 and the absence of scholarly works. In doing so, the inquiry brought the issue of Amhara nationalism into the literature, opening the way for academic discussion, debate, and further research.

1.6. Limitations of the Study

This dissertation is not without caveats that spring from the scope of the study and methodological approach. Provided the focus of this dissertation is how political discourses, ethnic restructuring, and societal insecurities shaped the rise of Amhara identity and nationalism, the political economy aspect has not been given more attention.

Methodological caveats are the consequences of COVID-19 that partly restricted a face-to-face interview with informants that impeded along the way to capture the emotions and true feelings of informants. The outbreak of the war in the North also challenged the data collection in Woldiya that forced researcher to use a data collector and phone interview.

Although nationalism follows a top-down approach in its origin and development (Hobsbawm, 1991), the data collection in Gondar, Bahirdar, Woldiya, Debre Birhan, and Addis Ababa in a way restricted a bottom-up or a political ethnographic explanation of Amhara nationalism.

1.7. Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation is structured into the following chapters: Chapter Two presents the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of the dissertation. The chapter flashes out and makes a thick description and analysis of the key concepts, theoretical debates on nationalism, and the underpinning theoretical lenses that informed the analysis and interpretation of the dissertation.

Chapter Three outlines the ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions of the dissertation. In doing so, the chapter elaborated on why and how the constructivist worldview and a qualitative case study approach were adopted to deal with the research questions. What is more, the data generation, sampling, and data analysis approaches are presented.

Chapter Four tackles the first research question on the discursive construction of Amhara identity. The recent Amharaness identity is discursively produced—constructed out of a body of discourses or recitations that essentialize Amhara identity, such as national oppression thesis, internal colonial discourses, cultural domination discourses, or what the nationalists collectively call "anti-Amhara discourses". The chapter outlines the construction of a glorious past, degraded present, collective future, and common territory as the features that characterize Amharaness. Further, the idea of Amhara identity has evolved through trajectories of construction from outside, contested from within, and reconstructed from within by appealing to history, the present, and territorial spaces.

Chapter Five explores the hegemonic anti-Amhara discourse's contribution to shaping and influencing the emergence of Amhara nationalism. The chapter, by doing so, attempted to capture the genesis, evolution, and institutionalization of the hegemonic discourse to the point of becoming a defining rule in the ethico-political realm of the Ethiopian polity. In addition, the counter-discourses of Amhara nationalism are examined and thoroughly discussed. The defining trajectories in the development of Amhara nationalism and the attempt to transform and crystallize Amhara nationalism through establishing various associations, unions, or political parities are analyzed.

Chapter Six delves into the ethnic-based state restructuring and the rise of Amhara national questions. A particular emphasis has been given to the politico-territorial space-related questions of Amhara nationalists. To capture the holistic picture of the questions, the chapter begins with a

discussion of the Peace and Democracy Conference and proceeds to the constitutional making process and the ethnic-based restructuring of the Ethiopian polity. How the Amhara nationalists construe these processes has also been given emphasis, from which the Amhara questions arise. The territorial claims of Welkait, Raya, Metekel, and Dera/Shoa are also thoroughly discussed in this chapter.

Chapter Seven discusses the societal security threats against the Amhara and how they played out in mobilizing Amhara nationalism. To demonstrate the risks faced by the Amhara, recorded evidence from numerous governmental, private, and international authorities and organizations was examined. The evidence is presented not to endorse the security threats but to go beyond the raw data and show how such reports instilled a sense of victimhood among the Amhara, hastening the surge of ethnic nationalism as a defense mechanism.

A brief summary of the important findings of each study in relation to the research questions is provided at the end of each chapter. The goal of these sections is not to repeat all of the findings of each study but rather to highlight those that address the contents and focuses of the chapters. It is worth noting that, while each chapter does not always address all of the research questions, the chapters of the dissertation as a whole do give answers, which are highlighted in the final chapter. Hence, Chapter Eight covers the broad discussion and overall findings gained from the four empirical chapters. The conclusion is informed by the theoretical and conceptual frameworks adopted in the dissertation. The chapter delves into the empirical findings and their theoretical implications, the benefits of methodological eclecticism, the limitations of the research design, future research directions, and the research's potential policy and research implications.

Chapter Two: Ethnic nationalism: Conceptual and Theoretical Perspectives

2.1. Introduction

Now the dissertation has discussed the background, objectives, the philosophical assumptions and methodological approaches adopted to investigate the research questions, this Chapter delves into the conceptual/theoretical and the review of relevant empirical literature. The Chapter starts by discussing the concepts of nationalism, ethnicity, ethnic nationalism, and self-determination. An elaboration of the theoretical and literature review sections follows.

Discussing these concepts is deemed appropriate to clearly capture the essence of the case under study. Although nationalism is one of the contested topics in social science research, the scholarship is not short of excellent works. Startlingly a lot has been written for the last two hundred years, particularly the second half of the 20th century witnessed the peak of the publication of vast research works on nationalism and ethnicity.

These literary works prominently appear to concede on the contested nature, origin, emergence, questions, and implications of nationalism. From the French revolution to the disintegration of socialist federations of the late 20th century, from Europe to Latin America as to the birth place of nationalism, from the unification movements in Europe to the two world wars and decolonization struggles, nationalism has been researched in an eclectic perspective. The constellations of diverse understandings are contingent on the socio-political, cultural, historical and economic realities of the nation or state the nationalist movement surfaced. Lack of general theory to explain nationalism could have emanated from these fluid contexts and realities. However, broadly, these theories can be categorized into two: macro level– elite or top-down approach and micro level– everyday or bottom-up approach, to nationalism studies.

Nationalism has, however, continued to overwhelm the world through mobilizing ethnicity to quest historical, territorial, and political claims on the behalf of the nation. In that sense, nationalism has not run its course (Harris, 2016). In this research context, the various concepts relevant to decipher the Amhara nationalist movement are discussed. To explain the fuzzy nature of concepts in the study of nationalism, as Haas (1986) remarked “studies of nationalism pose the proverbial elephant problem: the animal's appearance seems to differ depending on where it

is touched by a group of blind persons.” In addition, the theoretical perspectives and relevant research works are discussed. To explain the evolution of Amhara nationalism, its origins, and developments using more than one theoretical approach is deemed appropriate with particular emphasis on discursive formation, hegemonic theory, and societal security.

2.2. Making Sense of Nationalism

In the beginning was the nation, an unselfconscious cultural and linguistic nature, waiting like a sleeping beauty to be aroused by the kiss of politics (Minogue, 1993 as cited in Beiner, 1999). This epitomizes the inextricable linkages between the rise of “nation-alism” and the modern state.⁴ Nation and nationalism are the most contested terminologies in the nationalism scholarship. For the purpose of clarity, answering the common and old question, “what is a nation?” (Renan, 1882), is crucial. To begin with the etymology of the word “nation”— derived from the Latin *natio*, which means “a native community of *foreigners*, bound together by similarity of origin; but no superior origin” (Zernatto & Mistretta, 1944: 352). The word, however, has undergone a semantic transformation to the point where it finally became synonymous with “people” (Greenfeld, 1992).

The Oxford English Dictionary (2012) define nation as “a large aggregate of people united by common descent, culture, or language, inhabiting a particular state or territory.” The everyday usage of the term “nation” amplifies some essentialist attributes. The infamous definition of Stalin (1913) is ostensibly consistent with the common vernacular. Stalin (1913: 8) emphasized on objective elements; “A nation is a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture”. This definition has tremendously shaped the discourse of “nations, nationalities, and peoples” in Ethiopia politics from the ESM to FDRE Constitution (see Article 39). However, for Hobsbawm (1992) the conception of “nations” in “objective” terms are only adequate to some members of a larger group, thus lacks explanatory power. Objective criteria for Connor (1993), in and by themselves, are therefore insufficient to determine whether or not a group constitutes a nation. Stalin (1913) propounded a static definition, which ignored the dynamic interplay between the

⁴ State refers to “a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory” (Weber, 1991: 78).

objective and subjective attributes of nation, to which psychological make-up is reckoned as objective element.

Moreover, Guibernau (1996: 47) has defined the nation as: “a human group conscious of forming a community, sharing a common culture, attached to a clearly demarcated territory, having a common past and a common project for the future and claiming the right to rule itself”. Similarly, nation for Smith (2002: 15) is “a named community possessing an historic territory, shared myths and memories, a common public culture and common laws and customs.” The myths and symbols of modern nations are drawn from preexisting *ethnies*.

In contrast, Renan (1998:5) in his seminal work “What is a nation?” explained nation in terms of subjective attributes as follows.

A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one is in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together.

“A daily plebiscite”, he calls it, nation is bounded to history and memories of the past and yet continue to exhibit in the present. Modernist such as Gellner (1983: 7), alike, envisaged nations as “the artifacts of men's convictions and loyalties and solidarities”; “an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (Anderson, 2006: 6). Such conception of nation is an attempt to explicate the subjective attributes shared in group sentiments and loyalty to their nation. Notwithstanding, the definitions are inadequate to grasp the idea of a nation. Thus, Andersonian conception has been criticized by the post-colonial scholars like Chatterje (1993) who succinctly questioned, what is there to imagine in the post-colonial world?

Moreover, the various thoughts on the nation for Brubaker (1996: 14) adopted a realist ontological approach; where nation(s) are “real entities and substantial collectivities. Although how they exist and how they came to exist is much disputed.” He continued and claimed, “Nations are not things in the world, but perspectives on the world.” In the same vein, Calhoun (1998: 5) remarked that “nations are constituted largely by the claims themselves, by the way of talking, thinking, and acting that relies on these sorts of claims to produce collective identity, to mobilize people for collective projects, and to evaluate peoples and practices.” Here one thing is

clear the conception of “nation” is contested. In this regard Tilly (1975: 6) aptly pointed out, and “‘nation’ remains one of the most puzzling and tendentious items in the political lexicon.”

At this juncture, it is appropriate to illuminate how the word “nation” is understood in Ethiopia. Crystal (2014: 64) wrote language signifies “a guide to understanding a community’s world view” or in the words of Stamm (1999) “*La parole est un monde*”— A word is a world. Therefore, a discussion of the “equivalent” Amharic or Ge’ez or other Ethiopian languages of a “nation” will benefit to put the term in perspective and grasp the embedded worldview in the language. Since the publication of “On the Question of Nationalities” in 1969, the Ge’ez word “beher” has been uncritically granted to represent the meaning of nation. To be precise, a Stalinist understanding and conception of “nation” received unduly endorsement. According to Kidan-Wolde (1945:261) *beher* refers to “place, region, and subdivisions in a region”; “land, country, town, rural area, *awraja* administration, region divided by appointment and territorial demarcation”; “man, relatives, nagad (*tribe*), people (*hezab*) distinguished by language, state, administration, and law” (translation from Teshale, 2008:366).

In a common vernacular, *beher* is used by Amharic and Ge’ez *scholars* (my emphasis) to identify the place they are from such as Zabehera Bulga (of Bulgabeher), Zabehera Dima (of Dimabeher), Zabehera Zegie (of Zegie beher), etc. Yet Beher is regional, trans-ethnic, trans-religious identity. *Beher*, then, does not have the meaning Marxists intend to imply (Teshale, 2008: 365- 366). Agreeing squarely with Teshale’s (2008) position of the usage of the word “nation” by no means reflects Ethiopian realities, however, he overlooked words may undergo semantic transformation. Since the 1960s the word *beher* gained hegemony in the Ethiopian political discourse. The 1995 Constitution Article 8 (1) declared sovereignty resides on “nations, nationalities, and peoples” of Ethiopia, albeit more confusing on “who is who?” in practice in light of Article 39 (5).

Turning to nationalism, which in the words of Gellner (1983) is parasitic on the disputed concept of nation involves subjective interpretations. Indeed, an abated debate has been unfolding for years among scholars on the “discourse” and “ideology” of nationalism. Historians, anthropologists, sociologists, and political scientists contributed in articulating nationalism as a discourse, ideology, and movement, albeit the concept remained messier (Norman, 2006). As Hutchinson and Smith (1994) asserted, in the field of nationalism there is no agreed upon

definition of nation and nationalism. This has been attributed according to Anderson (2006: 5) “unlike other ‘isms’, nationalism has never produced its grand thinkers: no Hobbeses, Tocquevilles, Marxes, or Webers.” Beiner (1999) further ascribed the problem to nationalists too much preoccupation with local myth-making and satisfying the grievances of a certain national group. In contrast, according to McCrone (1998), the concept of nationalism primarily revolves around the notion of history. This implies that nationalism builds its own narrative of its origins and past, serving to legitimize the current state of affairs and provide guidance for future endeavors.

As a salient discursive formation and agenda of world affairs since the dawn of the 18th century, nationalism has, however, received the unwavering attention of scholars and led to the production of extensive research works. A distinctive conceptualization of “nationalism” characterized these works of literature; as they refer nationalism to several sorts of things, properties, mental states, abstract entities, and processes (Norman, 2006).

In his seminal work, “Nations and Nationalism”, Gellner (1983:1) defined nationalism as “primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent” (see also Hechter, 2000). In other words, nationalism is the sentiment that accompanies a political desire to live within a nation-state (Gledhill, 2005). After the formation of the state for Tilly (1975) and Mann (1995) nationalism could be an instrument to reinforce centralization and unification of the state.

The Gellnerian interpretation underlined “nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist” (Gellner, 1983: 168). But, words of caution are in order “not to imply that nations are created simply to satisfy the political principle of nationalism” (Calhoun, 1997: 22). This notion, however, has been criticized as reductionist for its assumption of nationalism as a quest of self-determination or political independence disregarding the cultural and discursive elements (Norman, 2006; Smith, 2008; Özkirimli, 2017). As Calhoun (1997) pointed out nationalism is a discursive formation or a way of talking that generates more talks to settle, articulate, and take position on matters essential in a society and culture.

With more specificity, Breuilly (1993) wrote nationalism is a political ideology. And, it should be understood in light of the objectives of controlling state power or political sovereignty. In doing so, he distinguishes three very different views of nationalism: as a set of ideas about the origins, character, and political destinies of nations; as a sentiment shared by particular groups of people; and as a form of politics. Norman (2006: 6) similarly defines nationalism as “a *process*, a kind of *sentiment* or *identity*, a form of *political rhetoric*, an *ideology*, a *principle* or set of principles, and a kind of *social-political movement*.”

In contrast, Smith (2013) remarked that nationalism is a way of affirming the continuity of the cultural history— memories, myths, customs, symbols, etc., in the emergence of the nation. Smith (2003) summarized three main issues that dominated the nationalism scholarship; i.e. ethical and philosophical, anthropological and political, and historical and sociological. In light of these questions, he made a distinction between perennialism, primordialism, ethno-symbolism, and modernism paradigms. These schools prove the concept is highly contested engendering various interpretations and classifications.

2.3. Ethnicity: Conceptual Clarification

The current political terrain of Ethiopia requires understanding the praxis of ethnicity and nationalism. These ideas with their contested connotations are alien to the Ethiopian politics up to the 1960s. Ethnicity was granted much attention by the 1960s, till then none of the founding fathers of sociology and social anthropology written about it (Eriksen, 2010). Thus, the introduction and development of the phenomenon of ethnicity or nationality in Ethiopia ostensibly looks an international “contingent event” (Brubaker, 1996). Terms such as ethnicity, ethnic groups, ethno-nationalism, nationalism, etc. occupied the political discussions and become common vernacular in the post-1991 in Ethiopia, yet the concepts remained vague and ambiguous.

A large and growing body of literature has investigated the notion and praxis of ethnicity. But the concept is subject to an ongoing debate and discussion in the fields of sociology, political sciences, and anthropology. To clearly discern “ethnicity” in this research context, before going further, a critical description of the etymology of “ethnicity” is deemed appropriate. The word “ethnic” is derived from the Latin “ethnicus” (which derived from Greek “ethnos” and

“ethnikos”), which originally meant “a heathen, pagan, one who is not a Christian or Jew”. However, its meaning evolved throughout the ages to presage different meanings (Hutchison & Smith, 1996; Eriksen, 2010).

The Oxford English Dictionary (2012) defined “ethnic” as “of or relating to a group of people having a common national or cultural tradition”; “denoting origin by birth or descent rather than by present nationality.” Its meaning in ordinary usage tends to corroborate the primordial school assertion. However, the definition could be interrogated from three vantage points; what are these common national/ cultural traditions people share? How they come to develop these commonalities? How do we know people are related by birth or descent apart from close relatives or families or “face-to-face contact”? (Anderson, 2006: 6)

In contrast, to find an Amharic (or any other Ethiopian languages) equivalent of “ethnic” or “ethnicity” would be challenging as the concept is imported and originated elsewhere. Quite frequently, however, the Ge’ez word “zaweg” is used to substitute ethnicity. According to Aleqa Kindane Wolde Kifle (1948: 415) the word refers to “two, twin, dual, overlapping twofold, husband and wife”. It also means “relative, one’s peers, one’s resemblance, and friend”. “Gosa”— tribe or “Neged”— clan are other alternatives in the tongues of politicians, activists and the politically conscious mass to mention ethnicity. Initially in the heydays of the ESM, Walleign (1974) used “nationalities” and “nation” to designate the diverse group of people that constitutes the Ethiopian Empire. Walleign and his contemporaries failed, to quote Orwell (1953: 169), to “let the meaning choose the word”. To put it differently, they have “surrendered to them (*i.e. words*)”. Messay (2008) also disapproved the undigested or uncritical usage of the word “nationalities” or “nations” in the Ethiopian context (Getachew, ND). This unfortunately set the fundamentals for the reification of “nations” or “ethnic groups” and become a hegemonic political dispensation in Ethiopia. For Teshale (2008) this could be attributable to the ESM thoughts were an extension of a Euro-centric knowledge structure that failed to grasp the Ethiopian reality.

Getachew (nd) prefers the Ge’ez and Oromiffa words “nagad” and “gossa” in stead of “ethnic group” and “nation”. These terms are “practical social categories” developed and deployed in Oromo, Somali, and other groups. In addition to “gossa” and “nagad”, Teshale (2008: 365) suggested the Ge’ez word “beher”, “if used without translating it as the Marxist concept of

‘nation’, explains the Ethiopian reality better, and more profoundly.” The point here is, in the beginning was word or *logos*, and our submission to the Euro-centric interpretation of Ethiopian history we often do the worst thing one can do with words, “surrendering to them”, to mention a few “feudalism”, “nation”, “ethnicity”. In this research context, the researcher will not refer to these words. This is because the “cat is out of the box” and there is no reproaching to rethink the meaning a word should connote after half a century.

In this regard, the political discourses of the 1960s and 70’s ESM and the ethnic nationalist movements which are by-products of the students’ movement brought the idea of “ethnicity”, or to use Walelign’s (1969) terminology “nationalities” to the forefront of Ethiopian politics. To clarify here, the ESM have never created ethnic identities in Ethiopia. However, the discourse has eventually reinforced the re-making of the Ethiopian polity in the post-1991 based on Stalinist principles of common descent, language, territory, and common psychology capitalizing on ethnic self-determination (Hizkias, 1996; Vaguhan, 2003; Asnake, 2013).

As Yonatan (2017) remarked the post-1991 political dispensation heralded a major departure from the hitherto regimes policies and praxis of building a single Ethiopian identity in the image, language and cultures of a particular ethnic group (see also Andreas, 2003). Accordingly, the regional units or ethnic homelands are established to host single ethnic groups, albeit not the case across the nine constitutive regions and two city administrations. However, the arrangement of political space and territory along ethnic lines seemed increasingly ill-matched to social, economic, and cultural realities (Assefa, 2012; see also Brubaker, 1996).

Apart from the lexical definition, ethnicity in the “scientific categories” has been complex and fluid to define (Brubaker & Cooper, 2004); hence a precise definition of it has proved elusive. In their influential book, *Ethnicity*, Hutchison & Smith (1996:3) defined ethnicity as “the essence of an ethnic group or the quality of belonging to an ethnic community or group.” Smith (2009) further elaborated ethnic group or community comprises six features; a common name, a myth of common ancestry, shared memories, a common culture, a link with a historic territory or homeland (which it may or may not currently occupy), and a measure of common solidarity (see also Hasting, 1997). The definition of ethnic groups by Smith (2009) appears to be comprehensive and generic; the list of features has been, however, refuted by other scholars in the field such as Brath (1969), Brass (1991), Brubaker (2004), Eriksen (2010), and to mention

but a few. For instance, Brass (1991: 18) remarked ethnic groups have “distinguishing cultural features”, “developed self-consciousness”, and “specific ways of behaving”.

However, the ultimate purpose of ethnicity could be broadly agreed on as Brath (1969) rightly put it; as a practice of classification and categorization, including both self-classification and the classification of (and by) others (c.f. Eriksen, 2010; Brass, 1991). As Brubaker (1996) also pointed out, such groups should be treated as a “category of practice”– how they shape practically group and individual action and behavior.

Three schools of thought stand out in the literature of ethnicity; primordialism, instrumentalism, and constructivism (Young, 1993). This quintessentially implies contradictory interpretation to the nature, durability, salience, and implications of ethnicity on societal socio-political behavior (Kiwuwa, 2012). The primordialist and the instrumentalist occupy opposite ends of the theoretical continuum while constructivist occupies the middle ground (Tilley, 1997). The primordialist (such as Shils, 1957; Geertz, 1963; van den Berghe, 1987) despite propagating a nuanced interpretation of ethnicity, commonly shares the belief in the naturalness and/or antiquity of ethnic groups. In contrast, instrumentalism focuses on the use of cultural symbols by elites seeking instrumental advantage for themselves or the groups they claim to represent (Brass, 1991; see also Glazer & Moynihan, 1975). Finally, the constructivist approach ethnicity as a “social phenomenon”, “neither immutable nor completely open”, and “constructed from dense webs of social interactions” (Lake & Rothchild, 1998: 6). In this view, ethnic identities are produced and reproduced during interaction (Jenkins, 2008), “imagined” and exist as an “idea” or “discourse” (Anderson, 2006; Calhoun, 1998). However, the dissertation considers ethnicity as a political identity in Ethiopia cannot be taken-for-granted and are the outcomes of historical processes. As Fenton (2003) argues reducing ethnicity or nation into a single or unitary definition precluded the wider cultural, historical and political contexts that informed their existence. It is therefore the framework of this dissertation to focus on the processes of categorization, mobilization and contestation instead of the specific treats of a certain ethnic group to “explain how and when people identify themselves, perceive other, experience the world and interpret their predicaments in ethnic or national rather than other terms” (Brubaker, 2002: 175).

The idea of ethnicity is indeed contested, yet continued to shape state politics in Africa and elsewhere. It has become a powerful political idiom and mobilizing tool with profound effects on prospects for democracy; economic development; distribution of public goods; and a major focus of academic discourse (Atkinson, 2016; Horowitz, 1993; Young, 1993). In deeply divided societies, as Horowitz (1993) pointed out ethnicity becomes the defining feature of the socio-political and economic life of individuals and the state. Actions and behaviors are also interpreted along the salience of ethnicity often accompanied by hostility towards out-groups.

2.4. Existing Debates on the Origin and Development of Nationalism

Kedourie (1961: 9) posits “nationalism is a doctrine invented in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century.” A different whereabouts of the birth of nationalism is proposed by Anderson (2006), Latin America. However, scholars like Acton (1862) and Renan (1889) argued the right to self-determination or national self-consciousness was the products of the 1789 French Revolution. In the beginning the nationalist movements in France and America were informed by Rousseau’s “doctrine of popular sovereignty”. The movements or revolutions were born out of the common effort, in a fight for political rights, for individual liberty⁵ and tolerance (Kedourie, 1961) and “out of, and in opposition to, Christian systems of belief” (Anderson, 2006).

The immediate reaction to the rise of nationalism in France was followed by the Romantic nationalism in German, Italian or Eastern Europe nationalism. The works of Johann Gottfried Herder, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Ernst Moritz Arndt, and Friedrich Hegel has shaped and crafted the later developments of nationalist movements. Since then, nationalism became a movement to redraw political boundaries to fit the contours of ethnic groups (Benner, 2013).

Nationalism spread all over the world in the 20th century⁶ (Kohn, 1968) through the engendering of national consciousness of “passive existence of peoples to the highest instrument of power of self-determination” (Hobsbawm, 1990: 89). The processes of anti-colonial movement in Africa

⁵ Ironically, a civic inclusion for those who did not belong to the enfranchised political class of white, they have to fight throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century (Ignatieff, 2006).

⁶ Anderson (1991) argued the combination of communication and colonial administration, or pilgrim Creole functionaries and provincial Creole print men fostered the spread of nationalism even before it engulfed the whole Europe.

and elsewhere contributed to the spread of nationalism⁷ (Bayly, 2003) and legitimize nationalist principles in the 20th century (Beiner, 1999). Apparently, the characteristics and structure of nationalism throughout its evolution remarkably (re) framed by ideologies and movements like liberalism, socialism, pan-Africanism, pan-Arabism etc. Although the epistemological origin of nationalism has always been attributed to the Western world, the debate over whether nationalism is exclusively *diffused* from the West or it is an authentically African, Chinese, or Indian notion untouched by Western influence in the post-World War II (Chatterjee, 1993; Bayly, 2003). For some, in contrast, to paraphrase Eckert (2013), nationalism is neither traditional nor modern, neither Western nor anti-western, but rather a specific *bricolage*.

The underlying factors in the rise of nationalism are contested and vary across different nationalist movements. Vast scholarly works have been published thus far on the underlying factors of nationalism, Smith (2003) broadly classified these works into four; primordial, perennial, modernist, and ethnosymbolism. However, the modernist school is the dominant and widely influential in the nationalism scholarship⁸. The school conceives nations and nationalism as inherent to the modern world and to the revolution of modernity. Although the proponents agree on the modernity of nation and nationalism and out-rightly reject the perennialism argument, there are nuanced interpretations on the specifics.

In this regard, Ozmirili (2017) broadly categorized the modernist position on the rise of nationalism in light of the relevant explanatory factors they “prioritize”, i.e., “economic”, “political”, and “social/cultural” transformations (see also Smith, 2012).

2.4.1. Economic transformation

Nairn (1977) and Hechter (1975, 2004) stressed the role of economic transformations on the spread of nationalist movements. With a Marxist heritage Nairn (1977) attributed the whirlwind spread of political nationalism in the world to “uneven development of capitalism” among the centre and periphery territories. The historical development of capitalism since the eighteen

⁷ Ongoing debate on nationalism as exclusively Western export and the opposite concept of an authentically African, Chinese, or Indian nationalism untouched by Western influence in the post-World War II.

⁸ It achieved its canonical formulation in the 1960s, above all in the model of “nation-building”. And, it achieved wide currency in social sciences in the wake of the movements for decolonization in Asia and Africa.

century ingrained the rise of nationalist movements. Capitalism *per se* is not the problem, albeit unevenness. Relative deprivation accompanied by an invasive centre operating through the oil industry, the multi-national companies and the superpowers contributed to the rise of disgruntled elite.

To contest the discrepancy of “uneven development” elites of the periphery had to persuade and mobilize the masses to demand factories, schools, and parliaments. To be precise, “the new middle-class intelligentsia of nationalism had to invite the masses into history; and the invitation-card had to be written in a language they understood” (ibid.: 340). The neo-nationalism in Scotland, Catalonia, Quebec, Flanders and elsewhere followed the Romantic philosophies of constructing a separate identity (Nairn, 1977, 1997).

Provided that the works of Tom Nairn such as “The break-up of Britian”, “Faces of nationalism”, and the articles published in the *New Left Review* had advanced our understanding of the different terrains of nationalism. However, various criticisms have been leveled against his works. Davidson (1999) dubbed “The Break-up of Britain” a nationalist manifesto to which Tom Nairn himself acknowledged eventually. Smith (2012) has also pinpointed the trajectory of capitalism’s discontinuous spread is not always coterminous with the diffusion of nationalism. Regional economic disparities are unlikely to be translated into nationalist movements.

With a nuanced explanation Hetcher (2004: 26) argued “the motive for nationalism only exists when the boundaries between the governance unit and the nation are not congruent.” This bold assumption has a Gellnerian influence. In his earlier work, “Internal Colonialism” Hetcher (1975), however, posited uneven wave of modernization over state territories creates “advanced”— core and “less advanced”— periphery groups. The core will dominate the periphery politically and exploit it economically. Cultural distinctiveness eventually becomes the upshot of this unequal encounter of territories of the state. Thus, the economic inequality coupled with its illegitimate label and adequate communication within the peripheral group sparks the rise of nationalist/group solidarity. In the context of Ethiopia, there are scholars such as Markakis (2011) that adopted a center-periphery approach to explain the Ethiopian context.

The “internal colonial model”— *hierarchical* division of labor— predicts with a quantitative and multivariate regression the impoverished and disenfranchised territories in a country perforce the

emergence of reactive ethnic nationalism. In this regard, nationalism for Verdery (1979) is construed as a “rational” response to ethnic inequality. Hechter (1975) analysis of nationalism focused on the Celtic fringe (Scotland, Ireland, and Wales) of the United Kingdom. In the case of Ethiopia, the internal colonialism model has also been propagated by the EPLF, OLF and others to explain the rise of secessionist and ethnic nationalist movements in the 1960s and 70s (Asafa, 2020; Lubie, 1980; Okbazghi, 1987).

However, the model does not fit to explain the rise of nationalist movements in affluent territories such as Scotland, Catalonia and Wales. As a result, Levi and Hechter (1985) made an amendment of the model. And posit the interplay of an ethnic group with autonomous economy characterized by a hierarchical division of labour likely lead ethno-regional movements. Thus, it was segmental division of labor and institutional autonomy of 1707 Act of the Union in the case of Scotland that facilitated the emergence of group solidarity and eventually nationalism. Be that as it may, Hechter’s model was criticized for its ahistorical approach with no firm basis (Dey, 2015). The model failed to explain why nationalist movements in most deprived northern England and southern Italy did not emerge? And how the most affluent territories such as Catalan, Croatia, and Basque experienced nationalist movements? (Smith, 2003; Ozkirimli, 2017).

In terms of lack of economic transformations in Ethiopia, Markakis (1989) made a compelling argument that majority of nationalist movement arose in peripheral areas such as Tigray out of economic impoverishment as they are neglected by the state. However, Markakis’s argument failed to take into account the following realities in Ethiopia. First, economic impoverishment was everywhere in Ethiopia in all parameters with few exceptions. Second, a nationalist armed struggle cannot be waged in the backyard of Arat Kilo. Perhaps the economic factors could still be decisive in nationalist mobilizations but there are other bigger factors that caused such movements.

2.4.2. Political transformations

The birth of nationalism has also been attributes to politics and power struggle. In this regard, Breuilly (1993: 15) posited nationalism is about politics and controlling the state apparatus. Hence, the emergence of nationalism has to be investigated in the context of the introduction of

the modern state, “which nationalism both opposes and claims as its own.” Given the presence of nationalist movements all over the world, the movements were/are developed out of distinctive political and historical contexts. He pinpointed the following as some drivers of power struggle and eventually causing the birth of nationalism; the institution of colonial system, marginalization of distinct groups from the state politics, and economic disadvantages. Similarly Mann (1995) pointed out nationalism is the upshot of a struggle from the mass to realize a representative government. The African anti-colonial struggle experience attests for Markakis (1999) a more state-led nationalism to craft a more viable political entity, i.e. the state— not a nation-state. And he remarked “If nationalism rejects one state, it is only for the sake of another, real or imagined.”

Breuilly (1993) remarked to understand the characteristics and nature of nationalism one should start with categorization. Broadly, on their characteristics nationalism have the nature of separation, reform, and unification. However, nationalist movements prefer to locate their purposes in “historical-cum-territorial terms”. Three functions performed by nationalist ideas are “coordination”, “mobilization”, and “legitimacy” (see also Breuilly, 2005).

In Breuilly (1993) assessment of the various cases, to succinctly put his arguments, the religious-cum-political opposition in England and France, anti-colonial sentiments in India and Kenya, unification aspirations in Germany and Italy, reform the nature of the modern state in China, Turkey and Japan, separatist movements (pro-nation-state) in Czechs, Magyars and Scottish, Catalan, and Basque are the main political motives in the birth of nationalist movements in these countries and societies.

In the same vein, for Hobsbawm (1992) the rise of nationalism, above all, is a negotiated process, driven by the intention of the groups for whom national organizations will provide immediate benefits. As a Marxist historian he classified the historical development of nationalist movements in to three; first, from the French revolution to the end of the First World War (1918). During this phase, the political map of Europe was transformed and mass/civic/democratic nationalism unfolded (c. 1830-70). From 1870 onwards reaction nationalism of ethno-linguistic groups to affirm the right to self-determination from large empires (multinational) in Easter Europe— the Ottoman, Habsburg and Tsarist empires, has unfolded. The second wave, “apogee of nationalism”, unfolded from 1918 to 1950 attributed to

anti-fascist and anti-imperial decolonization nationalist struggles. This period has also been characterized by the upsurge of the left nationalist sentiment. The last stage in the development of nationalism is the late 20th century as heir of the small-nationality movements directed against the Habsburg, Tsarist and Ottoman empires.

In a much-cited introduction to an edited book, Hobsbawm (1991) argued how traditions are invented to serve nationalist interests throughout history. Nationalism emerges in the moment of rapid transformation in societies, i.e., social engineering, when older traditions cease to fulfill the task for which they were designed. In a more succinct way Hobsbawm (1991) stressed that nationalism is the product of politics, technology, and social transformation fosters and should be studied as such. Here, the pertinent questions of “land to the tiller” and “question of nationalities” could be cited as notable examples in the political transformation of the Ethiopian students circle to which the Imperial regime failed to accommodate and provide solutions. Indeed, the later rise of tumultuous ethnic nationalist movements are the upshots of such political failures that drive the groups to seize power to resolve the problem. The groups did accent to power, yet the problem continued to challenge the internal politics of the Ethiopian state.

2.4.3. Social/cultural transformations

For Gellner (2008 [1983]) nationalism is the upshot of industrial social organization. In his *Thought and Change* and *Nations and Nationalism* works Gellner (1964, 2008) rejected the argument of “Dark Gods Theory”, “nationalist theory”, “Wrong Address Theory” of Marxism, and “Kedourie’s theory of contingent consequence” of nationalism. And proposed the modernizing needs of industrialization led the rise of nationalism. To buttress this thesis he proposed his own philosophy of history, where mankind has undergone three stages of social transformations, i.e. pre-agrarian, agrarian, and industrial. These phases are associated with different modes of production, coercion, culture and cognition.

With the introduction of the modern state, nationalism becomes the distinct legitimizing parameter. The state's duty then becomes the entity to prepare and educating the people certain cultural standard, i.e., high culture, for the tasks of industrialism needs. This asserts the premise of making nationality and state congruent. In another note, culturally heterogeneous society

engenders tension and nationalism. In ethnically diversified society industrialism promotes the emergence of nationalism (Gellner, 1997; 2008).

Similarly, Anderson (2006: 3) asserted “nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time.” Therefore, as Gellner (2008) argued nationalism is a general imposition of high culture on society for the proper functioning of a modern economy. Throughout his work Gellner consistently purported the association of nationalism and uneven diffusion of modernization or industrialization. Moreover, he emphasized the spirit of nationalism is engendered through abstract, centralized, standardized, and one-to-many communication.

However, some of criticisms of his theory include the functionalist reasoning, economic justification on the emergence of nationalism (Taylor, 1998). O’Leary (1997) has also pointed out the onset of nationalism and industrialization as a driver cannot be substantiated with historical evidence. In this regard, Wallerstein (1991) accepts in a capitalist world economy there is a difference in scale between the polity (state) and the economic system; to which Gellner (2008) argued nationalism was the only possible outcome when industrialism burst into an ethnically differentiated world.

Anderson (2006) held a “neo-Marxist explanation” / “postmodernist” (Smith, 1998) of the origin and spread of nationalism. The wide dissemination of print-capitalism, the by-product of industrialization, print words had entrenched and aroused nationalist consciousness. Although the book publishing was a long existed tradition before the advent of industrialization, books began to be published in different vernaculars. This has created a unified field of exchange and communication, gave a new fixity to language, and strengthens language-of-power.

For Anderson (2006) nationalism was first appeared in the Americas (specifically Latin America). Creole communities of the Americas developed their national consciousnesses well before most of Europe. The prior administrative units established to ease political and economic controls through the process come to be conceived as fatherlands. Here the role of language in the Americas context was hardly present, albeit “administrative pilgrimages” had. These pilgrimages were made by provincial officials of the Spanish empire, whose circuits as officials

created a sense of the political separateness of each province as well as a community of like-minded officials.

The end of American nationalism led to the beginning of nationalist movements in Europe. History and language were important in expounding the rise of nationalism. The "last wave" of "colonial nationalism" in Asia and Africa has drawn modular forms from the historical experience of nationalism in Western Europe and the Americas (see also Anderson, 1992). In the Ethiopian context, the print media, although it is very hard to call it print capitalism, has played a paramount role in initially rising class consciousness within the ESM circle and later upbringing the national consciousness of the various political organizations such as EPRP, EPLF, TPLF, MEISON, OLF, etc. Journals, statements, political manifestos, and pamphlets were widely circulated among the students and the members of the political party circle. (see Bahru, 2014).

The "modular" conception of nationalism, for Chatterjee (1993: 5), suggests the post-colonial world is a "perpetual consumer of modernity" and subjects their "imagination to remain forever colonized." Desai (2008: 195), further, remarked that Third World societies were reckoned as "clean slates onto which Westernized nationalist intellectuals wrote Western stories of nationalism." With all the praise and dominance of Andersonian conceptions of nationalism in scholarship, the conditions for the emergence of nationalism remain ambiguous. More criticism has been labeled against "Imagined Communities" by Smith (1998), who posited the following question that the Andersonian paradigm failed to answer: why should nationalism spread and why should the nation be transplanted? Why do people feel bound to nations and assert their "national" rights?

Smith (2009), in his ethnosymbolism approach, propounded a cultural explanation for the emergence of nationalism. He rejected the proposition that "nationalism invented a nation where none existed". And Smith (1994) asserted that nationalists went back to older demotic ethnies to forge a political nation through the rediscovery and selective appropriation of popular myths, symbols, values, memories, and traditions.

These macro-scale theories, although have been pertinent in placing the topic of nationalism within the broader sociological framework, their propensity to unravel the origins and spread of

nationalism made them to emphasize on static models, teleological accounts and a realist epistemological position towards the topic (Skey, 2008; Ozkirimli, 2005).

2.5. Varieties of nationalism: civic versus ethnic dichotomy

There is no agreement on the specific types of nationalism throughout the generations of nationalism scholarship. The usage of the varieties of nationalism has been so customary that it seems more a reflection of reality than something invented or constructed. However, the taxonomy helps to grasp the specifics, evaluations, and perceptions of modern history and contemporary politics on nationalism (Calhoun, 2007).

Kohn's (2017) ethnic versus civic, Western versus Eastern, or organic versus liberal nationalism has been a widely cited classification. This dichotomy of nationalism was inspired by "Herder's break with Enlightenment rationalism and his adoption of "cultural pluralism" (Smith, 2000: 26). Civic nationalism required "a strong, rational bourgeoisie to act as a 'bearer class' in the task of building and leading the mass citizen-nation" (Kohn, 2017). Another feature of civic nationalism is subscription to the nation's political creed that encompasses territoriality and liberal-democratic values (Ignatieff, 2006; Brown, 2007), and the state temporally precedes (or coincides with) the development of the nation, as Tilly (1994) calls it, "state-led nationalism".

In contrast, organic/ethnic nationalism emerges in the dearth of a "strong bourgeoisie and inter-state competition" (Kohn, 2017) and "a clash between educated power-holders from one high culture facing uneducated non-power-holders from a low culture" (Gellner, 2008). With a nuanced note, Ignatieff (2006:7) posited that deeply inherited attachments such as language, religion, customs, and traditions are the causes of ethnic nationalism. And, "it is the national community that defines the individual, not the individual who defines the national community". Unlike civic nationalism, in the Eastern model, the nation precedes and seeks to create the state (Shulman, 2002). In both types of nationalism, however, the individual must belong to a nation; there is no chance of surviving outside the bond of the nation (Smith, 2000).

Moreover, the use of civic and ethnic division often associates one form of nationalism with backwardness, ethnocentrism, and racism while glorifying the other type as advanced, rational,

and liberal (Ignatieff, 2006; Gat, 2013; Tamir, 2019). For Brubaker (2004), the distinction is used not so much to describe empirical differences between various nations but to label normative judgment, i.e., "good" vs. "bad" forms of nationalism. Tamir (2019: 425) linked the civic/ethnic classification with the stages of political development, i.e., representing a "more advanced stage of moral and political development" and an "early development stage" respectively.

The dichotomy has, however, been criticized for conflating normative prescriptions with empirical reality, which in doing so obscures as much as it reveals (Kymlicka, 1999; see also Breuilly, 1993). Brubaker (1998) went on to dismiss the distinction as normatively and analytically problematic (see also Máiz, 2004; Tabachnik, 2018). This distinction has also been challenged for its simplicity in reflecting the evolution of different societies and the political reality of nation-states' politics (Harris, 2016). Despite the blatant criticisms, the civic/ethnic dichotomy holds the greatest resonance in today's theoretical and empirical research (Tamir, 2019).

The works of Walker Connor (a political scientist) and Anthony Smith (a sociologist) offer also better conceptual sophistication on the idea of ethnic nationalism in the current research context. The underlying assumption is the ethnic origin of nations (Connor, 1973, 1993, 1994, 2012; Smith, 1987, 1993, 2010). For Connor (1973), loyalty to one's ethnic group or nation-state is the denominator of all nationalism. It is worth mentioning that the difference between a nation and an ethnic group is the line of political self-consciousness, although sufficient detail is in order about how ethnic consciousness comes and develops in a nation (Smith, 1993; Snyder, 2017). Connor (2012) also adopted a subjective understanding of the two crucial concepts in nationalism scholarship. National identities are glued together through emotional bonds, i.e., psychological and non-rational, among fellow nationals (see Connor 1994). Hence, for Connor (1993: 377), "It is not what is (nation), but what people believe is that has behavioral consequences."

Given the aforementioned assumption, Connor (1973) posited that "ethnonationalism" is a product of when ethnicity merges analytically with nationalism. It then denotes for Connor (2004) both the loyalty to a nation deprived of its own state and the loyalty to an ethnic group embodied in a specific state, particularly where the latter is conceived as a "nation-state". For

Connor (1994:4), the cause and telos of ethnonationalism are to enjoy "self-government because it is united by a special sense of solidarity emanating from one or more shared features and therefore forms a nation." Appealing to the emotional attachment of one's ethnic national group appears to foster the intended quest for self-government, autonomy, or mobilizations.

In a multinational state, Connor (1993) remarked that although loyalty to the state and nation may not always be congruent, ethnic national sentiments proved to be more potent than one's loyalty to the state—"constitutional patriotism," to use Jurgen Habermas phrase (see Maier, 1988). In the same vein, Miller (1995) observed that nationality is superior to citizenship given that it connects political principles and practice to a sense of shared history and culture and a sense of place and time. That's why European multinational empires and states (such as the Romanov, Habsburg, Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, and Soviet Union) in the aftermath of WWI, WWII, and the Cold War underwent breakup into multitudes of nation-states, or at least into states professed to protect dominant ethnic groups (Muller, 2008).⁹ In this regard, long ago, Mill (2002) postulated that democratic institutions are next to impossible in multi-ethnic states. Muller (2008) mentioned that the creation of a harmonious Europe after WWII has been attributed to the triumph of ethnic nationalism.

In contrast, Smith (1993: 57–61) argued that ethnic nationalism is the product of the politicization of ethnic consciousness by an ethnic community. The process encompasses "vernacular mobilization, cultural politicization, and ethnic purification." It has been resilient in serving as the "mainspring and banner of social discontent and cultural alienation."

Along with other prominent factors, the construction of an ethnic intellectual and intelligentsia stratum mobilizes and harnesses popular ties, myths, symbols, and sentiments of ethnic chosenness and applies the ideals of national self-determination¹⁰ (Smith, 1998). In his ethnosymbolism, nations are the continuation of the ethnies of the remote past, "being based on, and being created out of, pre-existing ethnies" (Smith, 2010: 196). However, it has been criticized for overlooking the political aspect of ethnic nationalism— the relations between the

⁹ While acknowledging this perspective, it can be argued that a significant portion of the dissolution can be attributed to the post-war framework established by the victorious parties.

¹⁰ Smith's conception of *ethnie* and nation, however, is different from Connor. Smith (1971, 1993, 2009) in his *ethno-symbolism* approach treats the concepts in objective terms, maintaining his modernist category of nations.

nation and the state (Guibernau, 2004). In terms of the political justification of the rise of ethnic nations, Smith (1993) remarked that only a few ethnic communities demand autonomy and independence and thus institute a state of their own.

2.6 The national question and self-determination

The national question first appeared in the "Proclamation on the Polish Question" in the 19th century. Central to the Polish Question was "Selbstbestimmung"—self-determination (Marks and Engles, 1953). Lenin (1913) analyzed national questions from a Marxist perspective, identifying key issues such as the national liberation movement, national independence, resistance against colonialism, the right of oppressed nationalities to self-determination, and policies aimed at addressing the grievances of oppressed nations.

Similarly, Blaut (1987) pointed out five common forms of the national questions: resistance to annexation by another state; colonial independence struggle; struggle to gain real sovereignty; and efforts to unify previously distinct political entities. An addition to the list, for Roshwald (2001), would be the question of internal political arrangements by ethno-linguistic territorial units for more autonomy (cf. Wright, 1974).

Stalin (1929) pointed out three solutions to the national question: autonomy, federation, and separation. The solution shall, however, take into account the historical condition of the nation's development. Indeed, this stems from the right of the nation to freely determine its own destiny. However, as Moltchanova (2009) argued self-determination is neither a derivative of a group right nor shared enjoyment of individual members, rather it rests at the group agent level.

As pointed out above, self-determination is construed as the key solution to all the national question problems. Indeed, the concept of self-determination is rooted in the political philosophies of the 18th and 19th century. Immanuel Kant short essay on "What is Enlightenment?" is referred to explain the moral roots of the idea of self-determination (Kant, 1963). The application of national self-determination was later picked up by the Marxist camp. For instance, Lenin (1916) defines self-determination of nations as the political separation of these nations from alien national bodies and the formation of an independent national state". The idea also received much political currency following the First World War through Woodrow Wilson, the President of the United States (1913–1921) (Heater, 1994; Lynch, 2002). For

Wilson, self-determination is the right of people to self-government (Lynch, 2002)—to decide their own political, economic, and social regimes (Paust, 2019). Oddly enough, no legal criteria determine which group may legitimately claim this right in particular cases. And yet, the "people" or "self" exercising the determination conceded the nationality.

In another note, a national self-determination-seeking project presupposes the national "self" to be created, nurtured, shaped, and motivated. What is tacit to nationalist self-determination quests, therefore, is the issue of nation-building (Norman, 2006). In this regard, Tamir (1993) remarked that the right to national self-determination stakes a cultural rather than a political claim; namely, it is the right to preserve the existence of a nation as a distinct cultural entity.

Hobsbawm (1992) critically argued that the Wilsonian idea of self-determination was a plot to redraw the boundaries of Europe. Wilson's Russian contemporaries, Vladimir Lenin and Joseph Stalin, adopted this liberal expediency of self-determination, which has roots in the American and French Revolutions (Heater, 1994). The Bolsheviks showed a firmer commitment to the principle of self-determination following the October Revolution under the Marxist paradigm (Connor, 2012). Lenin remained unequivocal in his support of the right to self-determination by asserting: "All nations have the right to self-determination... The vast majority, most likely nine-tenths of the population of the earth, come under this description" (quoted in Harris, 1990: 88). However, for Anderson (2006: 3), "nationalism has proved an uncomfortable anomaly for Marxist theory and, precisely for that reason, has been largely elided rather than confronted."

Overall, the national question involves a political struggle for power, complex ideological elements, historical, social, and economic phenomena and groupings, and so on (Blaut, 1987). These elements characterize ethnic nationalist movements. For the purpose of this dissertation, ethnic nationalism is construed as a political movement in a multi-ethnic state that aimed at achieving more autonomy, political representation in the national politics, and ensure ethnic-territorial integrity.

In the Ethiopian context, the question of nationalities has become a mobilizing force since the ESM. Theoretically, the question was informed by the writings of Lenin (1916) and Stalin (1913, 1929), along with students' and later leftist political organizations obsession with quickly fixing the Ethiopian problem. The answer to the question is also found in this writings, which grant

nationalities the right to self-determination, including secession as a panacea to the national question (see Bahru, 2014; Messay, 2008). Various insurgency movements such as the TPLF, OLF, and others have also picked up the national question to legitimize their struggle as a national one. It was, however, in the 1990s, with the accession of the TPLF/EPRDF to power, the idea of self-determination received unequivocal attention and became a guiding principle in the Peace and Democracy Conference, incorporated in the Transitional Charter, and the FDRE Constitution.

2.7 Theoretical Frameworks

Thus far, academia has fallen short of crafting a grand theory to explain the phenomenon of nationalism. This emanates from the fact, as Calhoun (1998) remarked, that as a rhetoric, nationalism comprises different movements, cultural patterns, states, or other projects. Coupled with the absence of a grand theory, grasping nationalism in its multiplicity of forms then requires an eclectic approach. In this dissertation, the theoretical underpinnings of discursive formations, hegemony, and societal security are deployed to investigate the rise and dynamics of Amhara nationalism in Ethiopia. The theoretical preference emanated from the following reasons: (1) discursive formations help identify the unity of discourses towards Amhara since the Italian occupation and how it engendered the recent nationalist movement. The discursive practices that define and determine the rules of discourse against the Amhara to the point of institutionalization in post-1991 Ethiopia (2) Provided the discursive formation lacks the theoretical lens to grasp how discourses are constituted into a hegemonic practice and political ideology of a regime, Gramsci's hegemony is deemed appropriate to decipher the way that for instance the national oppression become a dominant horizon of social orientation and action to the point of entrenching national identities as taken-for-granted. (3) Finally, to examine the outcomes of the discursive and hegemonic practices, a societal security theory has been deployed. The theory situates the various ethnic-based assaults against the Amhara in light of the Copenhagen School to see how security threats played out in mobilizing the Amhara into ethnic nationalism. The underlining assumptions of all these theories are their ontological and epistemic constructivist positions towards discourse, hegemony, ethno-national groups, and security.

2.7.1. Discursive Formation

Michel Foucault, in his 1972 book, *The Archeology of Knowledge*, specifically dealt with the notion of discursive formation. The book represents one of Foucault's major works on theoretical and methodological epistemes, or systems of thought, and the underlying defining rules of discourse that informed his other works. For Foucault (1972: 38), we are dealing with a discursive formation whenever there is dispersion in statements one makes, one sees a regularity among objects, statements, concepts, or thematic choices.

Whenever a group of discourses addresses the same object and commonly shares the same style, *modus operandi*, and institutional and administrative frameworks, we say it is a discursive formation (Cousins and Hussain, 1984). Discursive formations presuppose rules of formation for their existence, coexistence, maintenance, modification, and disappearance. Here, "statement is always an event that neither the language nor the meaning can quite exhaust." It is similar to an event in that it is (1) related to a writing gesture, residual memory, books, recordings, and so on; (2) subject to recurrence, change, and reactivation; and (3) triggered by a setting or context and the repercussions it produces (Foucault, 1972: 28). Such discursive acts in a given society do not appear in a vacuum but arise from a social practice rooted in and oriented toward real material social structures (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014; Fairclough, 1992). They are highly contingent on institutions, social groups, and relations between various discourses (see Foucault, 1972; Hall, 1992).

The main subject in discursive formation is discourse such as madness, sexuality, nation, nationalism, etc. Provided that the wide usage of the term discourse has now faced conceptual fuzziness with other terms, it would be wise to provide a working understanding of it. Discourse is construed as social practices that constitute the social world and contribute to the construction, deconstruction, or reconstruction of social reality or knowledge (Foucault, 1972; Fairclough, 1992; Burr, 2003). That is why it is argued that discourse produces knowledge through the dialectical use of language and social practice. Hence, reality or knowledge does not and could not meaningfully exist outside of specific discourses (Foucault, 1972).

Moreover, Hall (1997) notes that discursive formation involves statements about certain objects, topics, or knowledge, rules that regulate what is sayable or thinkable about a historical moment,

how this knowledge acquires authority, the practices within institutions for dealing with the subject, and acknowledgment that a different discourse or episteme will arise at a later historical moment. The different discourse for Foucault (1978: 101) is a counter discourse: "... began to speak on its behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or 'naturalness' be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified." When those usually spoken for and about by others begin to speak for themselves, they produce a "counter discourse". Reclaiming terminologies is the rudimentary act of a counter discourse (Foucault, 1978). It uses the existing dominant discourse to alter power dynamics without challenging the underlying assumptions (Haugaard, 2022).

By drawing from the work of Foucault (1972, 1978), Calhoun (1997: 3) explains nationalism as a "discursive formation"—"a way of speaking that shapes our consciousness." Discursive structures, according to Foucault (1972), determine the way we interpret objects and events and set them within systems of meaning, making objects and events appear to us to be real. Mills (2004) further posits that discourse delimits the way we think and act and narrows one's field of vision, excluding a wide range of phenomena from being considered real, worthy of attention, or even existing. Such a conception of nationalism in the Foucauldian sense of discourse has been adopted by a substantial number of writers on nationalism scholarship (see Hall, 1996; Suny, 2001; Delanty and O'Mahony, 2002; Wodak, 2006; Wodak et al., 2009; Ozkirimli, 2017).

For Ozkirimli (2017), the nationalist discourse differs from other similar discourses on three grounds: identity, temporal, and spatial claims. Identity claims involve dividing the world into "us" and "them", and "friends" and "foes". The temporal claim has to do with an obsession with history and the propagation of its authentic version. And nationalists invest considerable resources in establishing meaningful links to the past— often problematically. As Suny & Eley (1995) suggested, the discourses of politics of earlier times must be understood and respected in their particularity and not submerged in understandings yet to be formed. However, with the consideration of the temporal claims of nationalists, Levinger and Lytle (2001: 179) wrote nationalist rhetoric for the mobilization of the mass containing three juxtaposed elements, i.e., "the glorious past, the degraded present, and the utopian future."

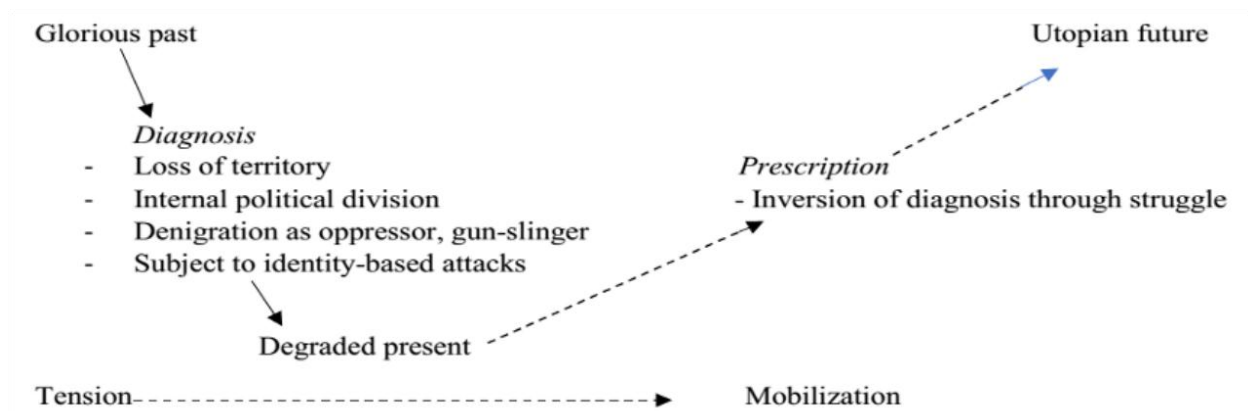


Figure 1. Diagnosis, Prescription and the vectors of National Action

Source: Adapted from Levinger & Lytle (2001: 186)

The spatial claim entails nationalists' fixation on the territory, a quest for land— actual or imagined (Anderson, 2006; Wodak et al., 2009). In making such claims, as Calhoun (1997) argued, nationalist discourses help to explain why people with grievances of a variety of sorts cast their struggles in the rhetorical framework of nationalism. The grievances may arise from economic, political, or cultural sources. But they do not produce insurgencies or social movements by themselves. In this regard, Foucault (1981: 52–53) remarked: "History teaches us that discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which there is a struggle; discourse is the power that is to be seized."

The nationalist discourse tends to present its choices of identity, past, and territory as a reflection of the immutable "essence" of the ethnic groups without reference to their internal diversity (Wodak *et al.*, 2009; Ozkirimli, 2017). In this regard, Suny & Eley (1995: 9) argued that successful nationalism presume the "objective" basis of ethnicity to provide the raw materials of their project. And continued:

Yet those prior communities should not be "naturalized," as if they have always existed in some essential way or have simply prefigured a history yet to come. Religious, linguistic, ethnic, and regional communities are themselves always in the process of historical formation and change. What looks from outside and from a distance like a bounded group appears much more divided and contested at closer range. Culture is more often not what people share but what they choose to fight over.

As such, the process of (re)construction of the nationalist discourse does not arise out of anything and does not exist in a social vacuum. It is produced and imposed by a whole gamut of institutions— state and civil society (Ozkirimili, 2005). Consequently, through "everyday practices" or "banal ways," to use Billing's (1995) words, nationalist discourses create unwavering hegemony. Thereby, it dominates other discourses, or alternative political languages, by "nationalizing" narrative and interpretative frames, ways of perceiving and evaluating, thinking, and feeling (Brubaker 1996: 20–1).

By drawing from the above theoretical discussion, this dissertation assumes ethnic national identity are discursively produced, reproduced, transformed and destructed according to contexts with the realm of difference and uniqueness. The essence of such identity groups becomes a reality through reifying, figurative discourses continually launched by politicians, intellectuals and media people and disseminated through the systems of education, schooling, mass communication, etc (Wodak et al., 2009). And they cannot be merely reduced to static criteria of language, territory, or culture (Suny & Eley, 1995; Wicke, 2019). But they are a creation of complex socio-historical, political, and ideological dynamics (Wodak et al., 2009; Yeros, 2016). In a nutshell, ethno-national groups are discursively produced or mental constructs (Anderson, 2006) entities as they do not have "navels" (Gellner, 1996), and the discursive processes will be piled on during the period of socio-economic, intellectual, and political transition (Wicke, 2019). Ethnic nationalism as a discursive practice is a dynamic and somewhat contingent process that is not primarily about historical truth but is shaped by changing constellations of belief and authority (Wicke, 2019). The role of cultural practice, contentious politics, and collectively held or intersubjective ideas and understandings in social life are pivotal in shaping ethnic nationalist movements (Finnemore & Sikkink, 2001).

The theoretical perspective enables us to explain how and why Amhara nationalism arose and crystallized in the last decade (since 2016). More specifically, the theory will aid in explaining the numerous ways in which the Amhara nationalist movement has constructed itself in recent years. More specifically, in what ways did the 2nd half of the 20th Century political discourse such as "national oppression" in Ethiopia inform the institutionalization of ethnic identity and the paraphernalia of competing ethnic nationalism? This discourse has been conspicuously fixated on instituting the idea of ethnic nationalist sentiment and eventually consolidating the hegemony

of ethnic readings of the state. To be precise, the discourse of the old order of the "Amhara" national ruling class has oppressed "other" ethnic groups or nationalities and gained momentum in the country. The historical roots of the dominant discourse, the trajectories, and the constant referencing of the Amhara by various Ethiopian and foreign intellectuals, politicians, etc. as a unified groups calls for a understanding the discursive contexts.

In this regard, a cursory look into Amhara nationalism illustrates that its aim is challenging and deconstructing the existing dominant discourse. And a discursive strategy in the context of Amhara nationalism has been set forth to inculcate "Amhara-ness" in myriad ways. This theory allows for seeing Amhara nationalism as a project of creating a common discursive framework through mobilizing the masses in the struggle of the "Amhara questions". In this sense, the discourses in Amhara nationalism are predicated on both reclaiming what has been considered as slurs such as *neftegna* and *temiketgna* and challenging the dominant interpretation of modern Ethiopia history through presenting a different historical discourse.

Further, the theory helps to address the role of elites and various institution, in the crystallization and articulation of the aspirations and quests of the Amhara nationalist movement. However, the critics of constructivism claim that considering nationalism as "a perspective on the world" denies its material, economic, and structural reality (Hall, 1997). In actuality, however, the theory does not deny the existence of the material objects rather the meanings assigned to it "constructed by human beings as they engage with the world" (Crotty, 2003: 43). What in practice occurs is as Laclau (1990: 34) argues "the system of possible alternatives tends to vanish and the traces of the original contingency to fade". Hence, this dissertation rejects the distinction of discursive and non-discursive elements (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014). To clearly discern how the discourses such as national oppression, other anti-Amhara discourses, political identities are taken for granted or maintained hegemonic meaning requires to frame the concepts in light of hegemonic theory.

2.7.2. Hegemony

The production of nationalism is predicated on the way nationalist discourses gain acceptance and shape public behavior. The role of power and social structure strongly influences such processes of rationalizing the exercise of nationalist discourses (Mills, 2004). In this vein,

Antonio Gramsci's "hegemony" aids to captures such inculcation of a dominant ethnic nationalist discourses to the body politics of a multi-national state like Ethiopia.

Torring (1999: 101) synthesized the definition of hegemony by drawing from the works of Laclau and Mouffe as "expansion of a discourse or set of discourses, into a dominant horizon of social orientation and action by means of articulating unfixed elements into partially fixed moments in a context crisscrossed by antagonistic forces". William (1960) also sees hegemony as socio-political reality or moment that entails moral and intellectual leadership of a specific sense of reality that pervades society in all of its institutional and private expressions.

Hegemony could be achieved through various mechanisms. At the hub of such endeavour lies civil society institutions operating to shape the cognitive and affective structures whereby men perceive and evaluate problematic social reality. The ruling classes also obtain, justify, and maintain the active consent of the governed through employing state institutions (Femia, 1981). Institutional structures are utilized or emerge to entrench certain discourses. Failure of entrenching hegemonic discourses stem from a wider structural shift where new forms of knowledge and practice come to challenge the previously entrenched structures and institutions (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014).

At this point it is pertinent to differentiate discourse and ideology. As the later has been the subject within the Marxist assumptions of hegemony. For instance, for Gramsci (1971) hegemony encompass cultural, moral, and intellectual dimensions of leadership channeled through various ideological structures that were all mutually reinforcing. In classical Marxist philosophy, ideology denotes a kind of consciousness expressed and controlled by elites and imposed as a false consciousness on others. In contrast, it is also conceived as a particular superstructural level within social totality (Althusser, 2020; Laclau, 1990). For instance, nationalism is considered as an "ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of it members to constitute an actual or potential nation" (Smith, 1991: 72). For this dissertation, ideology is construed as a system of ideas which proposes the way that (some aspect of) social relations should be organized and is therefore intimately bound up with attempts to establish or maintain power.

When hegemonic ideological superstructures dialectically govern or lead society through domination and consent, according to Femia (1975), the subaltern should be made well aware of the oppression before being presented with an alternative counter-hegemonic ideology. To this effect, political actors and civil society, including the media, play a pivotal role in the "conscious mobilization into political awareness of hitherto passive and repressed social groups" (Femia, 1988: 207). This has been done, for instance, in the case of Amhara nationalism, initially by a political activist in Ethiopia and the diaspora via social media and traditional media; later, political parties such as NaMA have also engaged in the conscious mobilization of the Amhara against the extant political ideologies, such as the Amhara as the national oppressor.

As Motyl (1999) pointed out, ethno-national identities could be constructed by casually living up to the rules, patterns, habits, and procedures of institutions. In due course, as Rosberry (1996) pointed out, when the hegemony of a common discursive framework reigns, certain actions and behaviors get official endorsement while others are pronounced offensive and inadmissible. In the Ethiopian context, since the advent of ethnic-based federalism that rooted in the 1960s students activism, the notion of ethnic or national identities has become a defining feature of civic, political, and territorial organizations. It has indeed also shaped moral and political dispensation by determining what is sayable or thinkable in public political discourse. In short, it has become a hegemonic ideology that lamented ethno-national identities as fixed that exist along with territorial clusters. This theory then helps to capture the hegemonic ideological context in which Amhara nationalism arises out of the broader antagonistic ethnic nationalists and Ethiopianists camps.

2.7.3. Copenhagen School: Societal Security Theory

Security is a contested term with multiple meanings, some of which are not at all necessarily logically linked to conventional understandings (Dalby, 2002). For most of the 20th century, the realists' and neo-realists' understanding of security dominated the field of international relations. A hegemonic state-centered conception of security has reigned in the field. It was in the post-Cold War period that alternative and counter-hegemonic facts and knowledge started to be delivered (Booth & Vale, 2002). A move away from a state-centered conception of security has been introduced, inter alia, by societal security in the work of Buzan (1991). The concept was

further elaborated by scholars from the Copenhagen School in their work, Identity, Migration, and the New Security Agenda in Europe (Wæver, Buzan, Kelstrup, and Lemaitre, 1993). Here, societal security is considered "sustainability within acceptable conditions for evolution of traditional patterns of language, culture, and religious and national identity and customs" (Wæver et al., 1993: 43).

Moreover, Thiel (2007) remarked that societal security implies the security of collective groups in relation to other communities or the institutions of the state in which they reside. The referent objects for Buzan, Wæver, & de Wilde (1998: 123) are those relevant groups "that can create a socially powerful argument that this 'we' is threatened." In this regard, Wæver (1989) posited that it is through a speech act that societies pronounce they are threatened and securitize the threats posed to them as a group. Securitization may be viewed as a strategy utilized largely by political actors to elevate a problem above the domain of politics, outside the scope of weighing and prioritizing in political debates and procedures (Wæver, 1998). Security is "a self-referential practice... constituted by the inter-subjective establishment of an existential threat with a saliency sufficient to have substantial political effects (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, 1998: 24–25). Whenever groups of any kind define the development or potentiality of a threat to their survival as a community, then there is societal insecurity. More precisely, the main component of analysis in societal security is politically substantial ethno-national and religious entities (Wæver, 1993; Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, 1998). To avoid everything from becoming a security issue, Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde (1998) identified three steps in the securitization milieu: identification of existential threats, emergency action, and effects on inter-unit relations by breaking free of rules. To pinpoint a securitization, move from political parties such as, for instance, NaMA; looking at the discourse would suffice.

In the work of Wæver (2008), the major societal security threats are migration, horizontal competition, vertical competition, and depopulation, though the threats are not limited to these. These issues are easily articulated in terms of existential threat and necessary defense. These threats could also be real or imagined. The threats for Buzan (1993: 43) include "forbidding the use of language, names, and dress, through the closure of places of education and worship, to the deportation or killing of members of the community." However, Buzan et al. (1993) explicitly

stated that the way societal identities are constructed determines their vulnerability to varied threats.

In multi-ethnic states, when societies feel threatened either in societal or military terms, they try to defend their identity through military or non-military means (Roe, 2016). Strengthening societal identity, or what Waever (1995) calls "defending culture with culture" and consequently "culture becomes security policy". Cultural and ethnic nationalisms arise out of the necessity of self-defense by societal groups. In this regard, Horowitz (1994: 49) remarked "Ethnic affiliation provides a sense of security in a divided society, as well as a source of trust, certainty, reciprocal help, and protection against the neglect of one's interests by strangers". For Roe (2016), the bottom line of such mobilization of ethnonational groups toward self-identification rests on the actions that other groups take to secure their identity, eventually leading to reactions. This has been summarized in the concept of societal security dilemmas. Such a conundrum is embedded in the nature of the state (i.e., weak states) and nation-building strategies of the regime (Job, 1992; Glenn, 1997). However, the Copenhagen School has been accused of creating an imagined and excessively holistic identity for society (Roe, 2005). Another criticism of the school is that it has limited securitization to singular threat-defense logic (Neal, 2009).

In this research context, therefore, the societal security perspective intends to explicate various (in)security predicaments that pushed the ethnonational group toward self-identification. The construction of the "Amhara identity"—"neftegna," its equivalent, as "oppressor"—since the ESM and its further institutionalization in post-1991 has vilified the Amharic-speaking population and particularly the elites (Semahagn, 2016) and eventually the wider population. The upsurge of Amhara nationalism, i.e., from 2016 onwards, could be explained through the lenses of societal security theory.

2.8. Ethnic nationalism in Ethiopia: An empirical literature review

The emergence of ethnic nationalism in Ethiopia is a highly contested research topic. When, how, and why ethnic nationalist movements proliferate are attributed to a multiplicity of factors. Scholarly works undertaken to decipher these crucial questions in different contexts of ethnic nationalism fail to deliver a unanimous answer. This dissertation, as well, does not have the

intent of providing one. In what follows, an attempt is made to situate the emergence of Amhara nationalism in the context of ethnic nationalist movements in Ethiopia.

Broadly, there are two contested and contending assumptions on the notion of nationalism in Ethiopia, i.e., Ethiopian nationalism and ethnic nationalism. At the heart of the schism lies a contested interpretation of the making of modern Ethiopia (Merara, 2003; Teshale, 1995). To illustrate the contested views towards the modern history of Ethiopia, Teshale (1995) broadly categorized three timescales of Ethiopian history: 3000 years, 100 years, and 40 years old. For This periodization is attributed to scholarly literature on the history of Ethiopia that focuses on Aksumite, Orientalist Semiticist, and Radical Left paradigms. The Aksumite paradigm (Ge'ez Civilization) is rooted in the Orthodox Monophysite Church and is viewed by some as a "myth" (Messay, 2003). The Oriental Semiticist paradigm is a Eurocentric interpretation of Ethiopian history. Although the paradigm has produced a systematic discourse of Ethiopian studies (Teshale, 1995), the Semitic thesis, for Messay (2003: 4), is a "Eurocentric phantasm". The Radical Left paradigm includes scholars influenced by Marxist-Leninist lines in their understanding of Ethiopian history. The paradigm questioned the legitimacy of the Ethiopian imperial establishment and the scholarship that rationalized monarchical legitimacy (Teshale, 1995). In this regard, Clapham (2002) also argued that the history of Ethiopia has fallen prey to ethnic nationalist historians with a Lennist conception. The Somalis, Eritreans, and Oromo have already embarked on the course of national construction through the selective use of history. Hence, how old the Ethiopian state is is contentious, and the search for a unifying history could not be found in the foreseeable future.

Among others, class, nationality or ethnicity, and race are the central themes the paradigms attempted to understand. In this regard, their contribution to the interpretation of Ethiopian history could be summarized as: racial distinction between the Abyssinians and "natives", ethnicization of the past, de-legitimizing of the crown, feudalism, self-governing territories, "national oppression", "class oppression", and "dependent colonialism" (Ullendorff, 1967; Crummey, 1980; Holcomb and Ibssa, 1990; Bahru, 1991; Mohammed, 1991; Levin, 2000; Gebru, 2009). The big picture of such contested interpretations represents the insurmountable challenge of crafting a common discourse on the state-building and nation-building processes in

Ethiopia. The ongoing simmering anomaly in Ethiopian politics draws its origins from the highly polarized narrations of history and memory.

The emergence of the modern Ethiopian state can be traced back to the rise of Tewodros II to power in 1855 (Bahru, 1991; Teshale, 1995). The making and remaking of the Ethiopian polity in the 19th and 20th centuries has been shaped by state formation, the war of incorporation, the Italian invasion, the ESM and the subsequent revolution of 1974, and the creation of a multi-ethnic polity (Merera, 2007). In the same vein, through a Marxist-Leninist lens, Markakis (2011) remarked that the Ethiopian past involved contentious relations between the center (the Abyssinian core) and periphery (newly occupied territories or lowlands). Polity has been characterized by an imbalance of power that marginalizes the majority of its people, including the highland peripheries. Unlike other African countries, the nature of Ethiopia's state formation under Markakis (1999) is a result of a response to the challenge of European imperialism and a successful partition in the Africa scramble. Therefore, Ethiopia, as we know it, is not older than most African countries. This assertion denounces the 3000-year statehood of Ethiopia as a nationalist mythology and reduces the history of the state to 100 years. For Clapham (1975), however, the polity is built through more of a centripetal or internal political dynamic than European colonial invention. With this comes the issue of ethnicity and internal political administration.

In contrast, without denouncing the Orientalist Semitist argument, the widely cited Greater Ethiopia of Levin (2000) proclaimed that the making of Greater Ethiopia (the Ethiopia synthesis) is the product of the "Amhara thesis and Oromo anti-thesis". The genesis of the thesis (i.e., empire building) is the year 1270 A.D. (restoration of Solomonic Dynasty or Amhara rule) and 16th-century Oromo expansion for the anti-thesis (egalitarian tradition). With a nuanced approach, Teshale (1995) maintained Ethiopian history from the 16th century on, including the history of the relations between the Amhara and the Oromo. Levin's (2000) assertion construed the Greater Ethiopia through the lens of ethnicity, i.e., through "ethnicizing the past". This begs the question: did the Amhara, Oromo, or Tigray see themselves as distinct groups? Is there any evidence that the relationship could be explained in terms of ethnicity? Levine (2007) has also made an opposing argument against the Western conception of the origins of nationalism, claiming that the conception has ignored the fact that countries such as Japan and Ethiopia had

developed nationalist cultures millennia before their putative origins in Western Europe. This indeed suggests the existence of a nation or a nationalistic element attributed to a unified national group.

Be that as it may, the nation-building effort in Ethiopia is far from completion (Markakis, 2011). Since the restoration of the Solomonic dynasty (for the second time), Tewodros II has embarked on centralizing state power and continued to live in the post-1991 federal Ethiopia (Markakis, 2011; Fisseha, 2006; Merera, 2003). In the course of consolidating the centralization of power, homogenizing the Ethiopian society or assimilation policy, i.e., Amharanization, has been perceived as a way out, especially in the period of Haile Selassie I. In this regard, Markakis (1999) claimed the state promoted its own version of Ethiopian nationalism, whose cultural ingredients, not surprisingly, were purely Amhara. In contrast, Crummey (2003) argues the promotion of Amharic language and Orthodox Christianity with all its ethnic tone cannot be crudely labelled as Amharaization policy as if it represents and benefited the peasants of Gojjam, Wello, Gondar, and northern Shoa. The discourse of Amharaization has stirred ethnic resentment and kindled dissent from the Ethiopia students, yet different structural causes contributed to the ESM flare-up in the 1960s and 1970s (see Messay, 2008; Bahru, 2014).

The legacy of the ESM in the conception of Ethiopianness has dramatically altered the old version and challenged Haile Selassie I's rule with "land to the tiller" and the "nationalities question". The eventual proliferation of radical insurgent movements grew from the students' persistence in activism and the regime's failure to respond to their urgent inquiries (Messay, 2008; Bahru, 2014). The "wrong address theory" (Anderson, 2006) best describes the proliferation of ethnic nationalist organizations in the 1970s. Even though the Marxist-Leninists attempted to mobilize the oppressed workers, they ended up mobilizing different nationalities. In this regard, ESUE (1973) argued that the emergence of grand nationality contradictions emanated from the Amhara ruling class instilling hatred towards other nationalities. This has hastened reciprocal hatred towards the Amhara, pushing a unified class struggle in Ethiopia to the peripheral agenda and cultivating ethnic-based mobilization. As a result, the main historical discourses of mobilization have become oppressors vs. oppressed, colonizers vs. colonized, and super-race vs. subaltern categories.

Incongruity with Ethiopianness and enmity epitomize the nature of the ethnic nationalist organizations. On the one hand, Ethiopian nationalism, alias patriotism, is adamant on repulsing external aggression and maintaining the territorial integrity of the polity. Tewodros (2013) distinguished the symbols of nationalism of historic Ethiopia— country, religion, and wife— from modern nationalism— flag, king, and mother land. The genesis of the ideology of Ethiopian nationalism is rooted in part in the period of Adwa and the patriotic resistance to Italian colonialism. This has been a long and sturdy tradition in Ethiopian history. Solomon (1993: 139) remarked "Ethiopian nationalism has a time-tested resiliency".

On the other hand, Ethiopian nationalism, in the eyes of the ethno-nationalists of the 1960s and 1970s, is construed as an "Amhara" imposition (Solomon, 1993; Almeseged, 2010). Thence, it is rooted in Amhara tradition and falls short of exhibiting the famously cited Conti-Rossini (1928) declaration "un museo di popoli" of Ethiopia. It would be fallacious, however, to acknowledge Conti-Rossini's assertion given the claim illustrates the "people" were on a secluded island or "museum" devoid of any interaction or contact. In this regard, Levin (2000: 21) eloquently argued that such a conception neglects the historical realities of what the various people in the current Ethiopia "have in common, the existence of discernible cultural areas, and the numerous relationships these groups have had with one another."

Since the 1960s, the hegemonic Ethiopian nationalism has faced challenges in propagating an ethno-linguistic nationalist tone that seeks outright secession and more autonomy or restructuring of the state (Solomon, 1993). The various political organizations established in the 1960s and 1970s with the intent of advancing as vanguards of certain ethnic groups' interests interpret the state and nation-building in Ethiopia differently. In this respect, Merara (2006) posits three theses promoted by such political organizations, i.e., national oppression, colonialism, and nation-building. The ascendance of Derg to power heralded a "tortuous period of revolutionary violence, political repression, chronic civil war, and ethnic fragmentation" (Levin, 2004: 5). On the positive side, the swift "land decree" of 1975 addressed the burning question of "land to the tiller". Like its predecessor, a grip on Ethiopian nationalism marked the regime's nation-building policy, albeit the Derg acknowledged the rights of nationalities (Markakis, 2011).

The coming of the TPLF/EPRDF to power and the ethnic federalism panacea were feared to descend the country into a political abyss. However, with all the disdain for "Ethiopianness", the

EPRDF regime has effectively utilized Ethiopian sentiment in assembling support for the Ethio-Eritrea war (1998–2000), the celebration of the Ethiopian Millennium, and the building of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) (Bach; 2013; Abdelhady et al., 2015). As Bach (2013) aptly put it: Pan-Ethiopia symbols, events, heroes, and images have been used in different ways depending on concrete political contexts in post-1991. However, the national oppression thesis received unresolved momentum to the point of defining the institutional blueprints of the ethnic-based federal arrangement (Tezera, 2021). The hegemonic national oppression discourse promulgated the "Amhara as oppressor" nation and was behind all the ailments of the Ethiopian polity. In the same vein, the Amhara are the "colonizers" and set off the state-making process (see Asafa, 2020; Addis Hiwot, 1975; Holcomb & Sisai, 1990). Merara (2008), through imagining a post-TPLF/EPRDF Ethiopia, argues that if history gave the Amhara the chance to lead the "making" of modern Ethiopia on unequal terms in the second half of the nineteenth century, the Oromo people now have a historic opportunity to lead the "remaking" of Ethiopia on equal terms in the twenty-first century.

The EPRDF's "accommodationist policy" was assembled from the primordial identities of the different nations, nationalities, and peoples (NNPs). Ethiopianness, as the late PM Meles said, is a right, not an obligation. However, there are established popular Ethiopian national symbols: Adwa, athletics, religion, culture, and GERD (Alemseged, 2004; Abdelhady et al., 2015). Such romantization of sports and historical symbols has currently faced challenges of a unifying role, except for external aggression and threats posed to the internal integrity of the state. This again shall be critically interrogated as to why the elite resort to Ethiopian nationalism in times of war and revert back to ethnic sentiment when they feel the political situation is at ease.

Over all, ethnic nationalist scholarly works dominated the nationalism scholarship. It is, thus, Ethiopianist nationalism construed as an anachronistic idea and deconstructed in every facet. Cultural elements have been given particular emphasis; acknowledgment of the prior autonomy of ethnic groups or nations; contestation on which ethnic group is indigenous to Ethiopia; and contested interpretations of history sum up the works on ethnic nationalism in Ethiopia. This begs the question: is it the lack of congruence between "state" and "nation" that cultivates the resurgence of ethnic nationalism in Ethiopia?

2.8.1 The construction of ethno-national identities and ethnic nationalism in Ethiopia

Ethiopia's boundaries have always been fluid, encompassing diverse peoples (or "ethnic groups") with dynamic territorial coverage. With the ushering in of a new historiography of Ethiopian history, these people began to be considered distinct "ethnic groups", "nations," or "ethno-nations" (Clapham, 2000; Yates, 2016). The rise of ethno-national groups in Ethiopian history has been attributed to four explanations. Nonetheless, the Semitic-Orientalist paradigm has contributed more to the discursive construction of ethnic groups in Ethiopia than the Marxist-Lennist paradigm, where the latter frequently refers back to the works of the former. An illustration here could be Crummey's (1980) ethnic interpretation of Ethiopia by asserting the Solomonic dynasty (1270–1974) was an Amhara dynasty and placing the Amhara as the dominant ethnic group in Ethiopia. Markakis (2011) echoes a similar sentiment throughout his work on Ethiopia.

First, the rise of ethno-national groups is traced back to the period of the coronation of Tewodros II (the earliest) (Teshale, 1995; Merera, 2003; Yonatan, 2017). The letter Tewodros II sent to Queen Victoria declaring the ousting and conclusion of the Yejju dynasty's (ethnically Oromo) dominance in his reign happened to justify the "ethnic factor" of politics in Ethiopian history (Merera, 2008: 116). This begs the question: can we claim there was an ethnic justification when Yekuno Amlak pronounced the Zagwe Dynasty usurpers of power? If affirmative, should the ethnic politics in Ethiopian history go back to the 13th century? Bahru (2002), however, refuted the claim that Tewodros II or other local warlords were fighting the Yejju dynasty out of self-interest and regional aggrandizement rather than for ethnic and religious reasons.

Second, Menilik's (later Emperor Menilik II) territorial "expansion" or "conquest" or "reunification" (Messay, 2015) to the south, west, and east of current Ethiopia is believed to be the benchmark for the conception of ethnic politics in Ethiopia. The incorporation of various diverse ethnic groups into the Ethiopian state in the late 19th century sparked a contested discourse, to use Merera's (2006) expression "nation-building, national oppression, and colonial theses". The historical discourse presumed the existence of prior "nation(s)". The ethnonational

political organizations established in the 1970s pronounced Menilik's expansion a colonial quest (see Asafa, 2020; Mohammed, 1990).

According to Aregawi (2008), the higher-ranking members of the front partially supported the "colonial thesis" in the early days of the TPLF. This has led to the publication of "Manifesto 68" in such a spirit, declaring Tigrayan independence as the ultimate goal of the armed struggle, albeit repudiated in the following years within the front and not publicly (see also Young, 1997). The death of Yohannes IV and the coronation of Menilik as emperor have been reckoned by the TPLF as usurpations of power from Tigray by Shoa-Amhara. This has fomented animosity among the Tigray Eiltes and Shoa since then (Young, 1997; Gebru, 2009). However, as Clapham (2002) pointed out, inciting ethnonational sentiment in the peasants of Tigray required time, other modus operandi, and suppression by the Dergue regime.

In addition, the OLF declares the Oromo question a colonial question or independence movement (OLF program, 1976, as cited in Assafa, 2020). The root of Oromo nationalism goes back to the 19th century, although the origin of the nationalist movement was conceived in the middle of the 20th century (Yates, 2016). Scholarly works on Oromo nationalism point out the existence of an independent "Oromo nation" before Menilik's subjugation. The phenomenon has been construed as "dependent colonialism", "settler colonialism", and "junior colonialism" (Holcomb and Ibsaa, 1989; Mohammed, 1990; Asafa, 2020). In the words of Mohammed (1990), Oromo nationalism emerged partly out of the struggle against Amhara domination and partly against Somali expansionism. However, unlike the TPLF and EPLF, the OLF failed to achieve the objective of creating an independent Oromia, but it has succeeded in mustering support from the intellectual and critical masses.

The imposition of Orthodox Christianity, the Amharic language, and the introduction of tenancy by "non-native" Amhara (Amharaziation) were the features of Ethiopia's colonialism (see Asafa, 2001; Mohammed, 1990; Mekuria, 1997). In contrast, Teshale (1995) asserted that Ethiopian history from the 16th century on is the history of relations between the Amhara and the Oromo. Hence, upholding the "colonial thesis" for the Oromos, Eritreans, or other ethnic groups in Ethiopia fails to meet the characteristics of either "internal colonialism" (Hechter, 1975) or the epithet "European colonialism" (see Messay, 2015). Clapham (2002: 45) argued that such

construction of ethno-nationalist history stems from the "pursuit of the intellectual and emotional basis for one political project or another."

Third, the rise of ethnicity in Ethiopian politics is attributed to the legacy of Italian colonial policy. The colonial policy targeted destroying the pillars of Ethiopian nationalism and fomenting communal hatreds by maliciously dividing the Ethiopian people in ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, and class terms. To be precise, to quell an organized resistance to the "civilizing mission", the administrative units during the Italian occupation were structured to amplify ethnic and "racial" differences. The Italian East Africa constituted, inter alia, Amhara, Oromo-Sidama, Shoa, and Eriteria (including Tigray) provinces that noticeably illustrated the Cushtic-Semitic dichotomy of the Ethiopian polity (Sbacchi, 1975; Tewodros, 2013).

The Italian "divide and rule" policy also intentionally favors one ethnic group over others. In doing so, the subtle incentives (such as armaments) were in order for one ethnic group or religion to turn against another: Oromo and Amhara; Christians and Muslims (see also Teshome, 1980; Belete, 2008). For Tewodros (2013), the legacy of Italian colonial policy has continued to pose a challenge to Ethiopian statehood. The post-1941 political developments such as the Woyane, Gojjam, and Bale uprisings, the 1960 coup, and the ESM partly fetched their attributes from the central dissension from the Italian anti-Shoa (Amhara) policy and condescension to the monarch (see Gebru, 1984).

Four "nations" ostensibly received a wider political currency coterminous with the radicalization of the ESM and the proliferation of ethnic nationalist fronts. The anti-colonial struggle, the influence of Marxism as liberation ideology, the worldwide student revolutionary movement, the 1960s abortive coup, government repression, etc. are reckoned as the underlining factors in the radicalization of the ESM (Andargachew, 1993; Messay, 2008; Bahru, 2014). The paradigm shift from internationalism and waging a working-class revolution to the national question dramatically changed the face of the political dispensation. Bahru (2014) argues that the break-up of the multi-national group in 1976 heralded the onset of the ethno-national movements.

The publication of "On the Question of Nationalities" in 1969 by Walleign Mekonnen raised the sacred subject of "ethnicity" to the forefront of the ESM. Ethiopia has been defined as a multi-

nation state in the shadow of Amhara-Tigray cultural dominance. Thence, the EPRDF and its allies later construed pre-1990s Ethiopia as "the prison of nationalities".

In contrast to Walleign's contemporary Tumtu (1971: 6-7), with a similar Stalinist stance asserted, it is logically inconsistent to accept the presence of, for example, the "Oromo nation" in the absence of capitalism. This conception is not without defects. The mere assumption of economic factors to justify the rise of nations oversimplifies the discursive, cultural, and political elements. From a different perspective, Yates (2017) also doubts the purpose of employing "a static ethnic lens" to decipher Ethiopian reality, as it "distorts" and "suppresses" shared historic experiences at the local level.

The ethnic nationalist movements, the by-products of the students' activism, claimed the unqualified rights of self-determination up to and including secession (Asnake, 2013). To achieve this objective, rural-based armed insurrection has been considered a viable option. However, the armed struggle resort of, for instance, EPLF, TPLF, OLF, EPRP, and others further complicated and politicized the "nationalities question". First, their nomenclature presupposes the acknowledgment of the substantive reality of a "nation" to represent as a vanguard. Second, it steered the invention of discourses of hatred, sentiments of oppression, and enmity as a tool to mobilize their ethnic group. At this juncture, the politicization of ethnicity in Ethiopian history has been effectively carried out during the period of the struggle. As Gellner (1991) rightly put it, nationalism invents nations where they do not exist.

In post-1991 Ethiopia, two crucial developments could be underscored in terms of the rise of ethnic sentiments. First, the restructuring of the state in line with an ethno-linguistic approach fostered and formally endorsed the emergence of ethnic-based political organizations (Abbink, 2011). This has not always been true for all NNPs. Second, ethnic solidarity emerged to challenge the alleged domination of the Tigrian group. The misleading assumption of "primordial" elements in the rise of ethno-national movements oversimplifies the problem (Berhanu, 2008). Given that the ethno-national movements are after "fair share or full control of state power" and to ensure the right to self-determination (Aregawi, 2008: 19).

2.8.2. Amhara nationalism

The subject of Amhara nationalism has not received much scholarly attention thus far. The rationales could be twofold: first, the center of nationalism scholarship in Ethiopia is the Amhara, the "villain" in the political conundrum. Second, the intellectuals consider studying and promoting the Amhara nationalist movement a perversion of Ethiopianness. However, broadly, research on Amhara identity and nationalism could be categorized into three categories. The first category may consist of Levine's (1965) sociological work on the culture of the Amhara, particularly Gondar and Shoa. The second category covers works on Amhara identity and nationalist sentiment from 1991 to the early 2010s. In this category, attempts have been made by the likes of Admassu (2010), Tegegne (1998), Michael (2008), and Pausewang (2005) to understand the elements of the Amhara identity and post-1991 political development in the invention of Amharaness. The third category is an emerging publication on the recent rise of Amhara nationalism, such as Tezera (2021); Bantayehu and Ishiyama (2021); Yilkal (2021); Jenber and Yan (2021); and Solomon (2022).

These scholarly works accentuated two important topics, i.e., Amhara identity and Amhara nationalism or ethnicity. The question of Amhara identity is a highly contested topic. However, the Amhara are reckoned to represent an ethnic group, a status group, a province, a religion, and an ethnic melting pot (Tegegne, 1998; Michael, 2008; Pausewang, 2005; Tackle, 1994; Admasu, 2010). Admassu (2010), for instance, argued that the essence of Amharaness is contingent upon the socio-political and historical changes in post-1991 Ethiopia; otherwise, Amharaness would have remained a status indicator. In the north-south relation, Amharaness constituted extra-linguistic-cum-religious status open for everyone to blend in on the precedence of speaking Amharic and adopting Orthodox Christianity (see also Tackle, 1994; Pausewang, 2005). Moreover, Michael (2008) remarked that a person by birth could be Amhara but may not subscribe to the Amhara identity or nationalist consciousness. This is a highly flawed argument for two reasons. First, applying the primordial argument without transcending common sense further complicates the identity question per se. Second, unlike other ethnic groups, the Amhara do not claim to have a common ancestor (see Levin, 2000).

Therefore, the elements of Amhara identity, except for the Amharic language, have not been clearly articulated. The consensus among the scholars is that the Amhara ethnicity surfaced in Ethiopian body politics in the aftermath of the 1991 regime change. In this regard, Levin (2000) and Taddese (1988) are exceptions for their pronouncements that the Amhara identity existed for millennia. In response, Admasu (2010: 80) posed a critical question: "Does it mean Amharic speakers since then are ipso facto ethnic Amhara?"

On the emergence of Amhara nationalism, Admassu (2010) argued it is an offshoot of the interplay of "ethnic othering", the unimagined Amhara state, and resistive Amhara nationalism. In the same vein, Tegegne (1998) pointed out that Amhara nationalism and ethnicity are the makings of post-1991 state policy and the threats posed by other groups. The two reasons unfortunately fall short of a detailed explanation as to how they eventually led to the emergence of the nationalist movement. The author (Tegegne, 1998) criticizes the mobilization of the Amhara in ethnic terms due to fear of the ramifications it may cause in the post-EPRDF era.

In contrast, the essence of Amharaness has been widely construed as the derivation of Ethiopian nationalism. In this regard, Yates (2017: 108) eloquently asserted that it is difficult to differentiate between those of Amhara descent and those who follow Amhara culture due to the culture's close relationship with the state and its widespread presence throughout Ethiopia. In addition, the emphasis of academics has traditionally been directed on the process of assimilation into a fixed Amhara culture, rather than the many ways in which other cultures have influenced "Amhara" culture.

The discourse of the ESM and the ethnic nationalist movements heavily emphasizes this idea. Some, like Pausewang (2005), go to the point of asserting Amhara nationalism is consciously veiled in pan-Ethiopianism to mobilize people for causes like the issue of access to the sea following the secession of Eritrea.

Generally, Amhara identity and nationalism, unlike the Tigray and Oromo cases, have not attracted scholarly attention for different reasons. The few research works undertaken so far commonly share the following: lack of conceptual sophistication, grounded on elitist perspectives (study from above), disregarding the wishes and longings of the people (Hobsbawm, 1991); post-1991 as a critical period in the making of nationalism; in their missing

the point fallacy, some of the works conclude by stating how destitute the Ethiopian people are; and the need to transcend ethnic politics. Sadly, as Smith (1993) rightly put it, once ethnic politics are instituted, they will never go away easily (see also Clapham, 2017).

The above-mentioned research works, with all its deficiencies, has contributed to shedding light on the nature of Amhara identity, the underlying causes, and the comparison made between Ethiopian and Amhara nationalism. In terms of the recent development of Amhara nationalism, the focus has been tremendously on the ethnic-based federal state and the discontents as the primary focus to explain the upsurge of Amhara nationalism (Bantayehu and Ishiyama, 2021; Yilkal, 2021; Jenber and Yan, 2021; Solomon, 2022). Tezera (2021) also made the assumption that Amhara nationalism was a remnant of the ancient regime or empire, striking back at the existing anti-Amhara discourses. Indeed, these research works are opening up and contributing to the study of Amhara nationalism. However, a lot remains to be explained and comprehended in terms of exploring the Amharaness identity, the discourse and counter-discourse of Amhara nationalism, the societal security perspectives in hastening Amhara mobilization, and the implications of Amhara nationalism in Ethiopia.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.1. Introduction

The previous chapter presented the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that informed the study. The study employed an eclectic approach by drawing theoretical underpinnings from discursive formations, hegemony, and the Copenhagen School of Security. This chapter delves into the philosophical considerations and methodological approaches of the dissertation. A thorough discussion of how the dissertation went about exploring the origin and dynamics of Amhara nationalism in Ethiopia, 1991–2020, is presented in this chapter. In addition, the rationales for the methodological and philosophical assumptions are fleshed out in this chapter.

In doing so, the chapter begins by presenting the philosophical assumptions of the research and proceeds to the research approach, data generation, sampling, data analysis, and methodological limitations of the dissertation.

3.2 Research Philosophy

A research philosophy is an overarching concept that percolates specific assumptions on the nature of reality (ontological assumption), how we can know and what we can know (epistemological assumption), the *modus operandi* of acquiring knowledge (methodological assumption), and the position of the values and prior experience of the researcher (axiological assumption) (Kuhn, 1970; Coyle, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Indeed, the assumptions, positions, or paradigms are competing and contradictory in nature, with some degree of emerging confluence. These major paradigms can be broadly categorized as positivism, post-positivism, constructivism, and critical theory (Crotty, 1998; Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2018).

In this dissertation, a constructivist paradigm has been adopted. There is an ever-increasing acceptance in the field of peace and security studies, particularly at Addis Ababa University, of adopting a constructivist worldview towards researching peace, conflict, and security problems in Ethiopia and beyond (Fana, 2016; Amare, 2021; Messay, 2022). The paradigm provides room to challenge the widely held objectivist and unbiased observation of the world by accenting the notion of relativism and focusing on individual interactions and the overall context in which they happen (Burr, 2015). For Crotty (1998: 53), this paradigm emphasizes that;

All knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of an interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context.

To be more precise, in terms of ontology, social reality—in this research case, Amhara nationalism—is socially constructed, multiple, defined, and created by and within a specific period of history and context (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Amhara identity and nationalism as social realities should also be construed in an ontological framework that endorses multiplicity and subjectivity. Asking the dubious question of the existence of the Amhara identity group falls into the trap of the objectivist tradition that presupposes the existence of an independent, discoverable reality or entity called Amhara. The notion of nationalism also accounts for the co-generation of sentiment, ideology, or movement through making sense of the responses of individuals and locating their responses in a certain politico-historical context. Indeed, the transactional subjectivism epistemic assumption to which constructivism subscribes helps to capture the holistic essence of Amhara identity and the rise and development of the ethnic nationalist movement. As a result of the ontological presupposition of relativism and the epistemological presupposition of transactional subjectivism, the researcher's voice is a "passionate participant as facilitator of multi-voice reconstruction" during the data generation stage and when presenting the findings (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2018: 166).

The constructivist paradigm represents a shift from the focus on explaining phenomena typical in the natural sciences to an emphasis on empathic understanding, which is deemed more appropriate for investigating phenomena in the human sciences (Berger & Luckmann, 1991; Creswell, 2009). Informed by the constructivist paradigm, this dissertation explored the way the research participants construct, reconstruct, and construe why and how Amhara identity and Amhara nationalism arise in light of, to use McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly's (2004: 227) expressions, various "structural factors, institutional constraints, cultural constants, and how they emerge from cascades of contentions." The dissertation, henceforth, sees Amhara nationalism as meaning different things to different individuals—in a way, a subjective reality—and understanding this social reality requires immersion and co-generating data—in a way, engaging in the construction of the reality itself. The purpose here is to analyze these multiple realities through multiple quotes using the actual words of the research informants and presenting their different perspectives and attempts to make sense of the participant's efforts to make sense of

Amhara nationalism. To understand or know what the informants know, a considerable amount of time was spent in field research. This indeed allowed a close interaction, which in turn created an opportunity to understand what the participants were saying (Maxwell, 2012).

3.3. Qualitative Approach

Provided that a constructivism approach has been adopted in this dissertation, an appropriate methodological approach must probe into the thoughts and meaning-making processes of the various individuals involved in social reality. It is, therefore, essential to reveal the constructions held by various individuals, and the constructed meanings must also be challenged, compared, and contrasted (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). A qualitative research approach best fits the task at this point. The basic premise of most qualitative approaches is that knowledge and the processes of generation are context-dependent and that there is no such thing as an objective reality. Here, multiple perspectives of individuals, including the researchers' and their embedded ideologies, beliefs, and positions, influence the construction of meanings (Flick, 2009; Creswell, 2015; Burr, 2015).

A constructivist worldview informed the adoption of qualitative research. The rationale is that qualitative research allows for the study of the meaning of people's lives, represents the views or perspectives of participants, and strives to use multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2011). Moreover, according to Creswell (2014), qualitative research provides an interpretive and holistic understanding of the issue under study. In doing so, it facilitates the researcher's engagement with informants to understand and report their multiple experiences. This fits the purposes of the proposed research questions, which explore the origin and dynamics of Amhara nationalism in Ethiopia (1991–2020). Overall, provided qualitative research presupposes a discovery-oriented approach instead of proving a certain given hypothesis (Blaikie, 2010), this dissertation has been directed by an emergent design within the data.

3.3.1. Case Study

From the arsenal of qualitative approaches, a case study design has been considered appropriate. A qualitative case study helps to explain Amhara nationalism as a specific and bounded case. For Schwandt and Gates (2018: 600), "in the simplest sense, a case is an instance, incident, or unit of

something and can be anything—a person, an organization, an event, a decision, an action, a location like a neighborhood, or a nation-state." According to Stake (1995: xi), "a case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances." To make an exploration of a bounded system or a case like Amhara nationalism over time through detailed and in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information, a case study approach is appropriate (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003; Creswell, 2005). As Yin (2003) pointed out, a case study is also appropriate to understand complex incidents and allows for attaining the holistic meaning and characteristics of real-life events.

From the list of case study types, an intrinsic case study has been adopted in this dissertation. The major reason here is, to quote Stake (1995: 3) "We are interested in it [the case], not because by studying it we learn about other cases or about some general problem, but because we need to learn about that particular case". Therefore, to make a detailed portrayal of Amhara nationalism in terms of its rise, trajectories, and dynamics, which have their own distinct features from other ethnic nationalist movements in Ethiopia, and where there is a dearth of studies on the case or phenomenon, a qualitative case study is deemed appropriate. Further, to comprehend how informants explain and interpret the rise of Amhara nationalism and convey the overall essence of their perspectives and experiences, the qualitative case study approach helps by providing flexibility, generating in-depth data, and positioning the researcher's approach from the bottom-up and top-down (Stake, 2014).

3.4. Sampling Methods

The focus of this inquiry is Amhara nationalism. It is the most convenient or accessible setting for exploring my research topic, i.e., ethnic nationalism. The ethnic nationalism of the Amhara is an unexplored research area with "unique" attributes in the sense of Stake's (1995) usage of the term. Hence, to get a better understanding of Amhara nationalism, four major towns of the Amhara regional state, namely Gondar, Bahirdar, Woldiya, and Debre Berhane, were purposefully selected. These towns have been serving as the centers of the nationalist movement and represent or constitute the geographical clusters of the regional state. Furthermore, these towns are selected since they allow for examining how the ethno-national group interacts and

perceives changes. And, given that some aspects of the group's life are interconnected and often one of them cannot be adequately understood without considering the other (Berg, 2007),

The rise of Amhara nationalism in Ethiopia is a recent phenomenon. Indeed, it is a new addition to the existing competing ethnic nationalist movements in Ethiopia. To capture the complexity, embeddedness, and context of the case, the time frame of the inquiry was delimited from 1991 to 2020 for three reasons. First, with the introduction of ethnic federalism, post-1991 Ethiopia facilitated conducive settings for the proliferation of ethnic nationalism. The establishment of AAPPO as an ethnic Amhara political organization and the notion of ethnic mobilization began in 1991. Second, since 2010, another round of ethno-national mobilization of the Amhara has commenced overseas, still having links at home in the digital space, subsequently leading to the outbreak of the 2016 Amhara resistance or protest. Third, the upper limit, 2020—particularly November 4, the outbreak of the war in the North—is basically that Amhara nationalism took another trajectory, which requires a separate research undertaking. However, due attention will be given to the historical processes by which things came to be as they are and the current status of the ethnic nationalist movement. This dissertation will go back to the rise of the radical nationalist movements, which were by-products of ESM in the 1970s, to analyze the historical antecedents and other structural factors embedded in the development of the nationalist movement.

Moreover, the informants for the study were purposefully selected. Amhara-based political parties, "identity restoration" committees (Welkaite, Raya, Metekel, and Dera), activists, the Amhara Scholars Council (ASC), Amhara Youth Association (AYA), and Amhara Students' Union (ASU), the diaspora, elders, and relevant government offices (such as the House of Federation) were included in the sample. The sample was selected for both focus group discussion (FGD) and interview, taking into account, firstly, their engagement in the everyday (re)production of the Amhara nationalist movement. Secondly, investigate the relevance of government institutions in explaining the case. Thirdly, interrogate the age and discrepancy of perception towards the Amhara nationalist movement. Furthermore, to capture the perspectives and views of the Amhara who live in other regional states, individuals and IDPs were purposefully selected from Oromia, Benishangul-Gumuz, and SNNPs. This, indeed, allowed the researcher to grasp the discourse or narratives of Amhara nationalism outside of the Amhara

regional state. Now, having offered a justifications for the sampling, the next part turns to the question of how to generate the data in order to answer the research questions.

3.5. Data Collection

The data collection effort in qualitative research is naturally extensive, drawing on manifold sources of information, such as interviews, documents, and audiovisual materials (Creswell, 2009). This dissertation relied on interviews, focus group discussions, and documents as tools to collect the required data to sufficiently answer the research questions. The data generation was conducted between March 2020 and September 2022. The researcher had to be innovative and flexible in the generation of data due to the unprecedented outbreak of the Corona virus pandemic and the war in the North.

3.5.1. Interview

Silverman (2016) notes that interviewing is a popular means of generating empirical data about the social world and knowledge-producing practices across the social scientific disciplines. Becker (1970) further argues that interviews enable us to generate "rich" data—data that is detailed and varied enough to provide a full and revealing picture of what is going on. In a nutshell, the purpose of an interview in research for Kvale (2007) is to obtain accounts of the life experience of the interviewee with regard to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomenon or case. The interviewees for Yin (2003) also supply insights into a matter, recommend sources of corroboratory/contrary evidence, and initiate access to such sources.

Hence, a face-to-face, telephone, email, and online (via Zoom and other modalities) semi-structured interview was conducted to generate detailed data on the rise, trajectories, or dynamics of Amhara nationalism. Due to the COVID-19 protocol, the researcher used other modalities in addition to face-to-face interviews. The semi-structured interview has left room for the respondent's more spontaneous description and provided the opportunity for probing based on the responses (Kvale, 2007). The interviewees were Amhara-based political party members, prominent activists and figures in the diaspora, "identity restoration" committees (Welkaite, Raya, and Dera), activists, ASC, AYA, internally displaced persons (IDPs, camps in Bahirdar and Debre Berhan), and ASU, government officials (from the House of Peoples' Representatives

and House of Federation), and community elders. Undertaking interviews with these people has created the opportunity to gain convenient data-based insights that serve the purpose of qualifying, contrasting, validating, or confirming the meanings of their experiences in the light of theoretical and conceptual analyses.

A total of sixty-eight interviews were conducted in Gondar, Bahir Dar, Woldiya, Debre Berhan, Addis Ababa, and Washington, D.C. area. The researcher has also, with the consent of the interviewee, been able to audiotape some interviews. The interview generally lasted between 1 and 3 hours. The variation in interview duration was attributed, among other things, to the number of guiding questions, as certain interviews were specifically designed to elicit specific information, and the extended interviews were conducted with informants who provided so much information on the research issues.

3.5.2 Focus Group Discussion

Focus group discussion (FGD) is viewed as the use of group interaction to produce qualitative data (Morgan, 2012). It is valuable in providing data on what the participants think and also explicit insights into why they think the way they do (Morgan, 1997). Through creating conducive settings, FGD can unravel diverse perceptions, judgments, and experiences on a particular topic (Lindlof, 1995). Furthermore, the setting allows participants to challenge each other and seek clarification on contentious issues, potentially revealing the sources of complex behaviors and motivations (Morgan & Krueger, 1993).

Five FGDs comprising 8–10 persons were conducted with purposefully selected informants from Gondar, Bahirdar, Woldiya, and Debre Berhan. To be precise, two FGDs consisting of ten discussants each in Gondar, two FGDs consisting of eight participants each in Bahir Dar, and ten in Debre Berhan were undertaken. All FGDs were conducted after the COVID-19 restrictions started to loosen. However, with the outbreak of the war in the North coupled with COVID-19 restrictions, undertaking FGDs in Woldiya was not successful. To fill this data gap created by FGD, more interviews were conducted in Woldiya.

The FGD consisted of heterogeneous informants from all age groups with different political opinions on Amhara nationalism. As Flick (2009) suggests, heterogeneous groups in FGD augment the dynamics of the discussion and facilitate the expression of diverse perspectives. The

role of the researcher during the FGD was to monitor the agenda of the speakers, introduce new questions, and steer the discussion toward a deepening and extension of specific topics and parts. With the help of a research assistant, the FGD successfully elicited the views and thoughts of discussants on how they explain Amhara identity, the rise of Amhara nationalism, and the trajectories of the Amhara nationalist movement. The primary data collection overall provided both broad-spectrum information and an in-depth co-generation of data.

3.5.3 Observations

For Marshall and Rossman (1989: 79), "observation is the systematic description of the events, behaviors, and artifacts of a social setting." Observation as a data collection tool is carried out directly by participating in the event or social setting happening in its naturalistic setting or indirectly as a non-participant observer (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011; Ciesielska, Boström, & hlander, 2018). In the context of this dissertation, the researcher participated in various consultative conferences, discussions, and demonstrations. To mention; the researcher made a participant observation in a conference organized by Amhara Scholars Council in Bahirdar between September 20-21, 2019; a consultative discussion with delegates of Amhara Region led by the late President Ambachew Mekonnen at Africa Union Hall on May 12, 2019, Addis Ababa, and various public discussions held in Gondar Meskel Square, peaceful demonstrations in Gondar, and participated in workshops on "Remembrance, Ethiopian/ethno-nationalism" held on December 24, 2021, Addis Ababa

The observation has created the opportunity to capture multiplicity of descriptions, analysis and solutions on the notion of Amhara identity, the question of Amhara nationalism, and the way forward to deal with such questions. Further, some of the meetings brought together individuals from the top tiers of regional and federal government to scholars' to students and youth associations, this indeed facilitated inclusion of different voices in the dissertation. To be precise, the researcher has also observed in the peaceful demonstration a large number of protestors from all age groups and genders and different slogans such as "Amharaness or death", "Welkait is Amhara", "Glory to Amharaness", "Restore the historic border", "Stop mass killing of Amhara", and others.

3.5.4 Documents

For Stake (1995) and Yin (2003), the collection of documents is crucial in rigorous studies aimed at producing a rich portrayal of a single phenomenon, event, organization, or program. They provide background and context, additional questions to be asked, supplementary data, a means of tracking change and development, and verification of findings. Accordingly, the proposed inquiry drew on relevant documents such as reports, journals, periodicals, public discussion documentaries from the mass media, travelers accounts, and other published and unpublished materials. The documents were selected considering Scott's (2014) criteria of authenticity, credibility, representativeness, and meaning. To be precise, the secondary sources could be classified into eight categories:

First, diaspora-based Ethiopian news agencies and opinion journals: The resources that fall under this category include Ethiopian Review, Welkait, and Amhara Satellite Television and Radio Media House (ASRAT). The data extracted from these resources includes op-eds on Amhara identity, causes of Amhara nationalism, interviews, and discussions on Ethiopian politics relevant to the study from 1991 to 2020. With the freedom of speech they enjoyed and the hatred the Diaspora developed towards the TPLF/EPRDF, to avoid carrying away with emotional and judgmental statements, the researcher attempted to counterbalance by bringing in differing voices into the analysis.

Second, Ethiopia-based television broadcasts, magazines, and newspapers, including online resources: The resources that fall under this category include the Ethiopian Reporter, Borkena, Addis Standard, Barara, Addis Zemen, Yezaritu Ethiopia magazine, and African Renaissance Television Services (Arts TV).

Third, Ethiopia-based public news agencies and magazines such as Ethiopia Broadcasting Corporation, Amhara Mass Media Agency, and Ethiopia Satellite Television were consulted. Here, relevant interviews, news stories, and discussions have been gathered and reviewed.

Fourth, human rights reports from 1992 to 2020 were also extracted from both international and national human rights agencies such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), and the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO).

Fifth, international magazines and news agencies such as the BBC, Washington Post, and Al Jazeera's worthy news and articles were analyzed vis-à-vis the primary data. The contents of these sources were purposefully selected for the period of 2010 to 2020.

Sixth, the FDRE Constitution and regional state constitutions of Amhara, Oromia, Benishangul-Gumuz, Harari, and Afar were referred to and cited to provide explanations and claims made in the analysis. Here, FDRE Constitutional Making Minutes were also specifically given due attention to discern the narratives and discourses in the early years of the ethnic-based federal era about the identity, territory, and overall perception of the Amhara by the participants of the Peace and Democracy Conference.

Seventh, the programs of Amhara-based political parties and other political parties such as OLF and TPLF and ESM magazines such as Struggle, Challenge, and Democratia were also consulted to address the widely held position towards the national oppression thesis. Moreover, EPRDF's yearly magazine, New Horizon (Addis Rai'ye), and the Amhara National Democratic Movement political program have been analyzed to make sense of the ascription towards the Amhara ethno-national group.

Eighth, to show the population dynamics of the Amhara across the last three consecutive national censuses, the Ethiopia Central Statistics Agency (CSA) reports have been consulted. Here, the researcher has refrained from making complex statistical computations to examine the "population decline" claims of the Amhara nationalists out of a skill gap, and doing so also does not provide new findings for this dissertation.

3.6 Data Analysis

For Strauss (1987: 10), the basic question in qualitative data analysis is "how to capture the complexity of reality (phenomena) we study and how to make convincing sense of it." Similarly, Yin (2011) argues that a case study approach requires a detailed understanding of the essence of the case by breaking down the generated data into vital statements that intermingle into themes. In order to reveal the astounding complexity of what lies in, behind, and beyond qualitative data, Strauss (1987) advises doing a comprehensive, conceptually dense, intense, microscopic investigation of the data. The researcher successfully generated a significant amount of data via interviews, participant observation, FGDs, and secondary sources. To make a clear sense of

Amhara nationalism as a bounded and defined case, both thematic and discourse analysis have been adopted. The overall analysis was informed by theories of discursive formations, reverse discourse, and societal security.

3.6.1. Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is a tool for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is also defined as a procedure for encoding qualitative data by breaking it down into codes, themes, indicators, and qualifications and attentively examining patterns of convergence and divergence (Boyatzis, 1998). As a widely used analytical method, one can easily see disparities in the procedures of thematic analysis. For the purpose of this dissertation, Braun and Clarke's (2006: 87) suggestions for thematic analysis have been adopted. Thus, the generated interviews, FGD, and documentaries were first read and re-read to obtain a general sense of the whole content. Secondly, coding at the semantic or latent level of meaning was done. The coding attempted to mirror the language of the participants and/or the conceptual framework. Thirdly, meanings were formulated from statements by reviewing the coded data to identify areas of similarity and overlap between codes. Fourthly, themes were reviewed with the coded data and the entire data set to find potential themes. The themes were both inductively generated from the data and deductively from the theoretical frameworks that informed the study. Fifthly, the formulated meanings were sorted into categories, clusters of themes, and themes. At this stage, a combination of descriptive and conceptual-interpretive analyses has been undertaken. The interpretation of the data was organized within a larger, overarching conceptual framework. Finally, producing the report The findings of the study were integrated into the exhaustive description of the problem, the existing literature, and the overarching theoretical framework.

As to why thematic analysis is deemed appropriate, the rationales include the analytical approach provides the researcher to engage with theory which ipso facto strengthens the theoretical depth of the overall data analysis. It allows researchers, observers, or practitioners to utilize a wide range of information in a methodical way to improve their understanding and sensitivity when observing people, events, situations, and organizations such as Amhara identity and nationalism. It permits the researcher to engage with theory a priori. Thematic analysis is also consistent with

constructivist perspectives; thematic analysis is a versatile methodological tool (Boyatzis, 1998; Roulston, 2001). However, "thematic analysis has limited interpretative power beyond mere description if it is not used within an existing theoretical framework that anchors the analytic claims that are made" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 97). To fill the gap where thematic analysis falls short in discerning the discursive field of the data analysis, a discourse analysis has been adopted.

3.6.2. Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis (DA) could be best described as a set of interrelated strategies for investigating language usage and its function in social life that emerged from various epistemologies and fields (Gill, 2000; Lisa, 2011). Given the varieties of discourse analysis, for the purpose of this dissertation, much emphasis has been given to looking at discourses historically and the functional or action orientations of discourses—a Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis. Therefore, discourse here is understood as:

a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation; it does not form a rhetorical or formal unity, endlessly repeatable, whose appearance or use in history might be indicated... Discourse is not an ideal, timeless form that also possesses a history; it is, from beginning to end, historical—a fragment of history, a unity and discontinuity in history itself, posing the problem of its own limits, its divisions, its transformations, and the specific modes of its temporality rather than its sudden irruption in the midst of the complexities of time. (Foucault, 1972: 117)

According to Coyle (2007), the aim of the discourse analyst is to investigate how social actors discursively build reality and the roles that these constructs might serve in certain social, cultural, and historical contexts. Discourse analysis has been used to analyze existing dominant political discourses in Ethiopia, particularly those that have received resonance since the second half of the 20th century and particular speeches and texts.

The overall discourses the dissertation emphasized include national oppression discourse, victimhood discourse, and a counter-discourse from Amhara nationalists. These discourses are drawn from primary data and texts such as Walleign (1969), TPLF (1975), the Federal Government of Ethiopia Constitution (1995), and the Amhara Regional State Constitution (2001), as well as speeches and addresses by political officials such as Asaminew Tsige and political party programs such as NaMA (2018). The analysis is not interested in the structure of

the texts but in how the discourse shaped policies to offer blame, make excuses, and present themselves in a positive light (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1997; Gee, 2011). Since discourse plays an active role in creating and changing the social world, the analysis has sought to explain the construction of Amhara identity and how discourses shaped the claims and modalities of operation of the Amhara nationalist movement.

3.6. Strategies to attain the trustworthiness of findings

To ensure the credibility and dependability of this dissertation, the researcher used the following strategies: triangulation, member-checking, structural corroboration, and peer-briefing. One, triangulation of theories, data sources, and methods were used. The theoretical frameworks adopted in this research context are assumed to provide a different lens to delve into the empirical research questions. Data was generated from multiple sources from experienced political officials, scholars, activists, elders, students, etc. The manifold perspectives and insights of the informants was crucial to make sure of the various voices are represented. In terms of methods, the triangulation of different data collection instruments such as interviews, FGD, and documents also ensured the trustworthiness of the research. Data generated from multiple sources through different tools has corroborated to make a thick description of the findings (Blaikie, 1991; Flick, 2004; Maxwell, 2012).

3.7. Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues are "concerns, dilemmas, and conflicts that arise over the proper way to conduct research" (Neuman, 2014: 145). To ensure informants the inquiry is an academic inquiry, the researcher presented a letter of support from the Institute of Peace and Security Studies, Addis Ababa University. Before and during the interview and FGD, the researcher clearly stated the nature of the study will not pose any risk or damage of any kind (psychological, physical, social) upon the research informants. They were also informed that they are free to refuse to give a response or to terminate the interview or the FGD at any point (Lune & Berg, 2017). Thus, the researcher assured that informants response is voluntary and their responses will be anonymized.

What is more, the researcher has also assured FGD participants orally that their personal information will be kept confidential and hence their identity will remain anonymous. All

respondents were also informed that they have the right to access the results of the research. Given the sensitivity of the research topic and responses, the researcher has anonymized the names of the informants to avoid any future risks. Finally, in the writing of the dissertation and the publications, the researcher attempted to report multiple perspectives and contrary findings honestly using unbiased language. And, the researcher has acknowledged the works of other researchers used in the research.

Chapter Four: A discursive construction of Amhara identity

4.1. Introduction

The previous chapter presented the methodological approach to the inquiry. In this empirical chapter, the dissertation addresses the first research question on the construction of Amhara identity or Amharaness. The Chapter proceeds by presenting the multiple conceptualizations or understandings of and being Amhara in Ethiopia through the years to the point of the recent sentiment of “nationness”. The Chapter agrees with Yates (2020) proposition on the relevance of religion, territory, and culture over ethnic categories for much of the Ethiopian history. For millennium intermarriage, migration, and cultural exchanges had shaped identity formation in Ethiopia (see also Bahru, 2022). However, a search of the earliest records of ethnic history and the golden age that define the essence of the identity of various groups in Ethiopia had been commenced since the 1960s.

At the center of such political identities rests the role of Oriental-Semitic Ethiopian Scholarship, ESM activism, *Derg*’s initial recognition and later sedimentation into institutional form in post-1991 Ethiopia. However, to reiterate what the researcher adopted as analytical anchor, these political identities are not invented by these groups. The ethnic discourses are pivotal as a historical juncture in defining the dynamics of ethno-national identities in Ethiopia.

Notwithstanding the categorization of the Amhara as a national group, the question of “who is Amhara?” has never been categorically addressed in the literature. Undeniably, multiple identities are attributed to “Amhara”, i.e., “Watadar”, toponym, “Christian”, “highlander”, ethnonym and others. Above all, a fuzzy boundary of Amharaness and Ethiopianess characterize the nationalism discourse in Ethiopia. This chapter address the Amhara identity formation in light of the historical dynamics and the institutional frameworks that shaped its construction in post-1991 Ethiopia.

4.2 The notion of Amhara identity

The idea of and being Amhara is a highly contested topic in the political and historical literature of Ethiopia. Scholars in the field of social sciences often refer to and use the word “Amhara” for manifold purposes, although it has continued to be vague and ambiguous in the “political

lexicon” to use Tilly’s (1975) phrase. It has been imagined as a “province” (Levin, 1974), a “social status” (Chernetsov, 1993; Admasu, 2010), “a metaphor for power” (Teshale, 1995), plowman (Hudson and Tekeste, 1987), a “Christian” (Mesfin, 2012), “a supra ethnically conscious ethnic Ethiopian” (Getachew, 1992; 2019; Takkle, 1994) and an “ethnic group” (Prochaska, 1936; Hoben, 1973). The last (ethnic) category has received undisputed hegemony from the ethnic nationalists side – TPLF, OLF, and others– in the second half of the 20th Century.

The intent, here, is not to uncritically acknowledge and fall into the trap of accepting the "Amhara" as an ethnic or nation category. The reverse argument also holds true. As Brubaker and Cooper (2005: 5) succinctly put it, “we should avoid intentionally reproducing or reinforcing such [national identity] reification by uncritically adopting categories of practice as categories of analysis”. Since the time of the ESM, the reification of “nations” or “nationalities” in Ethiopia prominently surged the political terrain. To be precise, Walleign’s (1969) article opened the Pandora Box that has been reluctantly and implicitly discussed in the circle of students of his time. Alem (2015) extends and situates the discussion of the problem of regionalism (an alternative glossary to nationalities) to the Philadelphia 1969 congress of Ethiopia Students Union in North America (ESUNA), three months earlier to the publication of Walleign’s 1969 article. With the proliferation of ethnic nationalist movements, a growing obsession with stretching the historicity of the nation to the earliest time possible becomes the norm. In this sense, with the rise of Amhara nationalism, the notion of Amharaness has occupied the center stage of Amhara politics, from revisiting the existing representation of the Amhara to historicizing and searching for a genealogy.

4.2.1 Searching for the genealogy and homeland

Scholars who have written on Amhara identity generally believe that the origin or ancestor of the Amhara is unknown and highly contested (Clapham, 1989; Levine, 2000; Taddesse, 1972; Tegegne, 1998). For Taddesse (1972) although there is an absence of traditional material to prove the specific dates of the origin of Amhara, they are believed to live before the adoption of Christianity in the Aksumite civilization. Tegegne (1998) goes to the point of concluding the Amhara do not belong to an ethnic group. The rationales include lack of objective ethnic markers except the Amharic language (common ancestry, territory, religion and shared experience);

mutual interests or shared understandings. However, Tegegne (1998) failed to provide an alternative category to the Amhara.

In contrast, scholars such as Aleqa Taye (1921), Cheeseman (1936), Trimingham (2013), Ullendrof (1965), Desta (1970), Misganaw (2018), Tedla (2018) and others have attempted to shed light on the origin and ancestor of the Amhara people. For Aleqa Taye (1921) the Amhara are the son of *Yoktan*¹¹ and grandson of Shem from the tribe of Israel. The Amhara as genealogically related to the tribe of Israel which could be observed in the following shared attributes: a way of life, appearance, names, place names, and their language. Whereas, Desta (1970) mentioned “Amare” as the father of “Sayinet” who in turn the ancestor of the Amhara. The collective name “Amhara” comes from “Amare”.¹²

In his widely read book “ግድግዳና ጥንት፡ የአማራ መነሻና መድረሻ”¹³, Misganaw (2018) went further to justify the mythology of the common descent of the Amhara from a single ancestor. The Amhara, hence, are the descendants of *Jethro*¹⁴. And, their history goes beyond the Axumite period. With a nuance departure from the Semitic narration Tedla (2018) posits the Amhara are a Cushito-Semitic people. The Amhara founded or better restored the hitherto Solomonic dynasty in 1270 that survived to 1974. Similarly, Tedla (1930 as cited in Pankhrust, 1998: 85) strongly believe that “Ethiopia’s survival had been achieved, thanks to the ‘energy’ of the Amharas, whom he proudly refers to as the ‘historic and governing population of modern Ethiopia.’” Moreover, Fitaye (2020) propagates a different narration where the ancestor of the Amhara are *Belew* and *Kelew* from the area of present day Welkait. A member of the Welkait-Tegede Committee and others have emphasized this narration.¹⁵ Indeed, this may be ascribed to determining the Welkait question by producing a narration that instills the notion of the Amhara homeland as Welkait.

In contrast, Levine (2000) dismissed such explanation as a derivation of folk mythology. Such myth-making efforts as Hobsbawm (1992: 34) pinpoints “tacitly inculcates certain norms and values in the conception and searches for the ancestor” of the Amhara. At this juncture, it is

¹¹ Yoktan is son of Eber and a descendant of Shem (Book of Genesis 10:25; Chronicles 1:17-19).

¹² This has, however, lacks further historical evidence to illuminate “who is Sayinet?” which is a toponym located in South Wello Zone of Amhara Sayinet Woreda, Amhara Region.

¹³ The books rough translation is “Ghionawinet: The roots and destiny of Amhara”

¹⁴ The biblical story of Jethro can be found in Exodus 2:18 and Exodus 3:1

¹⁵ KID, interview, September 30, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia

worth noting the researcher's experience during field work; Although the researcher attempted to elicit information on the genealogy of the Amhara, with few exceptions, the majority declined to discuss the matter of Amhara ancestor or origin. As a result, with small exceptions, claiming kinship to "Yoktan" or "Jethor" come up short to garner widespread recognition from both the elite and the critical mass.

What is more, coming from Oriental-Semitic Scholarship in Ethiopian Studies Cheeseman (1936) advocate the Amhara are immigrants from Yemen and settled with the native people of the region. Trimingham (2013) and Ullendrof (1965) similarly posits the Amhara are the byproduct of Semitization of the indigenous people. Girma (2009) begs to differ this line of argument and proposed all Afro-Asiatic languages are African in origin and not the other way round.

What is known, Taddese (1972) remarked the Amhara are the earliest Semitic linguistic group to be established south of the Tigre region. And, Levine (2000) pointed out with the end of the Zagwe Dynasty in 1270, the accession of Yukuno Amlak was considered as the start of the Amhara dynasty. However, Belete, vice-president of NaMA (now President), argued; "Years before the coronation of Yukuno Amlak, we believe the Amhara had established and ruled under a government. A long-established tradition of laying the foundation of statehood and defending its sovereignty continues living in the ideals of Amharaness."¹⁶

In terms of the Amhara homeland, Desta (1970) and Levine (2000) recognized Bete Amhara as the Amhara origin south of Tigre. However, NaMA uses an earlier account to envisage Bete Amhara as the Amhara ancestral homeland, i.e., Futul al Habesha.¹⁷ In the chronicle of Gragn Ahmed, Libene Dingle's utterance about Amhara homeland is recorded as follows;

I prefer that we march to the house [land] of our fathers and of our ancestors, the birthplace of our royal authority, and that we make a stand there. We shall hold the gates and do battle with the Muslims. We shall leave them in possession of the territory that they have conquered. We shall die in Bet Amhara. (Stenhouse & Pankhurst, 2004: 218)

Specifically, Levin (1974: 72) illuminated the Amhara province was;

¹⁶ Belete Molla, interview in Adafta media, August 8, 2019; FGD, November 19, 2020, Debre Birhan, Ethiopia

¹⁷ KIC, interview, March 2, 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Situated in what is today the southwestern part of Wello Province, the historical Amhara region was bounded on the west by the Abbai (Nile River) and its tributary the Bashilo river; on the north by the regions of Angot and Lasta; on the east by the escarpment leading down to the Danakil Desert, and on the south by the Wanchet River, reached through a mountain pass so precipitous that it is known as Ahiyya Fejj, Destroyer of Donkeys.

Geographically, people who inhabit Shewa, Lasta, Gondar, Gojjam, and Wello are all Amhara. In his account, Amhara Sayinet¹⁸ was the homeland of the Amhara, i.e. the people who speak Amharic first lived in Sayinet (Desta, 1970: 937-938). It is from Amhara Sayinet that the Amhara expanded to Ethiopia. Accounting peopling of Gojjam, for instance, Temesgen (2016) wrote it was in the 14th Century, the Amhara succeeded in populating present day Gojjam through conquest and introduction of socio-economic institutions to the Agew and Gumuz people (see also Taddese, 1994). In fact, historical evidence purport that the existence of different autonomous kingdoms in Abyssinia, albeit it is hardly possible to ethnically categorize such kingdoms (see Ludolf, 1682; Gobat, 1850).

In contrast to the homeland and genealogical claims, Admasu (2010) assert that the Amhara never had a homeland nor a common myth of their origin. The ethnic or nation attributes are absent in Amhara, hence, he suggest “status group” best suits the Amhara in Ethiopia north-south relations. Such argument are driven from the assumption that the Amharic language, “language of the king”, was invented in the royal courts as pidgin hence precedes the Amhara collective name. As Hudson and Tekeste (1987) wrote the Amhara emerged from a mix of diverse peoples who served as soldiers in the Zagwe dynasty.

However, “the present generation’s primary concern has not been establishing the Amhara genealogical origin or homeland, but rather addressing the immediate question of survival because the identity has been ascribed from outside by the perpetrators.”¹⁹ But again, the newly established NaMA and other unions and associations continued to make assertions of the origin and territoriality by going back to relevant historical events. In this regard, Smith (1997: 37) posit “nations need usable past, their uses being largely determined by the needs and preoccupations of present-day elites.” NaMA strongly propagates “so shall Amhara renovate and restore its history and former glory!” As one member of NaMA points out, “the current state of

¹⁸ A small district within Levine’s (2000) geographical description of Bete Amhara.

¹⁹ KIA, Interview, March 4, 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

affairs of the Amhara is the zenith of collective indignity in history.”²⁰ This suggest an imagined “Golden Age” in the past that confirms “a sense of continuity between generations”.

In this vein, Amhara nationalists only attempted to reconstruct a sketchy glorious past of the Amhara. Multiple “Golden Ages” shows the continuity of Amhara handiwork tracing its antiquity to Damat through Yeha, Axum civilization, Lalibela, the medieval Emperors of Amde Tsion and Zara Yacob, the sparkling Gondar Castles, to Tewodros II and Menelik II.²¹ The glorious past was rediscovered through “political archeology”, to use Smith's (1997) expression, of the Amhara nationalists including political parties and civic organizations. An ethnicization of the past explains the attempts to justify the above-mentioned civilizations and emperors as Amhara. With this, the effort is to (re)construct Amharaness on the foundations of rediscovered shared values, wisdom, ancestral land, flag, anthem, holidays, history, and collective suffering. Shared values include *yilugnta* (Levine, 2000), warrior and devotion to the state, wisdom, free people, decent, just and civilized.²²

Furthermore, “music has played a significant part in sparking Amharaness emotion by evoking the tale of hero and heroines, territorial claims, and current collective victimization. Singers such as Fasil Demoze, Solomon Demle, Dagne Walle, Amsale Mitike to mention a few have impacted the development of collective identity of the Amhara since 2010s.”²³ The song—“we are Amhara!”²⁴, since 2018 has also received popular acceptance. It has been widely used to facilitate popular mobilization in different parts of the Amhara region. The theme of the song summarizes the shared values, customs, and history of the Amhara. And, how the new Amharaness sentiment sprung out of collective suffering intending to counter what has been inflicting upon the people of Amhara. Overall, as Smith (1986) wrote myths and symbols, values, and memories play momentarily in determining the nation-to-be.

²⁰ KIC, interview, March 2, 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; FGD, November 2, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia

²¹ KIA, Interview, March 4, 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

²² FGD-I, December 3, 2021, Bahir dar, Ethiopia; see also NaMA (2018). Berhanu (2015), in contrast, argue inferring claims to a civilization or region based on present patterns of settlement is both intellectually lazy and politically risky.

²³ KIA, Interview, June 30, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia. For instance, the song by Solomon Demele, “Amaraye,” on the one hand, affirms self-identification as “I am Amhara” and describes the attributes of the Amhara as belonging to the genealogy of “Jethro” and the role the Amhara in the nation-building and defending the territorial integrity of the state. On the other hand, it recalls the derogatory names such as “neftegna” and reclaims the slur as the pride of the Amhara.

²⁴ Written by Temesgen Tessema who was the Executive member of NaMA.

4.2.2 Etymology of the word “Amhara”

The word Amhara constitutes multiple meanings. To illuminate the meanings the word “Amhara” connote and denote, a critical appraisal of the lexicon definition of the word is deemed appropriate. In this regard, Berlin (1976: 168) succinctly explains Herder’s conception of words as; “Words, by connecting passions with things, the present with the past, and by making possible memory and imagination, create family, society, literature, and history.” With this note, according to Kidane-Wolde (1967: 698), “Amhara” refers to “noble people or free people”. In the same vein, Desta (1970: 937-938) explained the etymology of the word “Amhara” derived from two Hebrew words, i.e., “am” means “people” and “hara” refers to “free”, hence it means “free people”. The word “Amhara” has also been construed as “watadar” (solider) referring to royal regiments in the Abyssinia empire.

4.2.3 The Amharic Language

Girma (2009) summed up two hypotheses on the origin of Amharic language: (i) it is a descendant of a common Proto-Semitic language; and (ii) it has evolved as a Semitic based origin which became a creole eventually developed into a fully-fledged language; to which the second thesis more looks appealing and persuasive. In this regard, for some, linguistically Amharic does not belong to a single-family or nation group such as the Amhara. It is made up Geez, Hebrew, Arabic, and other Ethiopian languages suggesting a creole nature. In the same vein, Bender (1985: 50) argues that "multilingualism created a creole [Amharic] which became a post-creole, and by the accidents of history became the dominant language of Ethiopia”.

Similarly, Levine (2000: 72) posited “During the first millennium A.D., the inhabitants of Amhara were the Agaw people who developed a distinct South-Ethio-Semitic tongue-Amharic- quite possibly through a process of pidginization and creolization”. Taye (1921) contends that the assumption that the Amharic language originated during the reign of Emperor Yikuno Amlak is grossly inaccurate and hilariously absurd. This is due to the inclusion of Amharic names and alphabets that were not found in Geez, Tigrigna, Arabic and related languages thousand years before the coronation of Yikuno Amlak. Similarly, Desta (1970) also mentioned Amharic as a descendant of Geez and related to other Semitic languages such as Hebrew, Syriac, and Arabic.

This thesis frames the Amharic within the Semitic language family and recognized similarities in the degree of genetic relationship.

Notwithstanding the above argument, for Getachew (1992) Wello was the hub of Amharic language speakers, yet for various historical reasons the Amharic language started to spread out to non-Amharic speaking areas of Gondar, Gojjam, Lasta, Shoa and the rest of Ethiopia. Presumably, the adoption of Amharic as *lingua Imperii* and later *lingua franca* have eased the spread of Amharic (see also Chernetsov, 1993; Temesgen, 2016). Be that as it may, the encounter of Amharic with other languages created a reciprocal scheme of influencing and changing, in turn, Amharic language and culture. The Amhara culture specifically the Amharic language served as the melting pot of other cultures and ways of life. In this regard, Getachew (1992) elaborates that the adoption of Amharic in Ethiopia was motivated more by social and economic factors than by compulsion. Amharic evolved into a common language for Ethiopians to interact with one another. As a result, speaking Amharic has come to be recognized as a means of taking membership into pan-Ethiopian culture.

Clapham (1988: 24) remarked this fusion, in turn, nurtured the loss of Amharaness of the indigenous Amharic speaking people. The language attribute, however, remained as the marker of the Amhara. And, it has long intermingled to the “core culture of Ethiopia” making the Amharic the property of the national, not the Amhara only (see Michale, 2008). For those who claimed (such as Getachew, 1992; Chernetsov, 1993; Levine, 2000; Mesfin, 2015) the Amhara does not exist as an ethnic group (in the Stalinist conception) the rationale springs from the idea of construing the “Amhara in the sense of being a fused stock, a supra-ethnically conscious ethnic Ethiopia.” From these arguments, Amharaness and Ethiopianness are imagined as similar (same), i.e., Amhara culture as a key ingredient in the (re)construction of the latter.

4.3 Debates in defining the Amhara identity: Ethnicity, Religion, Province...?

In his last address to the Ethiopian people, President Mengistu Hailemariam attempted to shed light on “who is Amhara?”.²⁵ The dawn of the era of ethnic nationalism has been approaching and Mengistu’s address though with a nuanced interpretation reiterated the above lexicology,

²⁵ Mengistu Haile-Mariam address to the Ethiopian public televised in 1990, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5TXvOpp5VYY&t=1s>

ostensibly looks an attempt of deconstructing the political baggage in the conception of Amhara. The rationales as he explained stemmed from the continual allegation from *Woyane* (TPLF) and *Shabiya* (EPLF) of the Amhara as oppressor, villain, and despot over “other” nationalities of Ethiopia.

He argued the word “Amhara” is coined by Israelites to describe and explain the scenery and the rivers of the place they once visited a long time ago. In Hebrew, “Amhara” designates “people who live in the mountains”.²⁶ Mengistu continued and pointed out the word Amhara in common Ethiopian parlance means “*degegna*”—highlander. With an unverified connotation of the word “Amhara” with highlander, he committed a fallacy of oversimplification by asserting it may denote the Gondarie, Tigrai, Kambata, Bale, Wollega, etc. that resides in the highlands of Ethiopia. The statement overall appears self-contradictory. This could be because of the absence of a “self-aware” (Connor, 1978) Amhara ethnic group, the conception for long (before Mengistu’s address) received a hegemonic influence in the Ethiopianist camp. The intention of Mengistu to illuminating once and for all the “Amhara” wrapped up by repudiating the existence of an Amhara ethnonym. Instead, the term lost its meaning by denoting all highlanders in Ethiopia, from Eritrea to the Bale Mountains, for which there was no historical proof and no people’s self-identification. As Mesfin Weldamariam correctly pointed out, “political position reifies authoritative knowledge in Ethiopian politics.”²⁷

With all the flaws, Mengistu was the first Ethiopian Head of State in modern history to publicly address the topic. In the early months of the transitional period, after the June 1991 Peace and Democracy Conference, a discussion on the representation of NNPs and Amhara national identity was convened between Meles Zenawi (Chairman of the EPRDF), three scholars namely Professor Andreas Eshete, Dr. Mekonnen Bishaw, and Professor Mesfin Woldemariam. The discussion was televised to the public and published in two consecutive issues of *Yezaritu Ethiopia* magazine on July 19th and 26th 1991²⁸ (*Yezaritu Ethiopia*, 1991).

²⁶ Takke (1994) has verified the meanings of the Hebrew words— “ama” and “hara”— from the native speaker (see also Desta, 1970).

²⁷ Mesfin Woldemariam, *Yezaritu Ethiopia* magazine, July 19, 1991

²⁸ The debate was also broadcast via the state owned media. Quite interestingly after this “Grand debate” no other discussion was made on this level between scholars and head of state.

Two opposing positions on the nature of Amhara(ness) were reflected from Mesfin and Meles. Mesfin vehemently argued, “Amhara is not a national identity, it is a religious one, i.e., Christian”, regardless of bloodline or area of origin (see also Mesfin, 2012; Berhanu, 2015). Previously, in this regard, Desta (1970: 937-938) has posited that “Amharaness is being Amhara through circumcision and baptism”. On top of this, there is a long-established tradition among the people of this region on swearing “you and I are Islam and Amhara”— meaning “you and I are Islam and Christian” while in dispute with a friend or family member. Another illustration of similar phenomenon, for Berhanu (2015), at a wedding reception when food practices are salient, it is not unusual for a Tigrigna speaker of Oromo descent from Raya to identify as Amhara, just as an Amhara from Gondar would do the same as a Muslim.

However, how did people come to develop such identification? Do the Amhara were historically followers of Orthodox Tewahido Christians? In this regard, Hudson and Tekeste (1987) noted since ancient times the Amhara have been Christians, so when an Oromo or Muslim takes up Christianity it is said he has become an Amhara. For Taddesse (1972) a recorded tradition of Christian settlement revealed that an Amara (Amhara) tribe group lived in the upper Bishalo river indicating these people were Christians back then. Ostebo (2020) also views the notion of Amhara as utterly worthless if it is not associated to Christianity.

Mesfin further claimed that “residents in the ‘Amhara territory’ identify with local toponyms such as Menzie, Gondarie, Damotie, and so on instead of a grand Amhara identity.”²⁹ This is also valid throughout Ethiopia. For Levine (2000) in their homeland, the Amhara shy away from identifying with a strong sense of belonging to the Amhara community. Instead, “They identify themselves either on a regional (provincial) basis, Gojjamie versus Gondere— or else by means of the supra-ethnic term Habesha”. A length quotation of Bahru (2022: 2) at this point helps to capture the trajectories of provincial to ethnic identification in Ethiopian particularly of the Amhara.

Until about the middle of the twentieth century, regional affiliation was a more important marker than ethnic identity. This was particularly true of the Amhara, who identified themselves by their regions (Gojjam, Gondar, Shawa, Wollo) or even sub-regions (Damot, Gayent, Manz, Yefat, Bulga, Yajju, etc.) rather than as Amhara. Indeed, Shawa was the ethnic

²⁹ Mesfin Woldamariam, Yezaritu Ethiopia magazine, July 19, 1991

melting pot par excellence, blending the Amhara, Oromo and Gurage into a distinct geographical entity.

Provincialism as "the inability (or the refusal) to see one's own culture in the larger context" (Kundera, 2007: 41), the provincial Amhara sentiment is more of the outcome of the political past and less of geography. On the one hand, the presence of the Blue Nile has effectively isolated for example Gojjam from the rest of provinces and reduced its influence in the Imperial throne (Pankhrust, 1992). On the other hand, Shoa being the hub of political power in the modern Ethiopia history has isolated the majority of Gojjam, Gondar, and Wello provinces from the central power (Levine, 1965; Henze, 2000). Indeed, with improvement of road infrastructure and era of internet, the geographical barriers have been reduced to the minimal. However, the political history may have still persisted in the contemporary political settings to shape the existing provincial sentiment. In fact, this is not peculiar to the Amhara only but is common across other ethno-national groups such as the Oromo (see Daniel, 2003; Østebø and Tronvoll, 2020).

The attempt by ethno-national scholars to historicizing politicization of ethnicity from the context where the idea of ethnic politics has become an ideological position does not help to fully understand the purported meaning attached to it. In contrast, Meles, without disregarding Mesfin's proposition on people's local provincial identification preference, asserted the Amhara or other NNPs³⁰ in Ethiopia commonly share traits such as history, language, and psychological make-up. Based on these parameters, he endorsed the existence of the Amhara as a distinct national group. In the early years of the transitional period, Andargachew³¹ (1993: 28) similarly endorsed Meles's position,

We know the existence of Amhara with its territory, language, culture and shared psychological make-up is because we collectively call ourselves Amhara. The pressure of competing ethno-national struggles has impelled the Amhara to identify themselves as *Amharas*.

This typically represents the Stalinist conception of a nation embraced uncritically since the time of the ESM (see Teshale, 2008). The perplexing fact in Meles stringent position on the existence

³⁰ Dergu and EPRDF have a nuanced approach to the application of the notion of nationalities and nations.

³¹ In his later writings and speeches, Andargachew denounced the existence of an Amhara national group. Why has Andargachew Tsige, a prominent politician, windup with such anti-Amhara moral epiphany after pioneering a work advocating the grave circumstances posed upon the Amhara ethnicity for its lack of political organization remains a puzzle?

of the Amhara national group, for Admasu (2010), emanated from a political reason. To reiterate Getachew (1992) “Amhara” is an ethnic name created for the ruling TPLF/EPRDF by those who desire “Amhara” enemies, just because they speak Amharic. Again, an outside construction and political debate over the concept of Amhara identity would drastically split conceptualization over the years of the TPLF/EPRDF between the ethnic nationalists and Ethiopianist camp. As such, the discussion also best captures the making of a politicized Amhara ethnic identity in Ethiopia apace with the introduction of institutions favorable for such identities to burgeon.

4.3.1 Amharaness and Ethiopianness: Two sides of the same coin?

The generally accepted view of Ethiopianness is that, the cultural elements are rooted from the Amhara-Tigre, yet the idea of and being Amhara is poorly understood. For Chernetsov (1993), the social identity of the Amhara, typified by a Christian, feudal, and mainly militaristic culture, is the center piece of Ethiopianness. The ESM and its offspring ethnic nationalist political organization, argued these traits are “imposed” on NNPs of Ethiopia through the policy of “*Amharization*” (see Abbay, 1997; Mekuria, 1997; Yinebeb, 2019). Walleigne (1969) goes to the extreme to depict Ethiopianness as camouflaged in “Amhara mask”. The “mask” is speaking Amharic, listen to Amharic music, following Orthodox Christianity, wearing Shamma³², and changing names³³. For him the Amhara national identity is acquired by being born from Amhara parents, to use Walleigne’s (1969: 2) expression “...blessed to be born Amhara”. In contrast, Clapham (1988: 24) writing about the ethnic identity of the Amhara suggested that “being Amhara is much more a matter of how one behaves than of who one’s parents were...”

Zooming into Ethiopian history, if there is one, as ethnic nationalists argue, it is packed with intense interconnections through trade, state systems, cultural integration and other milieu within

³² It is Amhara-Tigre handmade clothing from cotton. This has, however, unlike Wallilegn’s assertion been the handy-works of the people in South Ethiopia (Dorze people). And, the various ethnic groups in Ethiopia wear Shamma with a unique style. Hence, If Shamma was imposed on all Ethiopians, why do the Oromo, Sidama, Gamo, and others continue to wear Shamma to their cultural ceremonies?

³³ Amharanizing of names in Tigray, for instance, are from Adhana to Adane, Hadush to Addis, Kahssay to Kassaye (Gebbru, 2009: 78). It is one of the ironies of the dynamics of cultural development, that many students during the revolution of 1974–1975 changed back to their original (ethnic) names, only to turn a few years later back again to their Christian (Amharic) names (Pausewang, 2005).

the old Abyssinian Empire and beyond.³⁴ With the outbreak of the Ahmad ibn Ibrhaim al-Ghazi aka, Gragh Ahmed war (1529-43) and massive population movement of the Oromo, further transpired blending and assimilation with the Agaw-Amhara-Tigre culture. The modern history of Ethiopia, indeed, also represents a continuation of “reciprocal assimilation” of the Oromo and other ethnic groups to the royal culture (Bahru, 2022: 2). Hence, the term Amharization should be used in caution provided that the rulers of Ethiopia always refer themselves as Ethiopians and never as Amhara and their ambition was to integrate Ethiopia in however modalities, right or wrong (Getachew & Derib, 2006). Instead, Ethiopian monarchs justify their lineage and authority to the tribe of Judah. Although not everyone agrees with the mythology, it has served to legitimize and ensure the continuation one of the world's longest dynasty, i.e, the Solomonic dynasty. What is more, inter-ethnic marriage within the monarchy drastically reduced the pristine of the line of Judah claims (Tedla, 2018). This by extension holds true to the multiplicity and constellation of what later become Ethiopianization policy of Haile Selassie I.

In a workshop organized by Andimta (2021) on Ethiopianism/ethno-nationalism, the idea of Ethiopianism was constructed as having a dialectical character, i.e., global and national. Ethiopianism as a global sentiment began with the Pan-Africanist movement of anti-colonial struggle (see also Shepperson, 1953; Rose, 2019). Ethiopia’s successful resistance to colonial powers, combined with the mystique of the Ethiopia as mentioned in the Bible, inspired the Ethiopianism movement in the US and other African countries, and thus it transcends the Ethiopian state. At the national level, however, the concept of Ethiopianism is ardently debated, albeit never abandoned, and remains in the shadows "covered by dust" to be "rubbed and used by the state" in times of need.

During the early years of the 1974 revolution, anti-spirituality and anti-religious nationalist movements dominated Ethiopia's political landscape. The age of the revolution saw an inter-generational war and the abolition of Ethiopianism in its entirety. This sparked a heated debate on two fronts: Ethiopianism and the question of nationalities, and history, politics, and nationalism in Ethiopia. On the one hand, the first question is dominantly conceived and answered by intertwining Ethiopianism with Amhara; Ethiopianism is viewed as an oppressive

³⁴ Tewodros Hailemariam (2021). Nationalism in Ethiopia: From Where to Where? A paper presented in “Remembrance, Ethiopian/ethno-nationalism” Workshop, organized by Andmita, December 24, 2021 at Golden Tulip Hotel, Addis Ababa

tool; and nationalities are assumed to be sovereign and entitled to self-determination, including secession.³⁵ History, on the other hand, becomes a contested commodity. In the eyes of ethnic nationalists, Ethiopian history is viewed as a tool for hegemonic remembrance. Ethiopia is perceived as "Greater Ethiopia" and "Little Ethiopia" by the Ethiopianist and ethnic nationalist camps, respectively. This hastened the opportunity to write a struggle history, rebirth history, counter history, and revisionist history.³⁶

If Ethiopianness, which largely connote patriotism, is imagined in terms of the number of languages pronounced as official or working or court language, then our historical analysis should go beyond a century old modern history. Situating our research in contemporary history limits our understanding of the dynamic interplay of diverse groups while also encouraging historicization and essentialization of ethnicity. According to Bahru (2022) politicization of ethnic category is a recent development in Ethiopian history which growingly stirs up individuals to identify with a certain ethno-national group. As a result, for Clapham (1998) the long-entrenched Ethiopian identity pushed to the corner for a mere belief that Ethiopianness is rooted in "Amhara culture". However, "who is Amhara?" is not properly defined at least in the scholarly literature. The Amhara as an ethnic group is more constructed from without than within until recently. In an interview with Amhara Media Corporation in 2018, Asaminew Tsige argues:

I am Amhara. Wittingly or unwittingly, I am being forced to identify as an Amhara. If I cannot find a system that treats me for who I am, I will have to find people who look like me and start organizing. The current political situation and platform accommodate and allow such organization along ethnic lines. Therefore, it is important to organize as an Amhara to address the Amhara questions. Because our Ethiopian brothers also believe in identifying and politically organizing in such a way, and the question of alternatives is being treated with mistrust. The ethnic-based political milieu will not help us if we want to follow the path of our forefathers. Therefore, it is important to think and organize like an Amhara.³⁷

In this vein, in the early years of the Transitional Period (1991-1994) the EPRDF (1993: 29) political strategy clearly outlines the problem of organizing under the banner of Ethiopianness as follows:

³⁵ Extracted from the discussion on "Remembrance, Ethiopian/ethno-nationalism" Workshop, organized by Andmita, December 24, 2021, at Golden Tulip Hotel, Addis Ababa

³⁶ Tewodros Hailemariam (2021). Nationalism in Ethiopia: From Where to Where? A paper presented in "Remembrance, Ethiopian/ethno-nationalism" Workshop, organized by Andmita, December 24, 2021, at Golden Tulip Hotel, Addis Ababa

³⁷ Amhara Media Corporation, Interview with Asaminew Tsige, September 7, 2018, Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ESw9swpmlYU>

... the nation-wide political organization will be formed, not by multi-national organizations, but by a union of nationality-based organizations... The chauvinist ruling classes adhere to the principle of “Itiopiawinnet” (Ethiopianness) which kills identity based on nationality. So they do not follow the principle of forming a nation-wide organization through a union of nationality-based organizations. They aspire to form a dominant multi-nation organization composed of individuals from various nationalities and ethnic organizations that have betrayed the causes of their people and bowed to these chauvinists.

The events that followed the 2005 General National election serve as evidence that the EPRDF is not receptive to the concept of a “multi-ethnic” Ethiopian identity. Similar to the actions taken by *Derg* towards multi-ethnic parties in 1976, as documented by Bahru (2014), the EPRDF has successfully limited the platform available to such organizations, resulting in the Amhara community distancing themselves and promoting the growth of Amharaness sentiment.

4.4 Discursive formation of Amharaness

In the previous sections, the various characterization of the notion of Amharaness as social status, province, supra-ethnic sentiment, etc. have been discussed. Without disregarding the multiplicity of interpretation of the Amhara, this chapter argues the recent development of Amharaness is discursively constructed from the narratives of collective othering, recitation of the word Amhara in various publications, institutional practices in post-1991 Ethiopia, narrative of collective victimhood and lost ancestral territories. These discourses more or less fits into Hall (1992), Ozkirimli (2017) and Penrose (2002) national discourses– spatial, temporal, symbolic, and everyday– in identity formation.

The narrative of othering of the Amhara could be addressed how it originated, propagated, imposed, embedded in the multifarious institutional practice of the country, and eventually mobilizing the Amhara to self-identification since the 2010s. As the higher official of NaMA indicated, “the othering of the Amhara in Ethiopia politics takes its root in the period of the Italian occupation (1936-41)”.³⁸ In this regard, Sbacchi (1975) wrote in its aspiration to assemble the *Orientale Italia* a hostile colonial policy towards the Amhara and Orthodox Church was instituted. The policy aimed at fomenting discord and inter-tribal warfare against the Amhara through mobilizing the Oromo, Tigre, and the Muslims. It was during the occupation period the idea of eliminating the Amhara from the “Oromo Sidama” land commenced. The restriction of

³⁸ KIT, interview, March 12, 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

the use of Amharic outside of the Amhara province of *Oriente Italia* set off an internal state arrangement in line with ethnicity-cum-race. This marked a political framing of an Amhara identity with a defined territorial boundary (see also Parlesák, 1989; Zoli, 1937).

The prelude to such Italian colonial policy was drawn from the writings of an international diplomat hosted in Ethiopia called Roman Prochazka (1936). The author strikingly categorized the Ethiopian society along distinctive line of race, language, religion, and culture in contrast to the Abyssinia minority, i.e., the Amhara as the oppressor group. Granting the right to self-determination to the varied groups essentially facilitates their struggle against the ruling minority while simultaneously exposing them to the colonial project, which is also deemed relevant (Prochazka, 1936).

Following the end of the Italian occupation and the restoration of Haile Selassie I to the throne, the language policy, better known as the *Amharization* Policy, was developed in response to the divisiveness instilled by the Italian colonial policy. This has sparked, along with other compounding factors, the emergence of ESM (see Bahru, 2014). “Students’ propagation of the national oppression and colonial thesis has conspicuously categorized the Amhara as oppressor, colonizer, and many more pejorative slurs.”³⁹ Their views were published in various journals such as *Struggle*, *Tatek*, and *Challenge* that embedded promotion of the discourse of the “question of nationalities” and “land to the tiller” (see Wallelign, 1969; Tilahun, 1971; Tumtu, 1971; ESUE, 1973). These two questions harnessed the political ideologue, alias Amhara domination, of the ethnic nationalist movements that burgeoned in the 1970s.⁴⁰ Such discursive construction of “Amhara domination” has shaped the way of thinking and behaving of ethnic nationalists including the young generation.

Furthermore, an Amhara activist from Debre Birhan argues “Derg with all its spirited devotion to *Ethiopiawinet* has acknowledged the question of nationalities and land. Hence, ethnic Amhara urban dwellers had been targeted and confiscated their properties.”⁴¹ Looking at the post-1991 Ethiopia, members of the opposition political party pointed out, the TPLF led EPRDF policy

³⁹ KIH, interview, March 2, 2021, Debre Birhan, Ethiopia

⁴⁰ KIA, telephone interview, May 1, 2022, Woldiya, Ethiopia

⁴¹ KIB, interview, March 2, 2021, Debre Birhan, Ethiopia

towards the Amhara and the Church is a continuation of Italy's colonial policy.⁴² In the minds of ethnic nationalists live a category or group called Amhara (see the TPLF, 1976). For instance, TPLF (1976) recites the *Woyane* rebellion as anti-Amhara national oppression. During the war years as Aregawi (2009) confirms:

Cultural events, theatrical performances as well as jokes and derogatory remarks were used to disseminate this [anti-Amhara] poisonous attitude. Fueling some historical grudges perpetrated by the ruling classes, the Sibhat faction tried to cast doubt on the possibility of living in unity with "the Amhara".

The Amhara othering has continued since the early years of the TPLF/EPRDF by excluding their participation in the Peace and Democracy Conference⁴³ to wit Meles ironically argued "it is ideas not ethnic groups represented in the Conference".⁴⁴ What is more, the notion of Amhara was undermined through the policy of systematically humiliating and marginalizing the Amhara (Messay, 2016). Loss of historical and ancestral territories of Welkait, Raya, Metekel, and Dera/Shoa is considered as one of the policies of humiliating the Amhara.⁴⁵ In the Ethio-Sudan frontier, the Amhara peasant land was "sold" or "gifted" to Sudan.⁴⁶ Perhaps this could be associated with the illusion of TPLF creating "Greater Tigray" in the Horn of Africa. The region deliberately served as an experiment for minority enclaves to enjoy self-determination.⁴⁷ In this sense, NaMA and recently Amhara Prosperity Party (APP), for instance, vehemently claim the return of "forcefully annexed" Amhara "ancestral land"- homeland to the rightful owners.⁴⁸ A member of Amhara Scholars Council pointed out;

I would argue there is no Amhara national group that perfectly fits into the Transitional Charter and the FDRE Constitution conception of NNPs, I am not repudiating the notion of Amhara identity. For instance, geographically the homeland of the Amhara is Ethiopia, not the current Amhara Regional State.⁴⁹

Hence, a people with an Ethiopian homeland have been conferred "a piece of land" with an Amhara National Regional State (ANRS) tag. The ethnic federal architects have overlooked the actual geographical settlement of the Amhara in Ethiopia (Getachew, 1992). This has created an

⁴² KIM, interview, February 10, 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

⁴³ KID, interview, December 12, 2020, Bahir dar, Ethiopia

⁴⁴ *Yezaritu Ethiopia*, July 26, 1991

⁴⁵ KIA, telephone interview, May 1, 2022, Woldiya, Ethiopia

⁴⁶ KIZ, interview, August 19, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia

⁴⁷ KIC, interview, March 2, 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

⁴⁸ KID, interview, December 12, 2020, Bahir dar, Ethiopia; KIA (Abraham), interview, December 8, 2020, Bahir dar, Ethiopia

⁴⁹ KIA, Interview, March 4, 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

incongruence between ethno-national groups (NNPs) and territorial frontiers igniting discord on identity and territoriality. To paraphrase Brubaker's (1996) Soviet Union's description; post-1991 Ethiopia ethnic-based federalism disaggregated the polity into 14 later 9 (at present 11) “putatively autonomous” regional states and city administrations, each belonging to a particular ethno-national group— “titular” nationalities. It has assigned each citizen an ethnic “nationality” based on descent, registered in personal identity documents, recorded in bureaucratic encounters, and used to control access to higher education and employment. In doing so, the regime was not simply recognizing or ratifying a preexisting state of affairs; it newly constituted both persons and places as ethno-national.⁵⁰ With this discriminatory policy, the Amhara, who live in every part of Ethiopia, are relegated to a second class citizen.⁵¹

What is more, primary and secondary school curricula are also designed in such a way as to deconstruct the territorial integrity of the Amhara. For instance, in Grade 10 Civic and Ethical Education students' textbook, page 24, the map of Ethiopia showing the borders of federating units craftily avoids the frontier bordering Amhara region and Sudan, instead illustrates a shared border between Benishangul Gumuz and Tigray region.⁵² In a different note, the Tigray Regional State Grade 6 English text, page 48, teaches students that Mount Ras Dejen/Dashen is located in Tigray.⁵³ The Amhara nationalists view this as a direct threat to their own territorial claims and perceive it as a deliberate attempt by the TPLF to assert dominance beyond disputed territories. This perceived encroachment on their historical and symbolic land has only fueled the discontent and deepened the divide between the two groups. In this sense, educational systems as Foucault (1981) posits act as a mechanism to regulate discourses.

Statues were also built to othering of the Amhara in the post-1991. Good examples are the statues of Amhara Martyrs Memorial Monument⁵⁴ and the Anole. In the first case, one of the sculptures represents an old man standing in a defile with his arm downwards. This is designed

⁵⁰ This political indictment of the TPLF/EPRDF excludes the Amhara region and the SNNPs which are in their regional state constitutions enshrined the states are homelands to multiple ethnic groups.

⁵¹ KIT, interview, December 4, 2020, Bahir dar, Ethiopia

⁵² This map was initially produced by the Election Commission of the TGE. And the parliament renounced the map illegal and passes a deliberation on its future usage (Addis Zemen Magazine May 21, 1992).

⁵³ FGD-II, September 20, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia. Ministry of education has officially apologized for the editorial error after 10 years (Igunza, 2016).

⁵⁴ The nomenclature of the monument has now been changed to “Amhara People History Memorial Center”. One can see on the main gate of the Memorial Center two lions statues replicating the Arat Kilo Bete-Mengist.

to symbolize the defeat and humiliation of one of the cultural values of “neftegnent” and “the monarchy” of the Amhara.⁵⁵ Second, the bitter animosity and nemesis the Anole statues loudly inculcate in the young generation against the Amhara is beyond imagination.⁵⁶ Such banal practices inculcate hatred, further sediment ethnic animosity, to stuck in the past, and impede future peaceful aspiration and imagination.

A young lady spoke, in a live televised transmission on Oromia Media Network (omn) from Addis Ababa, the way forward of the *Qarree*⁵⁷ struggle. She was cheered by the crowd for passionately pointing out, the Oromo men and women should divorce the *Nefteгна/Habesha* and get married to the Oromo in the presence of highly-rated Oromo politicians the likes of Merera Gudina and Bekele Gerba.⁵⁸ Shall one blame the young lady? She grew up learning an anti-Amhara discursive framework as common sense from the school to Getachew Reda’s classification of the Amhara and Oromo as “fire and hay”⁵⁹. The young lady has become what Burr (2015) say “discourse user”– the already established social structure has profoundly shaped what counts as a reality, in this case, people may struggle to think beyond such a social reality.

The former President of Oromia, Lemma Megersa, confirmed the seeded animosities of the discourse of oppression, genocide, amputating hands and breasts particularly on Amhara and Oromo in the last three decades have yielded fruits.⁶⁰ Anti-Amhara discourses are discursively accepted and become a rule of behavior. The discursive frameworks are further institutional mechanisms in post-1991 Ethiopia. A classic example is the FDRE Constitution Preamble and ANRS Constitution Preamble pronounced “an atrocious national-oppression” plagued all NNPs and should be “rectified hereafter”. Who is the “oppressor nation”? From this, one can plausibly

⁵⁵ The enigma here is the ANDM is behind all these. Hence, ANDM is labeled as a surrogate of TPLF. This has been confessed officially by the top officials of the party.

⁵⁶ KIH, interview, December 1, 2020, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia

⁵⁷ *Qarree* is the female equivalent of Qeerroo Oromo protest that sparked in 2015 against the Addis Ababa Master Plan.

⁵⁸ Retrieved from, Oromia Media Network (omn); <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f73ddt9AfgI>, (last accessed January, 2020).

⁵⁹ The category is reiterated by Getachew Reda in the discussion Fana Broadcasting Corporate (FBC) that focuses on the outbreak of protest in Oromia and Amhara in the country in 2016/2017. He also proclaimed the job done so far to split and entrench animosities among the two groups is not appropriate; otherwise, we may not see these groups protesting together, i.e. “Oromara”.

⁶⁰ Lemma Megersa discussion with investors in Oromia, Fana Television, March 30, 2019, Adama, Ethiopia (available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ahQ9bPA1sVg> (accessed May, 2020).

contends that these narratives have *ipso facto* attained hegemonic status and have integrated fully into the political ideology of the governing party.

Moreover, there is a constant reference of the word “Amhara” in the works of Asafa (2020), Baxter (1998), Gebru (1991; 2009), Getahun (1974), Holcomb and Ibssa (1990), Mohammed (1990) and others. Looking at these works that engaged in knowledge production, the meaning purported on Amhara ostensibly shows uniformity. The Amhara are seen as people from the North-Western Ethiopia (Homeland), heir of old Christian kingdom (Abyssinia), *neftegna* (gunslinger), and colonialists (actively engaged in the African scramble). These people relished political domination and cultural dominance in modern Ethiopian history. Thus, Amhara is claimed as a politically conscious distinct national or ethnic or ethno-national category. With the Stalinist conception of the nation, however, ideologically the Amhara ethno-national group fails to meet all the criteria of nationness such as history, language, territory, psychological make-up, and economic-life⁶¹ (Getachew, 2019; Levine, 2000). For Baxter (1996) from an Oromo point of view Amharaness is primordial, speaking Amharic language, adherence to the customs and values (like lifestyles) of Amhara, and take on Ethiopian Orthodox Church fasting rules. And it is open to anyone to enter through either of the above ways.

The above-mentioned attributes of the Amhara particularly *neftegna*, chauvinist and oppressor continued to live on in the era of ethnic-based federal governance. Indeed, “an implicit reference to the “Amhara” through the usage of these slurs has been propagated since the ESM.”⁶² As a result, the Amhara continuously experienced discrimination and scapegoating. This hastened for people to be targeted and attacked on the mere fact that they are classified as *neftegna* and settler (i.e., Amhara and Orthodox Christian) in different parts of the country namely Gura Farad, Dodola, Shashemene, Kofele, Bale, Arsi Negle, Batu, Wollega, Ginche, Harar, Metekel, Mai-Kadra, etc. ever since the 1990s (EHRC, 2015; Moresh, 2016). In this regard, Smith (2009: 27) wrote ethnic ties come in many forms. Ethnic categories, for instance, are when people are categorized from without as different on one or more cultural traits such as language, customs, or religion, and yet the members have no known myth of ancestry and no strong sense of solidarity.

⁶¹ A counter-argument as to why the Amhara are ethno-national groups springs from, the Gabbar economic system (Asafa, 2020).

⁶² KIM, interview, February 10, 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Nonetheless, traits once labeled derogatory for Amhara are picked up and embraced by the young Amhara nationalists as their identities with a different connotation particularly “chauvinism”⁶³/*timikitegna* and *neftegna*. Christian Tadele, spokesperson of NaMA, proudly avers “we are *timikitegna* and we feel no dishonor”.⁶⁴ Further, as a senior AEUP member explained, “we have been advising and working towards getting the youth to accept and feel proud about these slur words. The youth should be proud of the deeds of their father’s in the Ethiopian state formation and defending its territorial integrity.”⁶⁵ This could be explained from a Foucauldian point of view, i.e., “reverse discourse” (Foucault, 1990: 101). For more than half a century, from the discourse of *neftegna*, *timikitegna*, oppressor, settler, etc. to the point of unabated ethnic assaults against the Amhara. Eventually, a counter-discourse began to speak on behalf of the Amhara using the “same vocabulary” (Foucault, 1990). Hence, the anti-Amhara discourse in the everyday practice - through the media, curricula, unending identity-based attacks, and the instituting of Amhara federal unit eventually produced the sentiment of unprecedented Amharaness.

It is plausible to argue that the Amhara ethno-national identity has been taken-for-granted in Ethiopian politics. It has become a practical category out of the ethnic discourse, knowledge production engagements, symbols, and an institutional blueprint that pinned the discourse. This assemblage of factors and the rise of Amhara nationalism to underpin its political ideology in the Amhara nation have engendered the recent resurgence of Amhara political identity.

4.5 The “victim thesis” as uniting factor

The conception of victim thesis among the Amhara has evolved and become another side in the mobilization of the Amhara to assert their identity and prevent future identity-based attacks. An activist from Bahir dar strongly argue,

For the last 50 years, the Amhara has been a center for political mobilization and the grudge of ethnic nationalist organizations. This narrative provoked hatred and symbolized the Amhara (with various derogatory names) as the enemy of NNPs.⁶⁶

⁶³ French chauvinisme (1839) “exaggerated, blind nationalism; patriotism degenerated into a vice”.

⁶⁴ Walta Television, Simeneh Bayifers interview with Christian Tadele and Belete Molla, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=an8TfZX2yC8&t=186s>

⁶⁵ KIM, interview, February 10, 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

⁶⁶ KIA, interview, November 12, 2021, Bahir dar, Ethiopia

According to Laclau (1990) the production of discourses has a dislocatory effect on those who are excluded from events beyond their control. Looking at the dominant narration, a member of ADFM pin points that:

The continuous societal insecurities spring from internal aggression, loss of lands tied to the Amhara identities, suppression of minorities by the home government, interference with its capability to reproduce, including killing members of the community, preventing the use of language, and so on.⁶⁷

This breeds continuous menace to the Amhara from 1991 to the recent Wollega, Metekel, and Mai Kadra massacres (EHRC, 2020a). Wæver (1995: 67) asserts that if a society cannot protect its identity, it will no longer exist as a society. As a member of Moresh Wogene Amhara Organization asserts that “silent genocide has been waged on Amhara since the dawn of ethnic federalism. These ongoing existential threats contributed to the construction of Amharaness as a ‘national’ group in post-1991 Ethiopia.”⁶⁸

The establishment of AAPO aimed at rescuing the Amhara living in various parts of the country from the wrath of disgruntled ethnic nationalists also instilled the idea of groupness in Amhara. In the early days of ethnic federalism, the Ethiopian Human Rights Council and AAPO were vocal about how the Amhara were being targeted for security threats based on their identities. Meles’s government, however, reduced these reports to Amhara chauvinism and failed transforming them into “high politics” (Wæver, 1995). A member of NaMA argue,

Up until 2016, the killings and forced displacements in Amhara continued as normal. No measure was taken to resolve the predicament. Instead, it has become a powerful weapon for fostering animosity and hostility among Ethiopians, allowing the government to seize power until a major awakening comes, calling into question the TPLF/EPRDF divisive strategy.⁶⁹

The protests that flared up in Amhara and Oromia became another historical juncture that changed the course of history. The resistance and protests in Gondar, Bahir Dar, Woldiya, and other places condemned the demonization and insecurities that besieged the Amhara. However, the Amharaness movement started in the Diaspora, mainly through digital media, in the 2010s. Bete Amhara is one of the organizations that has, since its inception, mobilized the Amhara

⁶⁷ KIT, interview, November 21, 2020, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia

⁶⁸ KIT, email interview, April 12, 2022, Washington DC.

⁶⁹ KIA, telephone interview, May 1, 2022, Woldiya, Ethiopia

diaspora and the Amhara youth (though it is difficult to measure its sphere of influence) by denouncing the perpetuation of ethnic massacres against the Amhara. It has advocated for the establishment of an independent Amhara homeland (and also produced a map) as a way out.

The Amhara resistance, in contrast, in terms of overcoming the status quo, endorsed the motto “Amharaness or death!”. A widespread movement unfolded throughout the Amhara region. Amharaness becomes the organizing and mobilizing factor. As the motto goes, “Amharaness is our savior!” This is what Wæver (1993) call “cultural” security policy. If one's identity seems threatened, a convenient mechanism is to strengthen societal identity by using cultural means to enforce societal cohesion and distinctiveness. Roe (2005) went on to say that preserving identity necessitates control over institutions responsible for reproduction and conterminous, societal bounded regions. In this regard, for the Amhara nationalist the societal security threats on the Amhara are twofold: “survival” and “preservation of identity and territorial integrity.” Roe (2005) wrote that for societal identity—ethno-national identity—and state sovereignty, territorial integrity are key. Societies may resort to military means to protect their historic ancestral lands. In this context, in post-1991 Ethiopia, armed struggle has been the recourse of the Amhara political struggle.

Moreover, institutions responsible for the (re)production of Amhara identity have mushroomed in the last 10 years. There are civic, business, and political organizations that bear the Amhara name. This has never been experienced before in Ethiopia, except for AAPO. To mention a few of such organizations, NaMA, Amhara Students’ Union, Amhara Youth Association, Amhara Bank, Amhara Scholars’ Council, United Amhara Charity and Development Association, Amhara Insurance and others can be mentioned.

4.6 Summary

This chapter discussed the notion of Amhara(ness), its historical trajectories, and its current dynamics. As a contested term Amhara refers to different things such as place name, ethnic name, religion, etc. The connotation of Amhara also varies from a supra-ethnic melting pot of identities to oppressor, cultural hegemonic, *neftegna*, settler, etc. in contemporary Ethiopian politics. Amhara is also the only term that required an official address by the head of Ethiopian

state as to what it is and is not. In the early years of the Transitional Period (1992-94) the term has also incited debate to determine its category.

The concept of Amharaness has historically been linked to the notion of Ethiopianness. For certain individuals and groups, the two concepts are perceived to be synonymous. Nevertheless, it is imperative to subject such a broad assertion to critical scrutiny, taking into account all elements that are pertinent to comparing the two identities. In the context of ethnic nationalist organizations, the attribution of Ethiopianness to the Amhara group serves the function of legitimizing the “national oppression thesis” of towards a specific ethnic group.

The emergence of Amharaness sentiment in contemporary discourse can be attributed to the Italian colonial policy during its occupation of Ethiopia. This has been further nurtured in the writings and activism of the ESM and its byproduct ethno-nationalist movements, and was eventually institutionalized in post-1991 Ethiopia. Throughout these years, the Amhara national identity has been refuted and contested. A strong provincial identity prevailed in the TPLF/EPRDF Amhara Region. Historically, power rivalry characterized the relationships of the Gondar, Gojjam, Shoa, and Wollo nobilities. Supra-ethnic Ethiopianness assembles these provinces, the ideals of Amharaness that transcend provincialism exist in the shadows, awaiting the "kiss of politics" (Minogue, 1993).

In the early 1990s, the AAPO attempted to mobilize the Amhara. Indeed, withstanding the TPLF/EPRDF suppression and conspiracy, it has succeeded in luring support from the disgruntled Amhara elites and setting the stage for the future political struggle. In the meantime, the surrogate of the TPLF, ANDM, without a viable opposition political party, single-handedly ruled the Amhara Region. The party played an instrumental role in inculcating hatred and overlooking the sufferings the Amhara are going through or have undergone. These assemblages of grievances and "othering" exhibited in terms of homogenization, pejoration, suppression, and silencing call for a reverse discourse to sustain the survival and preservation of the identity of the Amhara.

Amhara national identity is a counter-discourse to repulse the hegemonic anti-Amhara narratives. The construction from "outside" is not merely accepted undigested; a new discourse was

established. Apart from the shared sense of "victimhood", a commonly shared foundation for Amharaness is being built. Perhaps nationalism, as a double-edged sword, may serve the function of fostering in further development of collective identification as Amharaness. Ethnic national identities are continuously negotiated and the political landscape also plays a profound role. Hence, the political developments at national level and the the discourse within Amhara nationalism also have critical influence on Amhara nationness. The next Chapter examines the role that political discourses and narratives played in the emergence of Amhara nationalism in Ethiopia.

Chapter Five: The rise of Amhara nationalism: discourses and counter-discourses

5.1. Introduction

The last chapter explored the discursive construction of Amhara identity in light of the embedded nationalist discourses. Expanding on the previous chapter, this chapter delves into multiple factors that contributed to the emergence of Amhara nationalism. Amhara nationalism in Ethiopia emerged out of a constellation of deep-rooted and proximate factors. It is, therefore, the purpose of this chapter to address how dominant and contested political discourses shaped and contributed to the rise of Amhara nationalism. In the following section, the underlying discursive frameworks in light of their development, justifications, and trajectories that contributed to the origin and development of Amhara nationalism are thoroughly discussed. The chapter starts by addressing the origin of the notion of national oppression discourse by situating it in the second Italian invasion, circa 1935–41. The chapter also outlines the evolution of the political discourse, which eventually ascended to a hegemonic field through the years of the Ethiopian Student Movement (ESM), the establishment of ethnic-based political parties, the socialist revolution, and ethnic-based federalism.

The chapter also discusses the emergence of the Amhara counter-discourse to the existing dominant discourses. The chapter argues Amhara nationalism as a counter-discourse by reversing the existing what nationalists call anti-Amhara discourses such as “oppressor”, “neftegna”, “settler”, etc. The trajectories of Amhara nationalism along with the overarching events happening in national and regional politics have also been given due emphasis in the analysis.

5.2. The national oppression discourse: roots and developments

The recent rise of Amhara nationalism has been attributed to the widely accepted discursive practice of what is called “anti-Amhara” discourse. The genesis of the discourse for some is an

Austrian diplomat Prochaska's⁷⁰ (1935) work, the first Italian invasion and Italian Colonial Policy during the years of occupation. Looking at for instance “Abyssinia: The Powder Barrel”, that loathes and spurs an anti-Amhara sentiment was first appeared in Germany. This work was translated into Amharic titled “ኢትዮጵያ የባሩድ በር ማል” by Debebe Eshetu in 2015. Noticeably, the work endorsed the existence of diverse *ethnic* groups in Ethiopia, though being ruled under the iron fist of the Amhara. The thesis of the paper is to convince Italy or Europeans to launch the holy “*mission civilisatrice*” in Ethiopia and to “emancipate” the oppressed ethnic groups from the “yoke of Amhara domination” (Prochaska, 1935; Techane, 2018).

In contrast, the National Movement of Amhara (NaMA) Manifesto situates the genesis of anti-Amhara narratives to the first Italian colonial aggression. This highlights the idea is exogenous—imported and cultivated from the West, yet embraced impetuously and permeated the Ethiopian political dispensations throughout the 2nd half of the 20th Century. In this regard, Belete commented:

The Anti-Amhara narratives date back to the time of European Colonialism. A generally agreed upon pursuit to declare the supremacy of colonial powers over Africa had only been found incomplete because Ethiopia remained unconquered. While searching the reasons for that particularly after the battle of Adwa, it was found out that the patriotism and bravery of the Amhara people was the profound setback. This aspect was heavily researched upon and even formally documented.⁷¹

With the second Italian invasion and brief occupation (1936-1941), anti-Amhara discourses⁷² obtained further institutional forms with the colonial policy. Italian colonial policy towards the Amhara was built on “fomenting ethnic hatred”, “elimination”, “expelling from non-Amhara Governorates”, “de-Amharaziation such as repelling the use of Amharic and changing toponyms”, and “pro-Islam policy as anti-Amhara and Orthodox Christianity”. The massacre of Debre Libano and the execution of Abune Petros are two outstanding examples of the anti-Orthodox Christianity policy (Haile Mariam, 1988; Campbell, 2014). As a colonial power, Italy, manipulated every facet of cultural and socio-political predicaments of Ethiopia to “divide and

⁷⁰ This man was posted in Addis Ababa as Austria’s Counsel General and served for two years and was expelled in 1934 just two years before Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1936. The Italians had translated his works into Italian as “Abissinia Pericolo Nero” meaning “Abyssinia the Black Threat or Danger.”

⁷¹ Ethiopian Herald (2019), Interview with Belete Molla, Now Chairperson of NaMA, <https://press.et/herald/?p=1262> (last accessed November 10, 2022)

⁷² For them, the most important adversaries were the Christian Amhara, whom they saw as being the cultural, political, and ethnical linchpin of the Ethiopian Empire, which they intended to destroy (Prunier, 2010).

rule” *Africa Orientale Italiana* without resistance. Indeed, the brief occupation adeptly “shook medieval institutions and a traditional way of life” in Ethiopia (Sbacchi, 1975: 462).

Italian policy contributed in essentializing and permeating ethnic identity— new in the Ethiopian political context. As Yates (2020: 4) wrote, for so long “Christianity, the Amharic language, and the Solomonic dynasty were privileged” in Ethiopia unless construed in ethnic terms. Animosity and continuous wars were present in the Ethiopian empire, but never were interpreted strictly in the sense of ethnic warfare (Bahru, 2002; for differing arguments see Merera, 2003). The Italian colonial policy in Ethiopia had a significant impact on the development of ethnic identities. This was further intensified by the “defunct assimilation policy” (Alemseged, 2004). As a result, there was a noticeable increase in the mobilization of primordial identities after Haile Selassie I was reinstated. For Yinebeb (2019: 126), the Emperor “... used the state machinery as an alleged tool of cultural genocide against *subjugated peoples* by promoting the culture and history of the Abyssinian people through the so-called *Amharization* project.” *Amharization* is presumed as learning the Amharic language, assimilation into the Abyssinian culture, and adopting Orthodox Christianity. In this regard, Abune Petros of Ethiopia Orthodox Tewahido Church explains;

The radical ethnonational groups have labeled the Church and Amharic-speaking peoples as enemies. When they came to power, they began teaching their subjects to despise the Church and Amharic. Why is the Orthodox Church reviled? There are two reasons for this. For starters, they believe the Church has collaborated closely with the monarchical regime. Second, they believe the Church preaches about Ethiopianness and has been labeled as “unitarist”. All of the muddled consequences we are witnessing now are the result of hate teachings that have occurred over the last 27 years.⁷³

Furthermore, Haile (2017), in his critique of the national oppression thesis, argued that to promote their colonial goals in Ethiopia, European powers used the racist idea of group-based oppression. However, in the 1960s, left-leaning Ethiopian university students with little interest in or understanding of and any interest in knowing the cultures or doing ethnography of Ethiopian history spread this myth as reality. While Ethiopia, like many of its neighbors, has a turbulent past of poor governance, national oppression has never been a feature of the country's political culture. This argument, in fact, could raise a number of questions as well as outright rejections. For the better part of the last 50 plus years, the land tenure system in the south and

⁷³ Abune Petros, Interview with ETOC, Addis Ababa, Nov 16, 2021, Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tksjcEhohpc> (last accessed November 10, 2022)

southwest highlands was construed as a feature of “national oppression”. *Derg’s* attempt of “land reform” policy is presented as evidence to substantiate the existence of the oppression. Even this perspective is predicated on the notion that a single national group conspicuously through the existing state machinery grabbed land or alienated the ethnic or national groups access to land.

Ethnic nationalists such as TPLF and OLF attempted to anchor and draw their origin to the First *Woyane* rebellion of 1943 and later through the formation of the Mecha-Tuluma Self-help Association in 1964 and the Bale uprising (1964-70). “Legitimate regional autonomy” was the reason behind the outbreak of the First *Woyane* rebellion against the Shoa Amhara dominant regime. “It was a precedent in the history of the country and created a regional consciousness and an ‘example’ of the sort that was carried over to the young generation” (Aregawi, 2009: 373). Similarly, the Oromo elites felt discrimination in the Haile Selassie I’s government unequivocally endorsed Amhara domination. In a letter written by Mamo Mazamir to the Bale Oromo Uprising leaders on September 10, 1965, he mentioned “... oppressed masses in Ethiopia Empire against the hegemony of the Amhara and their allies...” (as cited in Mohammed, 1998: 77). In the same vein, the problem associated with Eritrean federation has also fostered the struggle in Eritrea. Kiflu (1993: 52) recalled “...more than anything else, that highlighted the problem of national contradictions in Ethiopia and compelled the student movement to confront the issue.” Messay (2003) also links the Eritrean question with “the rise of ethnicity in Ethiopia as a contamination of legitimate grievances with racist views through the agency of Eritrea.”

The ESM of the 1960s and 70s against Haile Selassie I (feudalism, imperialism) regime flared up out of the assemblage of oppression (national, class and colonial) (Balsivik, 1985). As Cudd (2006) posits “oppression” involves institutionalized physical violence, economic exploitation and psychological harm inflicted upon one group by another. The students’ activism with Marxism-Leninism credo either “out of genuineness and sincerity” to fight the prevailing injustices (Bahru, 2014: 280) or due to cultural dislocation (Messay, 2008) defined Ethiopian enigma as “national contradiction”. It goes without mentioning, the idea of “tribalism”, “regionalism”, “nation”, and “nationalities” as the prevailing problem of Ethiopia had never been embraced unanimously in ESM. Furious deliberations that went to the point of split in student’s union had occurred on the “national question” in Ethiopia, albeit the radical group that backed

Tilahun Takele's argumentation established resonance in the post-1970s. In this regard, Kiflu (1993: 77) prudently asserted, "Accepting the right of nations to self-determination up to and including secession became the litmus test that characterized the true revolutionary".

The ESM internally or overseas never brought the Amhara domination thesis till the late 1960s. Alemu (2015) pointed out the question of regionalism/nationalities brought to the fore in the students' activism in 1969—to be precise in the 1969 ESUNA 17th Congress in Philadelphia and Wallilegn Mekonnen's article. Unprecedented interest was given to the national contradiction to explain the Ethiopian problem as never before. Wallilegn (1969) wrote "a discussion on the issue of nation/tribalism has been going on in student circle for a while" but brought to the forefront in 1969. However, an informant begs to disagree with the widely held belief the article is Wallilegn's work. He continued and ask the following consideration to label the article as his:

He is an undergraduate student with an Eritrean girlfriend whose father was a powerful government official at the time secretly working with the separatist Eritrean organization, which is backed by Italy and the Arabs. Furthermore, all of the primary arguments in the essay are essentially identical to those in Prochaska's book.⁷⁴

The editorial note of the November 17, 1969, *Struggle*, declared that "the revolutionary ESM has now reached such a high level of militancy and consciousness... is capable of mobilizing the actual and potential revolutionary forces in Ethiopia." This year ushered a landmark in the ESM, the turn of the students' movement to the birth of Marxist-Leninist political parties (1969-74). As "agitate, integrate, mobilize and struggle" were the maxim of the movement, it is plausible to hypothesize nationalist agitation was considered a viable modality to mobilize the mass in the nationalist struggle against the perceived or real "Amhara domination".

The students' union began amplifying the Amhara domination and the need of countering through their journals *Struggle*, *Challenge*, *Tatek* and others (ESUNA, August/1972; Tilahun, 1971; Tumtu, 1971; ESUE, 1973). By so doing, the ESM revitalized the "ethnic factor" in Ethiopia politics by stringently questing solutions to the question of "land" and "national contradiction". In this sense, the privileged group, for the students', was the "Amhara" relishing economic and cultural dominance in modern Ethiopian history (Tilahun, 1970, ESUE, 1973). The Amhara students played a prominent role along with their comrades from other nationalities

⁷⁴ KIA, telephone interview, October 2, 2020

in resonating these questions. This has made the recent Amhara nationalism an inter-generational struggle in which the prominent Amhara students active in ESUE, ESUNA and other student unions and political parties are accused of betraying their own people. Nonetheless, the Amhara domination of the rest of Ethiopia is, therefore, a cultural, economic, and political one and is justified in Marxist-Leninist parlance. However, for the large part, such discourses of Amhara domination were restricted to the students and elites. Ethnic nationalist consciousness evolved in the public through time with the agency of political organizations such as TPLF, EPLF, OLF, EPRP (1975), MEISON (nd) etc.

As Amhara Prosperity Party higher official remarked:

The dissembled narration of Amhara domination took root during the students' activism of the 1960s and 1970s. They never for a moment reckoned the peasant Amhara living in Gondar, Wello, Gojjam, or Shoa led a destitute life like the rest of Ethiopians. For a rational person, it is sad to liken the poor peasants to the aristocrats of the period from various ethnic groups.

Teshale (1995) similarly commiserated the situation of the Amhara homeland remained backward and has not been excused from the infamous feudal exploitation (see also Gebru, 1977; Bahru, 1991). Prior to the publication of Walleign's article, Abdulmejid Hussien (1968: 11) to clear the confusion for those who feel the oppressors are the Amhara wrote:

... looking closely, one finds that the government (Haile Selassie I's) is not composed of Amharas only. They are not also the only ones who are seen exploiting the masses. What we see today in the government are persons not only who are Amharas but also Oromos, Tigreans, Guraghes, Somalis and others. They are a group of people who come from different parts of the country and from "tribal" groups of a diverse nature. This setup may be observed not only in the government but also in almost all walks of life in the country.

With the coming of Derg to power, following the 1974 Revolution, the question of Land and Nationalities was given due attention. In 1975, with the aim to halt a feudal exploitation instituted "Public Ownership of Rural Lands Proclamation No. 31/1975". What is more, Derg officially declared the right of Ethiopian nationalities to develop their language and cultures in addition to acknowledging the self-determination question in principle. It also established the Institute for the Study of Ethiopian Nationalities (ISEN) (see Abbink, 2011). Before the ISEN, in 1955 Ministry of Public Life Development recorded 81 languages in Ethiopia.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Ministry of Public Life Development, Languages spoken in Ethiopia, May 15, 1955, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Reiterating Abdulmejid's statement, Mengistu Hailemariam strongly condemns and is weary of repetitively hearing the narration of "Amhara as an oppressor, exploiter, and autocratic figure who perpetrated every kind of wickedness in Ethiopia." The President went on to admit Derg's role in fanning the question of nationalities in the early years of the revolution in the reification of anti-Amhara discourses.⁷⁶ Comparing the initial conception of "Amhara domination" in Ethiopia, for Merera (2003) the current presumption has gone way off from its 1960s and 70s initial gist. This essentially stems from years of propagation of Amhara oppression thesis to mobilize support by various ethnic nationalists, the hegemonic credo in the nationalism scholarship, and the role of the media in sustaining the thesis and institutional platforms in the post-1991 Ethiopia.⁷⁷

Looking at the stringent position of TPLF/EPRDF regime towards the "nationalities question", Getachew (1992) also wrote, "My concern is how to convince a group of wretched Amharic speakers from, for example, Menz or Dembiya that they are responsible for these crimes." The TPLF/EPRDF as a radical wing and intellectual offspring of the ESM espoused the legacy of the ideals of self-determination and including up to secession in the ethnic federal arrangement. "The federal constitution unequivocally acknowledged in the preamble "historically unjust relationships" in Ethiopia suggesting the Amhara benefited from the previous regimes."⁷⁸ In contrast, the TPLF/EPRDF argued the ethnic factor during the insurgency period was more tactical than strategic.

5.2.1. Proliferation of ethnic nationalist organizations and the "Amhara enemy" narrations

The rise of ethnic nationalist organizations in the 1970s to ensure autonomy or secession within and from Ethiopian polity was backed up with contested narrative but against common agency to the ancient regime. In his speech, Desalegn Chanie, in the inaugural ceremony of NaMA recalled,

Over the past 50 years, the unfounded argument of students' activism and their Marxist-Leninist nationalist organizations on our country's socio-economic and historical interactions has heralded

⁷⁶ Mengistu Hailemariam, Last Speech, Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5TXvOpp5VYY> (last accessed November 10, 2022)

⁷⁷ FGD-II, October 12, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia

⁷⁸ KIC, interview, March 2, 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

a phony conclusion, i.e., “national oppression”. The ESM gave credence to, and helped spread, the concept of “national oppression.”

Such presumptions recently are taken-for-granted among Amhara nationalists in their way proposing a competing discourse within the same social field. This could be construed in essence as the beginning of a discursive change or challenge the existing dominant discourse of Amhara domination.

As a direct offspring of the students’ activism MEISON and EPRP identified that the Amhara nation dominated the rest of nationalities politically, economically, culturally and linguistically (MEISON Political Program, 1968; EPRP Political Program, 1975). EPRP and MEISON have similar arguments on the “national oppression thesis”. As Alemu (2015: 9) aptly put it; “The Marxist-Leninist parties transformed the student movement to become an instrument, vehicle, and front for the Marxist-Leninist parties.” Journals such as *Challenge*, *Teglachen*, *Combat*, *Tataq*, *Struggle*, and *democracia* were instrumental in the political parties’ utterances on “Amhara domination” and Ethiopia being a “prison of nationalities” and laying a strong foundation in the anti-Amhara discourses after the Italian Colonial Policy.

Amhara students have played a significant role in the ESM activism, particularly in organizations such as the EPRP and MEISON. For instance, Walleign Mekonnen⁷⁹, an Amhara from Wollo, is considered an embarrassment to the Amhara nationalists. A member of NaMA condemned “Walleign as short sighted who failed to foresee the repercussions his article and thoughts would wreak havoc upon the Amhara in the long run.”⁸⁰ A columnist in Barara (2020) magazine similarly attacked “the generation”, particularly Walleign Mekonnen for unleashing the specter on Amhara:

The people of Amhara have become public flesh under the shadow of Ethiopia's national politics in the eye of biting dogs. ... That evil act [national oppression] started as a wildfire. Walleign Mekonnen was one of the pioneer selectees for such politics. It is a pity that his article is a source of the highly aggravating hate-mongering speech to this day.

The aftermath of 1974 revolution and endorsement of “national oppression thesis”, the Amhara elite faced with new political reality, yet a blessing and curse. A blessing since Ethiopian history

⁷⁹ Walleign Mekonnen never identified himself as Amhara, however, Kiflu (1993), Merera (2003), Bahru (2014) named him as an Amhara.

⁸⁰ KIW, interview, August 12, 2019, Gondar, Ethiopia

does not force them to struggle for cultural and linguistic rights; a curse because they cannot raise an Amhara banner in a liberation battle. As a result, they opted to fight under the banner of Ethiopian political organizations (see Merara, 2004). However, the establishment of AAPO in the early 1990s and Amhara Democratic Forces Movement (ADFM) in the early 2000s, and NaMA in 2018 contradict the above assertion. In fact, identity-cum-territory, socio-economic and political factors engendered the mobilization and establishment of the Amhara along ethnic organizations.

To overcome what they call century old repression TPLF, OLF and others resort to “modern guerrilla warfare” guided by the Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong values with the support of the oppressed people. “To invite the mass into history” (Nairn, 1977), they appealed to the recollection of the “glorious past” and the wretched present. As Wodak (2018: 414) posits “*history and the topos of history* are often mobilized in order to create national mythologies and *ad hoc* official narratives, which in turn serve to legitimate and reproduce national cultures and identities.”

Moreover, the formation of radical insurgent ethnic nationalists such as TPLF and OLF in the 1970s shared the Amhara as enemy of their respective ethnic groups and shall be deterred (see TPLF Manifesto, 1976; OLF Manifesto, 1974). Lencho Leta, a former leader of OLF, while commenting on the problem of Amhara nationalism, argues “nationalism without an adversary or enemy will not succeed. So, it needs to invent one.”⁸¹ For some, this construction of enemy image aimed to inspire and mobilize new recruits to the ethnic nationalism organizations, hence solely have an instrumental role (see Aregawi, 2009; Mulugeta, 2019). However, for the Amhara nationalists, “the mobilization strategy has an inherent presumption of Amhara hate that received resonance as a guiding political narrative throughout the last 50 years.”⁸²

The TPLF (1976) and OLF (1976) political programs endorsed the Amhara relished hegemonic dominance in the imperial regimes. Initially, both fronts fancied to establish an independent

⁸¹ Lencho Bati, Interview, November 10, 2022, Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r10l3KETaTo> (last accessed April, 2023)

⁸² KIW, interview, August 12, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia

“nation-state” to overcome the Amhara oppression and Ethiopian colonial empire. As Amhara Prosperity Party official commented;

The TPLF Manifesto played a principal role in the making of the hegemonic anti-Amhara discourse in Ethiopia (c. 1970s onwards). It categorically declared the Amhara as an “oppressor nation”. Since its inception, TPLF disdains and restlessly worked to humiliate the Amhara in different facets of their lives. In post-1991 Ethiopia, the TPLF/EPRDF indulged in inflicting embarrassment upon the Amhara in every corner of the country.

A senior politician of an opposition party, further, remarked;

The ongoing maladies the Amhara experiencing stemmed from the political program of the TPLF and OLF. In TPLF’s appraisal of Ethiopia’s predicaments, “national contradiction” is presumed to recapitulate the prevailing situation that all problems proliferated. The “Amhara national oppression” engendered the dehumanization and abject poverty in Tigray. As a result, TPLF has pledged to deliver woes to the Amhara in the years to come unless the Amhara nation halts its oppression.⁸³

To this day, “it never publicly showed remorse for the anti-Amhara statements included in the Manifesto.”⁸⁴ The Manifesto, however, has been repudiated within the TPLF politburo (Young, 1997).

Unfortunately for TPLF, it was widely thought that widespread hostility had grown between the Tigrayan populace and the Amhara (Revolt, 1968, as reported in Young, 1997). This proves that TPLF used fear and hostility to rally the Tigrayan mass behind their cause. Throughout the 17 years of insurgency, the TPLF used the same strategy (i.e., anti-Amhara discourses) through songs, poetry, plays, and cadre training manuals to bolster the morale of the soldiers (see Aregawi, 2009). Songs full of hatred for the Amhara were played on Ethiopian state television when the TPLF/EPRDF came to power. “You valiant Tigray warrior, march and haunt down that Amhara” is a line from one of the various songs, roughly translated from the original.⁸⁵ To paraphrase what Kundera (2007) has said, the question is how music could be developed that so enthusiastically incites hostility and homicidal foolishness. Was it an innocent mistake made by inexperienced TPLF fighters? According to the observations of one informant from the Amhara Democratic Forces Movement (ADFM) political party;

⁸³ KIM, interview, December 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, see also TPLF (1976)

⁸⁴ KIM, interview, December 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

⁸⁵ KIM, telephone interview, March 23, 2022, Washington DC, USA

Derogatory names such as chauvinist, donkey (hadigi), and others to the Amhara take their roots in the political program and mobilization strategies of the TPLF. So is dehumanization used to galvanize revulsion towards Amhara (although practically to *Derg*), which served TPLF to persevere the odds of the insurgency struggle.⁸⁶

In advancing the nationalist agenda, TPLF from the outset declared the existence of an independent Tigray nation up to the end of the Axumite Empire and revived with the ascent of Yohannes IV⁸⁷ to power in 1872 (TPLF Manifesto, 1976). The infatuation with the rise of nations in Ethiopia is attributed to the conclusion of “the transition from feudalism to capitalism” (Tilahun, 1971), and so TPLF heedlessly construed Tigray as a “nation” (see Tumtu, 1971).

A young activist, in Bahir Dar, associates “the First *Woyane* as the creation of the contingency of the Italian colonial policy and infuriation over the re-institution of Haile Selassie I deprivation of the chieftaincy position of Italian collaborators.”⁸⁸ As the heir of the first *Woyane*, the TPLF proclaimed to struggle for the cause the first *Woyane* embarked on. However, the leader, Hailemariam Redda, of the first *Woyane* collaborated with Italians during the occupation period (1936–41) and offered Blatta and later *Chiqa Shume* leadership rank (Gebru, 1984). By extension, the TPLF’s political program towards Amhara has evolved from the first *Woyane* to Italian colonial policy. In contrast, as Prunier (2010) wrote, between 1941 and 1943, Ethiopia was a chaotic combination of its shattered traditions and its attempts at political modernization. Interpreting the *raison d’être* of the First *Woyane* as the inheritance of anti-Amhara policy of Italy obstructs a holistic understanding of the whole essence of the rebellion.

Overall, in the realm of semi-colonial, feudal, and imperialist Ethiopia, the ESM and the paraphernalia political organizations arise from the backyards of the *ancie regime* to recite the panacea of Ethiopia as people’s democracy, socialism, and anti-Amhara discourse. Political parties competed over the scientific way (Marxist-Leninist) of addressing the Ethiopian problem; in the meantime, the generation paid dearly for failing to weaken their “irreconcilable” difference due to their adventurist looks. The interpretation of the imperial regime and the solutions put forward were not only kept in vain but also incorrectly uttered even in the philosophy and praxis of Marxism-Leninism. However, the Amhara domination thesis has eventually become

⁸⁶ KIT, interview, December 3, 2020, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia.

⁸⁷ In practice, a cursory inspection of Kassa Mercha’s coronation name, i.e., Yohannes IV, bares TPLF’s naivety to discern the Emperor belong to a long line of successive Solomonic dynasty in Ethiopia.

⁸⁸ KIT, interview, December 4, 2020, Bahir dar, Ethiopia

hegemonic in defining the political behaviors and actions of both *Derg* and later TPLF/EPRDF. These statements are the products of discursive practices that are, in turn, governed by historically contingent formation rules (Foucault, 1968). The national oppression thesis incarnates the idea of unity and transcendental self-hood and gives identity to the revolution and its successive interpretations. Over-determination of the students' activism to institute radical change in Ethiopian politics, though theoretically they set it right, is practically short of how these anticipated changes will be executed.

5.1.2. Institutionalization of Anti-Amhara Discourse: Post-1991 Ethiopia

When certain discourses are anchored in institutions, they can be called hegemonic or dominant (Laclau and Mouffe, 2014). After the fall of *Derg*, the TPLF/EPRDF took steps to further institutionalize the "national oppression thesis" as a political principle to determine the "re-making" or "unmaking" of Ethiopia. In fact, the remaking of Ethiopia along ethnic lines was partly concluded before the TPLF/EPRDF controlled Addis Ababa (see TPLF, 1976). As one member of NaMA pointed out:

The Peace and Democracy Conference that took place from July 1st to July 5th in 1991 conferred legal status to the national oppression thesis. The Conference served as the fundamental basis that shaped the overall trajectory of the Ethiopian political system. The TPLF/EPRDF, as the prevailing party, enforced a "victor's peace" and the discussion with easily baked parties was sham or a window dress only aimed at solidifying their hard won victory.⁸⁹

It is worthy of reiterating the legitimacy of governments in the post-Haile Selassie I hinge on addressing the question of land and nationalities. *Derg* initially succeeded in silencing student opposition through the nationalization of land (the 1975 Land Decree) and failed in the last. Learning from its predecessor, TPLF/EPRDF was infatuated with solving once and for all the "nationalities question" for different reasons.

A member of Amhara Scholars Council, in this regard, argues;

The TPLF, with its anti-Amhara political program and ideology, influenced the institutional blueprints of the country, including the Transitional Charter and later the 1995 FDRE Constitution. A cursory look into the preamble attests to the cardinal principle the constitution leans on: "national oppression"; "rectifying historically unjust relationships".⁹⁰

⁸⁹ KIB, interview, April 21, 2021, Gondar, Ethiopia

⁹⁰ KIA, interview, March 4, 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

The Amhara Youth Association (AYA) Chairperson sees “such ahistoricity in categorizing themselves as oppressed running in the veins of those ethnic nationalists such as TPLF, OLF, ONLF, and others who feel ‘inferiority complex’ and are fixated on pointing their finger at the Amhara as culpable for all problems in Ethiopia”.⁹¹ Moreover, “historically unjust relationships” is defined in terms of oppressor and oppressed national groups dichotomy. This claim has been drawn from the following circumstantial premises:

- (i) Ethiopia statehood is 100 years old (starting from Menelik II).
- (ii) The imperial rule is ethnically “Amhara” for “Amhara”.
- (iii) Speaking Amharic and following Orthodox Christianity are construed as essentially Amhara culture and there is an Amhara ethnic group *per se*.

The circumstantial premises should be critically interrogated, however. Here is the why as one informant argues;

Why 100? Why did they remain fixated on Menelik II? Why not Tewodros II? Why not Yohannes IV? Modernization was initiated by Tewodros and continued by Yohannes IV; why do they start from the Minilek II Era? In my opinion, the reason is to demonize Amhara and legalize their ethnic oppression thesis. This is just because of the victory of Adawa over the West/colonizers. It was Minilek II who stopped them for the first time. Why do they not start with Yohannes IV, considering the cases of Boru Meda, if they were interested in religious cases; Gojjam, if they were interested in ethnicity? because he is from Tigary. The agenda is given by the West because of their shameful defeat at Adawa. Minilik II was not the first king to march to the north, south, east, and west. There were movements from the south to the north and east. The West wants to tie history to their own advantage, and they articulate an anti-Ethiopia, anti-Amhara, and anti-Orthodox agenda, coach "Ethiopian students", and produce lots of liberation fronts directly or indirectly sponsored by the West. All anti-Amhara agendas are just coined, instructed, promoted, and implemented by the West.⁹²

The above argument cannot be altogether dismissed, yet the claims also made that the ESM lacked what Kant (1963) calls enlightenment—"Dare to know! Have the courage to use your own reason yourself!". Be that as it may, it has become compulsory to rectify the prevailing "national contradiction" by remaking the "administrative boundaries" of Ethiopian polity in light of the "ethnic cartography" produced by the Institute for the Study of Ethiopian Nationalities (ISEN) (Abbink, 2011: 599).

⁹¹ KIZ, interview, November 21, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia

⁹² KIA, telephone interview, October 2, 2020, Woldiya, Ethiopia

“The remaking of Ethiopia post-1991 has been concluded without the representation of the Amhara, the largest ethnic group”⁹³ (see Chapter 6). This has shortly incited discussion on representation and ethnic identities between Meles, Mekonnen, Andreas, and Mesfin (see Chapter 4). In this regard, an informant argues;

Apart from the legal substance, the decisive part of the FDRE Constitution is the spirit that guided its draft and ratification, which is anti-Amhara. People mistook the problems the constitution has with Amhara with the process that excluded Amhara from its making. So, it was the beginning of the institutionalization and crystallization of anti-Amhara discourse.⁹⁴

In contrast, with the emerging “ethnic party” structures, to fill the lacuna of representation of the Amhara “under the aegis of the ruling EPRDF” (Abbink, 2011: 599), EPDM (later ANDM⁹⁵) came to the fore. Tefera Mamo, a former member of the EPDM, veteran of Ethiopia National Defence Force, and Head of the Amhara Special Forces (ASF), in this regard, recalls,

Despite the multi-national nature of the EPDM movement, from the earliest days of the armed struggle and our first contact with the TPLF, the TPLF influenced EPDM to represent the Amhara when the struggle succeeded in overthrowing the Derg regime.⁹⁶

In its attempt to mobilize support from the Amhara mass, the party organized a conference on the "Oppressed Amhara Nation's Peace Conference" in Bahir Dar city in December 1991 (Addis Zemen, 1991). This presupposes the classification of the "Amhara nation" into "oppressed" and "oppressors.". The party's conviction of the dialectical labeling of the Amhara aimed to convince the public of the prevalence of "Amhara oppression," to which the Amhara themselves were not spared, and in turn mobilize support for the party. In this vein, an executive member of NaMA downplays the above argument:

The proposition “Amhara” are “oppressed” like other NNPs in Ethiopia, indeed was sheer hypocrisy of the TPLF/EPRDF. Because the banal flagging of hate mongering rhetoric towards Amhara occupied the state-controlled media, legal documents (starting from the Constitution), party magazines such as Addis Ra'ie, the curricula, etc.

The anti-Amhara discourse that emerged in the years after 1991 started to assume a hegemonic shape as a result of the establishment of such daily discursive standards by the media and educational curriculum. Gramsci (1971) made the observation that hegemony is fostered by the

⁹³ KIZ, interview, January 12, 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

⁹⁴ KIA, interview, January 10, 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

⁹⁵ The party officially changed its name to ANDM in 1993.

⁹⁶ Tefera Mamo, Interview with ESAT, Nov 7, 2018, Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kanZGCUyiWY> (last accessed May 2022)

media business industry. In a similar vein, Foucault (1971) made a comment on the significance of education in the process of transmitting certain discourses in order to mold the thoughts and beliefs of the next generation.

In an interview with Abebe Gelaw (ESAT TV), Professor John Markakis recalled the challenges of building an Amhara party in Ethiopia and the message he gave to the members of the ANDM at their party anniversary celebration. In his own words;

Amhara, to the rest of Ethiopia, means *neftegna*. It is your friend, the TPLF, which is constantly saying this— Amhara, *neftegna*, and feudal. And, you first clear up this with your friend. Because, they are causing you a great deal of damage.

However, Markakis overlooked the fact that ANDM is a Trojan horse of the TPLF that never denounced the account of the *ancien regime* as *neftegna* born from the Amhara. The ANDM (1994: 1-2) program states:

Born and grew in Amhara, the rulers of *neftegna* system oppressed and exploited through their double-edged swords. They have forcibly trampled on other nations and nationalities outside the Amhara region, especially in the South, West, Southwest, East and South East, by establishing strong administrative cities and exploiting their economic resources.

The political party that appeared to represent and toil for the Amhara cause becomes instrumental in the burgeoning anti-Amhara discourse. In their own words, ANDM higher officials through the years decried the Amhara as an "oppressor". For instance, as a senior member of ANDM recalls, "on the issue of national oppression, Hilawe Yosef once furiously commented, "Others [Europeans] crossed the sea and developed their country; the people who ruled this country in our name [Amhara] did not dream of Amhara".⁹⁷ For a former ANDM member;

People at the higher ladder of the party have, from the beginning, paid their allegiance to the TPLF, and they indeed are TPLF. So, it is naive to expect these people to strive for the interests of Amhara. That is why the Amhara never has a genuine representative these days.⁹⁸

“ANDM, from the beginning, was imposed upon the Amhara. It played an active and collaborative role in the hegemonic strategies of the TPLF to instill the narratives in the eyes of

⁹⁷ KIJ, interview, May 25, 2021, Gondar, Ethiopia. The informant has showed the researcher a recorded video of the comment made by Hilawe Yosef at the ANDM meeting.

⁹⁸ KIA, interview, June 12, 2019, Gondar, Ethiopia

other ethnic groups.”⁹⁹ In political parties panel discussion organized at the Africa Union, Getachew Reda, a TPLF Central Committee member, sarcastically said, "When disgruntled politicians wake up after 27 years and claim that they were not involved during the constitutional making, we will not allow them to reject the document." "How a constitution that established the Amhara region is labeled as anti-Amhara," he continued.¹⁰⁰

By changing names, erasing history, and erecting memorial monuments to denigrate the Amhara, the anti-Amhara political dispensation has gotten worse. As an example, Dejazmach Belay Zeleke Airport in Bahir Dar is renamed Ginbot 20, sub-cities and schools in the post-1991 period were given names that embody "revolutionary democracy" and "developmental state" ideology.¹⁰¹ In fact, previously, Derg in the post-revolution period also renamed places such as Meskel Square to Abiyot Square to scrub the memories of the imperial era. As Gramsci (1971: 181) wrote, hegemony requires “not only a unison of economic and political aims but also intellectual and moral unity.” The discourse of national oppression thesis in Ethiopia, as discussed, amalgamated an overall unison of politico-legal and intellectual apparatus and politico-ethical gauge in guiding Ethiopian political dispensation.

5.2. Amhara Nationalism as a “counter discourse”

The perception of repulsing the century-old “Amhara domination” has laid the foundation for the rise of ethnic nationalists and multi-national political organizations in Ethiopia. In fact, a cursory appraisal of their struggle, political programs, and mobilization strategies could be summed up using the Foucauldian concept of "counter discourse". For Deleuze and Foucault (1977: 209), "counter discourse is a practical engagement in political struggles." To defy the prevailing economic, socio-cultural, and political systems of the imperial and Derg regimes, counter-discourses inevitably become discourses. In this sense, the constructed discourses not only assail the ruling elites of the regimes but are also directed at what they call the "Amhara nation" or the *nefetegna*, settler, or *timiketegna* (chauvinist). It is worthy to reiterate that the discourses act as a litmus test in determining the "ethico-political" engagements in the Ethiopian political dispensation since the ESM (see Kiflu, 1993).

⁹⁹ FGD-II, March 21, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia

¹⁰⁰ Political parties' discussion, Africa Union Hall, August 28, 2019, Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ca-bMtNKiZc&t=2591s> (last accessed May 2022)

¹⁰¹ FGD-I, April 23, 2020, Bahir dar, Ethiopia

Nonetheless, there had been confusion, at least in academia, as to who the *nefetegna*, *settler*, *timikitegna*, and “nostalgic to the ancient regime” names represent— the “Amhara” or the “Amhara elites.”¹⁰² In Ethiopia, people write the Amhara and Amhara elite as they please to refer to the imperial and *Derg* regimes (see Mohammed, 1990; Merera, 2003; Assafa, 2020). The TPLF/EPRDF and OLF also never admitted that “derogatory names” denote the Amhara people.¹⁰³ In practice,

Amhara people have been the target of assaults, forced migration, and other crimes for the better part of three decades. In Oromia, Beni Shangul Gumuz, Tigray, SNNPs, and Somali regional states, no amount of ambiguity prevents the identification of Amharas from non-Amharas for the sake of inflicting all heinous and atrocious acts.¹⁰⁴

Therefore, Amhara nationalism emerged as a reaction by embracing the specific assemblages¹⁰⁵ the anti-Amhara discourses built on throughout the 20th century, particularly the second half of the century. By doing so, deconstruct the underpinning hegemonic anti-Amhara thinking and praxis in the Ethiopian political dispensation. Desalegn Chanie explains the necessity of Amhara nationalism as:

... an endeavor to reverse ... past mistakes and try to bring the interests of our people onto the negotiating table. By doing so, the people of Amhara can engage in disciplined bargaining, with other nations and nationalities in Ethiopia and try to protect their interests.¹⁰⁶

As Foucault (1971: 89) aptly put it, “when the formerly voiceless begin to speak a language of their own making (i.e., a counter-discourse), they have begun to resist the power-seeking to oppress them.” In the same token, the “reverse discourse” in Amhara nationalism has manifested in resonating, to paraphrase Foucault (1978), the hegemonic vocabularies using the “same categories,” i.e., the aforementioned pejorative names, by which the Amhara is dubbed an enemy to the NNPs. Tezera (2021), in his briefing, pointed out that Amhara nationalism is a “reverse discourse”.

¹⁰² Amhara elite discourse presupposes the inclusion multi-ethnic groups, i.e., Amhara, Oromo, Tigray, Gurage and others.

¹⁰³ They frequently characterize politically conscious Amhara who speak up for Amhara interests, such as Professor Asrat Weldyes, as *neftegna* and *yekedimo sirate nafaki* (nostalgic to ancient regime).

¹⁰⁴ KIA, telephone interview, April 10, 2022, Washington D.C.

¹⁰⁵ *Neftegna*, *timikitegna*, and “nostalgic to ancient regime”—these are not slurs in common parlance, yet construed as derogatory by TPLF/EPRDF, OLF and other ethnic nationalism movements. Thus, the Amhara nationalists are not reclaiming the slurs as non-derogatory but take up the lexicon definitions.

¹⁰⁶ Desalegn Chanie, Interview with Addis Standard, Available at: <https://addisstandard.com/the-interview-nama-is-expected-to-be-the-guardian-of-a-fully-fledged-amhara-nationalism-dr-dessalegn-chanie/> (Accessed May 2021)

Indeed, as a “reverse discourse”, the Amhara nationalism can be construed as a “political struggle”. Political parties such as NaMA, Amhara Democratic Forces Movement¹⁰⁷ (ADFM), Amhara Survival for Ethiopia’s Unity, All Amhara People’s Organization (AAPO), All Amhara People’s Party (AAPP), Reflection Amhara Organization (RAO) and The Amhara Ghionian Movement (AGM)¹⁰⁸ began to burgeon. What is more, the proliferation of business and civic organizations as part of the institutionalization processes in Amhara resistance. But, at this juncture, two questions pop up: to what extent the “reverse discourse” has influenced public policy and opinion, provided that ethnic based carnages continued to be unabated in the era of Amhara nationalism (after the coming of “Team Lemma” to power), and why a strong political party has not thus far been established? This calls for a thorough investigation into the extant heretics in the Amhara political dispensation.

Broadly, the dynamic nationwide political atmosphere and unprecedented events continued to shape the language and intensity of the Amhara reverse discourse and going beyond. Thus far, the Amhara political struggle has undergone four critical developments.

5.2.1. The All Amhara People’s Organization (AAPO) and the idea of Amhara ethnic nationalism

The AAPO is the first political organization established, on January 19, 1992, bearing the Amhara name. The party confirms the reluctant emergence of Amhara nationalism, yet it is not aimed at state disintegration (Alem, 2003). The rationale for the creation of the organization, according to the AAPO document (1994), was to represent the Amhara and ensure the protection of their basic rights.

Professor Asrat Weldeyes (President of the AAPO), in the inaugural ceremony of the organization, explained the party aimed at bringing unity, territorial integrity, equality of Ethiopians, and ending religious and ethnic conflict in the transitional period and beyond through closely working with multi-national and ethno-national political parties (Addis Zemen, 1992). In essence, as a former member of AAPO confirmed, "AAPO is a reaction to fill the void of the

¹⁰⁷ The ADFM was established in 2002 started an armed struggle from Eritrea through creating coalition with Patriots Ginbot 7. The movement after the coming of Abiy Ahmed is organized as a political party.

¹⁰⁸ ADFM, AAPO, AAPP, ASEUO, AND AGM created a coalition called Amhara Social Vision Front. The parties released a communiqué to take part in the 2021 Ethiopian General Election with ADFM symbol (Eyeglass).

absence of Amhara representatives and ethnic-based violence against the Amhara and Orthodox Christians in Arba Gugu, Asebot Monestry, and other places."¹⁰⁹

"The core of the AAPO political struggle was the tabling of Eritrea independence, the lack of Amhara representation in the TGE, and identity-based attacks on the Amhara ethnic group."¹¹⁰ For raising these questions, the party was dubbed "nostalgic to the ancient regime", *ahadawi* (unitary), and *timiketigna*. The TGE has, however, carried on by giving a deaf ear to the AAPO questions; Eritrea thereafter seceded in a "referendum", the unabated security threats keep on indulging the Amharas, and a pseudo representation of Amhara through the TPLF surrogate, i.e., ANDM conspired.

In its bitter opposition to the guiding ideals of the transitional government, as an informant recalls, "the AAPO declined to take part in the drafting of the constitution because it is divisive and a threat to the unity of Ethiopia; declined to take part in the 1992 election; and eventually agreed to a formal recognition to avert systematic attacks on its members."¹¹¹

On another note, looking at the support and membership of the party, as Tegegne (1998) observed, it came from the urban Amhara dwellers of Addis Ababa, though an attempt was made to raise support from rural areas. Eventually, the party also succeeded in obtaining membership from ethnic "non-Amharas" for its Ethiopianist stand. In this regard, the conversion to the All-Ethiopian Unity Party (AEUP) in 2002 may have been motivated by this rationale.

The AAPO, however, was wracked from the start with the vicious repression of the TPLF/EPRDF to avoid falling into the trap of losing their hard-won victory. As a result, Asrat Woldeyes was sentenced for attempting to incite havoc against the Transitional Government, and members of the party were continually subjected to intimidation and imprisonment. To counterbalance the influence of the AAPO, like it did to annihilate the OLF's influence in Oromia, the ANDM was established in 1994 (ANDM, 2015: 151).

The voice of AAPO has been silenced, yet it has stayed latent, waiting for a ripe moment to burst out. Why has the AAPO failed to mobilize mass support from the Amhara and inspire Amhara

¹⁰⁹ KIM, interview, January 12, 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

¹¹⁰ KIG, interview, March 3, 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

¹¹¹ KIM, interview, January 12, 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

nationalism? Among others, the following are possible explanations: first, the idea of Amharaness has not been well crafted vis-à-vis Ethiopianness. In this sense, the Chairman of NaMA argued, "Had there been a sufficiently strong pre-existing Amhara consciousness by the time Prof. Asrat rang the bell for Amhara to organize, a lot of damage could have been minimized both against Amhara as a people and Ethiopia as a country" (Ethiopian Herald, 2019: Par. 39). Previously, the Amhara were constituted under the umbrella of multi-ethnic political organizations such as EPDM, EPRP, MEISON, and others. Merera (2003) argued that the acceptance of the ancien regime was dominated by the Amhara nation, which began organizing multi-ethnic political parties. Second, political naivety from the AAPO that faultily presumed a democratic transition foreground has been instituted (for a nuanced argument see Tezera, 2021). In the same vein, the Amhara elite's shortsightedness to anticipate the TPLF/EPRDF anti-Amhara agenda may eventually result in a lack of support for AAPO and the idea of Amharaness. Third, TPLF/EPRDF tyranny, through unleashing terror and incessant intimidation on the opposition, has effectively checked AAPO's effort to rally the masses.¹¹²

Conversely, the AAPO created a relay for the young Amhara generation to start speaking on its own behalf in the digital era through social media (digital activism), which provoked the Amhara resistance in the 2010s. The diaspora played a leading role in instigating and condemning the widespread security threats being inflicted upon the Amhara, which is centrally the cause of Amharaness and nationalism. Extant political opportunities such as the death of Meles Zenawi, the division in the EPRDF, and the break-out of protest in Oromia have also created a ripe political opportunity for the Amhara resistance in 2016. The resistance exploded on the cusp of an ill-conceived attempt to imprison Colonel Demeke Zewdu.¹¹³

5.2.2. The Diaspora-based protests and the birth of Amhara resistance at home (c. 2010- 2018)

Anderson (1992) calls them "long-distance nationalists" and the diaspora's influence in shaping the overall life of their homeland has been greatly increasing from time to time. The Ethiopian diaspora in the US and other countries has been vocal about the repressions of freedom of

¹¹² For instance, firing Addis Ababa university professors and dissolving "Ethiopia Teachers' Association".

¹¹³ After the reform or *lewit*, the house of Demeke Zewdu in Gondar is turned into a museum.

speech, mass incarceration, and others by the TPLF/EPRDF, particularly in the post-2005 election. As Lyons (2009: 591) wrote, the diaspora networks serve as gatekeepers for political debates and shape political ideas that are considered legitimate in their homeland. Since the 1970s, the Ethiopian diaspora has been actively influencing the domestic political order. Diaspora in this research context follows Brubaker's (2005) explanation, diaspora should not be conceived of in substantialist terms as a limited thing but rather as an idiom, an attitude, a claim, and so on. The term "diaspora" is employed as a category of activity to make claims, explain objectives, construct expectations, organize energies, and appeal to loyalties.

In Ethiopia, the homeland regime is not fond of diaspora influences and tries to keep them out of the game by accusing them of being "hooligans who engage in acrimony and hatred" (Lyons and Mandaville, 2012: 14). With successive regimes authoritarian policies (ever since Haile Selassie I), opposition political parties have taken haven either in the mountains or bushes of Ethiopia's periphery or in the diaspora. In post-1991 Ethiopia, ethnic and multi-national (i.e., Ethiopianist)-based political parties that paid allegiance to the dominant TPLF/EPRDF are allowed to exist: if not, they are haunted down, end up in prison, dead, or exiled or made dysfunctional. Classical examples in this regard in the early years of the TPLF/EPRDF are the OLF and AAPO; the post-2005 election is also remembered as an event that obliterated the multi-national political parties, repeating the 1976 deeds of Derg, which fostered the proliferation of ethnic nationalism (see Bahru, 2014). This has helped the TPLF/EPRDF effectively solidify their power through repression that checks any dissidents. As the maxim has it, in TPLF circles, "The only good Amhara is the dead one."¹¹⁴

The outbreak of the "Arab Spring" as an external factor and the politico-structural context in Ethiopia have created political opportunities explained through "state repression, elite division, and institutionalizations" that led to repertoires of collective action (Tarrow, 1998, 2015; Lee, 2011). The outbreak of Amhara resistance, which in turn midwived Amhara nationalism, was started in the diaspora through cyber-activism. The diaspora's cyber-activism aimed to defy the dominant anti-Amhara discursive repertoire. Misganaw (2021: 66–67) recalls:

¹¹⁴ KIA, interview, October 21, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia; KIG (Gashaw), Interview, March 3, 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Before 2013, the number of Amhara digital activists was insignificant. And it was carried out through pseudonyms. This may be out of fear of government repression, misconstruing doing politics in Amhara's name as difficult, and being powerless to break from the customary strategy of struggling under the umbrella of Ethiopianism. The cyber activism was a response to the TPLF and OLF anti-Amhara activism, which profoundly resonates on social media.

In amplifying the Amhara questions and crafting documents that facilitate the struggle in digital activism, the forerunners were Bete-Amhara, Voice of Amhara (Lisane Amhara), One Amhara, Amhara Voice Radio, Ghion Media, Birana, Admas, welkait.com, and individual bloggers. Freedom from the direct repression of the regime, digital anonymity, and an information vacuum¹¹⁵ has enabled these online platforms to thrive. Their contribution could be summarized as follows;

1. Creating/raising awareness, voicing and influencing the national and international community about the Amhara questions to ensure or be vigilant about “their well-being” through a social media hashtag campaign #AmharaResistance #AmharaProtest #StopAmharaGenocide;
2. Document and expose the identity-based attacks on Amhara;
3. Raising funds to support Amhara resistance at home; and
4. Facilitated the establishment of political organizations such as the Bete-Amhara Movement (BETAM);
5. Recruiting members in Ethiopia that execute and facilitate the links with the youth.

Of all the cyber activism, Bete-Amhara succeeded in transforming itself into a political organization (as of May 2013) with a radical sentiment. The BETAM Manifesto 2013 challenged and diverged from the hitherto Amhara-based political struggles of AAPO and ADFM with a vision of creating a "State of Amhara" (Misganaw, 2021: 123–125). The origin of this project, inter alia, is the "statelessness of the Amhara" and the question of survival. Justifying the rationales, one of the founders of the organization argued that:

Amhara in the Ethiopian political arena has been excluded, discriminated against, and subjected to perpetual identity-based attacks due to anti-Amhara narratives. So, why do the Amharas live in peace with haters? We are not working to split the Amhara from Ethiopia

¹¹⁵ Repressive regulatory instruments curtailed the freedom to access and disseminate information through the Mass Media and Freedom of Information 2008 Proclamation, Proclamation to Provide for the Registration and Regulation of Charities and Societies (CSP) of 2009, and the August 2009 Anti-Terror Proclamation (for more Abraham, 2020: 156-195).

because it has already been done by the TPLF/EPRDF. We are then propagating the creation of a sovereign ‘State of Amhara’ that respects and protects the Amhara.¹¹⁶

BETEMAM ushered in a new political dispensation, turning down a united Ethiopian motto in the hearts of the young Amhara generation. One analyst pointed out a "generation gap"—the birth of a young generation "detached from narratives of Ethiopian unity"—that has fanned the idea of an independent "Amhara state". Be that as it may, "the vision of BETEMAM to grow as a vanguard Amhara political organization was short-lived due to internal power competition and external influence from the Ethiopianist camp in the diaspora."¹¹⁷ However, the imprints of Bete-Amhara in Amhara politics are still visible, including the motto "One Amhara for all, all Amhara for one" and the idea of a "State of Amhara" as a last resort (if the Amhara question is not addressed within the Ethiopian context).¹¹⁸

Moreshe is the other prominent civic organization working through mobilizing the diaspora and conducting empirical research on the “genocide” committed against the Amhara (c. 1972-2007 E.C). In doing so, according to the Chairperson of Moreshe;

Moreshe has succeeded in imparting the research report to the international organization and human rights advocates. Not only this, Moreshe has published a book entitled; “ምጽአ ተ ዐ ማራ:- ተ ገ ድሎና ተ ገ ዳድሎ የ ማያ ልቅ ተነ ቅሎ የ ማይደር ቅ” (The Future of Amhara: killed and killed, never to be uprooted or dried up). We have published brochures and more than 500 articles that focused on Amhara questions.¹¹⁹

Furthermore, various media outlets and civic and political groups in the diaspora joined the struggle of exposing the prevailing dangers on the Amharas. Dagimawi AAPO (May 14, 2016), Amhara Medihnn, One Amhara, Amhara Voice Radio, Ghion Media, Birana, Admas, Amba, Amhara Association in America, Israel, Germany is contributing their part in instituting a counter-discourse and the eventual evolution of Amhara nationalism. As Desalegn pinpointed in his speech at the inaugural ceremony of NaMA; “Its children, the shining stars, tenaciously awakened the Amhara from the deep political abyss.”¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ KIM, telephone interview, April 12, 2022

¹¹⁷ KIM, telephone interview, March 23, 2022, Washington DC, USA

¹¹⁸ KIM, telephone interview, April 12, 2022, Washington DC, USA

¹¹⁹ KIT, email interview, April 22, 2020

¹²⁰ Desalegn, June 10, 2018, NaMA inaugural speech, Bahir dar, Ethiopia

At the heart of instituting the idea of Amharaness, the unprecedented failed attempt to imprison Colonel Demeke Zewdu and his self-defensive measure on July 12, 2016, triggered the emergence of Amhara resistance.¹²¹ As Messay (2016: par.7) aptly put it;

In showing the example, Colonel Demeke both exhorted the Amhara to rise to the level of their historical legacy and injected a bitter dose of shame at their resignation to be humiliated by TPLFite renegades...

The research argues the birth of Amhara nationalism is the product of assemblages of grievances. Although this specific incident sparked continuous mass protests, the struggle as mentioned above goes back to the 2010s. The Amhara resistance (alias Fano resistance) defied the ongoing repression of the TPLF/EPRDF, voiced the Amhara questions, and further affirmed Amharaness. Slogans such as “Amharaness or death”, “Amharaness is our savior”, “Amhara nationalism is the way out”, “You Welkait, if I forget you, let my right hand forget it’s cunning”¹²², to mention a few asserted Amharaness and the ethno-territorial questions. Moreover, the “*nefetegna*” and “*timikitegna*” appellations are embraced and publicly celebrated among protesters.¹²³ Amharaness, in the process, becomes an organizing and mobilizing factor in the anti-government protests. The initial peaceful protest in Gondar (July 31st, 2016) spread to Bahir dar, Merawi, Debre Tabor, Dabat, Woldiya, Dangila, Finote Selam, and other places of the Amhara region. The Amhara resistance could also be explained through “collective identity”— played through the discovery of preexisting bonds, interests and boundaries framed by injustices and dichotomy of “us” and “them” (see Polletta & Jasper, 2001).

Pressure piled up on the ruling TPLF/EPRDF when the Amhara youth supports Oromo protests at Gondar Protest. This transcended, tactically or strategically, the dominant “fire and hay” discourse of the ruling front on Amhara and Oromo. After three year’s resistance, failed attempt at “deep renewal” measures from TPLF/EPRDF, and grave repression of protesters, on June 10, 2018 National Movement of Amhara (NaMA) was born at Mulalem Hall, Bahir dar.

¹²¹ Col. Demeke eventually handed himself in to Gondar city police after agreeing to stay in Gondar and defend his court case from Gondar jail.

¹²² Adapted from Psalm 137:5

¹²³ FGD-IV, October 21, 2022, Debre Berhane, Ethiopia

5.2.3. The birth of the National Movement of Amhara (NaMA)

“NaMA is established by a group of young university lecturers and civil servants with the ambition of filling the void in Amhara politics and becoming a true representative of the Amhara.”¹²⁴ The party is a move away and a resistance to the established discriminatory political system towards the Amhara.¹²⁵ To symbolize the resistance and inculcate Amharaness the party made a “double-headed eagle” as a logo and approved the motto of “One Amhara to all Amhara, all Amhara to one Amhara”. “The birth of NaMA, as a hire of AAPO (its precedent) and rejecting the ANDM “democratic nationalism”, opened up a new political space for the disgruntled youth.”¹²⁶

Since its inauguration, the party received mixed reactions. In this sense, Zola (2020: par. 8) observed that the TPLF and Oromo nationalists construed such development in the Amhara mobilization in ethnic terms as a victory in the longstanding attempts to push “Amharas to accept their Amharaness”. The rationale for these movements is the situation will facilitate a renegotiation of the existing federation in equal terms as an ethnic group. However, the Ethiopianist camp decried such move will exacerbate an already divided political atmosphere and lead to dissolution.

Tigrai Online (2018), TPLF affiliated media, described NaMA as “a militant aggressive group which openly threatening the Ethiopian federal system and the constitutional order”. What is more, ambiguity and calculated political moves characterize PM Abiy Ahmed’s opinion on Amhara nationalism. In his Mekelle speech, Abiy emphasized celebrating the recognition of languages and cultures as the fruit of the last 40 years of political struggle. To the contrary, in the same discussion the PM labeled the “Welkait question” as a “question of development”.¹²⁷ In other instances, he discourages Amhara tribalism and went to dismissing the existence of “pure Amhara blood” (Teshome, 2018).

Be that as it may, in the early or formative periods of NaMA, as the Deputy Chairperson pointed out, “we focused on mobilizing and educating our people on the necessity of organizing to

¹²⁴ KIB, Interview, March 02, 2020, Debre Birhan, Ethiopia

¹²⁵ Desalegn, June 10, 2018, NaMA inaugural speech, Bahir dar, Ethiopia

¹²⁶ KID, Interview, June 3, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia

¹²⁷ The PM has apologized in the Gondar for what he had said in Mekelle about the Welkait question.

overcome the existential threats.”¹²⁸ The party successfully assembled a number of panel discussion to introduce its manifesto to the larger public, mobilized support and membership (100,000), opened up offices (more than 150) in different part of the country. The birth of NaMA facilitated the Amhara resistance to a nationalistic political paradigm. As one of the founding members of the party noted, “The survival of Amhara as a nation has been compromised. To repulse this quagmire and ensure the dignity and continued existence of Amhara, we, in the danger of facing jail or death chose saving Amharaness— because it transcends our individual interests.”¹²⁹ In doing so, NaMA put forward common interests, i.e., the “Amhara questions” on the FDRE constitution, identity, economy, political representation and restitution (see NaMA Manifesto, 2018).

NaMA attempted to shape Amhara nationalism in its multiplicity– historicity, ideology, and discourse.

The historical origin of Amhara nationalism was traced back to the period of Emperor Libine Dingle (1508-1540). A reaction to the of Ahmad Ibn Ibrahim Al-Ghazi (commonly known as Ahmad Gagn) war on his kingdom and his speech to mobilize the subjects as the foundation that defined the nationalist sentiment five centuries ago.

As one informant pinpointed, “Considering Libine Dingel as a model for Amhara nationalists would be ill-advised since historically the emperor was the weakest of his entire predecessors. He failed to protect the empire he inherited.”¹³⁰ In addition, Abba Bahrey is presumed as the first scholar (elite) to lift up Emperor’s awareness about the pending Oromo expansion to the empire subsequent to the ruinous years of Gagn’s war. As Mohammed (2012: 293) wrote “Abba Bahrey was an extraordinary monk, historian, and court official. His ‘The News of the Galla’¹³¹ was written to educate the elite at the court of the Christian kingdom of Ethiopia...” Even then, as one informant argued, “Amharaness sentiment was a reaction to an external aggression.”¹³²

¹²⁸ Interview with Yesuf Ibrahim Deputy Chairperson of NaMA, Walta TV, April 14, 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

¹²⁹ KIT, interview, December 13, 2020, Bahir dar, Ethiopia; After returning from a meeting on the foundation of NaMA in one of the Tana monasteries, the nineteen founding members of NaMA were imprisoned in Bahir Dar and released shortly after two or three days.

¹³⁰ KIB, interview, December 18, 2020, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia

¹³¹ For various reasons the original article title cited by the author has been changed.

¹³² KID, Interview, June 3, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia

This, indeed, is questionable provided that Bahrey never mentioned the Amhara nation in his book.

Ideologically, Amhara nationalists see NaMA as a “new model” different from the existing competing ethnic nationalist movements for three reasons. First, NaMA differs from the 1970s conviction of Marxist-Leninist ethnic nationalist movements in that it adopts a moderate liberal ideology (see NaMA Manifesto, 2018). NaMA’s moderate liberalism is inspired by the culture/tradition of the Amhara— as much as the collective identity the Amhara shares, the Amharas’ deference to individual liberty is equally important.¹³³

Such characterization of the Amhara having a single “collective identity” and “respect for individual freedom” is questionable. Historically, with the exception of sharing the Amharic language, provincialism has profoundly characterized the relationship between the Amhara. The subjective bond of Amharaness evolved out of discursive practices that have been introduced in Ethiopia in the last century. What is more, nationalism and liberalism essentially are mutually exclusive. An inherent competition between communitarian and individual liberty depicts their relationship (Yack, 1995; Mearsheimer, 2020). Above all, ethnic nationalism in Ethiopia are the byproduct of state suppression or horizontal competitions. With this line of argument, a mere adoption of moderate nationalism may not suffice the uniqueness of NaMA’s ideology towards Amhara nationalism.

Second, unlike the insurgency or armed struggle modus operandi of the TPLF, OLF and other ethnic nationalists, NaMA strongly adheres to peaceful means to address the Amhara questions.¹³⁴ However, “an element of youth Fano militancy also embodies Amhara nationalism though in a dis-aggregated organizational form.”¹³⁵ Third, unlike the secessionist predisposition of *other* ethnic nationalists, the goal of NaMA as stated in the Manifesto is *Ethiopiawinet*.¹³⁶ In this regard, Lencho Bati commented;

Up to 1991, Ethiopianness and Amharaness were one and the same. Now, we are witnessing a rise of Amhara nationalism. It is, therefore, crucial for them to clear out three things, what is the break of

¹³³ KIH, interview, December 1, 2020, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia

¹³⁴ KIC, interview, March 2, 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

¹³⁵ KIS, Interview, August 8, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia

¹³⁶ KIA, interview, April 20, 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Amhara nationalism with Ethiopian nationalism; the time frame for the beginning and end of the break, and the goal of Amhara nationalism.¹³⁷

What is more, the frequent referencing of Kurd nationalism in NaMA discourse is another way of situating Amhara nationalism in a parallel sphere of nationalism. Ethnic nationalists usually employ such parallelism, for instance, Oromo with the Indians (native) Americans, African Americans, and black South Africans (Asafa, 2002; Najat, 2017). As explained by Belete Molla, “NaMA would never follow the footsteps of Kurd nationalists. Instead, we are focusing on unlearning by pinpointing the failures of Kurd nationalism which ended up making more than 30 million Kurds stateless” (Ethiopian Herald, 2019: Par. 36).

Recognizing the modalities or specificity that NaMA is drawing from Kurdish history to approach Amhara nationalism, a critical examination of Kurdish history appears to be diametrically opposed to the predicament of the Amhara in Ethiopia. The roots of Kurdish partition into four states resulted from the disintegration of Ottoman Empire after World War I (Olson, 2013). A closer look into the history of Kurdish ethnic groups attests a modern nation-state formation was dwarfed due to their geo-political location, disunity among the Kurds, strong allegiance to religious and tribal leaders (Romano, 2006; Epple, 2021). Historically the Kurds were partitioned between the Ottoman Empire and Persian Empires. For more than 300 years Kurdistan was a battle field between the two power (Epple, 2021). What happened aftermath of the Ottoman Empire illustrates a lack of strong national consciousness and hitherto experience of statehood (Tezcür, 2019; Tezcür & Asadzade, 2019).

The idea of unification of Kurds under one “Kurdistan State” underlines the nationalist movement of the Kurds. As a result, the Kurds were engaged in plight of political struggle against state-territorial nationalism and ethno-national groups within these states (Bruinessen, 1994). As Yavuz (2001: 3) eloquently put it; “Kurdish nationalism is an outcome of the tension between the forces of homogenization and the struggle to maintain cultural and local autonomy. This tension is at the core of the politicization of the Kurdish culture”. However, the Amhara are the historical constituent of Ethiopia for millennia including actively participating in the Ethiopia political administration unlike the Kurd. What is more, the Amhara were never partitioned into different sovereign states unlike Kurd. However, it is only if one view post-1991 ethnic-based

¹³⁷ Lencho Bati, November 10, 2022, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r10l3KETaTo> (last accessed January 2023)

federal demarcation of what are called Amhara ancestral territories to different newly established regions with Kurd that the Amhara and Kurd nationalism would be considered parallel cases.

In terms of discourses, the counter-narratives particularly, “Amhara as the touchstone of humanity” (አ ማራ የ ሰ ወላ ት ወያ -ል ክ ነ ወ!), and “divine intervention for the birth of NaMA”, “we are *timiketagna* but not *ebuye*”¹³⁸, “Amhara is the creator of Ethiopia”, “Ethiopia shall respect its creator, Amhara”, and others, that NaMA propagated to deconstruct the hegemonic discourses in time backfired. On one hand, an informant explained;

These utterances posture Amhara nationalism as embodied a “superiority complex” that belittles other ethno-national groups’ contribution to the Ethiopia state-building.¹³⁹ On the other hand, the newly formed party received both public attention and harsh criticism for adhering to long-entrenched divisive ethnic nationalist discourses.¹⁴⁰

Constellation of manifold historical memories presents and futures characterize the nature of ethnic nationalist discourses in Ethiopia— a glorious past, a destitute present, and utopian future to use (Levinger *et al*, 2001). Indeed, as conflicting as it appears, the narration of *othering* and a sense of pride or “vanity” was used to call the Amhara masses into nationalism. This has been described by Yesuf as *ipso facto* of NaMA’s “formative stage” in its organizational development.¹⁴¹ Overwhelmingly, however, lack of clear direction and goals, “us” and “them” attitude, and lack of ideological clarity defined the early years of the party— chaos phase (Pryor, 2018).

In the First General Congress held February 22 and 23, 2020 at Debre Berhan, NaMA elected a new Chairperson and central committee members. According to a top member of NaMA, the congress “evaluated the roads NaMA traveled in the past to ensure that it has what it takes to overcome the challenges of the time to address Amhara People’s question, and has prepared structural reform.”¹⁴² The First Congress was organized as part of the requirement to participate in the upcoming general election (required by NEBE), look back the protracted road NaMA underwent and redress the challenges the party has faced (particularly neutralizing provincialism,

¹³⁸ The rough translation is “we are prideful but not arrogant”, but the Amharic version makes much more sense. Yesuf however after a year or so denied the narrative of “we are *timikitegna*!”

¹³⁹ KID, interview, April 10, 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

¹⁴⁰ KIW, interview, June 20, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia

¹⁴¹ Yesuf Ibrahim, Deputy Chairperson of NaMA, interview with Walta Tv, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4bM2CLO50RQ&t=1555s> (last accessed April 2021)

¹⁴² KID, interview, November 14, 2021, Bahir dar, Ethiopia

shaping the language of the counter-discourse, and address the religion factor in the leadership of the party).

In addition to the birth of NaMA, “the Amhara resistance has also set free the ANDM from shying away from Amhara problems.”¹⁴³ In a panel discussion with residents of Bahir Dar, a young man told Gedu Andargachew (then President of the Amhara Region) “we set you free from TPLF tyranny” which burst him into laughter. The ANDM has always been labeled as a satellite of the TPLF to wit ANDM endorsed the accusation in post-2018. However, for Abraham “the party has never been short of individuals who dissent the dominance of TPLF and genuinely struggle to the interest of Amhara. These people were either demoted, imprisoned, purged or killed.”¹⁴⁴

With the death of Meles Zenawi, a big man, who holds the party together created an elite competition. As Asnake rightly observed, the transition from Meles to Hailemariam has moved to a collective leadership style characterized by greater consultation and consensus building. In turn, the danger of collective leadership poses elite competition and inefficiency (Rift Valley Institute, 2013). The genesis of one of a viable political opportunity to break out of the later protests goes back to the death of Meles and the leadership vacuum in the EPRDF. With the eventual intensification of anti-government protests, the EPRDF embarked on a reform as of January 2018 (Yoseph & Temin, 2018). The “Reform” concluded in the triumph of “Team Lemma” from the elite fraction and election of Abiy Ahmed as Chairperson of the ruling front (categorically made him Prime Minister save approval in the parliament).

The unprecedented alliance of OPDO and ANDM fostered the eventual relegation of TPLF hegemony from the EPRDF, but not from the political landscape of the country. In the meantime, however, Team Lemma picked up the demands of the youth and pledged to implement their questions in their party’s deep reform. And overall sounded like the voice of protest in the government (Tsegaye, 2018). In the reform measures of the ANDM, in its 12th Congress, the party brought back hitherto expelled officials (such as Melaku Fenta, Yohannes Buayalew and others) and prominent persons (Asaminew Tsige, Tefera Mamo and others) to the party’s central

¹⁴³ KIT, Interview, September 29, 2020, Bahir dar, Ethiopia

¹⁴⁴ Though the official did not give the list of people who are killed for opposing the “democratic centralism” line, an example in this regard is Mulualem.

committee. As part of the rebranding, ANDM has also changed its name to Amhara Democratic Party (ADP) and the party logo. Above all, controversial agendas on identity and border issues (with Sudan) were discussed.¹⁴⁵ “ANDM has always been shying away from identity questions of Welkait, Raya, Metekel and Dera/Shoa.”¹⁴⁶ Incorporating the identity question in the 12th Congress was a step forward for the party to win the hearts of the protesting youth and embrace Amhara nationalism.

However, the party is trapped in the feeble idea of “democratic nationalism” and a protector of the FDRE Constitution. This stood in stark contrast to the political creeds of the newly established NaMA, which pronounced from the outset “the Constitution as the mother of all evils in the Amhara political conundrum” and condemn “democratic nationalism” as a hoax to weaken Amhara and lacks theoretical sophistication. The aftermath of the “reform”, “democratic nationalism” continued to govern the political creed in ADP. As Gedu explained, “Amhara nationalism should be crafted in light of the democratic ideals of liberty, justice, and fraternity.”¹⁴⁷ This begs a question on the compatibility of nationalism and democracy.

For Moreno & Lecours (2010: 4) “The relationship between nationalism and democracy is ... not only multifaceted but also full of tensions and paradoxes.” In the Ethiopian context, with the presence of competing ethnic nationalist movements and the underlining Amhara oppression thesis, guiding Amhara nationalism with the aforementioned notions illustrates ADP’s gullibility.¹⁴⁸ Since the 1st Congress a similar strand has been adopted by NaMA, as top member of NaMA reiterated “the foundations of the party’s political struggle as justice, equality and liberty”.¹⁴⁹ Overall, the first phase is characterized by resistance movement, consensus and speaking the same language on the questions of Amhara in Ethiopia across the incumbent ruling party ANDM, NaMA, and the youth resistance.

¹⁴⁵ Borkena News, “Amhara Democratic Party is the new name for ANDM”, <https://borkena.com/2018/09/30/amhara-democratic-party-is-the-new-name-for-andm/>, September 30, 2018

¹⁴⁶ KIA, interview, May 11, 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

¹⁴⁷ Gedu Andargachew, President of Amhara Regional State, Amhara Broadcasting Corporate,

¹⁴⁸ FGD, March 9, 2021, Gondar, Ethiopia

¹⁴⁹ KIB, interview, April 2, 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

5.2.4. Role of print and press media in shaping the discourse of Amhara nationalism

Anderson (2006) posits print capitalism, publications of books and/or newspapers, facilitates thinking about one's identity and relating or imagining fellow others. However, for years, individuals have been reticent to publish manuscripts on Amhara identity, Amhara issues, and continuous attacks due to lack of a market and a lack of interest in Amhara ethnic nationalism, fear of state repression¹⁵⁰ and other factors. Only in the early 2010s, a small number of manuscripts begin to be published, which later reinforced Anderson's proposition.

In this regard, a noteworthy example is the publication of "The Amhara Holocaust: Accounts of the Hidden Genocide of the Amhara People in Ethiopia: 1991- 2015" by Muluken Tesfaw.¹⁵¹ The book urges Amhara to think about their Amharaness, relate to, and imagine the risks faced on fellow Amhara that they have never met by addressing the ongoing attacks on Amhara in other regional states (see Chapter 7). It has become a widely read book among the youth, despite the fact that public distribution and sale are severely controlled.¹⁵² "The Glory of Amhara: A Pillar of our identity" by Tedla Melaku also an earliest publication that sketched the roots of Amhara identity and past glory.

Eventually, an extensive publication of books on Amhara identity, questions, identity-based assaults, and broader discourse swaths of the market particularly in the post-2018. The manuscript's contribution to voicing and shaping discourses on Amhara nationalism could not be underestimated (see Annex 2). The readily available market demand has, in fact, contributed to the increase in publications.

Moreover, to control discourse-producing institutions such as the media; Amhara Satellite Radio and Television (ASRAT), Amhara Media Network (AMN), Barara magazine, and quite several websites and YouTube channels were launched. For instance, the establishment of ASRAT with a motto of "voice for the voiceless" is attributed to, among others,

¹⁵⁰ Regime repression may discourage publishing, although it may not be regarded seriously as a reason of lack of publication. People in the diaspora, for instance, are not subject to such constraints.

¹⁵¹ The English version is published in 2018.

¹⁵² KIT, Interview, September 29, 2020, Bahir dar, Ethiopia

... promote the history, identity, and culture; provide a platform for Amhara focused organizations, intellectuals, politicians, and human rights and political activists..., *report* the inhumane treatments of the Amhara people ... to the Amhara people, to Ethiopians, and to the international community.¹⁵³

Explaining how the media was established a former employee recall;

It is through mobilizing the Amhara at home and abroad we succeeded in establishing ASRAT. We coined the media, Asrat, to honor our first fallen martyr, Professor Asrat Weldeyes. It is to fill the media void, counter-balance the existing competing ethnic-based media such as digital Woyanne and Oromo Media Network (omn), and the suppression of Amhara questions by state-owned media that expedite the formation of Asrat media in 2018.¹⁵⁴

As previously discussed, digital media has played a critical role in shaping the Amhara nationalist discourses since the early 2010s. Although not in a strict sense, the print capitalism explanation of nationalism in Europe (Anderson, 2006) in the internet era with digital media captures the emergence of Amhara nationalism. In addition to the digital media including songs, fukera, and TikTok, the launching of ASRAT and *Barara* magazine were critical in voicing an Amhara perspective of political problems. Furthermore, in their endeavor to elicit support these media played a uniting role by mobilizing the educated class, businessmen/women, the diaspora, etc.¹⁵⁵

Looking back on the two years of ASRAT broadcasts, it covered a wide range of topics aimed at deconstructing the prevailing anti-Amhara rhetoric by bringing speakers from a diverse range of socio-political backgrounds, such as former officials, intellectuals, the diaspora, and so on. News coverage of identity-based assaults against the Amhara was given particular attention. Journalist round-table discussions focus on constitutional issues as well as historical and current events to expose their many facets. The goal of all programs at ASRAT has always been to support the Amhara national movement. This qualifies ASRAT as a medium working to inculcate and construct a strong ethno-national sentiment.¹⁵⁶ However, the media was also covering events outside of Amhara, such as the Gedeo mass displacement in 2019.¹⁵⁷

Eventually, financial constraints, disagreement within the broadcast board to make the media commercial, and the June 22 incident contributed to its closing. The June 22 incident in

¹⁵³ ASRAT media, available at: <https://asratmediahouse.org/about-us/> (last accessed May 2022)

¹⁵⁴ KIB, interview, June 12, 2021, Gondar, Ethiopia

¹⁵⁵ KIA, interview, December 23, 2022, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

¹⁵⁶ KIB, interview, June 12, 2021, Gondar, Ethiopia

¹⁵⁷ KIA, interview, December 23, 2022, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

particular not only created division in the media but also effectively drains the media funding from the diaspora and others. The assemblage of factors decimated the media, adding it to the list of failed Amhara projects.¹⁵⁸ Above all, as a publicly registered media, ASRAT has been tolerated by the Ethiopia broadcast authority for its coverage of political issues that contradicts the primary objective of the media.¹⁵⁹

Barara¹⁶⁰ (በ ረ ራ), on the other hand, a weekly published magazine that was established in 2018 that focuses on the socio-political, culture and economic life of the Amhara. The nomenclature of the magazine aimed at challenging the discourse and claims over Addis Ababa.¹⁶¹ Like ASRAT, the magazine aimed at becoming a voice for the Amhara through deconstructing established discourses, reporting identity-based attacks, and promoting the culture of the Amhara. Hence, essentially it has served as another area for the production of counter-discourses and avenue to inventing Amhara nationalism.

5.2.4. June 22th incident and the rupture in Amhara nationalism

General Tefera Mamo recalls “the June 22 incident evolved from assemblage of multiple factors, albeit many unknowns, ultimately leading into the split in the higher official of the ADP.” The division, however, was not essentially on the nature of the problems that the Amhara facing the aftermath of the “Reform” but on priority and strategy to manage the problems.¹⁶² As one informant pointed out;

The major tracts of division are on how to handle security problems such as ethnic clashes (in Metekel, Jawi, Central Gondar, and North Shoa/Ataye) and on the existence and sphere of influence of Fano. The two groups were led by Ambachew Mekonnen (the Late President of the Amhara Regional State) and Asaminew Tsige (the Late Head of Amhara Region Peace and Security Bureau). However, until the incident of June 22, 2019 the division in ADP was kept in denial.

Ambachew’s group focused on creating alliance and diplomatically working on addressing the dire situations. The OroMara moment could be cited as an example that momentarily illustrated the alliance of ADP and Oromo Democratic Party (ODP) in weeding out hyacinth from Lake Tana, a visit from the Presidents of both regions to Bahir Dar and Ambo, and pledge to support

¹⁵⁸ KIA, interview, December 24, 2022, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

¹⁵⁹ KIA, interview, December 23, 2022, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

¹⁶⁰ Barara is a medieval city located in the present-day Addis Ababa (Breternitz & Pankhurst, 2009).

¹⁶¹ KIB, interview, June 12, 2021, Gondar, Ethiopia

¹⁶² KIS, interview, January 30, 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Oromia Regional State endeavor to materialize the constitutionally enshrined special interest in Addis Ababa.¹⁶³ In another note, Ambachew Mekonnen, in a panel discussion organized by the Amhara Scholars Council at Africa Union Hall, has strongly condemned the rumors of hostility in ADP. He rather emphasized on the party's success in mustering alliance within the ruling front (i.e., EPRDF) and negotiations to address the Amhara questions. And he promised to protect and strive for the Amhara cause. However, when it comes to Fano, he said "we will not tolerate the impostor Fano".¹⁶⁴

The second group was unequivocal about "what the problems are", "who takes responsibility?", and "the way out". Given the security context of the region and the Amhara public, Asaminew press statements and speeches are filled with deixis, metaphor, and metonymy to mobilize and salvage the Amhara from what he perceived as imminent danger. Here are his remarks that were televised by the Amhara Mass Media Agency:

The Amhara questions are democracy and survival. Amhara are facing existential threats in its region.

The people should organize themselves...

There is nothing that has not been done to annihilate Amhara. This is something not hidden, but we are seeing it coming out of the earth. So, if this generation fails to overcome these challenges, we will make a historic mistake.

I sometimes see the elders talking about conciliation; do not talk anymore about mediation and negotiation. Try to speak your conscience and the truth on the ground, and if you can, be like Abune Petros.¹⁶⁵

Similarly, on May 27, 2019, during the graduation ceremony of the Amhara Special Force (ASF), he addressed the graduates as follows;

Going back 500 years in our history, we have faced such a great challenge. We passed the ordeal and got here. With the passing of that trying time, now the Amhara is being encircled and targeted because of their identity. It is the responsibility of this generation to reverse this trend.

Asaminew's speeches were expressively provocative to mobilize the Amhara mass to organize and arm themselves, to face the greatest existential threats. A direct address to the people on front of members of the ruling party suggests his lack of confidence on the capability of ADP to

¹⁶³ Ambachew Mekonnen, Speech in Ambo, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QZg2DRM9E0s>, April 21, 2019

¹⁶⁴ Ambachew Mekonnen, Discussion with Amhara Scholars, Africa Union Hall, May 19, 2019

¹⁶⁵ Abune Petros was a Bishop in Ethiopian Orthodox Church who resisted the Italian colonialism and later killed on the 29th of July, 1936 in Addis Ababa.

rescue and sort out the problems. Further, “before 500 years...” illustrates the continuity of the Amhara peril to the Oromo expansion of the 16th century; “encircled” implies the ethnic clashes in North Shoa, Central Gondar, Pawi (Gumuz vs Amhara), Welkait and Raya question with Tigray, the accusation of TPLF to incite violence in Amhara (support to Kimant Committee), border clash with Sudan, and unending displacement of Amhara in Oromia and Benishangul Gumuz to mention. This has been reiterated by Zemene Kasie in his speech in an event organized by the Amhara Youth Association (AYA) at Debre Markos.¹⁶⁶

"I sometimes see..." also entails Asaminew's expression of unity with the wider public and condemning "elders" suggestions of dialogue as the problem has overdue the time of dialogue. "This generation..." singles out the young Amhara Special Forces graduates to ensure its survival and surmount the existing predicament of the Amhara. This also implies the failure of the previous generation to put a halt to the ongoing targeting of the Amhara in Ethiopia.

With one event leading to another, the June 22nd, 2019 incident unfolded. The incident caused the deaths of Ambachew Mekonnen (the President), Migbaru Kebede (the Attorney General) and Ezez Wasie (public organization advisor to the President). Elsewhere in Addis Ababa, on the same day, Army Chief General Seare Mekonne and retired Major General Gezai Abera were shot dead. PM Abiy was the first to declare the incident as “a failed coup attempt”. “The government says it has reason to think the attack was linked to the assassination of the governor of Amhara a few hours earlier in the region's capital, Bahir Dar” (BBC, 2019: par. 12). Asaminew Tsige¹⁶⁷ was later confirmed as the “coup plotter” in the state media, to which he allegedly replied “coup d'état cannot be carried out in every village”, the rest is history.¹⁶⁸

A different account of the incident repudiates the widely accepted recitation of the incident as a "failed coup attempt". One can ask the following question in the context of the "failed coup attempt" in the Amhara region: First, how were the "coup plotters" intended to seize political power in a country where power is diffused and located in Arat Kilo Palace? Is it not strange for a coup plotter to kill the army chief instead of the head of the government? So, a lack of

¹⁶⁶ Zemene Kasie speech at a public meeting, Debre Markos, April 2, 2019, Amhara Media Corporation

¹⁶⁷ Asaminew was sentenced for life for an alleged “coup attempt”. He was later released after serving nine years of jail time with Tefera Mamo on February 22, 2018 as part of the “reform” measures within the EPRDF.

¹⁶⁸ Office of the Prime Minister, Press Release, June 23, 2019

appropriate vocabulary and political maneuvers explains the strange pronouncement of the incident as a "coup" plot.

On another note, Abrham Alehign, Head of ADP Political Affairs Office, explains;

The June 22 incident evolved out of a series of preceding events that started by harassing the local governments (Kebele, Woreda and Zone) and finally succeeded in assassinating the President. In the meantime, however, people (those who resented in ADP) who avowed to struggle for the Amhara cause were hijacked by the enemy and formed a coalition which eased June 22nd incident.¹⁶⁹

Controversy and hazy details overshadow June 22nd, 2019. However, the episode marked a turning point in Amhara nationalism. During a Focus Group Discussion at Bahir Dar, participants pointed out, “we have lost our brothers, leaders and icons of Amhara nationalism.” Apart from the leadership vacuum, the incident for Abraham “exacerbated provincialism, deteriorated internal cohesion and increased suspicion in the ruling party.”¹⁷⁰ Likewise, for provincialists, as a member of the Amhara Scholars Council explicitly argued, “the June 22 issue is widely regarded as a massacre of provincialists.”¹⁷¹ It has also aggravated the already heretic animosity between ADP and NaMA, given members (including the Spokesperson) of NaMA were arrested as co-conspirators of the “failed coup”. Overall, the incident contributed to the following fall outs in Amhara nationalism (1) expedited the crack between NaMA and ADP; (2) created a leadership vacuum; and (3) deepened provincialism.

1. Hostility between NaMA and ADP

Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM) has played an instrumental role in the establishment of NaMA by staying away from intervening in the process of the formation. For a surveillance state that altogether prohibited a formation of an Amhara political party, the green light from ANDM was crucial. The two parties attempted initially to work together in various aspects to address the questions of the Amhara.¹⁷² However, following the *June Incident*, a low-intensity conflict unfolded between the two political parties jeopardizing hitherto agreements.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁹ KIA, interview, Novemebr 14, 2020, Bahir dar, Ethiopia

¹⁷⁰ KIA, interview, Novemebr 14, 2020, Bahir dar, Ethiopia

¹⁷¹ KIS, interview, January 30, 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

¹⁷² KIH, interview, November 15, 2020, Bahir dar, Ethiopia

¹⁷³ KIT, interview, March 10, 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Prior to the incident, there had already been debate about who represented the true Amhara cause. This has not only involved NaMA versus ANDM, but also other political parties. Except for their names, it is difficult to distinguish their political and ideological differences. A closer look at where these parties' leadership and membership came from reveals that the provincial element outweighs ideological differences. As the incident was unfolded, the friction in the form of ensuring justice led to the imprisonment of 260 individuals including a dozen of NaMA members, who were later pardoned as political prisoners. This has created a morass as to who was truly responsible for the deaths of ADP officials.

2. Leadership vacuum

Despite all of the pitfalls of leadership and the resulting grievances against ANDM, the region enjoyed a relatively stable political environment until June 22.¹⁷⁴ The incident created unstable leadership, in this case, one indicator would be the number of presidents the region had prior to June 22 and subsequent to 2021. Three regional presidents were replaced in the last three years. In comparison, the Oromia region has only appointed one after Lemma Megersa, this also goes to Somali, Afar, and other regions. Why stable leadership is a problem in Amhara region? This may need further research but implicates on the institution of stable and predictable governance in the region.

With the death of experienced political and security leaders, the region began to experience ambivalent leadership problems such as ensuring unity in the ruling party, legitimacy, sluggish responses to conflicts or security concerns, etc. The exodus of experienced leaders from the regional state to federal offices also, *inter alia*, implicates fear, distrust, animosity, etc. within the ruling party. The narration of opportunism and ODP client reinstated towards ADP(PP).

3. Provincialism

Political elite-based provincialism has always been a feature of the power struggle in historic Ethiopia. Recently, provincialism characterized diaspora unions, development groups, and Fano organizations, but it is veiled in party organizations. In terms of unions, Gondar Union, Gojjam

¹⁷⁴ Excepting the sporadic border clashes along Sudan's border, the post-2018 emergence of Kimant-Amhara conflict in Gondar, and conflict along the borders of North Shoa and Oromo Special Zone, the post-1991 Amhara regions appear to be more stable but not peaceful.

Union, and Wello Union; development associations, Gondar Development Association, Gojjam Development Association, Wello Development Union, Shoa Peace and Development Association could be cited as examples. There are signs of frictions and animosities particularly in the diaspora organizations along provincial sentiment.¹⁷⁵ The diasporic unions and their representatives at home go to the point of proposing the establishment of regional states along provincial lines. “The most recent onset include the Gondar and Wello Union proposal of establishing a separate regional state.”¹⁷⁶ The provincial sentiment reached another trajectory following the events, the start of the war in the north.¹⁷⁷

In terms of Fano, the provincial establishment stems out of (1) simplicity and accessibility for mobilization and command (2) financial and security factors. A sub-provincial especially leadership-based animosity and friction perhaps characterizes Fano more than the overarching provincial sentiment.¹⁷⁸ The Gondar Fano is the oldest establishment which goes back to the *kefagne* movement of the 1970s in Welkait.¹⁷⁹ Currently, Fano arrangement is disaggregated into provincial and sub-provincial organizations. Here are some examples; Wello Fano, Eastern Amhara Fano, Bete-Amhara Fano, Yefat Fano, Shoa Fano, etc. With all such divisions, “The closest and authentic Amharaness sentiment and indignation towards the Amhara question is represented in Fano organizations.”¹⁸⁰

Although none of the political parties admit provincialism as a cause of party in-fighting, it is, in fact, undeniable caveat in Amhara politics. Since acceding to regional administrative power, provincialism has been unwritten law inside ANDM. But, with strong internal party democratic centralism, it is restricted to flare up problems within ANDM to the period of *lewit*.¹⁸¹ The June incident has further fumed the already lingering provincial sentiment within ADP and worse within the newly established NaMA.¹⁸² An informant pointed out the following as a sign of division in senior ADP members:

¹⁷⁵ KIA, email interview, March 19, 2022, Washington DC., USA

¹⁷⁶ KIA, interview, April 20, 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

¹⁷⁷ KIA, interview, December 23, 2022, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

¹⁷⁸ KIS, interview, June 17, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia

¹⁷⁹ KIS, interview, June 17, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia

¹⁸⁰ KIA, interview, August 2, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia

¹⁸¹ KIJ, interview, May 25, 2021, Gondar, Ethiopia

¹⁸² KIG, interview, March 10, 2021, Bahir dar, Ethiopia

The migration of top ADP officials to federal offices (especially those who were in office at the time of the event) and the influx of junior party members to regionally higher posts look unprecedented. How come these top officials quit their posts for promotion or something when the party desperately needs leadership? However, unlike NaMA, the provincial division was subtle. The episode sparked infighting within the NaMA central committee.¹⁸³

The hyphenated Amhara identities of Gondar-Amhara, Gojjam-Amhara, Wello-Amhara, and Shoa-Amhara has emerged as an alternative approach for organizing and mobilizing individuals within the context of Amhara nationalism. A closer look at NaMA reveals that internal conflict stemming from disputes over party leadership positions on provincial line, including the Chairperson, Vice Chair, and members of the executive committee, has become a recurring issue following the June incident.

5.3 Summary

This chapter sheds light on the background of the anti-Amhara discourses, their development, and their later institutionalization into the body politics of Ethiopia. The chapter argues that discourses of ethnic dichotomy were introduced in the second Italian Invasion and the ensuing Colonial Policy. The goal of the policy was to facilitate the colonial ambitions of Italy to easily control Ethiopia and avoid the mistake they made forty years ago. The divide and rule policy sowed the seeds of animosity and hostility among Ethiopians' by fanning the discourse of "national oppression" (see Sbacchi, 1975). This discourse was later picked up by the Ethiopian Student Movement's (ESM) radical activism by substantiating the declaration of the Amharic language as the lingua franca by the Haile Selassie I regime as a marker of Amharaization policy.

Moreover, the proliferation of ethnic nationalist organizations in the 1970s and later their successful accession to power in the 1990s further essentialized the "national oppression thesis". The idea of Amhara nationalism is rooted in the days of the All-Amhara People's Organization (AAPO) in the early 1990s, which defended the Amhara from the repercussions of anti-Amhara narratives. However, the party failed to muster support from the Amhara mass for different reasons (see Teka, 1998). The party incited the idea of instilling Amharaness as a way out of the widespread killings and displacements of the Amhara in different parts of the country because of their identity. The various ethnic nationalist movements justify their nationalist motives in

¹⁸³ KIS, telephone interview, September 30, 2020, Woldiya, Ethiopia

manifold ways and yet are contested from other perspectives. Similarly, the genesis and dynamics of Amhara nationalism are explained by emphasizing constellations of structural factors, such as hegemonic anti-Amhara political discourses. The recent rise of Amhara nationalism since the 2010s is a defensive movement or counter-hegemony to the dominant discourse that labels the "Amhara" as an oppressor, neftegna, settlers, etc. The emergence of the ethnic nationalist movement is accompanied by a counter-discourse aiming at deconstructing the existing narrations and constructing a new dialectical discourse glorifying the Amhara and echoing the destitution of the Amhara since the 1990s.

Various civic associations, intellectual associations, business organizations, media, youth militancy (Fano), and political parties are organized in the name of Amhara to institutionalize the Amhara national movement. However, significant political events have overtaken the trajectory of the Amhara nationalist movement. With the political reform that has been ushered in since the coming of PM Abiy to power and the unprecedented series of political events, the incident of June 22nd unfolded, which marked a turn in the Amhara nationalist movement. The incident sparked a low-intensity conflict between the ruling party (ADP) and the opposition (NaMA), deepening the existing provincialism and creating a leadership vacuum in the region.

Chapter Six: The ethnic-based federal order and the Amhara question

6.1. Introduction

This chapter zooms into the institution of ethnic-based federal and how the ethnic federal order contributed to the rise of Amhara questions in Ethiopia since 1991. Looking at the 1995 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) Constitution, the federal system could be characterized as ethnic in nature due to its provision of ethnic-based territorial autonomy and serving as the foundation for the internal organization of Ethiopia. Overall, the ethnic-based federal system is seen as a way to address long-standing historical and political conflicts. It is unique in its approach to incorporating ethnicity into the institutional framework and bringing together elements of ethnicity, territoriality, and self-determination.

The adoption of ethnic-based federalism is a contested topic in literature and political practice (ethnic nationalist and Ethiopianist camps). The debate over the normative and practical implementations of ethnic-based federalism will not be addressed in this chapter. Instead, the focus of this chapter is on how the ethnic-based federal structure provided a heuristic and institutional space for ethnic nationalist movements to thrive, particularly Amhara nationalism with its own pressing questions. The Amhara nationalism like other nationalist movements emerged with its of perspective on determining Amharaness in terms of majorly (re)imagining its territorial spaces in Ethiopia along with other political and economic questions.

It is, therefore, critical to look into the ideological roots and procedures that underpin ethnic-based federalism in order to grasp its essence and how it engendered the emergence of Amhara nationalism. Following the fall of the *Derg* regime, the TPLF/EPRDF emerged as the victor, assuming administrative responsibilities and laying the foundations for the Peace and Democracy Conference and Transitional Government. These stages were key in the (un)making of Ethiopia's post-Derg administrative structures. The TPLF/EPRDF worldview appears to suggest "ethnic contradiction" as the prominent problem in Ethiopian state-society relations, derived from the party's Marxist-Leninist reading of Ethiopian history. However, to entice support from western countries, the party abandoned the Marxism-Leninism positions in the early years of the transitional period, though not publicly. With this note, the following section discusses the

efforts involved in the institutionalization of an essentialist ethnic category in Ethiopia and how they contributed to the development of Amhara questions.

6.2. The Peace and Democracy Conference (PDC) and the Amhara representation

The Peace and Democracy Conference (hereinafter the Conference) was held from July 1 to 5, 1991. The conference was a continuation of the London Peace talks brokered by the US government among ruling *Derg*, EPLF, TPLF, and OLF (de Waal, 1992). The Conference brought five hundred attendees or delegates. The delegates were recruited from twenty-seven political parties, the majority of which were ethnic in nature, as well as a few professional organizations (Vaughan, 1994). With all the accolades the Conference received; some scholarly works are heavily critical of the process, representation and outcome of the Conference. For instance, Merera (2003) remarked that leaders of the EPRDF who were adamant about consolidate their triumph over the old regime cautiously proceeded to invite easily beaked and weak parties that effectively banned actual or potential contenders in the transitional processes. Markakis (1998: 145) blames the new regime's effort "to refashion the political system in its own image." Kinfé (1994: 62) also commented that the Transitional Charter "was engineered by the EPRDF and agreed by the ethnic elites."

In what way the Conference has contributed to the rise of the Amhara questions? In his opening speech to the PDC President Meles states "On behalf of the EPRDF and the Interim Government, I would like to thank you for representing your organization and your *people* ... on this important occasion."¹⁸⁴ This speech illustrates that, in actuality, people (NNPs) and organizations such as Addis Ababa University are represented. Though the recent resurgence of Amhara nationalism and its proponents attribute the Amhara were left out of the Conference, the debate over the representation of the Amhara in the Conference was held following the conclusion of the event. However, Meles as Chair of the Conference and President of the Transitional Government unambiguously argues that "we know the people [the Amhara], their problems and questions. In the absence of an organized party, the EPRDF has stepped up to represent the Amhara ethnic group".¹⁸⁵ This affirms the representation of the Amhara in the Conference and later in the Transitional Government through the newly established ANDM. With the emergence

¹⁸⁴ Meles Zenawi, opening speech at Peace and Democracy Conference, July 1, 1991, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

¹⁸⁵ Yezaritu Ethiopia magazine, July 19, 1991

of ethnic party structures to fill the vacuum of Amhara representation within the leadership of the dominant EPRDF, EPDM (later ANDM¹⁸⁶) came to the forefront.

In the early years of the Transitional Period, there had been debates about EPDM's stepping up to represent the Amhara. At this juncture, it is pertinent to consider three illustrative instances. The source materials utilized in this study are derived from the December 1991 and January 1992 editions of Addis Zemen magazine. The contributions are from Dareskedar Abebe on "EPDM: a multi-national or national organization?" (Dareskedar, 1991); a rejoinder by Combatant Solomon Fisseha to Dareskedar titled "With its blood, EPDM has assured itself as a democratic organization of the Amhara" (Solomon, 1992), and a third one by Yesewsew Amu (Wello) on "Should the Amhara be represented by a national party?" (Yesewsew, 1992). Both the first and last opinion contributions raise concerns about the broad support base of the EPDM and characterize the party as a multinational organization. Yesewsew (1992), in particular, expresses opposition to the concept of Amhara *Kilile* and the notion of representing the Amhara through a party like EPDM, given that the Amhara population is dispersed across various regions of Ethiopia.

In contrast, Solomon (1992) presents a compelling argument advocating for the recognition of EPDM as the genuine representative of the Amhara community. The Amhara population has historically been subject to governance by chauvinistic ruling factions. In the present context, the EPDM has emerged as a proactive force in facilitating democratic processes within the Amhara. However, members of the EPDM as multi-ethnic party are from different NNPs. As a senior member of Amhara Prosperity Party (APP) confirming the multi-ethnic nature of the EPDM argues that with the establishment of ANDM, non-Amharas joined their respective ethnic parties, i.e., OPDO, SPDM and others. In this vein, EPRDF (1993: 29) clearly pointed out that;

EPDM was formed as a multi-national type of organization on the basis of this principle so that it could mobilize and lead the struggle of the Amharas and the other peoples who would not rally around a nationalist platform. However, in view of the fact that those nationalities which the EPDM was aiming to mobilize have currently formed their own democratic organizations, EPDM's task is now to reorganize itself on a nationality basis and struggle by making the Amhara people to hold a revolutionary democratic outlook.

¹⁸⁶ The party officially changed its name to ANDM in 1993.

In practice, “in the newly established ANDM, the higher officials, including Tefera Walewa, Bereket Simon, Taddese Tinkishu, Hilawiye Yosef, and Kasa Teklebirhan, to mention but a few, are non-Amharas in their own stricture yet claim to represent the Amhara.”¹⁸⁷ Therefore, the TPLF/EPRDF “managed to recruit non-Amharas as well as opportunist Amhara and used them to influence public opinion that all nationalities including Amharas are now represented in government and the political affairs of the country.”¹⁸⁸ In fact, the Late PM Meles Zenawi argued, “no one approached us and explicitly wanted to attend the conference as an Amhara representative.”¹⁸⁹ True, but could this be taken as an ultimatum for the lack of representation on the Amhara? Why not devise other mechanisms to include the voices or interests of the Amhara?

In this regard, a member of NaMA Central Committee argues that,

The claim that the Amhara were represented during the Transitional Period, including the Conference, is false. The Amhara people were not represented in the Transitional Government or in the founding of the FDRE. Their interests and objectives were ignored, resulting in alienation and a sense of exclusion from the federation. Those who took part were not genuine Amhara delegates; instead, they were playing Amhara cards or double-dealing.¹⁹⁰

The counter argument from other ethnic nationalist parties such as TPLF was the reference of Gedu Andargachew (former Foreign Minister) and Demeke Mekonnen (Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister) as signatories of the Transitional Charter, who are proclaimed and cheered as reformers in the post-2018.¹⁹¹ As an Amhara activist from Bahir Dar asserts that;

The persistent frustration of young Amhara nationalists is evident in their perception of the ANDM as an adversary to the Amhara community, as they persistently refer to the party by its original name, despite its subsequent name changes to the Amhara Democratic Party (ADP) and Amhara Prosperity Party.¹⁹²

“The party is complicit in the isolation of the Amhara from economic gains, the region’s inadequate infrastructure, inexorable identity-based attacks, forceful annexation of the ancestral

¹⁸⁷ KIG, Interview, September 1, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia. Here, the researcher did not contemplate to check to which ethnic group these people belong, yet the idea of questioning the Amharaness of the ANDM officials has been instrumental in the Amhara nationalism.

¹⁸⁸ KIM, telephone interview, March 23, 2022, Washington DC, USA

¹⁸⁹ Yezaritu Ethiopia magazine, July 19 and 26, 1991

¹⁹⁰ KID, interview, December 12, 2020, Bahir dar, Ethiopia

¹⁹¹ Discussion on “Nationalism in Ethiopia”, Tea-Coffee Program with Journalist Solomon, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wrrh0le-6eQ&t=2091s> (last accessed June 2022)

¹⁹² KIT, interview, December 14, 2020, Bahir dar, Ethiopia

territories and so on.”¹⁹³ The ANDM representation of the Amhara contradicts to what Horowitz (1985) posits an ethnic oriented political parties dominantly attracts or pulls support from a specific ethnic group and vows to serve the interests of the group. The dispersion of support from the ethnic group it is designed to represent will always be a test to such an ethnic-based party. Be that as it may, the nationalists’ claim of lack of representation in the Conference leads to an outright rejection of the Transitional Charter and the FDRE Constitution (see NaMA, 2018). Indeed, the young Amhara nationalists also cite former high-ranking members of the TPLF, such as Gebru Asrat, to justify their argument.¹⁹⁴ In his book, *Sovereignty and Democracy in Ethiopia*, Gebru (2014) explained how Eritrea People’s Liberation Front (EPLF) facilitated the draft of the Transitional Charter and the discussion on the substance of the articles of the Charter with TPLF and OLF (see also Vaughan, 1994). It is worth to mention at this juncture, the document established the main agenda of the Conference.

Furthermore, the substance of the discussion, which later institutionalized ethnicity as “political asset that provides access to resource” (Markakis, 1998: 145), also negotiated in the absence of the representatives of the Amhara ethnic group. Indeed, post-1991 institutionalization of ethnicity is an extension of *Derg’s* “incessant echoing of the nationality issues” as Mengistu confirmed in his last speech as a Head of State.¹⁹⁵

The Conference was also convened under the guise of three key rebel organizations’¹⁹⁶ narrative of “Ethiopia as a prison of nationalities”. “The institutionalization of the ‘national oppression thesis,’ in which the ‘Amhara’ were viewed as oppressor groups, corroborates the purpose of the ethnic group’s exclusion from the Conference.”¹⁹⁷ Hence, it is not only lack of representation which contributed to the rise of Amhara questions but also the promulgation of the Amhara as “oppressor nation”. The structural foundations of the remaking of the Ethiopian state in post-1991 hardly sprung out from the decision reached within the five days discussion. In fact, it is the outcome of ESM activism ideological conviction that was materialized in post-1991

¹⁹³ KIT, interview, December 3, 2020, Bahir dar, Ethiopia

¹⁹⁴ KIT, interview, December 4, 2020, Bahir dar, Ethiopia

¹⁹⁵ Mengistu Hailemariam, address to the Ethiopian public, 1991, Addis Ababa, Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yTKn_vCpdDM&t=167s (last accessed June 2020).

¹⁹⁶ Within the ruling EPRDF coalition, there is no doubt that... TPLF calls the shots (Alemu, 2004: 112).

¹⁹⁷ KIG, interview, March 10, 2021, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia

Ethiopia. Lack of representation has deprived the Amhara to decide on the territoriality of their homeland.

6.3. The Amhara questions in the ethnic-based federal Ethiopia

The right to self-determination of NNPs including up to secession was the cradle of the Peace and Democracy Conference and the TGE. The ethnic restructuring subsequently followed and carried out in 1992 bringing the country into 14 regional administrations (TGE, 1992). This was later revisited and the number of regional states reduced to nine regions and two city administrations (FDRE, 1995). This has received a *de jure* status by the 1994 Constitution. As the FDRE Constitution Article 46 (2) stipulates “States shall be delimited on the basis of the settlement patterns, language, identity and consent of the peoples concerned”.

The TPLF/EPRDF regime relied on its power to institute a policy of ethnic-based federalism which put ethnic identity at the center of political life. Until around 1974, administrative units in Ethiopia were formed based on administrative efficiency, the ability to collect taxes and maintain security, and the governor’s allegiance (Mulatu, 2017). What the TPLF/EPRDF accomplished in remaking Ethiopia perfectly fits into the proposition that it has not only restricted itself to imagining purportedly primordial communities but also made the existing multinational identities unimaginable (see Hayden, 1996). To paraphrase Batt (2005), it looks like Ethiopia was embraced less as an end in itself than as a means of satisfying the TPLF and other ethno-national organizations aspirations for self-determination (see also Asnake, 2013).

As framers of the ethnic-based federalism argue, the Institute for the Study of Ethiopian Nationalities¹⁹⁸ (ISEN) provided the foundation for the establishment of administrative boundaries in post 1991 Ethiopia (Vaughan, 1994; Abbink, 2011). A conflation of NNPs and ethnic regions were created under the presumption of ethnic identities as taken-for-granted or fixed or primordial. The restructuring could never be considered as flawless as any system, albeit it is peculiar in every aspect to Africa and Ethiopia. However, the ethno-linguistic-based remaking opened up rooms for the quest for ethnic identity recognition, the upsurge of ethnic

¹⁹⁸ As per Proclamation No. 236/1983 Article 4 Institute is entrusted with two the objectives: first, to study the political, economic, social and cultural conditions of Ethiopian nationalities; second, to conduct studies concerning the constitution, the state structure and administrative set-up on the basis of which a People's Democratic Republic is to be established in Ethiopia.

entrepreneurs, and inter-ethnic conflicts. Among other predicaments, “this has created a question of identity recognition among various groups from all over the country. Indeed, the ethno-linguistic *Kilili*’s overlooked to entertain the people residing in frontiers who speak more than one language.”¹⁹⁹ During the Transitional Period, Representatives Council released a statement on the establishment of national regional states and their demarcation in the Amhara-Tigray border was undertaken as per the 50 percent parameter (Addis Zemen, 1991). The statement appears sketchy in terms of defining the 50 percent parameter. It seems that 50 percent of the population speaks Tigrigna.

As a matter of fact, in such circumstance the FDRE Constitution Article 47 suggests people’s consent to decide their ethnic identity through referendum. With few exceptions, there had hardly been attempt to grant a self-determination of one’s identity in Amhara-Tigray, Amhara-Benishangul, and Amhara-Oromia frontiers.²⁰⁰ The TPLF/EPRDF’s stringent clinch to Lenin’s (1915) idea of “prison of nationalities” and Conti De Rossin’s description of Ethiopia as “un museo di populi”—as if the people lived in a building as a constellation of objects incapable of interaction— constitutes the major predicament in Ethiopia’s remaking.

The Director of Identity and Constitutional Interpretation Affairs of the House of Federation (HoF) further pointed out;

A quest for identity recognition from 26 groups has been filed to the House of Federation (HoF). We are hoping the newly established Identity and Border Commission will help us to sort out the questions. Among these questions, Welkait, Telemet, Metekel, Raya, and Dera/Shoa identity questions filed to the HoF are quests for a restoration of Amhara identity.²⁰¹

This has stemmed from three factors: one, people have begun to determine their ethnic identity as different from the one “given” to them in the ethnic federal order. Second, an inquisitive move from ethnic entrepreneurs to create a unique identity out of superficial difference for various reasons such as economic factors. Third, coming-together of NNPs to have their own region out of political and socio-economic interests such as South West Ethiopia People’s Region. The establishment of identity restoration committees of Welkait, Telemet, Raya, Metekel, and Dera/Shoa could be framed as a struggle to determine their ethno-national identities as Amhara.

¹⁹⁹ KIG, interview, February 12, 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

²⁰⁰ KIC, interview, February 13, 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

²⁰¹ As per 2021 report from the HoF, the number has increased to thirty.

As Fenton (2003) posits territory is fundamental to the national imagination. Similarly, Smith (2009) argues nationalism is always about land ownership and retention, regardless of other aspirations; for it is only in and through such possession that the true work of self-determination can be done. Only in and on a homeland can ethnic members realize their political brotherhood and social coherence; only those with homelands or realistic ambitions of achieving their own homeland can properly follow the path to determining the self.

In this vein, the rise of Amhara nationalism in the ethnic based federal Ethiopia include questions over newly established Amhara ethnic homeland, over the share of the national cake, representation, etc. NaMA (2018), for instance, categorized the Amhara questions into six; first, revising the FDRE Constitution and the ethnic-based federal state structure; second, repulsing identity and existential threats of the Amhara; third, prevent systemic political and socio-economic exclusion of the Amhara; fourth, ensure the unity and indivisibility of Amhara ancestral territories; fifth, augment the participation of the Amhara in the national politics; sixth, ensuring the share of development benefits of the Amhara in Ethiopia. These collectively shared questions could be summarized as the derivative of the earlier Bete-Amhara movement, Moresh Wogene organizations, the youth resistance that sparked in 2016, other political parties such as All Amhara People's Party, Amhara Survival for Ethiopia's Unity Organization, Amhara Democratic Force Movement, Netsebirake Amhara Dirijit, All Amhara People's Organization and various organizations. However, at the heart of the Amhara question in the ethnic-based federal Ethiopia lies the quest for ancestral territories.

6.3.1. The Amhara “ethnic homeland” and the quest for “ancestral territories”

The Amhara National Regional State was established after the advent of the ethnic-based federalism. “Many Amhara were opposed to the federal structure as a whole including the establishment of the Amhara Region.”²⁰² A relatively similar territorially coterminous Amhara province had been instituted during the Italian Occupation (1936-1940) (see Sbacchi, 1975). Prior to this period, the Amhara province was also documented in European traveler's account. The province did not include the four major districts that are considered proper Amhara ancestral territories (see Gobat, 1850; Samuel and Baird, 1850).

²⁰² KIT, March 10, 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

This actually works for those ethnic nationalist organizations that mobilized their respective ethnic groups with an “imagined”, to use Anderson’s (2006) expression, territorial space within the Ethiopian state such as the TPLF, OLF, and others. However, the Amhara case ostensibly departs from these key political players, given the presence of the Amhara ethnic group across the country coupled with absence of an existing “imagined Amhara homeland”. In this regard, Andreas (1992: 12 cited in Vaughan, 1994) wrote;

Oromo and Tigari communities have demonstrated their readiness to determine their political destiny. A government that recognizes the right to self-determination is obliged to provide them with a meaningful framework for its expression. ... any such arrangement ... will encourage other communities to seek their place in the sun.

Disregarding Mazuri’s (1982: 24) assertion that “... the greatest enemy of African nationhood is ethnic-consciousness”, ethnic based homelands are unequivocally declared in the Federal and Regional states constitutions (see FDRE Constitution). The restructuring is predicated on the presence of previously independent and autonomous groups. As a result, the federation is a voluntary union of these groups (NNPs) to live as one political community in order to foster their common interests (see FDRE Constitution Preamble). As Belete argued;

The federal system was flawed from the very beginning ... Theoretically, pre-existing federal units would come to a dialogical fusion and form a federation. But in our case, the units were non-existent beforehand and were literally created by [masterminds of EPRDF]. (Ethiopian Herald, 2019: Par. 26)

In an attempt to create “pure” ethnic homelands, regional constitutions such as the Afar, Harari, Oromia, and Benishangul-Gumuz Constitutions, as opposed to the Amhara Constitution, pronounce the essence of coalescing of ethnicity and territoriality.²⁰³ As much as the ethnic homelands are peculiar to the Ethiopian body politics, the idea of ethnic restructuring is intended to facilitate the upsurge of ethno-national groups in light of their own ethno-linguistic, political and territorial units (Alemante, 2003).

The Afar National Regional State Constitution (1994) by recalling the widespread national oppression of the Afar people in previous regimes proclaims the highest political power rests to the Afar people to ensure a fastest growing economy and nurture democratic values. This

²⁰³ During the Transitional Period (1991-94) one of the agenda proposed by the TPLF/EPRDF was to return people who participated in *Derg*’s villagization and resettlement scheme but no tangible efforts were done to put the agenda into action (Vaughan, 1994).

excludes the 5.12 percent and 1.15 percent people of Amhara and Tigray who resides in the regional state (CSA, 2007). This holds true to the Oromia Constitution which expressly granting ownership to the Oromo disregarding the rights to other ethnic groups living in the regional state (Oromia Constitution, 2001).

The Harari constitution reiterates in explicit hitherto national and religious oppression and confers the region's highest authority to the Harari people (Harari Constitution, 2004), although 56.4 percent Oromo, 22.8 percent Amhara, 4.34 percent Gurage, 3.87 percent Somali, and 1.53 percent Tigrayan inhabit the small region (CSA, 2007). Similarly, Berta, Gumuz, Shinasha, Mao, and Komo are the titular owners of the Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State according to the 2002 Revised Regional Constitutions. The population of the above listed ethnic groups excepting Berta accounting 25.41 percent, the rest constitute less than that of the Amhara (21.69 percent) (CSA, 2007).

The Amhara regional state constitution differs from the aforementioned Regional Constitutions in its recognition of “the supreme power ... resides in and belongs to the *peoples* of the Amhara Region” (ANRS Constitution, 2001). The idea of ethno-national homeland falls short in the case of Amhara (and SNNPs) excepting the region's Amhara name the constitution unlike other regional states does not suffice in granting the Amhara the invented Amhara homeland.²⁰⁴ In contrast, Solomon (1992) the Amhara have acquired a big chunk of land they have never imagined in the TPLF/EPRDF era. The notion that “the Amhara have lost territories” is unjust, and it is unlikely that this perceived notion will come to fruition.

An activist from Bahir dar ironically states;

Mengistu Hailemariam's portrayal of the Amhara as a ‘mountain people’ has had a significant impact on the foundation of the Amhara regional state. They gave us the mountains, and we lost our connection to our people and lowland ancestral territories in the process.²⁰⁵

Moreover, Belete claims;

Before the coming into being of the Constitution, *ethnic nationalists* had amassed as much land as it could and finally arranged the stage only for federalism which is in their favor. Neither in the process of this, nor in every stage of the process of creating what is called the FDRE constitution,

²⁰⁴ FGD-I, March 14, 2020, Bahir Dar

²⁰⁵ KIA, interview March 12, 2021, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia

Amhara people was literally left out of the activity, hence for the masterminds of EPRDF to freely grab a bigger chunk of Amhara historical lands. Not just this, Amhara lands which then masterminds could not directly annex because of geographical remoteness, were to be transferred to other regional states. (Ethiopian Herald, 2019: Par. 22)

He continued and argues;

Even worse, lands have also been either transferred or sold to the Sudan, as was made public; this has been one of the reasons for recent political feud between state rulers of both sides. The fact is actually one of the crucial problems that inspired Amhara nationalism, and perhaps a reason for us to pronounce the struggle as one against existential threat posed on our people by the masterminds. (Ethiopian Herald, 2019: Par. 23)

On the issue of al-Fashaga, territorial dispute goes back to the 1902 colonial border delimitation between Emperor Menelik II of Ethiopia and the British Agent in Ethiopia, Lieutenant Colonel J. L. Harrington (Ullendorff, 1967). The dispute over al-Fashaga transcends the coming to power of TPLF/EPRDF. However, the widely held belief among the Amhara is “the ruling TPLF/EPRDF has ceded the disputed territory to Sudan and has actually changed the hitherto border”²⁰⁶ (see also Mulatu, 2015). In terms of ownership of the land, a member of Gondar Development Association, argues “Ethiopian farmers have always been cultivating the land for generations. However, sporadic violent conflicts between the militia of both countries characterize the situation in the al-Fashaga triangle.” During the researcher's 2016 visit to the disputed Ethio-Sudan border, local kids revealed where their father's agricultural field boundary used to be, and how, in their words, “Meles ceded the land to Sudan.” However, the disputed territory transcends such individual opinions to the point of implicating foreign policy of Ethiopia towards Sudan. This is out of, for example, Sudan’s Water Minister Yasir Abbas has taken seriously the rise of Amhara nationalism as a threat to the two countries relation. In his own words, “The rise of the Amhara in Ethiopia’s politics is threatening the future of relations between our nations — not countries, but nations, peoples with literally thousands of years of shared history” (Bearak, 2021).

On the other hand, prior to the 1992 regional restructuring, there were mainly known constitutive provinces of Gondar, Gojjam, Wello, and Shoa. The ethnic based reorganization preserved the four provinces while transferring substantial part of the Amhara “ancestral territories” to other

²⁰⁶ KIW, interview, June 20, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia

regional states and established ethnic enclaves within the larger invented Amhara homeland such as Oromo, Awi, Waghimra, Argobba, and Qimant (post-2018) zones. An Activist from Woldiya, for instance, strongly claims;

The Oromo Special Zone is established by taking larger part of South Wello territories. The Oromo only live in the areas of Dawo Chefa. The majority of the people in the Special Zone identify themselves as Amhara.²⁰⁷

The researcher has come across similar stories and claims in other Special Zone administration of Agaw Awi and Wag Himera. In contrast, Qimant self-determination question which started in 2009 claimed 126 Kebeles from eight adjacent Woreda in North, Central and West Gondar Zones of the Amhara region including the historical city of Gondar. This identity and territorial quest eventually flared up violent conflict since 2015 which caused massive displacement, death, and mistrust between the two groups.²⁰⁸

Nonetheless, the recognition of minority ethnic groups within an ethno-linguistic regional state is unique to the Amhara region.²⁰⁹ In other ethnic regions, “with all their contempt to Abyssinian assimilationist policies, they are actively involved in minority assimilation inside their regional state.”²¹⁰ This begs a question, why is only the Amhara region? Three propositions could be forwarded in this regard.

First, provided the preconception of anti-Amhara discourses is anchored in the key political actors in the Transitional Period, the region is created in a way that deconstructs the socio-political bonds entrenched over the years among the people of Ethiopia as a homeland for all, including the Amhara. In this regard, Lidetu Ayalew decried that “during the 1990s, nearly 85 percent of Ethiopians resided in rural areas. Do the philosophical underpinnings of Marxism-Leninism suggest peasants as proponents of nationality questions? So, why did the EPRDF adopt ethnic-based federalism?”²¹¹ They (TPLF/EPRDF and OLF) assumed that the Amhara elite, as supporters of Ethiopianism, would be a formidable force in establishing and cementing an

²⁰⁷ KIS, telephone interview, October 12, 2022, Woldiya, Ethiopia

²⁰⁸ KIC, interview, August 1, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia

²⁰⁹ FGD-II, January 10, 2020, Gondar

²¹⁰ KIT, Interview, December 3, 2020, Bahir dar, Ethiopia

²¹¹ Lidetu Ayalew, Political Parties Debate, ArtsTV August 28, 2019, 46:00-46:40 minutes, Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ca-bMtNKiZc&t=3334s> (last accessed June 2022)

ethnic-based federal Ethiopia; hence, with the establishment of the Amhara region, the elite would lose the urban constituencies such as Addis Abeba, Adam, Bishoftu, Dire Daw, and others as well as its political influence.²¹²

Second, the dearth of strong political representation that questions the newly established regional boundaries has impacted the making of the Amhara region. Looking at the Minutes of the TGE House of Representatives, victorious ethnic nationalist movements such as the OLF claim the designation of the former Wollo province to Oromia. The minute reads that OLF's claim was never refuted or contested by the Amhara or other political groups, confirming the lack of or genuine representation of the Amhara in the making of ethno-territorial boundaries. This is not unique to the Amhara, other ethnic groups, such as the Hadiya, have experienced similar problems.²¹³ Indeed, attempts to file complaints with the President's Office, Meles Zenawi, by the Gondar Development Union over the designation of Welkait, Humera, Tegede, and Telemet to Tigray was made on November 21, 1992.²¹⁴ Members of the union were arrested and served four months in prison for bringing up the question. Tamrat Layne, who was the leader of the ANDM, denounced the questions as inappropriate.²¹⁵

Third, given that the ISEN map served as the foundation for ethnic-based federalism, the Amhara's current geographical space roughly correlates to the institution's map. The map encapsulated the region's current territorial space (see Annex 3). However, the administrative provinces established by an ISEN task force in 1979 are different from the 1992 ethnic regions. Be that as it may, the nationalities distribution in Ethiopia is subject to critical interrogation in terms of the field work, given that the northern part of the country has been besieged by violent conflict. These three propositions are not exhaustive on the making of the Amhara region; nonetheless, they are all taken from the researcher's discussions in interviews and Focus Group Discussions.

Regardless of how the Amhara regional state was established and the resentments suppressed, they eventually provoked mass resistance in July 2016. At the heart of the resistance lies the

²¹² FGD-IV, May 20, 2022, Debre Birhan

²¹³ Transitional Government of Ethiopia House of Representatives 16th Ordinary Meeting Minute, October 3, 5, and 8, 1992

²¹⁴ Letter to TGE President, November 21, 1992

²¹⁵ KIB, interview, October 5, 2021, Gondar, Ethiopia

question of Welkait, i.e., identity and territorial claims stifled throughout the years of the TPLF/EPRDF. Boundary and identity questions are widespread in Ethiopia. Hence, it is crucial to note that, the Amhara case is not unique in this sense. With the outbreak of mass resistance in Gondar, assemblages of grievances over "forcefully annexed territories", developmental questions, issues of political representation, and other factors began to shape the Amhara nationalist movement.

In this regard, NaMA, as a byproduct of Amhara nationalism, framed the issue of Amhara territorial unity as the rationale for the formation of the party and as a guiding political agenda (NaMA, 2020). This is a reproduction of ethnic nationalist organizations such as the TPLF and the OLF's insistence on the indivisibility of ethno-national identity and territoriality. As a member of the opposition political party pointed out, "for any keen observer of Ethiopian politics, all ethnic organization consider territorial claims as sacrosanct, hence they are expansionists if you will."²¹⁶

In an effort to constitutionally settle the Amhara identity claims, representatives from Welkait, Telemet, Raya, Metekel, and Dera/Shoa established separate identity restoration committees to file their queries to the House of Federation and monitor the implementation of the matter. So far, these questions have been relegated to the sidelines, where they have remained, producing animosities and violent conflicts. As Mitchell (2018) argues more violence occurs in contested territories that are valued for their natural resources, religious sites, or historical homeland claims (see also Hassner, 2006). With the coming of PM Abiy Ahmed, an Administrative Boundary and Identity Issues Commission was established as part of the reform measures to address administrative boundary, self-government, and identity issues.²¹⁷ After much controversy without achieving the envisioned goal, the Commission is officially relieved from its duties in 2022. One rationale could be duplication of responsibility with the newly launched Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission.²¹⁸

These territories are contested and yet meritoriously employed to mobilize the mass, instill sense of collective identity, and presented as the cradle of the Amhara nationalism. This of course

²¹⁶ KIH, interview, March 2, 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

²¹⁷ Administrative Boundary and Identity Issues Commission Establishment Proclamation No.1101 /2019

²¹⁸ The Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission Establishment Proclamation No. 1265 /2021

extends to the repercussion of an institutionalization of ethno-national identities in the TPLF/EPRDF Ethiopia. Such politico-territorial claims *inter alia* emanate from the scope of recognition and self-determination conferred to the NNPs as enshrined in the FDRE Constitution. On top of this, historical animosity and perpetration of human rights upon those individuals who resisted the TPLF advance to Welkait and surrounding to the point of an imposition of Tigrayan identity in the post-1991 Ethiopia checks another box in the evolution of a formal quest for recognition of Welkait Amhara identity in 2016.²¹⁹ Be that as it may, rectifying the issue of Welkait in the last thirty years remains a political than a legal matter. In this vein, Norman (2006) posits a national-self-determination-seeking project presupposes the national “self” to be created, nurtured, shaped, and motivated. What is tacit to nationalist self-determination quests, therefore, is the issue of nation-building. Tamir (1993) also remarked the right to national self-determination stakes a cultural rather than a political claim; namely, it is the right to preserve the existence of a nation as a distinct cultural entity. In the case of Amhara, an informant from the Diaspora conspicuously argues that:

The Amhara have never subscribed to a distinct ethnic identity and often identify themselves as Ethiopians or with their provincial names. The ethnic restructuring of the country and subsequent identity-based attacks compelled the Amhara to affirm their Amharaness and begin to re-imagine their ethno-territorial spaces. This is attributed to the current Amhara Region falls short of their imagined homeland as a nation within Ethiopia.²²⁰

This re-imagination of Amhara territorial unity, i.e., claiming Welkait, Raya, Metekel, and Dera/Shoa, has been dubbed by some as “Amhara expansionism” (Tronvoll, 2021). That is why, “when identity and administrative boundary questions brought to the fore, the TPLF/EPRDF keep on ridiculing and reduce the matter as a question of development, imprisoning and torturing members of the various committees.”²²¹

Now, the quest for “ancestral territories” recognition of the Amhara needs a greater discussion. The Amhara nationalist perspective regards “ancestral territories” as having originated from the historical and symbolic significance that land has held in Amhara culture, as well as the methods of land inheritance based on one’s ancestry.²²² The Amharic expression has strong emotional

²¹⁹ KIA, interview, October 21, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia

²²⁰ KIM, zoom interview, March 23, 2022, Washington DC, USA

²²¹ KIW, interview, December 2, 2021, Bahir dar, Ethiopia

²²² KIM, interview, May 22, 2022, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

expression to the “ancestral territories”—አጽመር ስት. The purpose of the investigation is not to (un)justify the claims and counter-claims but rather to cast light on the complex political situation that the country has been experiencing since 1991 due to territorial and identity recognition issues. As the same time, the Welkait issue has been central to the Amhara nationalism that mobilized the Amhara across the region.

6.4. The Welkait Question

The Welkait question is a quest for the restoration of Amharaness identity of the people of what is known as Western Tigray, i.e., Welkait, Kabtiya-Humera, and Tsegede (Tegede). Tselemet (Telemet) from North West Tigray also another contested territory (see the map below).²²³ Before delving into the details of why the question arises? how it is being handled? and the narratives and counter narratives of the Welkait question, it is better to give a proper background.



Map 1: The contested territories of Welkait-Tegede, Kabtiya-Humera, and Telemet

Source: UoG (2022)²²⁴

²²³ According to Telemet Amhara Identity Committee Chairperson, Telemet is frequently left out of the Welkait question; KIY, interview, August 23, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia.

²²⁴ The researcher has obtained the consent of the UoG (2022) to use or reproduce the map.

The territories of Welkait, Kabtiya-Humera, and Tegede comprise both highlands and lowlands and was part of Gondar, Begemeder, and Simen province until 1992, excepting the brief years of Italian Occupation. The highlands, like the rest of northern Ethiopia, are more hospitable, conducive to making a living, and also well populated. A good example here could be the Bete Mulo Castle, which looks like the Fasiledes Castle of Gondar, located in Welkait and built in the 17th century (Feyissa, 2018). The lowlands, particularly Kabtiya-Humera, are 640 meters above sea level, with temperatures ranging from 40 to 45 degrees centigrade. It is inhospitable due to infectious diseases such as malaria, kalazar, etc., yet fertile for agriculture (see Kassahun, 2000). As a result, the residents of Tegede and Welkait, in the rainy season, through *mofe-zemet* (ጥፊ.ር ዘ መገገ²²⁵) plow the fertile agricultural land of Kabtiya-Humera.

With the beginning of mechanized agriculture in the late 1950s, according to Hammond (1994) Humera Woreda, with 30,000 inhabitants, was a hub of farming centre that attracted workers from Tigray, Gondar, and the Sudan. In post-1991 period, a large part of the resettlement was carried out in Kabtiya-Humera, particularly in Ada Bai, Mai Kadra, and Rawayna in 1993 and 1994 including the resettlement of 30,000 former TPLF combatants (Colletta, Kostner & Wiederhofer, 1996).

The contested territory is suitable for agriculture and rich in natural resources. Welkait-Tegede district was home to one of the mechanized agriculture initiatives set up during the reign of Haile Selassie I. The area is renowned for its black soil, which is ideal for cultivating sesame or commonly known as “white gold”, cotton, oil seeds, incense, and other food and export commodities (McCann, 1989). The vast agricultural land covers 3500–4000 square kilometers between Setit and the Angareb River (Friew, 2015). Setit-Humera accounts for 28.87 percent of total sesame production in Ethiopia (CSA, 2019).

In terms of geopolitical location, the contested territory is located at the intersection of Ethio-Sudan-Eritrea border. During the TPLF’s insurgency years, it had served as TPLF’s main outlet to the international border. Through this border, TPLF has imported various logistics including

²²⁵ *mofe-zemet* is a seasonal agricultural practice by the peasants. The major factor in such seasonal practice is due to harsh climate for the people to permanently settle in the area. The peasants from the highland areas in rainy season will plow the land and return for harvest season. However, this terminology has been used to attack the Amhara in Oromia and SNNP regions for the alleged fact that the peasants clear forests for agricultural purposes.

ammunition and also facilitated Tigrean refugees to Sudan by providing protection from the hinterlands of Tigray province (see Aregawi, 2009). The international boundary is highly contested between Ethiopia and Sudan due to lack of clear border demarcation over the al-Fashaga triangle. With EPLF animosity with TPLF, the Eritrea government also has a vested interest to deny TPLF an international border particularly following the outbreak of the war in the North, November 4, 2020.

The people of Welkait speak Amharic, Tigrigna, and Arabic. The highlanders are fluent in Amharic and Tigrigna. The lowlanders, due to their frequent contact with Sudan also are well-versed in Arabic in addition to Amharic and Tigrigna. The people are mainly Orthodox Christians and Muslims (see Hammond, 1994).

6.4.1 The roots to the Welkait problem

The FDRE Constitution gave institutional anchorage to the contestation of territoriality in Ethiopia. The territorial based autonomy for some such as Yonatan (2010) facilitated the recognition of the multi-ethnic nature of the Ethiopian society. The Constitution aspired to create pure ethnic homelands. This actually has drastically failed, it neither created pure ethnic homelands nor guaranteed the rights of minorities living in titular ethno-national regional states. Blaming the Constitution does not serve any purpose at this point. Hence, to explain the roots of the Welkait problem, one has to look at the TPLF 1976 Manifesto and the political developments afterwards.

“The incorporation of Welkait to Tigray goes back to the 1976 TPLF Manifesto. Hence, the territories were forcefully annexed in 1978 before the advent of the ethnic based federal order in Ethiopia.”²²⁶ In actuality, the preamble of the TPLF Manifesto states unequivocally that the territory of Tigray comprises Welkait and Tselemt in the west, the Mereb River borders it in the north, and it extends up to Alewuha in the south (TPLF, 1976).²²⁷ One can plausibly argue here that TPLF from the outset was clear as to the future borders of Tigray and closed all doors for negotiation in internal boundary demarcation. This imagined politico-territory of Tigray by the

²²⁶ KID, interview, September 30, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia

²²⁷ TPLF (1983: 1) similarly states “Tigray is bounded to the north and east by Eritrea, to the *west by the Sudan*, and to the south and south-west by the Ethiopian regions of Wollo and Gondar respectively.”

TPLF was, with little change, effected in the 1992 ethnic restructuring. Hence, as an Executive Committee of NaMA strongly argues that, “Welkait was ‘forcefully annexed’ to Tigray in the early years of the TPLF struggle and constitutionally guaranteed in 1995.”²²⁸

Abreham Yayeh, a former TPLF member, in an interview with Ethiopia Television in 1990 uncovered that “the Marxist-Leninist League Tigray (MLLT) has created a map of Tigray, in addition to the proper Tigray, taking territories of Welkait, Humera, Telemt from Gondar, Seqota, Alamata, Hashenge from North Wollo, and Dallol, Asab, and others from Afar.”²²⁹ Gebremedih Araya, a former TPLF member and an opposition figure in the diaspora, similarly illuminated on the identity of Welkait as follows:

For a thousand years, Tigray has never been in charge of Welkait-Tegede. They are Gondarie and Amhara people. Tekeze has always been a natural boundary between Tigray and Gondar. The genesis of all this goes back to the early days of Mahibere Gesigesti Bihere Tigray (Tigray National Organization) and the political program of the TPLF to establish the Democratic Republic of Tigray. The program designated Welkait, Tegede, Telemet, Humera, Alamata, Woldiya, Raya-Kobo, and other territories as part of Tigray simply because the locals speak Tigrigna. However, the TPLF's plot was to gain an international outlet via Sudan and use its economic avarice to plunder the area's fertile farmland.²³⁰

In his book "Tears of Welkait, Gondar, and the Amhara People", Fitaye (2021) explores the pretext and actual reasons for annexing Welkait as follows: On the one hand, the pretexts are that the territory was part of the Tigray administrative province before it was passed over to the Semien Gondar administrative province as a reward to Dejazmach Ayalew Biru by Teferi Mekonnen, the people speak Tigregna, and some localities have Tigraigna names. The actual reasons, on the other hand, are vengeance, demographics pressure from central and northern Tigray, and economic greed.

At this point, it is crucial to interrogate the issue of vengeance. The researcher, in this respect, has come across two explanation for the reason of TPLF vengeance towards Welkait: One is during the years of insurgency and its march to control Welkait in the late 1970s, it has faced strong resistance from EDU and Kefagne Movement and lost thousands of its combatants. Second is out of the front's anti-Amhara policy (for further discussion see Chapter 7). As one

²²⁸ KIM, interview, May 22, 2022, Addis Ababa Ethiopia. This also holds true to the case of Raya.

²²⁹ Ethiopia Broadcasting Corporate (EBC), Documentary: *Ye'mitelat* Ethiopia, March 5, 2021

²³⁰ Gebremedih Araya, Interview with 3CR Amharic Radio Melbourne, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1X1X4cYWEb8>, (last accessed May 2021)

member of Welkait-Tegede Committee claims, "with the delimitation of Welkait to Tigray, kidnapping, killing, and evicting native residents of Welkait have been common."²³¹

Historically, Clapham (1988) wrote Welkait has never been governed as part of Tigray and that the territory has always been administered by Gondar or Semien Provinces. On the same token, Ras Mengesha Seyoum, a former governor of Tigray from 1953 to 1965, confirms that the natural boundary of the Tekeze River separates Tigray from Gondar.²³² Before the ethnic restructuring, maps of modern Ethiopian history illustrated that the now contested territory was part of Gondar or Semine or Begemeder province (see Decree 6/1946; 14/1980 E.C.).

In contrast, TPLF's historical justification for claiming Welkait, Humera, and Tegede was that under the reign of Haile Selassie I, following the Italian occupation, the emperor wanted to annex the fertile Western Tigray to Gondar Province in order to weaken the resistance and insurrection from Tigray particularly the First Woyanne Rebellion. To impoverish Tigray, the land was taken away from its historical province in 1946. For the next thirty-three years (1946–1978), the area was administered under North Gondar Province.²³³

In 1992, two prominent individuals, namely Ambassador Dagneu Weldeslassie and Fitaye Assegu (High Court Judge), wrote a letter to the President of TGE on the demarcation of Welkait to Tigray as follows;

We are shocked and saddened by the plot that the proposed Ethiopian nationalities administrative region map revealed, which categorically infringed the natural boundary of Tekeze River and designated the historical and ancestral fertile territories of Gondar—Setit Humera, Welkait, Tegede, and Telemet—as a part of Tigray. These areas are only meant to be used for Tigray's economic development and to turn the inhabitants into second-class Tigray citizens.²³⁴

This is what Renner (2005: 9) calls territorial principle: "If you live in my territory you are subjected to my dominion, my law and my language." In the process of the administrative

²³¹ KIA, interview, October 21, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia

²³² VoA interview with Ras Mengesha Seyoum, available at: <https://amharic.voanews.com/a/welkait-ethnic-group-in-ethiopia-tigray-region/3211410.html> (last accessed April 2021); Ras Mengesha has given a different account for Demtsi Weyane Television that Tigray used to incorporate Welkait until the 1948 administrative regions decreed. (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vcDCfdQjWD0>)

²³³ Kaza Media, Documentary: Welkait is Tigray mini documentary, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tenW-t6acO0> (last accessed May 2021)

²³⁴ Letter to TGE President, November 21, 1992, p.1

restructuring the letter also mentions the people of Gondar were never consulted and requested to send a representative.

The people of Gondar did not send any representative in the Transitional Government. This restrains the opportunity to explain the existing reality and history of the region in detail. We therefore firmly believe that our legitimate and ancestral lands will never be impacted by a newly elected council of representatives.²³⁵

Although the administrative boundary delineation was completed in accordance with Proclamation No. 7/1992, the topic of Welkait and Raya was frequently raised throughout the Ethiopian constitution-making process. More notably, Welkait is referred as "Sesame Land" in the minutes of the Ethiopian Constitutional Council. The aforementioned expression suggests that the Amhara elite harbored a strong inclination to obtain the territory owing to its notable productivity in sesame and other lucrative agricultural commodities. The TPLF continues to uphold the notion of "Sesame Land" as a term denoting the Western Tigray vis-à-vis Amhara quest of the territory.²³⁶ People such as Alemseged Gebreamlak (representative from *Kilile* 1) and Addisu Legese (representative from *Kilile* 3) blame "neftegna and expansionists" for raising the question of the forced delineation of Welkait and Raya to Tigray. Quoting Alemseged's statement at this juncture about Welkait helps to capture the essence of the matter:

The TPLF considers residents of Welkait and Tegede to be Tigrayans. However, if the people of Welkait and Tegede (not Tsegede) declare that they do not belong to Tigray, the TPLF would be the first to step up and support their decision to leave Tigray. The idea of forceful incorporation of Welkait and Tegede into Tigray, in contrast, is the pursuit of *neftegnas* and expansionists, not the oppressed people of Gondar.²³⁷

"Questions and resentment over the border delineation concerning Welkait and Raya to Tigray have been prevalent since 1992. Nonetheless, those who raised the subject were dubbed as "*neftegna* not only by the TPLF but also by the party that meant to represent the Amhara, i.e., ANDM."²³⁸ A former senior official of ANDM accuses the TPLF/EPRDF that, "The reconfiguration of Ethiopia's internal boundaries in 1992 failed to incorporate historical

²³⁵ Letter to TGE President, November 21, 1992, p. 2. The Boundary Commission was established in 1991 consisting of ten members from which three are from EPRDF, two from OLF, one Somali, one Afar, one Gurage, one Harari and one Hadiya.

²³⁶ KIA, interview, October 21, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia

²³⁷ Ethiopia Constitutional Council Minute, Volume 3, 1987, pp. 49-50.

²³⁸ KIA, interview, March 5, 2021, Bahir dar, Ethiopia

administrative structures and the self-identification of the people. It was done by armchair consultants and politicians with the utmost motive of realizing the TPLF's political program.”²³⁹

6.4.2 Establishment of Welkait-Tegede Amhara Identity Restoration Committee

The Welkait question is instrumental in the outbreak of Amhara protest in Gondar on July 31, 2016 which induced the ruling EPRDF to undergo an internal party reform that facilitated the accession of Abiy Ahmed to power. Be that as it may, the official inauguration of the Welkait-Tegede Amhara Identity Restoration Committee (hereinafter Welkait-Tegede Committee) on August 23, 2015, in Adi Remetse, Welkait, ushered in a new political turn that kindled the long-awaited question in the making. The Welkait-Tegede Committee was established to represent and constitutionally seek the restoration of the Amhara identity of the people of Welkait. The committee succeeded in collecting individuals signatures to corroborate that the question is not from some disgruntled individuals against the TPLF/EPRDF rule but from the people.²⁴⁰ The Welkait-Tegede Committee wrote an official letter outlining the rationales for pressing the identity question to the Tigray Regional State Council and the House of Federation on December 17, 2015, and February 3, 2016, respectively (EHRCO, 2016).

The letters detailed the Welkait people's Amhara identity, psychological, historical, and geographical ties to the Begemeder of Amhara. It adds that the people are proud Amhara and Ethiopians who contributed profoundly to Ethiopian history in many aspects. It also considered the current Tigray identity as an imposition, and the people have been robbed of their lands and belongings, evicted, abducted, and slain since 1978. The letter provided a list of people who had been abducted and whose whereabouts is unknown. Although the Welkait people's quest for their Amhara identity goes back to the early days of ethnic-based federal restructuring, the current movement also comes from such complaints as a continuation of the earlier unheard voices.

The Welkait question, however, has been repressed, and members of the Welkait-Tegede Committee have been imprisoned and tortured in *Ma'ekelawi* Prison Cells— a notorious detention and interrogation center in Addis Ababa. People like Atalay Zafe, Getachew Ademe,

²³⁹ KIJ, Interview, May 25, 2021, Gondar, Ethiopia

²⁴⁰ Given the coercion for raising the Amharaness question, the Committee obtained signatures from the people of Welkait and Tegede areas through discreet means.

Mebratu Getahun, Alene Shama, and Nega Bantihun, to name a few, were imprisoned for raising the Welkait identity question. They were all charged with conspiring to forcibly obstruct the constitutional order in complicity with Ginbot-7, the Patriots Front, and the Eritrean government.²⁴¹

The major incident in Gondar town to detain Colonel Demeke Zewdu, Chairperson of the Committee, after dark in his home could also be mentioned as an example of how the regime goes the extra mile to silence the question.²⁴² This act sparked the Amhara resistance, and Demeke has since become a symbol of Amhara resistance. This begs the following question: why has TPLF/EPRDF failed to entertain such a constitutional quest for identity recognition? And why is the question pushed to the sidelines?

In this regard, a member of the Welkait-Tegede Committee mentioned,

We have never resorted to violence to assure our Amhara identity. We have lived up to the legal requirements to initiate such a question. We have referred to every bit of article, sub-article, and procedure stipulated in the Constitution and Proclamation No. 251/2001 to raise and file our question with the local, regional, and federal governments. However, the response from the government was intimidation, imprisonment, torture, etc.²⁴³

Two anomalies have impacted the Welkait question. First, there was an absence of consensus on determining the grand identity of Welkaities either as Amhara, Wekaitie, or Tegararu within the movement initially. For those claiming Wekaitie identity, their argument springs from the idea that the people speak Amharic, Tigrigna, and Arabic and have a distinct culture that cannot be categorically classified as Amhara or Tigre. The propagation of Wekaitie's distinct identity faded away early on, and the struggle was borne out as Amharaness as a counter movement to the already instituted Tigrianness. Second, there had been an unequal power relationship between the Committee and the Tigray Regional Government. This complicated the legal undertakings and the Committee's effort to make progress and easily facilitate the legal undertakings in a short amount of time.

²⁴¹ KIA, interview, October 21, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia

²⁴² KIM, interview, May 22, 2022, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

²⁴³ KIA, interview, October 21, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia

In the middle of the ongoing Welkait question, "the Tigray Region claimed a particular territory called Gichew in Tegede from the Amhara Region. This feud between the Tigray and Amhara Regions eventually resolved in 2016, heralding a new border."²⁴⁴ Looking at such circumstances, for some, "ANDM has always been engaged in forfeiting Amhara ancestral territories since the inception of the establishment of the ethnic regions without any debate. It is not surprising that Gedu Andargachew handed over Gichew to Tigray."²⁴⁵ However, following a strong resistance from the Amhara people and the accession of Team Lemma (OroMara) to power in 2018, the Amhara regional administration began to take strong position in regaining such contested territory by taking over from the Committee balancing power relations.²⁴⁶ ANDM's 11th Conference could be cited as an example where the ruling party acknowledged the Amhara questions and resolved to deal with these questions constitutionally including the Welkait question.²⁴⁷ What are, therefore, the questions of the Committee and their rationales for claiming their Amharaness? How have the regional and federal governments responded to the question?

A member of the Committee, explaining the Amhara root of Welkait, argued,

We have been categorized as Tegar, and as such, we are living within Tigray Regional State since 1992. But who are the people of Welkait? Welkait are an Amhara people who live in the North Gondar Zone, which is surrounded by Eritrea in the north, Tigray in the east, Tegede in the south, and Sudan in the west. We speak Amharic, Tigrigna, and some Arabic. We use Arabic and Tigrigna for trading, and we express our joy, grief, and celebrations in Amharic. Our language is Amharic, our culture is Amhara, and our will is to live alongside our Amhara and Begemeder brothers.²⁴⁸

Trudeau's (1965: 20) proposition sums up the above argument: "... more than language and culture, more than history and geography, even more than force or power, the foundation of the nation is will. For there is no power without will!" In addition, the Committee presents local lyrics and poems that illustrate the culture and psychological makeup of the people of Welkait-Tegede is in fact Amhara. Here are some examples of well-known Amharic lyrics from popular traditional music about the contested territory.

²⁴⁴ KIF, interview, August 3, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia

²⁴⁵ KIA, interview, June 11, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia

²⁴⁶ KIZ, interview, March 17, 2021, Bahir dar, Ethiopia

²⁴⁷ KID, interview, August 12, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia.

²⁴⁸ KID, interview, September 30, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia. The Committee has also come up with a narration that the Welkait is the homeland of the Amhara whose ancestors were Belew and Kelew, and the Amhara spread to the present day Amhara territory from Welkait (cf. Fitaye, 2019). However, the researcher has no historical evidence to verify such narration.

ማረሻ ውምንሽ ርመሳ ልጎ ያውጓን ደ

ስማን አርማጭሆ ወልቃይት ጠገደ

The rifle to till, the musket/howitzer to harrow and level
Simen Armachiho, Wolkait Tegede (literal translation)

ወልቃይት ጠገደ ድፍን አርማጭሆ ዳንሻና ሁመራ

ስወምጎን ደሬ ነው መሬቱም ያማራ

Wolkait Tegede, the whole Armachiho, Danshia and Humera
The people is Gondarian, the land is Amhara (literal translation)

The issue of Welkait, regardless of the promotion, manipulation, or trivialization by Amhara, Tigrian, Ethiopian, or other ethnic nationalists, presents a legitimate challenge to the federal order that necessitates a civilized resolution. A member of HoF pointed out that”

The peculiarity of the Welkait questions is borne out not only from the “forceful annexation” and the contested linguistic parameter to its inclusion into Tigray, but also from the lack of giving the question a chance to get entertained as per the constitution.

The informant continued and argued: "Looking at the Welkait question against the FDRE Constitution Article 46 (2): in terms of ‘settlement patterns’—where the Tekeze River appears to be a natural barrier; ‘identity’—self-identification or imposed identity; and ‘consent’—where the people were never consulted, one cannot conclusively incorporate the people into the Tigray region". Indeed, what the Welkait-Tegede Committee argues in terms of dealing with the problem is to rejoin Gondar and the Amhara region unconditionally. The argument being that forceful incorporation was undertaken before the ratification of the constitution, and the constitution could not be taken as space to entertain our question. This actually contradicts the legal undertakings of the Committee. On the other hand, officials of the Tigray region have officially endorsed that the question will only be resolved in accordance with the constitution.

There have been experiences of constitutional settlement over self-rule, territorial disputes, and identity questions in Ethiopia, such as Guji versus Sidama, Oromo versus Somalia, Silte, and Qimant, to name a few.²⁴⁹ However, when it comes to Welkait, the TPLF/EPRDF appears to confirm what Hagmann (2006) posits—"a centralized authoritarian...party system that operates

²⁴⁹ KIA, interview, May 11, 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

behind the facades of federalism and ethnonational self-determination". Identity and self-determination issues have moved from being constitutional to political, and it is now up to the ruling party to decide which ones to accept and which to reject. The question becomes what Agamben (2005) calls a "state of exception"—a means of depriving the Amharaness of Welkait as the sovereign power resides on the TPLF/EPRDF.

The Welkait question should be understood in this context. Hence, the question has been intentionally relegated and repelled over the years through bureaucratic maneuvers from the federal House of Federation to the Woreda tiers of government, vilifying the question as a plot by few individuals to destabilize the peaceful status quo. For the TPLF, however, the Welkait question is a quest for development such as road infrastructure, health centers, employment, etc.²⁵⁰

Furthermore, claims over these territories by the Amhara nationalists are a self-assertion of their Amharaness, refuting and re-imagining the politico-territorial Amhara regional state established under the 1995 FDRE Constitutions. In this sense, it is plausible to argue the ethnic-based federal order has engendered the rise of Amhara questions through the creation of contested territorial spaces, the assertion of Amhara identity with the loss of "ancestral territories", and an organized move to restore these lost territories.

The Ethiopianist camp, in contrast, underplays such ethno-territorial claims as primordial and parochial. So long as the territories are part of Ethiopia, why do we need to fight over Welkait, Raya, Dera, and others? This attitude only lasted till the outbreak of the war in Tigray on November 24, 2020.

After the outbreak of the war in the North, Welkait and Raya became part of the Amhara regional state, but not officially. "Although the Zonal administrations were organized by the Amhara Regional government, neither the Regional Constitution has officially endorsed the administration nor has the federal government allotted an annual budget to the newly established

²⁵⁰ VoA, program on the identity of the Welkait people, January 24, 2016, available at: <https://amharic.voanews.com/a/welkait-ethiopia-ethnic-groups-in-ethiopia/3160599.html> (last accessed May 2021)

Zonal administrations."²⁵¹ Since late 2020, members of the Welkait-Tegede Committee have been in charge of running the Zonal Administration. Abiy's government position also shows no track of consistency. During the war, the PM himself proclaimed the contested territory to be Amhara.²⁵² After the Pretoria agreement of November 2, 2022, the PM said the people of Welkait speak both Amharic and Tigrigna that suggests a unique Welkaitie identity.²⁵³

6.4.3. Maps and travelers account as justification

Looking into historical evidences such as chronicles, travelers account, previous research works, and the overall debate also help to grasp the question of Welkait. The intricacy of the Welkait dispute rests on the polarization of the arguments put forth by Amhara and Tigray nationalists to justify their respective claims to the region. Thus far, apart from the social media debates and few blog posts on, two individuals, Achamyeleh Tamiru and Ian Nyess boldly wrote about the Amharaness and Tigrayness of Welkait: one with a nationalistic tone and the other we so far do not know. Achamyeleh (2020) has eloquently explored rich historical evidence including travelers account that proves Welkait as part of Amhara from 1991 going back to the 4th century. Although the researcher could be criticized for lack of knowledge of historiography, the evidence presented in the paper illustrates Welkait historically was part of Tigray. Indeed, the researcher presents the chronicles of the a 4th century Emperor Ezana to the 19th century Yohannes IV, travelers account such as Poncet and Lewis (1709), Bruce (1790), Tellez (1710), Orlowska (2006), Salt (1814), Rubeson (1976), d'Abbadie (1868), and so on to prove the Amharaness of Welkait. The researcher has also referred to some of these documents to verify whether such documents exist and they tell similar stories as provided by Achamyeleh, and the documents in detail discuss the physiology of the Amhara people, the existence of the province of Amhara bordered in the west by Tekeze river, etc.

In contrast, Nyssen (2022a: 6), through 108 historical and 21 ethno-linguistic maps retrieved from online sources The David Rumsey Historical Map Collection at Stanford, the Ethiomap

²⁵¹ KIT , interview, January 21, 2022, Gondar, Ethiopia

²⁵² PM Abiy Ahmed, 6th Year 2nd Extra-ordinary session of HPRs, Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I-43KpkmB24> (last accessed June 2022)

²⁵³ PM Abiy Ahmed, 2nd Year 4th Ordinary Session of HPRs, Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zuy8XbDDE-I> (last accessed June 2022)

repository Forschungszentrum Gotha der Universität Erfurt (Germany), Centre Français des Études Éthiopiennes (Ethiopia), and Mekelle University (Ethiopia) argued “Welkait was not ‘always’, rather ‘occasionally’ part of Amhara” from 1607 to 2009. With its focus on maps to determine the Tigrayness or Amharaness of Welkait has failed to provide due attention to chronicles of Ethiopian Emperors and governors of Welkait. Nyssen (2022b) has also presented 574 place names as recorded by Ellero and his translator to justify the contested area has Tigrigna toponyms. Both diametrically opposed propositions require further research by cartographers, linguist, historians. Members of Welkait-Tegede Committee, in contrast, argue that since the incorporation of Welkait to Tigray, the regional government has intentionally changed place names into Tigrigna (see also UoG, 2022).²⁵⁴

Moreover, Smidt (2022) presented a 19th century map sketched by traveling cartographers and researchers of Northeastern Africa that shows Welkait and the environs belong to Tigray province. Overall, in addition to the above-mentioned travelers accounts such as Gobat (1850), Plowden (1848), Stern (1868), Beke (1867), and others are presented as evidence to prove the Amharaness or Tigrayness of the land beyond Tekeze. The questions, however, remains: will these maps and travelers’ account serve the purpose of rectifying the Welkait question? The authenticity, the credibility, and profession of travelers’ and their maps of Ethiopia should be critically scrutinized.

The central issue of arguments about Welkait keeps eluding agreement: European travelers’ accounts and chronicles appear to be manipulated to support their claims; and it is not unusual for the TPLF’s argument to went so far as to completely reject such historical evidence and maintain that the provinces of Wello and Gondar were never Amhara prior to 1991 (see Clapham, 1988; Aregawi, 2009). Two pieces of evidence will refute this claim: first, Charles Cooke (1867) wrote in his book “Routes in Abyssinia” that the Province of Amhara includes, among other places, Waldba and Welkait; and second, Italian East Africa, which more or less strictly adhered to ethnic identities, established the Amhara province west of the Tekeze River (see Sbacchi, 1962). However, Welkait became a bone of contention as pertains to the reference of the ISEN

²⁵⁴ KID, interview, September 30, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia

map and various European travelers' accounts following its demarcation to Tigray Regional State in 1992 and officially in 1995.

6.5. Summary

The chapter attempts to scrutinize how the ethnic-based federal state structure played in hastening the grievances and questions of the Amhara elite in post-1991 Ethiopia. Although the context and the way of ethnic categorization of Ethiopian society is problematic from the outset, going ahead with the plan of instituting ethnic-based federalism in 1991 onwards has further engendered Amhara and other nationalist movements to thrive. Amhara nationalists strongly argue their exclusion from the constitutional-making process that defined the political life and territoriality of identity groups in the years to come as the root of the problem. At the heart of the Amhara questions is the issue of the demarcation of Amhara “ancestral territories” to Tigray, Oromia, and Benishangul-Gumuz according to Proclamation No. 7/1992 and Sudan.

The findings of this dissertation revealed that the Welkait question played a central role in mobilizing the Amhara in every corner of the Amhara region and beyond as one of the central questions in the Amhara resistance. This has been widely resonated in the Amhara resistance movement that sparked in Gondar on July 31st, 2016. Similarly, the mass protests in Bahir Dar, Woldiya, and other places or towns in the region voiced the question of Welkait along with other grievances against the ruling TPLF/EPRDF. The quest for ancestral territories in Welkait, Raya, Metekel, and Dera/Shoa has united the Amhara nationalists to (re)imagine the existing identity-cum-territoriality of the Amhara region. Individuals who have never been to Welkait strongly and emotionally claim the return of the Amharaness of the people and the territory.

Since 2016, if pushed further back to 2010, the Amhara nationalists have also raised various deep-rooted grievances and resentments against the TPLF/EPRDF regime, including marginalization from national politics, exclusion from the economic miracle, unabated identity-based attacks against the Amhara, etc. The questions in the process are ostensibly aimed at determining the self as an Amhara in light of the FDRE Constitution and designating the authentic versus crooked representative of the Amhara at regional and national politics. Nonetheless, the questions of Amhara and ethnic nationalism as a *modus operandi* to push for answers to these questions lack both ideological clarity and concerted effort which usually comes

and goes as a background to events such as ethnic-based attacks against the Amhara. The next chapter delves into the status of Amhara societal security under the ethnic-based federal Ethiopia and how it played out in mobilizing the Amhara into the ethnic nationalist movement.

Chapter Seven: Societal (In)securities and mobilization in Amhara nationalism

7.1. Introduction

This Chapter addresses how societal security threats and defensive mechanisms contributed to the rise of Amhara nationalism taking the period 1991-2020. The chapter delves into the state of societal (in)securities of the Amhara by drawing evidence from the Ethiopian Human Rights Council, Moresh, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission. Key informant interviews were also undertaken to generate how individuals perceive the state of security threats against the Amhara in Ethiopia and how it played into the mobilization and emergence of the nationalist movement.

To this effect, the chapter is written by drawing theoretical lens of the Copenhagen School. Hence, the nature of threats, referent object, and defensive mechanisms are given due attention to explore both the state of Amhara societal (in)security and the concomitant ethnic nationalist movement. The central argument of the chapter is the unabated insecurities posed upon the Amhara throughout the last three decades in different parts of the country have ignited the sentiment of otherness on Amhara to devise self-identification of a nationalist movement as a way out. Amhara nationalism, therefore, is conceived as a cultural policy to avert the existing state of societal insecurities.

7.2. The Amhara in Ethiopia: “Our survival is under threat”?

The widely held rhetoric since the outbreak of the Amhara resistance and mobilizing factor in Amhara nationalism is “our survival is under threat” (NaMA, 2018). This sentiment is also shared along various Amhara political and civic organizations including Fano. This fit into what Buzan, Waever, & de Wilde (1998: 26) call “a specific rhetorical structure of survival, priority of action ‘because if the problem is not handled now, it will be too late, and we will not exist to remedy our failure’”. This vague rhetoric is backed by specific actual and perceived societal security threats ranging from continuous identity-based assaults and their repercussions for instance in Oromia, Benishangul-Gumuz, and SNNPs against Amhara in the ethnic federal Ethiopia. To grasp the state of Amhara societal security in post-1991 Ethiopia, it is pertinent to

interrogate three questions. First, what are the specific security threats posed on the Amhara? How do these threats emerge? How the Amhara, given their security is threatened, defend, or deal with the threats?

The Copenhagen School divided threats to societal security into three main categories, i.e., migration, horizontal competition, and vertical competition. Depopulation has also been added as a fourth element. Societies can also be threatened through the four other dimensions of security: military, political, economic, and environmental (Buzan, Waever, & de Wilde, 1998). The following section attempted to picture the Amhara case by adapting the above theoretical lens, yet strictly applying the security sectors and the causes of societal security to the Amhara case would be misleading.

The societal insecurity that stems from the misrecognition and vilification eventually perpetuates danger on the survival of Amharaness through destroying and repressing the symbol and memory of the identity. As Waeveret *al.* (1993) put it, “survival for a society is a question of identity.” A crucial question to interrogate at this point is “how the survival of an ethnic national identity has been subjected to threats?” During the FGD, the following security risks inflicted upon Amharaness are pinpointed and discussed— killing and imprisoning prominent individuals and elders, looting of properties of dissidents, forcing people to leave their ancestral land, lack of representation in the government (local, regional and federal level), and preventing people to exercise their culture such as speaking Amharic, isolating from the invented Amhara Region, through education policy, closing schools, settlement and demographic change, forcing people to change their names, and changing toponyms.²⁵⁵ This has been further confirmed by members of the Welkait identity committee.²⁵⁶

For the sake of clarity, the threats inflicted upon the Amhara are addressed from three politico-structural contexts, i.e., Amhara living in contested territories; Amhara residing outside of the “invented homeland”; and Amhara living in the “Amhara Region”. The nature, scope, and types of threats vary slightly in different situations as well. This dissertation identified a perpetual

²⁵⁵ FGD-II, September 20, 2020, Gondar

²⁵⁶ KID, interview, September 30, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia

forgetting of Amharaness, displacement, killings, depopulation and identity-based attacks as the main societal insecurities.

7.3. The societal security of the Amhara in the contested territories

Since the outbreak of the Amhara protests in 2016, the question of “forcefully annexed” ancestral lands, i.e., Welkait, Raya, Metekel, and Dera/Shoa has rejuvenated and gained momentum. In post-1991 Ethiopia, Welkait, Raya, Metekel, and Dera/Shoa territories are bounded by Tigray, Benishangul-Gumuz, and Oromia regional states respectively. Contention has always existed ever since the invention of the internal ethno-linguistic arrangement of Ethiopia in 1992.²⁵⁷ The recent revitalization was ensued through the widely held “Amhara ancestral land” narrative among the youth, political parties, identity committees, civil society organizations, Fano, etc. Hence, the societal security threats are not limited to the environmental sector— “loss of lands tied to a particular group identity” but also the political sector, military sector, depopulation, etc (Buzan, Waever, & de Wilde, , 1998).

7.3.1. Welkait and Raya

Targeting Amhara in Welkait and Raya goes back to the period of the TPLF struggle against Derg regime. In this regard, a member of Welkait-Tegede Committee claims:

Ever since TPLF set its foot in Welkait in 1978, it targeted exterminating popular and influential individuals. This is a deliberate act of creating a generation gap and induces an everlasting forgetting of our Amharaness and imposes Tigray identity that furthers the party’s long-term goal of annexing the territory to the Tigray Regional State in the Federal Ethiopia or the illusion of Greater Tigray Republic.²⁵⁸

Daniel Kendie (2021) wrote “Some 70,000 native Welkaites were either killed or uprooted from their lands and replaced by 500,000 Tigrean settler farmers, Tigrean refugees from Sudan and TPLF ex-combatants”. Mekonnen Zelelew (2016), similarly estimated that the TPLF had relocated excess of 500,000 Tigreans to the Welkait, Telemet, and Setit-Humera regions.²⁵⁹ Bekalu (2018: 88) also wrote “After uprooting the Amhara community from Welkait Tsegedie ... the regime gave these areas to thirty thousand demobilized TPLF militiamen and four

²⁵⁷ See Constitutional Making Minute Volume 6, 1992

²⁵⁸ KID, interview, September 30, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia

²⁵⁹ Mekonnen Zelelew, Head of Public Mobilization Tigrayan Alliance for National Democracy (TAND)

hundred thousand Tigray community.” Furthermore, a recent investigation undertaken by group of researchers from University of Gondar uncovered over 60,000 Amhara were killed by the TPLF in the last forty years in Welkait, Telemet, and Tegede (Ethiopian Herald, 2022).²⁶⁰ It was difficult to confirm the number of settlers, killed, or uprooted people, aside from the accounts of these people and the researcher had spoken.

Similarly, although TPLF advanced to Raya in the late 1980s, as member of Raya Identity Committee argues, those who were mindful of their Amhara identity dissented TPLF’s brand new imposition of Tigrayan identity.²⁶¹ In contrast, Raya Rayuma Democratic Party construes individuals who were killed in the late 1980s and early 1990s as Raya— an identity that relationally differs from the Amhara and Tigray. Further, the party goes to the point of accusing “... the Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF) of engaging in forced assimilation and causing an identity crisis against the people of Raya in a move to strengthen regional autonomy.”²⁶² However, except for the records of both identity committees and accounts of interviewees, the researcher hardly found any evidence to verify these claims. Such narratives were crucial in rallying the masses and garnering support for the identity questions and raising ethnic consciousness.

Following the assumption of power by the TPLF/EPRDF and the subsequent inclusion of these territories to Tigray, TPLF began undertaking measures to change the demographic composition of the people through resettlement. As Colletta, Kostner, and Wiederhofe (1996) reported as part of a continuing reorganization of the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF), the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) began the demobilization of up to 30,000 former TPLF combatants under the Humera Resettlement Scheme (HRS). Instead of returning demobilized troops to their original domicile, the scheme intends to establish a substantial number of them in new communities on sparsely inhabited terrain in Western Tigray. This also holds true for refugee returnees from Sudan where resettlement was undertaken in the lowlands of Setit-Humera instead of repatriating returnees to Central and Eastern Tigray (see Kassahun, 2000; Hammond, 2018). In addition to the economic justifications for the relocation, Hammond (2004:

²⁶⁰ Ethiopia Herald (2022) https://press.et/herald/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Hr_opt.pdf

²⁶¹ KIA, interview, March 5, 2021, Bahir dar, Ethiopia

²⁶² Ezega, TPLF Accused of Engaging in Forced Assimilation of Raya People, September 4, 2020, <https://www.ezega.com/News/NewsDetails/8112/TPLF-Accused-of-Engaging-in-Forced-Assimilation-of-Raya-People> (last accessed May 2021)

39) emphasized the political justifications, such as the redrawn regional boundaries following the EPRDF's ascent to power and the incorporation of Humera into Tigray; "increasing the proportion of Tegarú residents in the Humera area helped to secure Tigray's claim over it." Naggy (2022) similarly pointed out "When the TPLF came to power, they transferred a fertile section of Amhara State (Welkait district) to Tigray, renaming it Western Tigray, and brought in ethnic Tigrayans to displace ethnic Amharas." ²⁶³

Year	Ada Bai		Mai Kadra		Rawayan	
	Refugee	Local Population	Refugee	Local Population	Refugee	Local Population
1993	7200	-	2200	720	2600	Small
1994	-	-	-	-	2255	-

Table 1: Refugee resettlement in Humera 1993-1994

Source: Hammond (1994)

An informant from Welkait, in this regard, states:

Due to the inhospitable climate and fatal infectious diseases like Malaria, the lowlands of Setiti-Humera were rarely inhabited. However, with the incorporation of the area into Tigray, a massive influx of people beyond Tekeze began to arrive in addition to the resettlement package. This has impaired the Welkait highlanders continuing agricultural cultivation of the lowlands because of the fragmentation of land including snatching their lands. ²⁶⁴

In this regard, according to Kassahun (2000), Setiti-Humera area endured land fragmentation as a result of the distribution of huge agricultural land, such as more than 10,000 hectares to Hiwot Farm Mechanization (controlled by the TPLF) and communal land to refugee returnees per family head (see also Colletta, Kostner, and Wiederhofe, 1996; Hammond, 2004; Hammond, 2018). Further, a member of NaMA strongly claims that: "after TPLF forcefully annexed Welkait and Raya, it began insidiously working on resettling a significant number of individuals from other drought-stricken parts of Tigray to these areas after capturing the state machinery, to

²⁶³ Tibor Naggy (2022). Peace in northern Ethiopia — looking for the end of the rainbow, Washington Examiner, Available at: <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/op-eds/peace-in-northern-ethiopia-looking-for-the-end-of-the-rainbow> (last accessed January 2023)

²⁶⁴ KIA, interview, October 21, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia. Similarly, Kassahun (2000) pointed out the challenge of infectious diseases such as Malaria and Kalazahr and the inhospitable climate posed on the refugees/returnees to these areas.

the point of demographic re-engineering.”²⁶⁵ In this regard, Buzan, Waever, & de Wilde (1998) assertion of the influx of individuals from outside causes changes in the host society and a shift in demographic composition theoretically applies to these places.

Zooming into the previous three Ethiopian population censuses help to examine the state of “population engineering” in Welkait and Raya. The first comprehensive population census in Ethiopian history was conducted in 1984, during the *Dergue* regime, and was published later in 1991. The census covered 16 administrative regions, 101 provinces, 604 districts, and 819 urban centers. The ethnic composition of the Ethiopian population was officially published in this census (CSA, 1991). In terms of Welkait and Raya, it provided that the disputed territories were part of Gondar and Wello Province respectively. It is important to look at the provincial ethnic composition as recorded in the 1984 Census. As shown in the table, the Amhara are the dominant ethnic group accounting for 84.3 percent of Gondar Province which includes Welkait, Setit Humera, Telemet, and Tegede.

Ethnic group	Total Population	Percent (%)
Amhara	2,545,732	84.3
Tigray	190,183	6.3

Table 1- Population by Ethnic Group, Gondar Province, 1984 Census

Source: Population Census (1984: 33)

However, the question remains: Can Amhara dominance and "population engineering" in the two most recent censuses, in the disputed regions in 1994 and 2007, be explained by the 1984 census alone? Two contested arguments could be forwarded; first, there were gaps in the census in terms of covering rural areas of the contested territories of Setit (25,609), Welkait (66,415), Tegede (69,000), and Tselemt (60,668) accounting an estimated population of 221,692 (CSA, 1991: 91). Basing from this premise, Abel (2022) out rightly rejects Amhara domination and “population engineering” claim of Welkait is self-defeating. Since the contested territory accounts for seven percent of the Gondar province suggesting the 6.3 percent of the population may have resided in the contested territory to which the ethnic composition was never reported in the estimated

²⁶⁵ KIW, interview, August 12, 2019, Gondar, Ethiopia

population. Hence, the Welkait question is originated from “Amhara irredentism”. Second, by comparing the estimated population of Setit alone (25,609) to the 30,000 ex-TPLF combatants established in Setit, excluding refugee returnees, one can observe the "population engineering" as an orchestrated act.

Ethnic Groups	Kabtiya Humera	Tselemet	Welkait	Tsegede	Total
Amhara	3,800	10,382	2,734	14,226	31,142 ²⁶⁶
Tigraway	41,999	87,012	87,099	45,532	261,642

Table 2- Population by Ethnic Groups, Selected Contested Tigray Woredas, 1994 Census
Source: CSA (1994)²⁶⁷

What would then explain the demographic change or “population engineering” in the disputed areas? Two hypotheses may be advanced here: first, the Amhara are compelled to identify as Tigrayans initially and through time assimilated to the dominant regional culture to ensure Western Tigray's integrity. Provided the newly established regional structure is in control of “pieces of machinery of cultural reproduction (e.g., schools, churches, language rights)” (Buzan, Waeber, & de Wilde, 1998) and the status of multilingualism in Welkait and Raya²⁶⁸, it was not formidable to acculturate newly incorporated territories into Tigraway. Bourdieu (1973: 71) wrote educational systems are instrumental in cultural reproduction and sustain “the reproduction of the structure of power relationships and symbolic relationships between classes”. The key problem addressed at the FGD in this respect was the fact that children are being denied the right to study in their mother tongue, i.e., Amharic, Rayigna (Raya-Tigrigna), Oromiffa, or Agewigna, since the medium of instruction has been abruptly changed to Tigrigna.²⁶⁹ This, indeed, contradicts with Article 39 (2) of the FRDE Constitution, which is stated; “Every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has the right to speak, to write and to develop its own language; to express, to develop and to promote its culture; and to preserve its history.” As one

²⁶⁶ Considering that there are 31,142 Amhara, the census has given them the discretion to define their ethnic affiliation.

²⁶⁷ The 1994 census has explicitly recorded and published the ethnic composition, demonstrating Tigraway's domination in the contested areas.

²⁶⁸ The people in Welkait and Raya speak Amharic, Tigrigna, Arabic, Agewgna and Oromiffa

²⁶⁹ KIA, interview, March 5, 2021, Bahir dar, Ethiopia

member of Telemet Committee puts it, “we were devoid of the right to speak Amharic but Tigrigna, listen to Amharic music, mourn the deceased in our typical Amhara tradition, etc. Our elders were targeted and haunted down. This has the purpose of engendering our memory of Amharaness into oblivion.”²⁷⁰ This actually has been reiterated by members of other identity committee members.

In contrast, TPLF argues the territory belongs to Tigrigna speaker as per the map produced by Ethiopian Revolution Information Center (1979). A slightly different map was later produced by the ISEN in 1983. As Abbink (1998) wrote the preliminary making of ethno-linguistic boundaries extensively used the “nationalities map” produced by the ISEN. However, Welakit and Raya identity committees filed similar complaints to the House of Federation on the repression and perpetual challenge of losing their Amharaness owing to the educational policy, media and other systems that disregarded the core features of their identity.²⁷¹ Similarly, one respondent regrettably mentioned; “if you go to Welkait, the younger generation struggle to speak Amharic due to the educational policy and strict measures of the TPLF on those who speak Amharic, listen to Amharic music and so on.”²⁷² What is more, personal names and sixty-seven toponyms were systematically changed into Tigrayan names (UoG, 2022). In this regard, Buzan (1993: 43) wrote “forbidding the use of language, names and dresses, through the closure of places of education or worship, to deportation on the killing of members of the community” characterizes societal insecurities.

Second, the Amhara in the newly incorporated territories were forced to flee their homes due to continuous brutal threats from the TPLF. Research undertaken by the University of Gondar (2022) revealed the massacre of ethnic Amharas and hidden prison cells during the TPLF occupation. Accordingly, a new mass grave was found in a place such as *Qalim*, *Tirkan* (Humera airport), and *Dejena* to mention a few. Places such as Gehanem (Hell) and *Minmine* were notorious prison cells.²⁷³ What is more, the massacre of more than 1,500 ethnic Amhara in Mai-Kadra on November 9, 2020, following the TPLF's attack on the Northern Command of the

²⁷⁰ KIY, interview, August 23, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia

²⁷¹ Welkait Amhara National Identity Question, December 14, 2015

²⁷² KIA, interview, October 21, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia

²⁷³ <https://waltainfo.com/researchers-discover-more-mass-graves-of-ethnic-amharas/>

Ethiopian National Defense Force, exemplifies the tenacity of the anti-Amhara policy of the TPLF (Amhara Association of America, 2021; UoG, 2022).

Due to fear of persecution, as Ashete Demelew, Chief Zonal Administrator of Welkait Tegede Setit-Humera, revealed;

At least 500,000 ethnic Amhara reportedly were subjected to forced displacement from Welkait, Tegede, Setiti-Humera and Telemet districts fleeing mass detention, killing and grave human rights abuses against them.²⁷⁴

Similarly, Ambassador Taye Atske Selassie, who was born and raised in Welkait, twitted:

A painful reminder of the travesty of history. Those who are hunted, eliminated and evicted from their land are labeled as occupiers. Welkait is a lived tragedy. The truth will not die with those who lived and witnessed the forceful occupation of Welkait by TPLF in 1978.²⁷⁵

In a similar vein, TPLF advances similar policy in the contested Raya provinces.²⁷⁶ The Vice Chairperson of the Raya Amhara Identity Restoration Committee points out that, “since Tigray’s forcible annexation of Raya, the TPLF has killed, arbitrarily arrested, and intimidated notable persons and those who reject the imposition of a Tigrian identity.”²⁷⁷ The recent 2018 political development and identity question in Raya was largely dismissed by the TPLF as a question of good governance. In this regard, Ato Redae Halefom, Tigray Regional State Spokesperson, vehemently argues:

We have recently seen a group of individuals trying to galvanize identity questions in the name of the people of Raya. From the outset, in Ethiopia, all identity questions are constitutionally guaranteed and addressed through popular struggle. Yet, if the people of Raya have any identity questions, they have every constitutional right to do so. However, the people of Raya are Tigreans and do not have identity questions; if they have any question, it is a question of development and good governance.²⁷⁸

In his early days in office, PM Abiy Ahmed has made a similar speech in Mekelle which caused a public roar including the identity committees. One informant sums up TPLF’s position towards these contested territories “if you believe Raya is Amhara, move to the Amhara region. We only

²⁷⁴ Daily News, May 29, 2021, <https://mereja.com/index/358502>. However, the researcher was unable to verify claims of number of displaced persons in the stated area.

²⁷⁵ Ambassador Taye Atske Selassie official Twitter Account July 11, 2022

²⁷⁶ KIA, interview, March 5, 2021, Bahir dar, Ethiopia

²⁷⁷ KIB, interview, March 6, 2021, Bahir dar, Ethiopia

²⁷⁸ Redae Halefom, Tigray Region Spokesperson, Press Conference on Raya Identity Questions, September 6, 2018

want the land.”²⁷⁹ However, ethnic territorial claims transcend such one-sided official rejection and again organized political claims (for further discussion see Chapter 6).

7.3.2. Metekel and Dera/Shoa

Metekel was the part of Gojjam Province during pre-1991 and become a constitutive part of Benishangul-Gumuz region after federal Ethiopia. However, “Neither in ecological nor in sociological terms Metekel is part of Gojjam. The region, always a periphery of the Ethiopian highlands, was joined to the province mainly for administrative convenience” (Desalegn, 1988: 16). With all the loaded connotation, the Shinasha and Gumuz are considered as the indigenous community of the area. As one of the resettlement hubs in 1975/76 and 1984/85, a considerable number of Ethiopians, including Amharas, were settled in Metekel (Desalegn, 1988; Getachew, 1989; Ofcansky & Berry, 1991).

Dera/Shoa, in contrast, was part of Merha-Bete Awraja, Shoa before 1991. In post-1991 Dera/Shoa was initially a constituent part of the Amhara region before it is incorporated into the Oromia region through a sort of public vote. Indeed, two alleged reasons profoundly affected the incorporation of Dera Wereda into Oromia. First, people complained that Debre Birhan, the capital of North Shoa Zone of Amhara Regional State, is too far away from Dera and prefers the nearby Fitch Town of Oromia North Shoa Zone. Second, the Oromo Peoples’ Democratic Party (OPDO) was founded in Dera/Shoa, and the party considers the district to be part of the Oromia region.²⁸⁰

However, after 1991 the Amhara who reside in Metekel and Dera faced manifold security threats. Before delving into the insecurities inflicted upon the Amhara, presenting the following figure is deemed appropriate to grasp the major population composition of the contested territories.

²⁷⁹ KIB, interview, March 6, 2021, Bahir dar, Ethiopia

²⁸⁰ KIC, interview, Debre Berhan, February 21, 2021

	1994 Census		2007 Census	
	Metekel Zone	Dera Wereda	Metekel Zone	Dera Wereda
Amhara	47900	69496	48050 ²⁸¹	na ²⁸²
Shinasha	-	-	-	-
Gumuz	66965	-	101638	-
Agew-Awi	17155	-	31312	-
Oromo	27050	70082	30656	na

Table 3: Ethnic composition in contested territories 1994 and 2007 Census

Source: CSA (1994) and CSA (2007)

The population census witnessed a significant number of ethnic Amhara inhabited both contested territories. However, they have never been officially recognized as a community belonging to the newly instituted regions in the post-1991 (see Benishangul Gumuz Regional Constitution, 2002) instead referred as settlers— “these people have been living every day of their life suffering from immense and unexplainable structural violence” (Amare, 2020: 5). Furthermore, since the 1994 census, the Benishangul-Gumuz regional state, in particular, has refused to accept migrants as legal residents of the regional state for fear of losing the majority of indigenous groups population in the regional state due to an influx of overwhelming non-indigenous ethnic groups (Mesfin, 2012). Overall, the indigenous vs non-indigenous (settler) dichotomy along with other factors hastened security vulnerabilities, lack of political representation, possessing land, enjoying their fundamental rights, etc. of the Amhara and other ethnic groups in Metekel (see Amare, 2020).

This dissertation draws the accounts of human rights reports mainly of the Ethiopian Human Rights Council and Moresh Wogene Amhara Organization to illustrate the continuous and unabated identity-based attacks on the Amhara. The EHRCO (2015), in its third statement, reported violence against the Amhara broke out in Dibate and Mandura districts. The report citing a witness reads:

... lot of people were burned alive in their homes; people were killed and had their genitals cut off as trophies; 270 men, women, children and elderly were shot dead indiscriminately; 9 farmers associations and 6833 homes were burned down and their inhabitants displaced; crops in the fields, harvested grains and cattle were pillaged and burned; the Muslim Amhara

²⁸¹ From 1994 to 2007, the Amhara population in Metekel Zone grew only by 150 persons.

²⁸² na- not available

descent in Metekel Zone more than 60,000 fled in fear and settled in Menta Weha and Chagni without clothes, shelter and medical care.

An informant from Metekel recalls, “Since I was a child, we were subjected to identity-based attacks.”²⁸³ The informant describes the situation of the Amhara in Metekel “as horrific”. The informant continued;

We have been a target of identity-based attacks and displaced in thousands. Only those who are fortunate escape the massacre. We have nowhere to go and return to start over. Yet another round of massacre happens in months, or a year so under the watch of the regional and federal governments.²⁸⁴

The researcher heard individual stories who survived continuous massacres, lost family members, friends, etc. at Bahir Dar Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) Center. Going beyond their narratives, there are a commonly shared grievances attributed to lack of representation and protection from the Benishangul-Gumuz region, Amhara regional states and/or the Federal government. Despite continuous complaints and early warnings these people filed to either regional states, no security organ stepped up to ensure the protection of these people. This resembles to a condition in which individuals are effectively reduced from the bio-politics, and bereft of legal protection, allowing them to be killed, expelled from their homes and face wanton destruction (see also Moresh, 2016). “Disarming the Amhara ethnic community in advance of attacks further restricts their ability to defend themselves in the absence of state protection.”²⁸⁵

In contrast, the situation in Dera/Shoa is more like to that of Welkait and Raya, where the Amhara are obliged to identify as Oromo, attend schools in Oromiffa, and lack representation in *Cheffe Oromia*, State Council of Oromia Regional State or the House of Federation. The identity committee of Dera/Shoa have also been subject to harassment, imprisonment, physical abuse, etc. for requesting a constitutional right to be identified as Amhara. Individuals who dissent from the new identity are experiencing more repression from the regional government. Quite recently, OLF-Shene has continuously raids of attacks on the Amhara in Dera causing death, pillage, destruction of properties, etc.²⁸⁶

²⁸³ KIA, telephone interview, May 2, 2021

²⁸⁴ KIA, telephone interview, May 2, 2021. The Oromos and Shinashas are also targets of identity-based attacks.

²⁸⁵ KIB, interview, February 20, 2021, Debre Berhan, Ethiopia

²⁸⁶ KIB, interview, February 20, 2021, Debre Berhan, Ethiopia

7.2.3. Amhara in Oromia, Benishangul-Gumuz and SNNPs

For various historical reasons, millions of Amhara live outside of the Amhara Regional State. There are no definitive explanations as to why the Amhara are scattered all over Ethiopia. The hegemonic narrative, though, is a settlement in pursuit of dominating the modern Ethiopian state during Menelik's expansion in the 19th Century (Baxter, 1978; Birru, 1980; Assafa, 2020). Further, the Resettlement and Villagization Policy during the *Derg* regime to overcome the daunting famine that unfolded in different parts of Ethiopia is another reason for the presence of large number of Amharas in different parts of the country (Ofcansky & Berry, 1991). The other explanation is the Amhara had inhabited a large part of current Ethiopia and for various historical reasons, the Amhara were forced to leave, assimilated or kept their Amharaness intact (see Mered, 1971; Habtamu, 2020).

For generations, the Amharas co-existed alongside what later become the “titular” ethno-national groups of several regional states. The reconstitution of Ethiopia along ethno-linguistic lines made the Amhara an ethnic minority in the new regional states (Bekalu, 2018). From the outset of TPLF/EPRDF accession to power, the plight of ethnic profiling and identity-based raids against the Amhara began manifesting itself in Arsi and Hararghe Zones of Oromia (HRW, 1993; EHRCO, 2015; Moresh, 2016). Notably to this day, nobody has ever claimed responsibility for these atrocities. The ruling party accuses the OLF, and the OLF in turn accuses the TPLF/EPRDF for the atrocities committed against the Amhara and Orthodox Christians. In contrast, a survivor's account of the Bedeno massacre attributes the blame to the ruling party for the atrocities committed.²⁸⁷

The suppression of minorities by the local government, coercive measures to rectify tensions between integrating state policy and minorities, and ongoing coordinated aggression from dominant groups (Buzan, Waeber, & de Wilde, 1998) have all contributed to societal insecurity against the Amhara. Stemming from such structural threats an IDP informant states; “ethnic-based assaults appear to keep on indulging the Amhara throughout the years of the TPLF/EPRDF era (including the PP) suggesting the atrocities could have an institutional foundation against the

²⁸⁷ESAT, Human rights discussion with Gebeyehu Desta, February 2, 2013

Amhara.”²⁸⁸ It is critical to note at this point that various ethnic groups have been subjected to harassment, displacement, segregation, eviction, and other forms of discrimination since the establishment of ethnic federal Ethiopia, thereby avoiding the debate over whether the conflict or the federal structure came first. However, the Amhara situation dwarfs all others in terms of its scale, continuity, categorization, etc.²⁸⁹

The institutionalization of ethno-linguistic regions with a titular ethnic group reinforced, to use Smith (1994: 194) proposition, “to single out and categorize minorities within as 'alien' to the historic culture-community”. As a member of NaMA Central Committee pointed out:

Looking at national and international human rights reports and individual accounts (1992-2020), the violence against the Amhara in Oromia, SNNPs and Benishangul-Gumuz ostensibly appears either to forcefully expel the Amhara to establish a homogenous region/locality or intended at avenging the Amhara for the alleged “historical grievances” that happened centuries ago.²⁹⁰

Indeed, Smith (1994) posited the plight of minorities starts with imagining them as a threat to the purity and continued existence of the ethnic nation, hence they will be deprived of citizenship in their own country, and eventually driven out. The slogan “Oromia for Oromos only” that started during the 1992 election as vernacular mobilization *modus operandi* by the OLF to forcefully evict thousands of Gurage in Agaro town (National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, & African-American Institute, 1992: 47) has continued to guide the 2014 protest against Addis Ababa Master Plan and beyond (see also Kymlicka, 2006; Dimetros, 2014). Looking at the number of IDPs due to inter-communal conflict and violence in Ethiopia between 2016 and 2021, it increased dramatically from less than a million to 2.1 million. The number of displaced Amhara in these years has been recorded as considerably high (IDMC, 2020).

In terms of identity infusion, “the Amhara are forced to assimilate into the dominant ethno-national culture. However, assimilation never helped to break or at least loosen the ethnic boundaries of the dominant group. In fact, the Amhara were never excused from the wrath of ethnic nationalists in times of crisis.”²⁹¹ It is worth mentioning a widely circulated plea in the social media platforms from a child begging for her life in Wollega, crying “I swear to Allah, I

²⁸⁸ KIT (Ahmed- IDP), interview, February 19, 2021 Debre Berhan, Ethiopia

²⁸⁹ FGD-III, Gondar, and FGD-I, Bahir dar

²⁹⁰ KIT, interview, March 12, 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

²⁹¹ KIT, interview, March 12, 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

will never be Amhara again”. This has been used to mobilize the Amhara in the digital space and the #Stop (#beqa) mass demonstrations in major towns of the Amhara regional state.

What is more, the chaos that ensued after the death of an Oromo singer Hachalu Hundessa on the 29th of June, 2020 resulted in horrendous crimes against humanity based on ethnic identity and religion, i.e., Amhara and Orthodox Christians (EHRC, 2020b: 3). Similar assaults led to the death of thousands, displaced millions, caused irreparable economic damage on the Amhara in Oromia, SNNPs, Somalia, Harar, and Beni Shangul-Gumuz (EHRC, 2020a; EHRCO, 2020a; for more on the violence against the Amhara in Oromia, Benishangul-Gumuz and SNNPs see Annex 5).

“Such violence against the Amhara was well-coordinated, backed by complicit local or regional leaders, premeditated, and shockingly, there were warning measures in place to advise victims ahead of time to stay at home or evacuate their homes via leaflets, etc.”²⁹² EHRC (2020b: 3) further reported that lack of preparedness from security forces and lack of command to intervene from the higher-ups worsened the atrocities aftermath of the chaos that swept Oromia regional state. Witness also told the Ethiopia Human Rights Commission that security forces failed to take measures to stop the carnage as if “It did not feel like we had a government!”

Indeed, based on witnesses’ account in some places the security collaborated with the mob to wit the EHRC shy away from explicitly reporting what has actually happened. EHRCO in its regular and special reports continuously pinpointed local government officials perpetrated heinous acts against the Amhara. The officials indeed justify their actions by referring to Article (39)—Amhara as settler and has to go, and the Amhara are clearing forests (EHRCO, 2015). It is a real deja vu moment for the Amhara to live through a similar experience since the first identity assault of 1991 in Arsi, Hararghe, and Metekel Provinces (Moreshe, 2016). This could succinctly be explained using Mbembe’s (2003) notion of necropolitics— the power to decide or control who should live and die. An ethnic-based attack that sustained for over two decades in the name of attacking “sefari”, “neftegna”, etc. without any institutional mechanism to avert future atrocities suggests that bio-politics has recognized some lives as killable over others. An illustration here is, as a Member of the Amhara Democratic Forces Movement recalled “in

²⁹² KIT, interview, February 19, 2021 Debre Berhan, Ethiopia

response to a query raised by members of the HPRs regarding the 800 farmers purged from Gurafarda, the Late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi justified the expulsion for deforestation in Gurafarda with all the rhetoric he could muster.”²⁹³

7.3. “Depopulation” of the Amhara

The Amhara question, *inter alia*, is construed in light of lack of political representation and inequitable distribution of the national pie in terms of basic infrastructural amenities such as roads, schools, health centers, etc. which have a spillover effects on the survival of a society. In lenses of societal security, however, the commonly accepted meta-narrative is “the TPLF/EPRDF's systematic depopulation of the Amhara”²⁹⁴ (NaMA, 2018).

The purpose here is not to disprove or prove or reify the ruling party has intentionally engaged in “depopulating” the Amhara, but rather to present the arguments on the matter and how they shaped the societal security discourses. Why is census a delicate campaign strategy in Ethiopia? is an essential question to consider, at this juncture. Three explanations could be provided; First, with an ethnic dis-aggregated data, census determines which ethnic group has the highest or most population. This significantly impacts the national politics in terms political representation and allocation of economic resources. The narrative of having the most population also occupies the national political space to which the Amhara has been considered as dominant in the political and demographic spectrum. An argument forwarded by the Amhara nationalist, at this point, is; “The population of the Amhara has been intentionally reduced to profoundly decrease the political space of the Amhara in the national politics”.²⁹⁵ Indeed, this notion could be countered by looking at the TPLF/EPRDF minority rule, although the census explicitly confirm that the Oromo are the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia.

However, census has continued to influence the discourses of national politics in Ethiopia. NaMA, for instance, has advocated vehemently for the postponement of the national census scheduled for 2019.²⁹⁶ As a member of the NaMA's Executive Committee noted, our concern was “due to security predicaments undertaking credible and universal census would be highly

²⁹³ see also Meles Zenawi address to the Ethiopian HPRs, 2010 available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H-dqM6Iq6ck>

²⁹⁴ KIC, interview, March 2, 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

²⁹⁵ KIM, interview, May 22, 2022, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

²⁹⁶ KIC, interview, March 2, 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

unlikely. Moreover, the Amhara are the target of ethnically motivated assaults in regions such as Benishangul Gumuz, Oromia, etc, under such circumstances, we have doubts that the Amhara will register their ethnic identity in such locations.”²⁹⁷ Second, census also determines the ethno-linguistic territoriality in Ethiopia. A close look into the contested territories, in the case of Amhara, are demarcated with the preponderance of demography, excepting Metekel of Benishangul Gumuz. Third, census determines the very existence of identity groups (Anderson, 2006). With this note, on the decrement of the Amhara population in the 2007 Census, Samia Zekaria, General Director of Central Statistics Agency, reported for the Ethiopian HPRs that:

We have noticed a systematic decline in the Amhara population. We looked for any irregularities in the counting, such as flaws in the data, but we discovered none. We next checked the data against demographic indicators such as age, gender, ethnic makeup, migration, and so on, and discovered no errors again. Finally, we brought in an expert from Harvard University to examine the census, but the expert said the data is consistent and identified no problems.²⁹⁸

Samia Zekaria continued and pointed out, “when the commission calculated the national population projection, we discovered a missing 2.4 million-person difference between the actual projection, which we assume is associated with the Amhara case.”²⁹⁹ The problem in the Amhara population is also reflected in the population growth rate, 1.7, which is the lowest from the national average of 2.6 (CSA, 2007). Going back to the 1994 census, the Amhara population growth was also 1.8, whereas the national average was 3.0 (CSA, 1994). This pushes the population predicament of the Amhara to the 1994 Census. As Coleman and Rowthorn (2011) posited population decline can arise from any combination of low birth rates, high death rates, and net emigration.

In this respect, the Amhara situation prompts the question: why did the Amhara population face such a problem in a country where there are no official record of causes of population decline³⁰⁰? During a discussion in the Parliament, MP Bulcha Demeksa implied “the government has the final say over the population of the country including deciding on the population of Addis Ababa

²⁹⁷ KIM, interview, May 22, 2022, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

²⁹⁸ Samia Zekaria, 13th Regular Meeting of HPRs, Addis Ababa, 1998; see also Committee on Foreign Affairs House of Representatives (2017)

²⁹⁹ Samia Zekaria, Member and Secretary Population Census Commission 2007, 13th Regular Meeting of HPRs, December 4, 2008

³⁰⁰ Addisu Legesse, Chairperson Population Census Commission 2007, 13th Regular Meeting of HPRs, December 4, 2008

and the ethnic composition of the country.”³⁰¹ So far, neither the Commission nor the ruling government conclusively explained the anomaly in the population growth predicament of the Amhara. However, the alleged and unverified causes to the population decline has been associated to a “high infant mortality rate, high HIV infection, and other factors in Amhara regional state”.³⁰² In fact, experts’ recommendations to undertake migration and inter-censual surveys to determine the effects of migration and other population dynamics (CSA, 2012) only ended up adjusting the population growth rate from 1.7 to 2.3 (CSA, 2013). An expert, in this regard, argues “the survey solely relied on the post-2007 population growth rate. Hence, the report failed to provide a cogent explanation as to why the 2007 Census reported the Amhara population growth rate as 1.7.”³⁰³

	1984	1994	2007
Amhara	12,005,250	16,007,933	19,878,199

Table 4: Amhara population in Ethiopia across three censuses

Source: CSA (1984; 1994; 2007)

The Amhara population predicament, as nationalists call it— የ አ ማራ ህ ዝ ብን ማሳ ሳ ት “Amhara depopulation” has served as a major discursive strategy to stir up the Amhara mass against the ruling TPLF/EPRDF. For instance, as a byproduct of the nationalist movement:

The formation of NaMA is ascribed to such threats to the Amhara's survival by the resolute actions of the ruling party to depopulate the Amhara. This has a repercussion on the budget distributions and the political representation of the Amhara in Ethiopia. NaMA intends to repulse an all-round survival threat posed on the Amhara.³⁰⁴

Similarly, Amhara Student Union, Amhara Youth Association, Amhara Scholars Council, and others recite the alleged Amhara population decline in post-1991 as a major societal security threat posed on the Amhara. Indeed, while undertaking FGD sessions and interviews, the participants strongly believe the reported population decline and the explaining factors are

³⁰¹ Bulcha Demeksa, Member of Parliament, 13th Regular Meeting of HPRs, December 4, 2008

³⁰² KIN, interview, October 12, 2022, Gondar, Ethiopia. In terms of the estimates of death rates as a result of the infectious diseases is not available for the country as a whole and for the Amhara region in particular. Samia Zekaria has also told a local newspaper (Addis Guday, 2013) she did claim the Amhara population decline is high mortality rate due to HIV/AIDS (as cited in Addis Fortune, ND).

³⁰³ KIN, interview, October 12, 2022, Gondar, Ethiopia

³⁰⁴ KIC, interview, March 2, 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

simply a farce and political game of the TPLF/EPRDF anti-Amhara sentiment. Two contending explanations were provided as to the root problem with the 2007 Census; the first group attribute the depopulation to under reporting; the second group attribute the problem to ethnic cleansing, infectious diseases such as malaria, strong family planning measures³⁰⁵, etc. These counter-claims entail further study to establish their veracity, but because security is self-referential and determined by a speech act, they remain legitimate statements in light of the Copenhagen School (see Buzan, Waeber, & de Wilde, 1998; Waeber, 2008).

7.4. Causes and responses to the societal security threats

Vulnerability to societal security threats arises from the way identities are perceived and constructed (Buzan, Waeber, & de Wilde, 1998). In this sense, the hegemonic discourse towards the Amhara for the last 50 years was more detrimental than positive. This has been later institutionalized in the ethnic federal formula. That is why the FDRE Constitution has been dubbed by political organizations such as NaMA as a legal framework to engender the othering of the Amhara. A member of NAMA central committee, in this regard, argues;

The FDRE constitution preamble underscores the need to “rectify historically unjust relationships”. If we look at the commentary of the constitutional drafting discussion, the Amhara is exclusively mentioned as an oppressor. This is not a mere coincidence but drawn from the TPLF Manifesto.³⁰⁶

To this effect, an Amhara activist in the diaspora also asserts:

In the TPLF/EPRDF reign the Amhara experienced multiple societal insecurities, it has also continued in the re-branded Prosperity Party years. The structural factor embedded in causing such threats on the Amhara lies on the way the Amhara identity has been constructed and perceived in Ethiopia.

This could also be attributed to the paradigm shift in the nation-building project the TPLF/EPRDF embarked on to rectify the question of historical ethnic contradictions in Ethiopia. “The dubious ‘nationalist oppression thesis’, in which the Amhara has oppressed, exploited, and governed the rest of Ethiopia with an iron fist, contributed a lot in the Amhara's proclivity and

³⁰⁵Forty-seven percent, the second highest in the country next to Addis Ababa. The Amhara Region Health Bureau in a letter headed “On Family Planning Service” written January 27, 2011 E.C. to all Zonal and Woreda Health Offices, stated the list of hitherto family planning methods from now onwards shall not be enforced.

³⁰⁶ KIH, interview, December 1, 2020, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia

resultant chaos.”³⁰⁷ As member of Amhara Association in America pointed out: “This has been reinforced by the collapse of a central authority, emerging weak state, institutional vacuum and above all ethnic nationalist politicians’ construction of an image whereby the Amhara is always the culpable aggressor and the self the blameless victim.”³⁰⁸ This has created what Posen (1993) calls “societal security dilemma” on the Amhara national group since the onset of the ethnic federal formula in Ethiopia.

In the beginning of the Transitional Period, there was anarchy, a collapse of the military regime, and the dawn of a new transition; the people, as always, never resorted to butchering on ethnic differences; a continuum of the usual Ethiopian chores was everywhere; then come TPLF/EPRDF and OLF to disrupt the peace, ordering their comrades to assault on ethnic and religious grounds— provoking a security threat spiral (see United States Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, 1993; Tegegne, 1998; Admasu, 2010; Tezera, 2021). From then on, the ethnic-based attacks spread throughout Oromia, Benishangul-Gumuz, and SNNPs (Moresh, 2016). The malign intention of the elites, i.e., retaliation out of memory politics and the policy of divide and conquer towards the two largest ethnic groups was realized through fanning hatred and assaults. Initially, the insecurities are spearheaded by the elite. It is curious to ask, does groupness explain the security threats posed to the Amhara? Is it the intention of the Oromo or other ethnic groups to threaten the Amhara and, in turn, ensure their security? Or is it an elite-led attempt to escalate the *de facto* anarchy and pit the two sides? Did these groups slaughter one another with abandon when they were no longer constrained?

The Amhara were powerless in the face of the prevailing uncertainty and fear. No exiting organized groupness that could establish a survival counter-measure. It was the Amhara's Oromo neighbors who stepped up to assist them and ensure their safety. The Oromo were opposed to the ongoing attacks on their Amhara neighbors, although they were targeted as sympathizers and gunned down (Moresh, 2016). As one survivor recalls,

After killing an Oromo elder who tried to save his Amhara neighbor, the perpetrators told the locality that he was killed by an Amhara. The body was left in the street for so long that family

³⁰⁷ KIC, interview, March 2, 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

³⁰⁸ KIH, telephone interview, April 2, 2022

members were unable to give the man a proper burial. This is their method of inciting animosity between the two groups.³⁰⁹

After the ruling party established itself as the dominant party, similar issues continued to disrupt civil peace. The best explanation, in this regard, is that “the elite, despite receiving no support from the masses, used the collapse of the central government and the ensuing anarchy to establish a historical backdrop in their quest for power and to vent their enmity towards the Amhara.”³¹⁰ The Amhara were haunted by the specter of perpetual anarchy, which made it difficult for them to live freely in their neighborhoods. The anarchy was, in fact, the proximate cause of the resulting insecurities, though the problem has much deeper roots. In light of the three essential features of societal security dilemmas: anarchy, a lack of malign intentions between groups, and offensive abilities (Tang, 2009), the Amhara situation evolved and appeared with the three elements after the 2016 mass resistance.

In addition to the spiral of unprecedented violence against the Amhara, societal fear has been nurtured out of the institutional blueprints as well as a threatened demographic situation in post-1991 Ethiopia. With the widespread and continued security threats, as discussed above inflicted upon the Amhara, how have the state and the society responded? In a nutshell, for Buzan, Waever, & de Wilde, (1998), there are two types of responses when societies grappled with such scenarios, i.e., state and non-state-oriented responses.

7.4.1. State oriented responses

State’s response was minimal in essence the ruling party with the dire situation of the Amhara has never made the issue a public or political issue requiring urgent measures. Instead, the killings and displacements have continued to be treated in light of the existing regular legal procedures. An excellent example is what the government did after Hachalu's death, which resulted in the arrest of thousands of suspected young men including prominent opposition political party members such as Eskinder Nega, Bekele Gerba and Jawar Mohammed who are considered to get involved in the mayhem (Amnesty International, 2020). In fact, for a member of Amhara Scholars Council “with the Amhara nationalists accusing the state of hostile policy

³⁰⁹ ESAT, Human rights program, discussion with Gebeyehu Desta, Bedeno Massacre Survivor, February 2, 2013

³¹⁰ KIH, telephone interview, April 2, 2022

orientation towards the Amhara, it is hardly imaginable the ruling party will securitize the ethnic-based attacks on the Amhara.”³¹¹ An activist from Bahir Dar also accuses “The ANDM branch for the most part not only tolerate the status quo, but even participated in reproducing the continued ethnic-based violence (EBV) against the Amhara.”³¹² For an EPRDF coalition party that securitized poverty (Fana, 2014), and its conviction as a vanguard of nations and nationalities, as stated in its plan, such identities were not treated outside of regular politics (see FDRE Constitution, 1995).

However, as a senior ADP official pointed out:

Following the outbreak of the 2016 Amhara resistance and subsequent reform within the TPLF/EPRDF in 2018 the issue of ethnic attacks get momentum at least among members of ANDM. The party began talking about the lingering assaults against the Amhara and started devising measures by engaging in public diplomatic efforts with other regional states.³¹³

Furthermore, the regional state strengthened its police force through recruiting former members of ENDF and training Amhara Special Forces (ASF) in post-2018 Ethiopia.³¹⁴ With all the intention of maintaining law and order entrusted to the region as per FDRE Constitution Article 52, the ASF was also entrusted with repelling the “survival threats” the Amhara faced after 500 years.³¹⁵

As an informant from Amhara Regional State Peace and Security Bureau pointed out:

The ASF within a short period of time began soothing and maintaining law and order in the region. For instance, the ASF successfully repelled the aggression on the Amhara in Jawi from Benishangul-Gumuz, Qimant (North Gondar), and Ataye (Oromo Special Zone and North Shoa Amhara Region) marked the Amhara eventual progression into defending identity-based assaults. This has caused friction within the Prosperity Party and beyond accusing of militant behavior of the Amhara nationalism.³¹⁶

This resulted in as Tefera Mamo argued “the intentional denial of firearms from the federal government, unlike other special forces. The ASF is labeled as a threat and the federal

³¹¹ KIW, interview, June 20, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia

³¹² KIT, interview, December 4, 2020, Bahir dar, Ethiopia

³¹³ KIA, interview, December 8, 2020, Bahir dar, Ethiopia

³¹⁴ KIA, interview, December 17, 2020, Bahir dar, Ethiopia

³¹⁵ Asaminew Tsige speech at graduation ceremony of Amhara Special Forces June 10, 2011 EC., Debre Markos available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uLnUtMEiVR8> (last accessed April, 2022)

³¹⁶ KIA, interview, December 17, 2020, Bahir dar, Ethiopia. See also Tsegaye (2022) and Peoples’ Alliance for Freedom and Democracy (2019).

government does what it takes to weaken the police force.”³¹⁷ However, a dire security predicament unfolded in post-2018 upon the Amhara. Hence, the measures taken were not only far from enough but also aggravated the already precarious security situation of the Amhara in Oromia, Benishangul-Gumuz, Somali, and SNNPs (see EHRCO, 2020a; EHRC, 2020a; 2020b).

7.4.2. Societal Responses

The societal measures could be addressed from political and military perspectives. An organized armed confrontation dates back to the late 1970s to curb the TPLF’s aggression in Welkait. The counter-movement, called “kefagne”—I am saddened—was launched, although the movement was crushed by the TPLF and, thence, short-lived.

TPLF has never been welcomed in the areas of Welkait. It has faced fierce resistance from the people. However, it finally succeeded in gaining the hearts of the people by telling them that their objective is to resist the tyranny of *Derg* regime and that they are not interested in their land. Those who resented believing the TPLF’s charade promises organized themselves and started an armed struggle under the banner of *kefagne*!³¹⁸

Such a movement against the TPLF in Welkait, Humera and Telemet has not been mentioned in any of the authors who wrote the history of TPLF, Aregawi (2009), Young (1997), and Gebru (1984, 2009). Instead, these authors highlighted the conflict between competing insurgent movements such as with Ethiopia Democratic Union (EDU) and the EPRP for supremacy in Tigray and beyond the Tekeze River. Although TPLF has declared these territories to be part of Tigray from its inception in its Manifesto, the TPLF crossed the Tekeze River in 1978 to pursue the EPRP and eventually take the province as an outlet to the outside world through Sudan (Aregawi, 2009).

Similarly, a member of Gondar Development Association narrated that; “TPLF fought its own wars with EDU and EPRP to prove dominance and vanguard position in the fight against *Derg* in Tigray. The EPRP and EDU after losing their stronghold positions in Tigray, they crossed the Tekeze River and settled in Welkait, Telemt and Tegede areas. This caused the TPLF to chase these forces and ensure they never become a threat.” However, in an interview with a former member of *kefagne* movement, the researcher learned that; “When the TPLF initially arrived in

³¹⁷ Tefera Mamo, interview, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3hMoVvUaxsE>

³¹⁸ KID, interview, September 30, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia

Welkait, they started killing the nobility and those individuals with knowledge of history of the area; in response, we organized under the banner of *kefagne* to stop the killing and fought against the TPLF. When *Derg* learned about us, they called and supported our movement with firearms.”³¹⁹ The current Fano movement particularly in Gondar area traces its origin to the *kefagne* movement of the late 1970s.³²⁰

In post-1991 Ethiopia, through establishing AAPO in 1992, Amhara and Ethiopians began challenging the ruling TPLF/EPRDF and other ethnic nationalist organizations to halt anti-Amhara sentiments, reporting ethnic-based attacks, creating awareness through campaigns and opening offices in different towns across the country. In this regard, a member of All Ethiopian Unity Party recalls:

There had been attempts to stave off identity-based attacks against the Amhara since the early years of the ethnic federal period. The establishment of the AAPO pioneers in strongly condemning such acts. The party aimed at mobilizing the Amhara and Ethiopians to check the TPLF/EPRDF dividing policy and voice to the ethnic profiling and the associated repercussions.³²¹

The governing party– TPLF/EPRDF, on the other hand, was not prepared to throw away the hard-won victory and allow resistance to the principles that it upholds. “The AAPO eventually resorted to violent strategies. As a result, military operations were successfully carried out to set free political prisoners in Sela-Dingay and Debre Birhan.”³²² With the ruling TPLF/EPRDF excessive repression and lack of mass Amhara mobilization the violent strategies had short-lived.

According to Amnesty International (1998), the efforts of AAPO to raise attention to the suffering caused by ethnically motivated attacks led in Dr. Asrat Woldyes's incarceration and eventual death as a consequence of the deplorable conditions in jail and the burden of having to make over 170 court appearances. The party was finally reformed as the All Ethiopian Unity Party (AEUP) in 2002 owing to both internal and external forces, and the original endeavor to build a rhetoric of securitization of the Amhara attacks failed (Gashaw, 2019).

³¹⁹ KIK, interview, January 12 2022, Gondar, Ethiopia; Similarly a member of Telemet Committee explained the heinous anti-Amhara policy of TPLF in Telemet led to the death, incarceration, looting of properties of elders and prominent individuals.

³²⁰ KIS, interview, August 8, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia

³²¹ KIM, interview, February 10, 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

³²² KIM, interview, February 10, 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

An Amhara activist in the Diaspora argues,

Since the death of Asrat, the Amhara struggle was silenced but remained latent. The assemblages of continued hate-mongering narratives and the resultant attacks fanned a defensive movement from the digital activists from the Diaspora. Particularly, since the 2010s the Amhara in the Diaspora began exposing the dire security situation.³²³

This has been possible through social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. “Hitherto attempts to voice the issue of the Amhara never bear fruit, either the leaders are killed, jailed, or failed to reach the wider mass because of the tight state repression.”³²⁴ The social media platform provided unfettered access and a reach outside of the governmental apparatus for readily sharing material with the general public, particularly the youth.

The digital activism and the eventual outbreak of Amhara resistance weigh into strengthening and revitalizing Amharaness and Amhara nationalism. Protest slogans such as "Amharaness or death", "Amharaness is our savior", and others confirm strengthening internal cohesion among the Amhara as a *modus operandi* for averting societal security threats. This has also been echoed in various interview engagements with NaMA members and Amhara Student and Youth Association leaders. As one respondent enthusiastically argued, "Amhara nationalism is our way to redemption".³²⁵

The establishment of political parties such as NaMA, the Amhara Democratic Force Movement (ADFM), Amhara Survival for Ethiopia's Unity Organization, and others have raised the issue of continuous attacks on the Amhara in different parts of Ethiopia, which needs an urgent response from the government (see NaMA, 2018). The formation of business organizations such as Amhara Bank, and civic unions such as ASU, ASC, AYA, Fano, and others were all aimed at addressing the multifaceted problems of the Amhara.

To emphasize, the rise of militant Fano movement, though disorganized along provincial and local lines, could be attributed to the unabated attacks and unresolved questions of the Amhara. As one Fano leader pointed out: “Our intention and existence is predicated on the identity-based attacks and the return of Amhara ancestral territories. We will do what it takes to achieve our

³²³ KIM, telephone interview, March 23, 2022, Washington DC, USA

³²⁴ KIJ, interview, May 25, 2021, Gondar, Ethiopia

³²⁵ KIH, interview, December 11, 2020, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia

objectives”.³²⁶ A military wing for the Amhara nationalism could eventually emerge with a strong sense of protecting and ensuring what nationalist call the Amhara questions.

To create a sense of urgency and push the critical mass to protest against such attacks, the Amhara Association in America, including the aforementioned parties, played their part in creating awareness by exposing the identity-based attacks of the Amhara to the international community and, most importantly, declaring that the Amhara faced survival threats. What is more, ASRAT media in its short years of broadcasting, has given due attention by reporting such attacks and creating forums to discuss the overall security challenges the Amhara face. The Amhara Media Corporation as a public media organization has also aired news coverage, talks on Amhara identity questions, and documentaries on Raya and Welkait that concentrate on the societal security threats that the people have been going through since the 1990s.³²⁷

For Roe (2005: 157) preservation of identity relates to control over those institutions accountable for cultural reproduction and/or over districts to which societal identity is bound. Similarly, these organizations openly pronounced the Amhara encountered an existential threat to its survival and requires urgent measures outside the bounds of political procedure (see Buzan, Waever, & de Wilde, , 1983). What is more, Wæver *et al.* (1993: 191) posited when identity seems threatened “one obvious line of defensive response is to strengthen societal identity... In this sense... culture becomes security policy.” And continued to argue “hurt pride and humiliation can contribute significantly to the rise of nationalism”. The rise of Amhara nationalism for starters, then, is a defensive movement through ensuring and reinforcing Amharaness to avert the perceived and actual societal security threats. However, societal insecurities for the Amhara are on the rise even after all these attempts.

7.5. Summary

This chapter discussed how perceived and actual societal security threats against the Amhara since the accession of the TPLF/EPRDF to power contributed to the mobilization of the Amhara.

³²⁶ KIS, Interview, August 8, 2020, Gondar, Ethiopia

³²⁷ Amhara Media Corporation documentaries on “Tears of Welkait” and “The tragedy of Raya” are available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9WPtnkQja7U>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Rkh1rhQwD0>

The chapter indicates that grave human rights violations continue to be prominent characteristics of current Ethiopian politics, including post-2018. These attacks occurred in the context of ethnic hostility, religious fanaticism, the growing impact of ethnic nationalism, and internecine power struggles, which were frequently fueled by memory politics. The human rights violations against the Amhara ostensibly continued to have a feature of ethnic-based attacks threatening societal security across the country. Records illustrated that the Amhara have been facing similar threats ever since the institutionalization of the ethnic-based federal arrangement that embedded the narratives of animosity, otherness, and mobilization of the Amhara along ethnic lines.

When societal identities are at risk, as the Copenhagen School argues, people will come together by strengthening their identities and fighting back via multiple approaches. The Amharaness sentiment that evolved through time, establishing political parties, civic and business organizations, and militancy in a way, were putative measures to defend the Amhara. These actors have pronounced the Amhara are facing existential threats since 1991. Through the speech act, political parties and other actors have mobilized the Amhara mass into politics, i.e., nationalism. However, the state failed to treat such identity-based attacks outside of normal politics feeding more grievances and resentments that cultivated the surge of militancy as a strategy to defend the ongoing attacks on the Amhara.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion and Recommendations

This dissertation attempts to explore the origins and trajectories of Amhara nationalism in Ethiopia from 1991 to 2020. Provided the case is a recent development and little research has been done, undertaking this inquiry is found to be timely and relevant to contribute to the scholarly debate on ethnic nationalism in Ethiopia. To address the research questions, the study draws philosophical assumptions from a constructivist worldview where social reality is subjective and multiple; the co-construction of reality; and capturing multiple realities through an emergent qualitative research design. To be precise, a qualitative case study approach is adopted to investigate Amhara nationalism by situating the case in broader multiple nationalist movements in Ethiopia while firmly focusing on Amhara nationalism as a single or intrinsic case to produce an in-depth and rich analysis.

The study departs from previous research on ethnic nationalism in Ethiopia in the following aspects: theoretical lens, temporal, and spatial or contextual settings. This dissertation has attempted to investigate Amhara nationalism in light of discursive formation, and societal security threats, which differ from previous ethnic nationalism studies. Since such studies presumed identities as fixed, they reluctantly shied away from how discourses and ongoing identity-based attacks fostered the rise and development of ethnic nationalist movements in Ethiopia.

By adopting a diachronic and synchronic approach, the inquiry attempted to investigate the historical trajectories and the recent developments of Amhara nationalism by engaging primary and secondary data. The research emphasized capturing multiple perspectives of various groups, from members of political parties to civic organizations to student unions to prominent individuals at the grass-roots level, through interviews, observation, and focus group discussions. The research has generated massive amounts of data to address the objectives by consulting political parties, identity committee documents, statements, fliers, and interviews in mainstream media and social media.

Theoretically, discursive formation, hegemony, reverse discourse, and the Copenhagen School of Security Studies informed the data analysis and the interpretations thereof. The central

theoretical underpinnings of the frameworks include the discursive fields that shape the crystallization of collective identity and the conception of the ethnic nationalist movement as rejecting the dominant discourse at the same time as a resistance strategy. Further, the persistent identity-based attacks have stirred collective mobilization to defend the well-being and continuity of an identity group—a cultural policy. In doing so, the research draws the following findings on the rise and dynamics of Amhara nationalism and its implications:

Concerning the notion of Amhara identity or "Who is Amhara?", the topic has always been a contested one in Ethiopian nationalism and ethnicity literature. It is considered a "status group", "supra-ethnic Ethiopian", "dominant group", "oppressive group", "toponym", "militaristic identity", "ethnic identity", etc. However, the political praxis and dispensation diverge from the literature-wide argument. The recent post-2010 development of Amharaness is a discursive construction that stems from various interlocked apriori political events and dominant narratives. The discursive construction involves a continuous recitation of the Amhara as a distinct and unified group and the embedded hegemonic discourse, narratives of collective othering, perceived or actual institutional marginalization practices, narratives of collective victim thesis, and loss of ancestral territories.

Further, though it has received little attention from the critical mass, the search for genealogical myth and a glorious past contributed partly to the collective mobilization of the Amhara youth. However, by reinterpreting and revitalizing certain historical heroes, symbols, and cultural attributes or values, Amhara nationalists have attempted to link with the past and ensure the continuity of Amharaness. As it has been argued, the Amhara identity is imagined, propagated, and articulated from the outside. For years, the ethnic identity with the embedded hegemonic narratives has been contested from within before being eventually embraced by rejecting the dominant discourse and reclaiming terminologies used against the Amhara. Amharaness is then a reaction as a "cultural policy" to defend the ensuing widespread identity-based attacks that have surfaced since the introduction of ethnic-based federalism. This does not, however, repudiate the existence of a certain group who historically identified as Amhara.

Furthermore, the formation of the Amhara regional state (though strongly resisted), Amhara-based organizations, and the regional state anthem contributed to engendering an Amharaness

sentiment. Since the 2010s, mushrooming of business and civic societies through the production of books and the creation of broadcast and print media (including social media) have expedited the institutionalization of Amharaness. The banal things that look trivial in everyday narratives and representations through the years have led the youth to increasingly identify as Amhara, cultivating a nationalistic sentiment.

The rise of Amhara nationalism is a response to the dominant anti-Amhara discourses that the Italian Colonial Policy introduced, which the ESM later cultivated and transformed and institutionalized in post-1991 Ethiopia. The hegemonic discourse stems from the contested interpretation of modern Ethiopian history in the eyes of different ethnic nationalist movements. Indeed, the notion of "history" here should be treated with caution as opposed to "memory," which is in "permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived" (Nora, 1989: 8). The construction of Amhara domination appears at the center of all sides of the interpretations as "colonizer", "oppressor", or "nation-builder". However, with the national oppression thesis being the dominant narrative, "Amhara" becomes the "oppressor". In the praxis of dealing with the matter, the strategy conflates both the old regime ruling elite, multi-ethnic in a primordial sense, and the Amhara mass.

The accession of the TPLF/EPRDF to power has heralded the institutionalization of the national oppression thesis. The Constitution, the blueprint of the newly imagined social contract, conspicuously acknowledges the idea of "national oppression", though the Amhara is not mentioned in the document. The constitution-making and ratification minutes allude to the oppression of the Amhara nation. The oppressor, settler, neftegna, and other slur epithets have become much more entrenched in molding the ethos of all types of thought and behavior in Ethiopia. Such hegemonic anti-Amhara discourses are realized through institutional frameworks, speeches, symbols, etc. Indeed, consent and dominance played critical roles in the making of the anti-Amhara discourse.

Moreover, the rise of Amhara nationalism could be explained in light of a resistance movement aimed at deconstructing the existing hegemony, i.e., ideological hegemony, and reversing the discourses by reclaiming some of the terminologies used against it by either redefining or using

them as is. This characterizes the discourse of Amhara nationalism and the movement itself as a reverse discourse through reclaiming pejorative terms such as *neftegna*, *timikitegna*, etc. Such a counter-discursive *modus operandi* introduced both controversial narratives and limits to ways of thinking and speaking on the Amhara questions.

The discourse of the nationalist movement is also a resistance strategy to the hegemonic political discourse that has ushered in Ethiopia since the second half of the 20th century. Even after the 1991 ultimatum that ensured the prison break of NNPs from their imagined Amhara domination of political, sociocultural, and economic lives, the Amhara continued to serve as a scapegoat for all Ethiopian political ills. In this regard, the notion of oppressor, settler, etc. is highly resisted and deconstructed in mass protests, various publications, and public speeches.

However, breaking away from existing ways of thinking and speaking has been difficult, inevitably leading to disagreements among Amhara political elites to the point of resorting to violence to settle their differences. A close look into the discourse of Amhara and other competing ethnic nationalism in Ethiopia, all share a similar *modus operandi* depicting their movement to a glorious past, a destitute present, and a utopian future. Thus far, the Tigray and Oromo nationalists have failed to deliver the promised dreamland. It would be naive to assume at this point that the future of Amhara would be different unless an innovative ideology and pragmatic political program were adopted.

The much-anticipated introduction of ethnic-based federalism in 1991 as a panacea to Ethiopian ailments ended up instituting a system characterized by hate-mongering towards certain ethnic groups. A rhetorical question that arises in this regard is: Is it ethnic-based federalism or the assemblages of myriad factors that contributed, or both, to such new problems in Ethiopia? Subscribing to the notion of Ethiopia's federalism as "a federation without federal credentials" (Yonatan, 2022: 144), one thing is clear here: the introduction of ethnic-based constituents coupled with grievances over territorial questions, economic marginalization, political representations, etc., has engendered the slow upsurge of Amhara ethnic nationalism.

The contested territorial claims occupy the greater political space within the rise of Amhara nationalism. The territories of Welkait-Tegede, Telemet, Raya, Metekel, Dera/Shoa, and others

are at the center of disputes that the Amhara nationalists vehemently claim as "ancestral territories". Moreover, such claims are anchored in the FDRE Constitution, which categorically states that territories and ethnic identities are congruent. The duality, however, in Amhara nationalism is that they use the constitution to buttress their demands while denouncing the text as anti-Amhara.

The mobilization of the Amhara under the aegis of a ethnic nationalist movement could be attributed to the ethnic-based attacks that reigned since the 1990s. The movement in this sense could be framed in light of the concept of "cultural policy" as a strategy to counter and defend the unabated assaults against the Amhara. There is compelling evidence suggesting the rise of Amhara nationalism could be explained from a societal security perspective. A deep sense of victimhood, to the point of ignoring and trivializing ongoing attacks on Amhara without securitizing the problem for immediate state intervention, has created grievances for Amhara political elites and the general public, prompting them to condemn the attacks and seek ways to prevent future attacks.

Amhara's threats of survival have been echoed via protests, social media activism, publications, political debates or discussions, and later in party programs. In this regard, a speech act was the *modus operandi* for securitizing Amharaness, yet it failed to make it into high politics. With the identity of the victims (Amhara) defined by the perpetrators, the relationship between the referent object and the security threats vis-a-vis the source of the threats appears fluid and fuzzy. Responsibility has always been scapegoated at either the ruling coalition (TPLF/EPRDF) or the opposition, such as the OLF and other vigilante groups. In such a chaotic political quagmire, Amhara nationalism grew as a defense mechanism against overall societal security threats.

In light of the above conclusions, the following implications could be drawn. Ethnic nationalism is the go-to mobilization strategy in Ethiopia's politics. Multiple and contested ethnic nationalist movements characterize the nature and strategies of such movements. Amhara nationalism, a recent development with theoretically compelling questions in the Ethiopian political landscape, has so far lacked consistency and a clear strategy to deal with its aspirations. On top of this, the territorial, security, and ahistorical narrative questions have not been addressed, further complicating the existing mistrust in state politics. The territorial issue, in particular, extends

beyond internal regional border disputes to an international boundary redrawing with Sudan over contested areas along the borders. Hence, the implications include revisiting not only the internal border of federal units but also an international one, including rethinking a foreign policy towards the volatile Eastern Nile Basin. The implications for peacebuilding within the region and beyond, as well as the contested territories, require special attention. This is not to say that Amhara nationalism is a war-mongering movement. This should be seen from the overarching perspectives of intense territorial claims and counterclaims, poor institutional frameworks to deal with problems peacefully, mistrust in traditional conflict resolution systems, and so on.

Threats posed to the Amhara require changing the extant discourse of “oppressor vs. oppressed”, “settler vs. native”, “neftegna vs. tenant”, etc., which is ingrained in various ethnic nationalist mobilization strategies. Amhara nationalists have echoed the reciprocal victimhood narrative as a result of Amhara being the target for more than two decades, seemingly starting a vicious cycle. Indeed, the security threats could only be resolved with an overall institutional and legal overhaul that strongly advocates respect for human rights, political representation, ensuring economic development, etc.

To better understand the implications of these results, future research could address a comparative case study of ethnic nationalism in Ethiopia in the context of the northern war that broke out in 2020. Further, since this dissertation avoids the economic aspect of Amhara nationalism, investigating this element with a mixed methodological approach will help to grasp a holistic picture of the rise and development of Amhara nationalism. Furthermore, through ethnographic research, one can gain a deeper understanding of the cultural practices, beliefs, and values of the Amhara identity. This includes exploring the religious traditions, studying the language and literature can provide insight into the history and worldview of the Amhara. The approach also can shed light on the ways in which the Amhara identity has changed over time and how different factors such as modernization and ethnic-based federalism have influenced it. Overall, this type of research is crucial for developing a nuanced understanding of the Amhara people and their unique cultural identity.

In general, this dissertation, in essence, contributes to the little existing body of literature and debate on the case study as well as to the larger field of ethnic nationalism in Ethiopia. While

various factors played a role, this dissertation emphasizes the importance of the political discursive field, which created a space for Amhara nationalist ideas to gain traction. Additionally, the need to ensure survival in the face of continued threats was a key driver of Amhara nationalism. Finally, institutional othering—the ways in which institutions and policies exclude or marginalize certain groups—played a significant role in shaping the trajectory of Amhara questions. Together, these factors provide a nuanced understanding of how and why Amhara nationalism emerged as a significant force in Ethiopian politics.

References

- Abbay, A. (1997). A decade that gestated the Eritrean identity: The Amhara-Eritrean Rendez-Vous. *Africa: Rivista trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell'Istituto italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente*, 52(3), 401-415.
- Abbink, J. (2006). Ethnicity and conflict generation in Ethiopia: Some problems and prospects of ethno-regional federalism. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 24(3), 389-413.
- Abbink, J. (2011). Ethnic-based federalism and ethnicity in Ethiopia: reassessing the experiment after 20 years. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 5(4), 596-618.
- Abbink, J. (2016). Ethiopia's Unrest Sparked by Unequal Development Record, Available online at: <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2016/09/ethiopia-protests-amhara-oromiya/>, (last accessed September, 2020).
- Abbink, J. (1998). New configurations of Ethiopian ethnicity: the challenge of the South. *Northeast African Studies*, 5(1), 59-81.
- Abel Tesfaye (2022). Under Ethiopia's federal system, Western Tigray belongs in Tigray, *Ethiopian Insight*, <https://www.ethiopia-insight.com/2022/08/03/under-ethiopias-federal-system-western-tigray-belongs-in-tigray/> (last accessed November, 2022)
- Abraham Tesfalul (2020). "Social Media in Exile: Disruptors and Challengers from Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Sudan", PhD dissertation, Ohio University.
- Achamyeleh Tamiru (2020). *The Welkait Affair: A Study of Welkait, Tegede, Telemet and Humera boundary and geographical history (330- 1991 AD)*, Rohbot Publishing: Washington DC.
- Acton, L. (1862). Nationality. *The Home and Foreign Review*, 1, 1-25
- Addis Fortune (ND). Samia Zekaria: "I didn't say that." Available at: <https://addisfortune.net/columns/i-didnt-say-that/> (Last accessed September 2021).
- Admasu Kebede (2010). *The invention of Amhara nationalism: ethnicity and national identity in Ethiopia*. PhD Dissertation, George Mason University.
- Afar Regional State (2001). The Revised Constitution of Afar Regional State, Proclamation No. /2001, Semera, Ethiopia
- Alem Habtu (2003). Ethnic federalism in Ethiopia: background, present conditions and future prospects. In *Second EAF International Symposium on Contemporary Development Issues in Ethiopia* July 11-12, 2003.

- Alemante Gebre Selassie (2003). Ethnic federalism: Its promise and pitfalls for Africa. *The Yale Journal of International Law*, 28(51), 50-107
- Alemayehu G. Mariam (2013). EDITOR’S NOTE: “Kililistanization” of Ethiopia: The Coming to Pass of Roman Prochazka’s Prescription. *International Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, 7(1 & 2), 138-142.
- All-Ethiopia Socialist Movement (MEISON) (nd). *The program of the All Ethiopian Socialist Movement*, Me’ison.
- Althusser, L. (2020). *On ideology*. London: Verso Books.
- Amanuel Tesfaye (2018). Commentary: The Birth of Amhara Nationalism: Causes, Aspirations, And Potential Impacts. Available online at: <http://addisstandard.com/commentarythe-birth-of-amhara-nationalism-causes-aspirations-and-potential-impacts/> (last accessed May, 2020)
- Amhara Association in America (2021). Amhara Massacre in Mai-Kadra: A Report on the Deadliest Civilian Massacre Under the Context of the War in Northern Ethiopia, available at: https://www.amharaamerica.org/files/ugd/e494ca_f345f8b8b49047b689d09c8c0a3e6c6a.pdf?index=true (last accessed May 2022)
- Amhara National Regional State Council (2001). The Revised Constitution of Amhara National Regional State. *Zikre Hig Proclamation No. 59/2001*, Bahirdar, Ethiopia
- Amhara Regional State (2001). Revised Constitution of Amhara National Regional State, Proclamation No. 59/2001, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia.
- Amnest International (August 8, 2016). Ethiopia: Dozens killed as police use excessive force against peaceful protesters, Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2016/08/ethiopia-dozens-killed-as-police-use-excessive-force-against-peaceful-protesters/> (last accessed January 2022)
- Amnesty International (2020). Ethiopia: Account for all people arrested after Hachalu Hundesa’s killing, available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/07/ethiopia-account-for-all-people-arrested-after-hachalu-hundesa-killing/> (last accessed June 2021)
- Andargachew Tiruneh (1993). *The Ethiopian revolution 1974-1987: A transformation from an aristocratic to a totalitarian autocracy*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London, UK: Verso Books.

- Anderson, K. B. (2020). *Marx at the margins: on nationalism, ethnicity, and non-western societies*. IL: Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- ANDM (2015). *EPDM/ANDM History: From 1973-2008 E.C. ANDM*
- Andreas Eshete. (2003). Ethnic federalism: New frontiers in Ethiopian politics. Paper presented in the First National Conference on Federalism, Conflict and Peace Building (142-172).
- Anta Diop, C. (1974). *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*. New York, NY: Lawrence Hill.
- Aregawi Berhe (2004). The origins of the Tigray people's liberation front. *African Affairs*, 103(413), 569-592.
- Aregawi Berhe (2009). *A political history of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (1975-1991): Revolt, ideology and mobilisation in Ethiopia*. Los Angeles: Tsehai Publishers & Distributors.
- Armstrong, J. (1982). *Nations before nationalism*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press
- Asafa Jalata (2002). Fighting against the injustice of the state and globalization: Comparing the African American and Oromo movements. Springer.
- Asafa Jalata (2002). *Fighting against the injustice of the state and globalization: Comparing the African American and Oromo movements*. NY: New York, Palgrave.
- Asafa Jalata (2020). *The Oromo movement and imperial politics: Culture and ideology in Oromia and Ethiopia*. Lexington Books.
- Asnake Kefale (2013). *Federalism and ethnic conflict in Ethiopia: A comparative regional study*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Assefa Mehretu (2012). Ethnic federalism and its potential to dismember the Ethiopian state. *Progress in Development Studies*, 12 (2-3), 113-133.
- Atkinson, M. (2016). Ethnography. In *Routledge handbook of qualitative research in sport and exercise* (pp. 71-83). London: Routledge.
- Bahru Zewde (2002). *Pioneers of change: the reformist intellectuals of early twentieth century*. Oxford: UK, James Currey.
- Bahru Zewde (2002). *A history of modern Ethiopia, 1855-1974 (2nd Ed.)*. OH: Athens, Ohio University Press.

- Bahru Zewde (2014). *The quest for socialist utopia: the Ethiopian student movement, c. 1960-1974*. Suffolk, UK: Boydell & Brewer Ltd.
- Bahru Zewde (2022). The Unresolved Question of Identity in Ethiopia, CODESRIA Bulletin Online, No. 4, February 2022.
- Barth, F. (1998). *Ethnic groups and boundaries: The social organization of culture difference*. Norway: Waveland Press.
- Baxter, P. T. (1978). Ethiopia's unacknowledged problem: the Oromo. *African Affairs*, 77 (308), 283-296.
- BBC (2019). Ethiopia army chief shot dead in “coup bid” attacks, 23 June 2019, Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-48734572> (last accessed September, 2019).
- BBC (2019). Ethiopia army chief shot dead in “coup bid” attacks, Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-48734572> (last accessed January 2021)
- BBC (2016). Ethiopia declares state of emergency amid protests, Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-37600225> (last accessed May 2020)
- Bantayehu Shiferaw & Ishiyama, J. (2021). Political transition and the rise of Amhara Nationalism in Ethiopia. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 56(5), 1036-1050.
- Bearak, M. (2021). A border war looms between Sudan and Ethiopia as Tigray conflict sends ripples through region, *Washington Post*, March 19, 2021, Available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/03/19/sudan-ethiopia-border-conflict/>. (last accessed April, 2021).
- Becker, S. (1970). Field work evidence. In H. Becker (Ed), *Sociological work: Method and substance* (39-62). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books.
- Beiner, R. (1999). *Theorizing nationalism* (Ed.). New York, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Bekalu Atnafu (2018). Ethnic cleansing in Ethiopia. *Peace Research*, 50(1) 77-104.
- Beke, C. T. (1867). *The British Captives in Abyssinia*. London: Longmans, Reader, Green and Dyer.
- Bender, M. L. (1985). Ethiopian language policy 1974-1981. *Anthropological linguistics* 27(3), 273-279.
- Benishangul Gumuz Regional State (2002). The Revised Constitution of Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State, Asosa, Ethiopia

- Berger, P. & Luckmann, T. (1991). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. London, UK: Penguin Books.
- Birru, L. (1980). Abyssinian Colonialism as the genesis of the crisis in the Horn: Oromo resistance (1855-1913). *Northeast African Studies*, 93-98.
- Birt, L., Scott, S., Cavers, D., Campbell, C., & Walter, F. (2016). Member checking: a tool to enhance trustworthiness or merely a nod to validation? *Qualitative health research*, 26(13), 1802-1811.
- Birt, L., Scott, S., Cavers, D., Campbell, C., & Walter, F. (2016). Member checking: a tool to enhance trustworthiness or merely a nod to validation? *Qualitative health research*, 26(13), 1802-1811.
- Bitew Geremew (2023). The Tragedy of Colonialism in a Non-Colonised Society: Italy's Historical Narratives and the Amhara Genocide in Ethiopia. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 00219096221147002.
- Bitsch, V. (2005). Qualitative research: A grounded theory example and evaluation criteria. *Journal of agribusiness*, 23(1), 75-91.
- Blackburn, M. (2022). The persistence of the civic–ethnic binary: competing visions of the nation and civilization in western, Central and Eastern Europe. *National Identities*, 24(5), 461-480.
- Blaikie, N. (2010). *Designing Social Research* (2nd Ed). Cambridge: Polity.
- Blaut, J. (1987). *The National Question: Marxist Theory and National Liberation*. London, UK: Zed Books.
- Booth, K., & Vale, P. (2002). Critical security studies and regional insecurity: The case of Southern Africa. In Krause, K., & Williams, M. C. (Eds) *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and strategies* (353-382). London, UK: Routledge.
- Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*. London: Sage.
- Brass, P. (1991). *Ethnicity and nationalism: Theory and comparison*. New Delhi, India: Sage.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2012). Thematic analysis, In Cooper, H., Camic, P., Long, D., Panter, A., Rindskopf, D., & Sher, K. (Eds), *APA handbook of research methods in psychology* (57-71). Washington, WA: APA.
- Breuilly, J. (1993). *Nationalism and the State*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.

- Brubaker, R. (1996). *Nationalism reframed: Nationhood and the national question in the new Europe*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Brubaker, R. (1999). The Manichean myth: Rethinking the distinction between ‘civic’ and ‘ethnic’ nationalism. *Nation and national identity: The European experience in perspective*, 55-71.
- Brubaker, R. (2004). *Ethnicity without groups*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bryant, A., & Charmaz, K. (Eds.). (2007). *The Sage handbook of grounded theory*. London, UK: Sage.
- Burr, V. (2015). *Social Construction* (2nd Ed). Routledge: New York, NY.
- Buzan, B. (2008). *People, states & fear: an agenda for international security studies in the post-cold war era*. New York, NY: ECPR Press.
- Buzan, B., Wæver, O., Wæver, O., & De Wilde, J. (1998). *Security: A new framework for analysis*. London, UK: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Calhoun, C. (1997) *Nationalism*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.
- Calhoun, C. (2007). Nationalism and cultures of democracy. *Public Culture*, 19(1), 151-173.
- Campbell, I. (2014). *The Massacre of Debre Libanos: Ethiopia 1937: the Story of One of Fascism's Most Shocking Atrocities*. Addis Ababa University Press.
- Candela, A. G. (2019). Exploring the function of member checking. *The qualitative report*, 24(3), 619-628.
- Central Statistical Agency (CSA) (1984). Summary and statistical report of 1984 population and housing censuses. Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Census Commission, Addis Abeba. Central Statistics Authority.
- Central Statistical Agency (CSA) (1994). Summary and statistical report of 1994 population and housing censuses. Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Census Commission, Addis Abeba. Central Statistics Authority.
- Central Statistical Agency (CSA) (2007). Summary and statistical report of 2007 population and housing censuses. Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Census Commission, Addis Abeba. Central Statistics Authority.
- Central Statistical Agency CSA (2012). 2007 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia: Administrative Report, Available at:

- https://rise.esmap.org/data/files/library/ethiopia/Documents/Clean%20Cooking/Ethiopia_Census%202007.pdf (last accessed July 2020)
- Central Statistical Agency (CSA) (2013). Inter-Censual Population survey report, Available at: <https://www.statsethiopia.gov.et/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/ICPS-2012-Report-final-Report.pdf> (last accessed July 2020)
- Central Statistical Agency (CSA) of Ethiopia. (2019). Agricultural sample survey 2018/19 (2011 E.C.) report on area and production of major crops for private peasant holdings, Meher season, volume I. Addis Ababa. Available at: <http://www.csa.gov.et/survey-report/category/373-eth-agss-2018> (last accessed July 2022)
- Chatterjee, P. (1991). Whose imagined community? *Millennium*, 20(3), 521-525.
- Chatterjee, P. (1993). *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Cheeseman, r. E. (1936). *Lake Tana and the Blue Nile*. London: Macmillan.
- Chernestov, C. (1993). On the origins of the Amhara, *St. Petersburg Journal of African Studies*, 1(1), 97-103
- Ciesielska, M., Boström, K. W., & Öhlander, M. (2018). Observation methods. In Ciesielska, M., & Jemielniak, D. (Eds.), *Qualitative methodologies in organization studies*, (pp. 33-52). Palgrave Macmillan
- Clapham, C. (1987). Revolutionary socialist development in Ethiopia. *African Affairs*, 86(343), 151-165.
- Clapham, C. (1988). *Transformation and Continuity in Revolutionary Ethiopia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Clapham, C. (1989). The state and revolution in Ethiopia, *Review of Africa Political Economy*, 16(44), 5-17
- Clapham, C. (1995). Nationalism, Nationality and Regionalism in Ethiopia. *Occasional paper. Anglo-Ethiopian Society*.
- Clapham, C. (2000). War and state formation in Ethiopia and Eritrea. In *conference La guerre entre le local et le global, Paris: Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches Internationales* (29-30).
- Clapham, C. (2007). The European Mapping of Ethiopia, 1460-1856. *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, 40(1/2), 293-307.

- Clapham, C. (2009). Post-war Ethiopia: the trajectories of crisis. *Review of African Political Economy*, 36(120), 181-192.
- Clapham, C. (2017). *The Horn of Africa: State formation and decay*. London: Hurst Publishers.
- Coleman, D., & Rowthorn, R. (2011). Who's afraid of population decline? A critical examination of its consequences. *Population and development review*, 37, 217-248.
- Colletta, N., Kostner, M., & Wiederhofer, J. (1996). *Case Studies in War-to-Peace Transition: The Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Ethiopia, Namibia, and Uganda*, World Bank Discussion Paper No. 331, Africa Technical Department Series.
- Committee on Foreign Affairs House of Representatives (2017). House hearing: Democracy under threat in Ethiopia, U.S. Government Publishing Office, Washington DC.
- Connor, W. (1973). The politics of ethnonationalism. *Journal of International Affairs*, 1-21.
- Connor, W. (1984). Eco- or ethno- nationalism?. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 7(3), 342-359.
- Connor, W. (1993). Beyond reason: the nature of the ethnonational bond. *Ethnic and racial studies*, 16(3), 373-389.
- Connor, W. (1994). *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Connor, W. (2012). Can autonomy stunt the self-determination impulse? Tensions arising from ethnic and political borders. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 2012(213), 51-62.
- Coyle, A. (2007). *Discourse analysis*. In E. Lyons & A. Coyle (Eds.), *Analyzing qualitative data in psychology* (pp. 98-116). London: Sage.
- Creswell, J. (2005). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Creswell, J. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research method: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. (2014). *A concise introduction to mixed methods research*. London: Sage
- Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. London, UK: Sage.
- Crummey, D. (1980). Abyssinian feudalism. *Past & Present*, (89), 115-138.

- Crummey, D. (2003). The Horn of Africa: Between history and politics. *Northeast African Studies*, 10(3), 117-138.
- Dalby, S. (2002). Security and Ecology in the Age of Globalization. In *Environmental Change and Security Project Report*, 8(101), 4.
- Daniel Kidane (2003). The causes of the failure of the present Regime in Ethiopia. *International Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, 177-213.
- Daniel Kidane (2021). *Forward*. In Fitaye Assegu *The Tears of Welkait, Gonder and The Amhara People in Ethiopian History and Civilization*, Printed in the USA, Signature Book Printing.
- Dareskedar Abebe (1991). EPDM: A multi-national or national organization? *Addis Zemen*, December 1, 1984.
- Davies, H. (Ed) (1976). Introduction, In Luxemburg, R. *The national question: Selected writings by Rosa Luxemburg* (Vol. 24). NY: New York, NYU Press.
- De Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., & Wodak, R. (1999). The discursive construction of national identities. *Discourse & society*, 10(2), 149-173.
- De Vos, G. & Romanucci-Ross, L. (1975). *Ethnic identity: Cultural continuities and change*. California City, CL: Mayfield Publishing Company.
- Delanty, G. & O'mahony, P. (2002). *Nationalism and social theory: modernity and the recalcitrance of the nation*. London, UK: Sage.
- Desalegn Rahmato (2003). Resettlement in Ethiopia: The Tragedy of Population Relocation in the 1980s. *Discussion Paper No. 11*, Forum for Social Studies, Addis Ababa.
- Desalegn Rahmato (2003). Resettlement in Ethiopia: The Tragedy of Population Relocation in the 1980s. *Discussion Paper No. 11*, Forum for Social Studies, Addis Ababa.
- Dessalegn Rahmato (1988). Settlement and Resettlement in Mettekel, Western Ethiopia, *Africa* 43(1), 14-34
- Desta Tekle-Wold (1970). *Amharic Dictionary*. Addis Ababa: Artistic Printing Press
- Deutsch, K. (1953). *Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality*. Cambridge, MS: MIT Press
- DeWalt, K., & DeWalt, B. (2011). *Participant observation: A guide for fieldworkers* (2nd Ed.). Rowman Altamira: Lanham.

- Dimetros Birku (2014). The Master Plan is only an immediate cause, *Borkena*, Available at: <https://borkena.com/2014/05/06/themaster-plan-is-only-an-immediate-cause/> (last accessed September 2021)
- Drakulic, S. (2008). Whence nationalism? *Nations and Nationalism*, 14 (2), 221–239
- Dreyfus, L., & Rabinow, P. (1983). Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics, Chicago: IL, The University of Chicago Press.
- Dukor, M. (2015). Ethnic nationalism and a theory of nation building. In Maduabuchi Dukor *Philosophy and Politics: Discourse on Values and Power in Africa* (pp. 165-174), Lagos, Malthouse Press.
- Echitchi, G., & Raymond, S. (2014). The discursive formation of nationalism: A study of the Anglophone secessionist movements in Cameroon.
- Eckert, A. (2013). Anti-Western doctrines of nationalism. In Breuilly, J. (Ed.). (2013). *The Oxford handbook of the history of nationalism* (pp. 222-296). OUP Oxford.
- EHRC. (2020a). Press statement, Benishangul-Gumuz: Protection of civilians is the primary duty of civilians, EHRC, 24 November 2020, available at: <https://ehrc.org/benishangul-gumuz-protection-of-civilians-is-the-primary-duty-of-the-government/> (last accessed July 2021)
- EHRC. (2020b). Press statement: Tigray: Maikadra a massacre of civilians is a crime of atrocity, *EHRC*, 24 December 2020, Addis Ababa
- EHRC. (2021). Violence & Human Rights Violations following Musician Hachalu Hundessa's Assassination, *Investigation Report EHRC*, Addis Ababa
- EHRCO (2015). Compiled Report on Human Rights from 1992-2015 (vol. 1, 2, & 3), Ethiopian Human Rights Council, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- EHRCO (2016). 141st Special Report, Available at: <http://ehrco.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/HRCO-141st-Special-Report-Amharic-Scanned.pdf> (last accessed June 2020)
- EHRCO. (2020). Preliminary investigation report on major human rights violations in and around Maikadra, December 25, 2020. Available at: <https://ehrco.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/EHRCO-Preliminary-Investigation-Report-on-Major-Human-Rights-Violations-in-and-around-Maikadra-1.pdf> (last accessed June 2020)
- Eley, G.& Suny, G. (Eds.). (1996). *Becoming national: A reader*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

- EPRP (1975). The Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Party Program, Printed by Ethiopia Students Union in North America.
- Eriksen, H. (2010). *Ethnicity and nationalism: Anthropological perspectives*. London, UK: Pluto Press.
- Ethiopia Student Union in Europe (1973). The question of nationalities, *Tatek 1*, 1-52
- Ethiopian Herald (2019). Herald-Guest: Belete Molla “Amhara nationalism makes no divorce from Ethiopian identity”, *Ethiopian Herald*, January 4, 2019, available at: <https://press.et/herald/?p=1262> (last accessed January 2021)
- Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (1993). Our Revolutionary Democratic Goals and the Next Step. *Ethiopian Register*, June 1996.
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Longman
- Fana Gebresenbet (2014). Securitization of development in Ethiopia: the discourse and politics of developmentalism. *Review of African Political Economy*, 41(sup1), S64-S74.
- Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (1995). FDRE Constitution, Proclamation No. 1/1995, Fed. Negarit Gazzeta 1st Year No.1, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- Femia, J. (1975). Hegemony and consciousness in the thought of Antonio Gramsci. *Political studies*, 23(1), 29-48.
- Femia, J. (1981). *Gramsci's political thought: Hegemony, consciousness, and the revolutionary process*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Fenton, S. (2003) *Ethnicity*. Cambridge, MA: Polity.
- Feyissa Hailu (2018). Documentation and conservation status of Bete Mulu Castle in Welqait, Western Tigray, A paper presented in 20th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Mekelle University, Ethiopia
- Findlay, R. E. (1992). Notes on the political economy of nationalism, Discussion Paper Series No. 647, Columbia University Paper presented at the Conference on "Nationalism and its Re-emergence" at Villa Colombella, Perugia, Italy, September 3rd and 4th, 1992.
- Finnemore, M. & Sikkink, K. (2001). Taking stock: the constructivist research program in international relations and comparative politics. *Annual review of political science*, 4(1), 391- 416.

- Fitaye Assegu (2021). *The Tears of Welkait, Gonder and The Amhara People: The Contribution and Plight of the Amhara People in Ethiopian History and Civilization*, Printed in the USA, Signature Book Printing.
- Flick, U. (2004). Triangulation in qualitative research. In Uwe Flick, Ernst von Kardorff and Ines Steinke, *A companion to qualitative research* (pp. 178-183). London: Sage.
- Foucault, M. (1972). *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the discourse on language*. NY: New York, Pantheon Books
- Foucault, M. (1977). “Nietzsche, genealogy, history”, In D. F. Bouchard (Ed) *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Foucault, M. (1978). *The history of sexuality: An introduction*, volume I. Trans. Robert Hurley, NY: New York, Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M. (1981). The order of discourse, in Young, R. (Ed). *Untying the Text: A Poststructuralist Reader* (48-78). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Foucault, M. (2002). *Power. Essential Works of Foucault 1954–1984*, volume 3, London, UK: Penguin.
- Foucault, M. (2008). *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1978–79*. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Friew Kelemu (2015). Agricultural mechanization in Ethiopia: experience, status and prospects. *Ethiopian Journal of Agricultural Sciences*, 25(1), 45-60.
- Gashaw Mersha (2019) *የአማራ ተጋደሎች* (The Amhara Resistance), Self-published.
- Gebru Asrat (2014). *Sovereignty and Democracy in Ethiopia*. Washington, D.C.: Signature Book Publishing.
- Gebru Tareke (1977). *Rural Protest in Ethiopia, 1941–1970: A Study of Three Rebellions*, PhD dissertation in History, Syracuse: Syracuse University
- Gebru Tareke (1984). Preliminary history of resistance in Tigray (Ethiopia), *Africa*, 39 (2), 201-226
- Gebru Tareke (2009). *The Ethiopian revolution: war in the Horn of Africa*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Geertz, C. (1963). *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (2nd ed.). London, UK: Fontana.

- Gellner, E. (1983). *Nations and nationalism*. Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell.
- Gellner, E. (1996). Ernest Gellner's reply: 'Do nations have navels?' *Nations and nationalism*, 2(3), 366-370.
- Gemeda Guluma (2002). The Rise of Coffee and the Demise of Colonial Autonomy: The Oromo Kingdom of Jimma and Political Centralization in Ethiopia. *Northeast African Studies*, Michigan State University Press.
- Getachew Anteneh and Derib Ado. (2006). Language policy in Ethiopia: History and current trends. *Ethiopian journal of education and sciences*, 2(1), 37-62
- Getachew Assefa (2018). The Constitutional Right to Self-determination as a Response to the 'Question of Nationalities' in Ethiopia. *international journal on minority and group rights*, 25(1), 1-50.
- Getachew Haile (1992). Amharic speakers and the question of nationalities, *Ethiopian Review*, <https://www.ethiopianreview.com/index/374#:~:text=The%20ethnic%20name%20of%20the%20extended%20family%20of%20Ethiopia>.
- Getahun Dilebo (1974). Emperor Menelik' s Ethiopia, 1865-1916: National unification or Amhara communal domination, (PhD dissertation), Howard University.
- Girma Awgichew (2013). *The Origin of Amharic*, Trenton NJ: Red Sea Press.
- Gledhill, J. (2005). The Power of Ethnic Nationalism: Foucault's Bio-power and the Development of Ethnic Nationalism in Eastern Europe. *National Identities*, 7(4), 347-368.
- Glenn, J. (1997). The interregnum: The South's insecurity dilemma. *Nations and Nationalism*, 3(1), 45-63.
- Gobat, S. (1850). *Journal of Three Years' Residence in Abyssinia*. MW Dodd.
- Gorski, P. S. (2000). The mosaic moment: An early modernist critique of modernist theories of nationalism. *American Journal of Sociology*, 105(5), 1428-1468.
- Gramsci, A. (1988). *An Antonio Gramsci reader: selected writings, 1916-1935*. New York, NY: Schocken.
- Greenfeld, L. (1992). *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Guba, E. (1981). Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries. *Educational Resources Information Center Annual Review Paper*, 29 (2), 75-91.

- Haas, E. B. (1986). What is nationalism and why should we study it?. *International organization*, 40(3), 707-744.
- Habtamu Tegegne (2020). Barara (Addis Ababa's Predecessor): Foundation, Growth, Destruction and Rebirth (1400-1887).
- Haile Larebo (2017). Critique of Ethno-Nationalities Oppression in Ethiopia, *International Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, 11(1&2), 1-44.
- Haile Larebo (1988). The Ethiopian Orthodox Church and politics in the twentieth century: Part II. *Northeast African Studies*, 1-23.
- Hall, J. (1998). *The state of the nation: Ernest Gellner and the theory of nationalism* (Ed.). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Hammond, L. (1994). Humera Repatriation Report II, *United Nations Emergencies Unit For Ethiopia*, available online at: https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Hornet/Humera_Repat_2.html (last accessed May 2022)
- Hammond, L. (2004). Tigrayan returnees notions of home: Five variations on a theme, In Fran Markowitz, Anders H. Stefansson (Eds), *Homecomings: Unsettling Paths of Return* (pp. 36-53). Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Hammond, L. C. (2018). *This place will become home: refugee repatriation to Ethiopia*. NY: Harari People Regional State (2005). The Constitution of Harari People Regional State, Harari, Ethiopia.
- Harris, E. (2016). Why has nationalism not run its course?. *Nations and nationalism*, 22(2), 243-247.
- Harris, N. (1990). *National liberation*. London, UK: IB Tauris.
- Hassner, R. E. (2006). The path to intractability: Time and the entrenchment of territorial disputes. *International Security*, 31(3), 107-138.
- Hayes, C. J. (1960 [2016]). *Nationalism: a religion*. Transaction Publishers.
- Hearn, J. (2006). *Rethinking nationalism: A critical introduction*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Heater, D. (1994). *National self-determination: Woodrow Wilson and his legacy*. New York, NY: Springer.
- Hechter, M. (1975). *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

- Henze, P. (2000). *Layers of Time: A History of Ethiopia*. London: Hurst and Company.
- Hoben, A. (1973). *Land tenure among the Amhara of Ethiopia: the dynamics of cognatic descent*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press.
- Hobsbawm, E. J. (1990). *Nations and nationalism: Programme, myth, reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hobsbawm, E. J., & Cumming, M. (1995). *Age of extremes: the short twentieth century, 1914-1991*. London: Abacus.
- Hobsbawm, E. (1991). The perils of the new nationalism. *Nation*, 253(15), 537-539.
- Hobsbawm, E. (1992). *Nations and nationalism since 1780: Program, myth, reality*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Hobsbawm, E. (2013). (Ed). Introduction: Inventing Traditions. In Hobsbawm, E; Ranger, T. (Eds). *Inventing Traditions* (1-14). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Horowitz, D. (1993). The challenge of ethnic conflict: democracy in divided societies. *Journal of democracy*, 4(4), 18-38.
- Horowitz, D. (1994). Democracy in divided societies, In Diamond, L and Plattner, M (Eds.), *Nationalism, Ethnic Conflict and Democracy*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Human Rights Watch (1993), Ethiopia: Human Rights Developments, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/reports/1993/WR93/Afw-01.htm>, (last accessed May 2020)
- Hutchinson, J. (1994). *Cultural nationalism and moral regeneration*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Hutchinson, J. (2012). *Dynamics of cultural nationalism: The Gaelic revival and the creation of the Irish nation state*. London: Routledge
- Hutchison, J. & Smith, A. (1996) (Eds). *Ethnicity: Reader*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Ignatieff, M. (2006). *Blood and Belonging*. Toronto, Canada: Penguin Books
- Igunza, E. (2016). Ethiopian government made “honest mistake”, *BBC Africa*, Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/live/world-africa-37347778/page/2> (last accessed January 2021)
- Jørgensen, M. & Phillips, L. (2002). *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. Sage: London
- Jenber, B. J., & Yan, Z. (2021). The Oromo and Amhara Ethno-nationalism in Ethiopia: A Challenge to National Integration. *Journal of Nation-Building and Policy Studies*, 5(1), 49.

- Job, B. (1992). The Insecurity Dilemma: National, Regime, and State Securities in the Third World. In Job, B (ed.), *The Insecurity Dilemma: National Security of Third World States*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
- Kant, I. (1963). *What is Enlightenment? [1784]*”, in *Immanuel Kant*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill.
- Kedourie, E. (1961). *Nationalism*. India: Prabhat Prakashan.
- Kidane Wold-Kifle (1948). *Ge'ez-Amharic dictionary*, Addis Ababa: Artistic Printing Press
- Kiwuwa, E. (2012). *Ethnic politics and democratic transition in Rwanda*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Kohn, H. (1944 [2017]) . *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study in its Origins and Background*. New York, NY: The Macmillan Company.
- Kohn, H. (1950). Romanticism and the rise of German nationalism. *The Review of Politics*, 12(4), 443-472.
- Kohn, H. (1968). *Nationalism and Realism, 1852-1879* (Vol. 2). Van Nostrand.
- Kundera, M. (2007). *The curtain: an essay in seven parts*, trans. Linda Asher, NY: New York, Harper Perennial.
- Kvale, S. (2007). *Doing interviews*. London, UK: Sage.
- Laclau, E. (1990). *New reflections on the revolution of our time*. London: Verso Books.
- Laclau, E., & Mouffe, C. (2014). *Hegemony and socialist strategy: Towards a radical democratic politics (3 Ed.)*. London: Verso Books.
- Lake, A., & Rothchild, D. (1998). Spreading fear: The genesis of transnational ethnic conflict. In Lake, D. A., & Rothchild, D. S. *The international spread of ethnic conflict: Fear, diffusion, and escalation* (3-32). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Lenin, V. I. (1916). The discussion on self-determination summed up. In Lenin's Collected works (pp. 320-360), Moscow, Progress Publishers
- Levine, D. (2000). *Greater Ethiopia: The Evolution of a Multiethnic Society* (2nd Ed). Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press.
- Levine, D. N. (1965). *Wax and gold: Tradition and innovation in Ethiopian culture*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press.
- Levine, D. N. (2004). Reconfiguring the Ethiopian nation in a global era. *International Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, 1-15.
- Levine, D. N. (2011). Ethiopia's nationhood reconsidered. *Análise Social*, 311-327.

- Levinger, M.& Lytle, P. (2001). Myth and mobilization: the triadic structure of nationalist rhetoric. *Nations and Nationalism*, 7(2), 175-194.
- Lincoln, L.; Lynham, S.; Guba, E. (2018). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions and emerging confluences, revisited. In Denzin, N; Lincoln, L. (Eds), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (5thEd., 108-150). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lindlof, R. (1995). Eliciting experience: Interviews. In Lindlof, T. R. (Ed) *Qualitative Communication Research Methods* (163-196). London, UK: Sage.
- Lubie Birru (1980). Abyssinian Colonialism as the genesis of the crisis in the Horn: Oromo resistance (1855-1913). *Northeast African Studies*, 2/3(3/1) 93-98.
- Ludolf, H. (1682). A New History of Ethiopia: Being a Full and Accurate Description of the Kingdom of Abessinia. Vulgarly, Though Erroneously, Called the Empire of Prester John. Four Books . . . Illustrated with Copper Plates. Samuel Smith
- Lune, H., & Berg, L. (2017). *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (9th Ed). Essex, UK: Pearson Education Ltd.
- Luxemburg, R. (1976). *The national question: Selected writings by Rosa Luxemburg* (Vol. 24).NY: New York, NYU Press.
- Lynch, A. (2002). Woodrow Wilson and the principle of ‘national self-determination’: a reconsideration. *Review of International Studies*, 28(2), 419-436.
- Mamdani, M. (2002). *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Mann, M. (1995). A political theory of nationalism and its excesses. *Notions of nationalism*, 44-64.
- Marcus, H. (1992). Does the Past Have any Authority in Ethiopia? *Ethiopian Review* (04), 18–21.
- Markakis, J. (1989). Nationalities and the State in Ethiopia. *Third World Quarterly*, 11(4), 118-130.
- Markakis, J. (1976). *Ethiopia: Anatomy of a Traditional Polity*. Oxford: Clarendon Press
- Markakis, J. (2011). *Ethiopia: The last two frontiers*. Suffolk, UK: Boydell & Brewer Ltd.
- Marx, K. & Engels, F. (1953). *The Russian Menace to Europe: A Collection of Articles, Speeches, Letters, and New Despatches*. Paul W. Blackstock; Bert F. Hoselitz (Ed.), London, Allen & Unwin.

- Maxwell, A. (2012). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. London, UK: Sage.
- McAdam, D. Tarrow, S. and Tilly, C. (2004). *Dynamics of Contention*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- McCann, J. (1989). Frontier Agriculture, Food supply, and conjuncture: A revolution in Dura on Ethiopia's Mazega 1809-1930, Working Papers in African Studies No.138, African Studies Center, Boston University.
- Mearsheimer, J. J. (2021). Liberalism and nationalism in contemporary America. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 54(1), 1-8.
- Mekuria Bulcha (1997). The politics of linguistic homogenization in Ethiopia and the conflict over the status of Afaan Oromoo. *African Affairs*, 96(384), 325-352.
- Merara Gudina (2004). The state, competing ethnic nationalisms and democratization in Ethiopia. *African Journal of Political Science*, 9(1), 27-50.
- Merera Gudina (2006). Contradictory interpretations of Ethiopian history: The need for a new consensus. In Turton, D. (Ed.) *Ethnic Federalism. The Ethiopian Experience in Comparative Perspective* (119-130), Oxford, UK: James Currey.
- Merera Gudina (2011). Elections and democratization in Ethiopia, 1991–2010. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 5(4), 664-680.
- Mesfin Gebremichael (2012). *Federalism and Conflict Management in Ethiopia. Case Study of Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Bradford.
- Mesfin Woldemariam (2012). *Mekishef ende Ethiopia tarik*, Self-publishing.
- Messay Kebede (2003). Eurocentrism and Ethiopian historiography: deconstructing Semitization. *International Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, 1(1) 1-19.
- Messay Kebede (2008). *Radicalism and cultural dislocation in Ethiopia, 1960-1974*. Rochester, NY: University Rochester Press.
- Messay Kebede (2016). Jawar's New Ploy: Hijacking Amhara Resistance. Available at: <https://borkena.com/2016/12/11/jawars-new-ploy-hijacking-amhara-resistance-messay-kebede/> (last accessed September, 2020).
- Michael, M. (2008). Who is Amhara?. *African Identities*, 6 (4), 393-404.
- Mills, S. (2004). *Discourse*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Misganaw Andualem (2018). *Giyonawinet: Ye Amhara Menesha ena Medaresha*. Self-published

- Mitchel, S. (2018). Territorial disputes, available at: <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199743292/obo-9780199743292-0178.xml> (last accessed January 2021)
- Mohammed Hassen (1990). *The Oromo of Ethiopia: A history 1570-1860*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Mohammed Hassen (2002). Conquest, tyranny, and ethnocide against the Oromo: A historical assessment of human rights conditions in Ethiopia, ca. 1880s-2002. *Northeast African Studies*, 9(3), 15-49.
- Mohammed Hassen (2022). Genocidal conquest, plunder of resources and dehumanization of the Oromo in Ethiopia. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 24(1), 109-118.
- Moltchanova, A. (2009). *National Self-Determination and Justice in Multinational States*. MN: Northfield, Springer.
- Moreno, L. & Lecours, A. (2010). Introduction: tensions and paradoxes of a multifaceted relationship, In Lecours, A., & Moreno, L. (Eds.) *Nationalism and democracy: Dichotomies, complementarities, oppositions* (pp. 1-15). London: Routledge
- Moreshe Wogene Amhara Organization (2016). *The Amhara Genocide Ignored by the World: A study of the genocide and ethnic cleansing of the Amhara ethnic group from 1991 – 2015*, Self-published.
- Morgan, L. (2012). Focus groups and social interaction. *The Sage handbook of interview research: The complexity of the craft*. London, UK: Sage.
- Morgan, L. & Krueger, A. (1993). When to use focus groups and why. *Successful focus groups: Advancing the state of the art*, 1, 3-19.
- Motulsky, S. L. (2021). Is member checking the gold standard of quality in qualitative research? *Qualitative Psychology*, 8(3), 389-406.
- Motyl, Alexander J., 1999. *Revolutions, Nations, Empires: Conceptual Limits and Theoretical Possibilities*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Moynihan, P.; Glazer, N. (Eds.). (1975). *Ethnicity: Theory and experience* (Vol. 531). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Mulatu Wubneh (2017). Ethnic Identity Politics and the Restructuring of Administrative Units in Ethiopia, *International Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, 11(1 & 2), 105-138

- Mulatu Wubneh (2015). This land is my land: the Ethio-Sudan boundary and the need to rectify arbitrary colonial boundaries, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 33(4), 441-466
- Nairn, T. (2003). *The break-up of Britain: crisis and neo-nationalism*. Common Ground.
- Najat Hamza (2017). *A mirror Story: The striking similarities of Native American Ordeal and the Oromo people*, Available at: <https://oromianeconomist.com/2017/04/16/a-mirror-story-the-striking-similarities-of-native-american-ordeal-and-the-oromo-people/> (last accessed January 2022)
- National Movement of Amhara (2018). Manifesto of the National Movement of Amhara. NaMA, Addis Ababa.
- National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, & African-American Institute (1992). *An Evaluation of the June 21, 1992 Elections in Ethiopia*. National Democratic Institution for International.
- Neal, A. (2009). *Exceptionalism and the Politics of Counter-terrorism: Liberty, Security and the War on Terror*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Neuman, W. (2014). *Social research methods: qualitative and quantitative approaches* (7th Ed), London, UK: Pearson.
- Norman, W. (2006). *Negotiating nationalism: nation-building, federalism, and secession in the multinational state*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Nyssen, J. (2022a) Dataset: Western Tigray in 108 historical and 21 ethno-linguistic maps (1607-2009). Version 3.1. Ghent (Belgium): Ghent University, Department of Geography. Zenodo
- Nyssen, J. (2022b). List of place names in Welkait (Tigray, Ethiopia), as recorded in 1939. Version 1.1. Ghent (Belgium): Ghent University, Department of Geography. Zenodo,
- Ofcansky, T. P., & Berry, L. (1991). *Resettlement and villagization: Ethiopia a country study*. GPO for the Library of Congress.
- Okbazghi Yohannes (1987). The Eritrean question: a colonial case?. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 25(4), 643-668.
- Oromia Regional State (2001). *The Revised Constitution of Oromia Regional State*, Proclamation No. 49/2001, Adama, Ethiopia
- Özkirimli, U. (2005). *Contemporary debates on nationalism: A critical engagement*. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Özkirimli, U. (2017). *Theories of nationalism: A critical introduction* (3rd Ed.). London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Østebø, T., & Tronvoll, K. (2020). Interpreting contemporary Oromo politics in Ethiopia: an ethnographic approach. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 14(4), 613-632.
- Pankhurst, R. (1998). Tedla Haile, and the problem of multi-ethnicity in Ethiopia. *Northeast African Studies*, 5(3), 81-96.
- Pankhurst, R. (1992). *A Social History of Ethiopia: The Northern and Central Highlands from Early Medieval Times to the Rise of Emperor Tewodros*. Trenton: Red Sea Press.
- Pankhurst, R., & Breternitz, H. (2009). Barara, the Royal City of 15th and Early 16th Century (Ethiopia). Medieval and Other Early Settlements Between Wechecha Range and Mt Yerer: Results from a Recent Survey. In *Annales d'Éthiopie* (Vol. 24, No. 1, pp. 209-249). Persée-Portail des revues scientifiques en SHS.
- Parlesák, A. (1989). *Habešská odysea*. Panorama; Techane Jobrie TRANS (2018). *Yehabesha Jebdu*. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press
- Pausewang, S. (2005). The two-faced Amhara identity. *Scrinium*, 1(1), 273-286.
- Peoples' Alliance for Freedom and Democracy (2019). Press release: The Massacre of Benshangul Gumuz People by the Amhara's Special Forces Must Be Immediately Stopped! Available at: <https://oromoliberationfront.org/english/the-massacre-of-benshangul-gumuz-people-by-the-amharas-special-forces-must-be-immediately-stopped/> (last accessed July 2020).
- Plowden, W. C. (1868). *Travels in Abyssinia and the [Oromo] country: with an account of a mission to Ras Ali in 1848*. Longmans.
- Polletta, F., & Jasper, J. M. (2001). Collective identity and social movements. *Annual review of Sociology*, 27(1), 283-305.
- Prochazka, R. (1936). *Abyssinia: The powder barrel*, London: British International News Agency.
- Prunier, G. (2010). The 1943 Woyane revolt: A modern reassessment. *Journal of the Middle East and Africa*, 1(2), 187-195.
- Prunier, G., & Ficquet, E. (2015). *Understanding contemporary Ethiopia: Monarchy, revolution and the legacy of Meles Zenawi*. Oxford University Press.

- Renan, E. & Giglioli, M. (2018). *What Is a Nation? and Other Political Writings*. New York Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press.
- Richmond, O. P. (2006). The problem of peace: understanding the 'liberal peace'. *Conflict, security & development*, 6(3), 291-314.
- Robert M. Hayden (1996). Imagined Communities and Real Victims: Self-Determination and Ethnic Cleansing in Yugoslavia, *American Ethnologist*, 23, (4), 783-801
- Pryor, R. (2018). 3 Stages Of Organization Development, Available at: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/3-stages-organization-development-101-basics-roberta-pryor-ms-lssgb> (last accessed September, 2019)
- Roe, P. (2005). *Ethnic violence and the societal security dilemma*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Roe, P. (2016). *Societal security*. In Collins (Ed.) *Contemporary security studies* (4th Ed) (pp. 215-228). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Roseberry, W.(1996) Hegemony, power and languages of contention. In Wilsen, E.N. and Mcallister, P. (Eds). *The politics of difference: ethnic premises in a world of power* (pp. 71-84). The University of Chicago Press. First edition.
- Rose, W. A. (2019). WEB Du Bois: Ethiopia and Pan-Africanism. *Journal of Black Studies*, 50(3), 251-272.
- Roshwald, A. (2001). *Ethnic Nationalism and the Fall of Empires: Central Europe, Russia and the Middle East, 1914–1923*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Roulston, K. (2001). Data analysis and “theorizing as ideology”. *Qualitative Research*, 1(3), 279-302.
- Rousseau, J. J. (2018). *Rousseau: The Social Contract and other later political writings*. Cambridge University Press.
- Samatar, A. I. (2008). Ethiopian Ethnic Federalism and Regional Autonomy: The Somali Test. *Bildhaan: An International Journal of Somali Studies*, 5(1), 44-76.
- Sbacchi, A. (1975). Italian colonialism in Ethiopia, PhD dissertation, University of Illinois at Chicago Circle.
- Scott, J. (2014). *A matter of record: Documentary sources in social research*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Semahagn Abebe. (2016). *The last post-Cold War socialist federation: Ethnicity, ideology and democracy in Ethiopia*. London, UK: Routledge.

- Seton-Watson, H. (1977 [2019]). *Nations and states: An enquiry into the origins of nations and the politics of nationalism*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Shepperson, G. (1953). Ethiopianism and African nationalism. *Phylon* (1940-1956), 14(1), 9-18.
- Shils, E. (1957). Primordial, personal, sacred and civil ties: Some particular observations on the relationships of sociological research and theory. *The British journal of sociology*, 8(2), 130-145.
- Shulman, S. (2002). Challenging the civic/ethnic and West/East dichotomies in the study of nationalism. *Comparative political studies*, 35(5), 554-585.
- Silverman, D. (Ed.). (2016). *Qualitative research: Theory, method and practice*. London, UK: Sage.
- Smidt, W. (2022). Why old maps of Northeastern Africa are not old: Cartographic collections as a repository of local territorial knowledge and practice. In *Online Lecture Series "New Perspectives on the Horn of Africa"*: Wissenschaftlicher Arbeitskreis Horn von Afrika.
- Smith, A. (1983). *Theories of Nationalism*. New York, NY: Holmes & Meier.
- Smith, A. (1986). *The ethnic origins of nations*. Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell.
- Smith, A. (1993). The ethnic sources of nationalism. *Survival*, 35(1), 48-62.
- Smith, A. (1998). *Nationalism and Modernism*. London: Routledge
- Smith, A. (2008). *The Cultural Foundations of Nations*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Smith, A. (2009). *Ethno-symbolism and nationalism: A cultural approach*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Smith, A. (2012). Nationalism and global culture. In Halikiopoulou, D., & Vasilopoulou, S. (Eds.), *Nationalism and globalization: Conflicting or complementary?* (pp. 153-170). London, UK: Routledge.
- Snyder, L. L. (2003). *New Nationalism (The)(Ppr)*. NJ: Piscataway, Transaction Publishers.
- Solomon Fisseha (1992). With its blood: EPDM has assured itself as a democratic organization of the Amhara, *Addis Zemen*, January 1, 1984.
- Solomon Molla (2022). Demystifying the causes of the Amhara people's protest in Ethiopia. *Third World Quarterly*, 43(4), 916-935.
- Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Stalin, J. (1929). *The national question and Leninism*. NY: New York, International Publishers.
- Stalin, J. (1913). *Marxism and the National Question*. NY: New York, International Publishers.

- Stenhouse, P. L. and Pankhurst, R. (2004). *The conquest of Abyssinia* (Futuh Al-Habasa) [16th century], Hollywood: LA, Tsehai Publishers.
- Stern, H. A. (1868). *The Captive Missionary: Being an Account of the Country and People of Abyssinia. Embracing a Narrative of King Theodore's Life, and His Treatment of Political and Religious Missions*. Cassel, Petter & Galpin.
- Strauss, A. L. (1987). *Qualitative analysis for social scientists*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.
- Suny, R. (2001). Constructing primordialism: old histories for new nations. *The Journal of Modern History*, 73(4), 862-896.
- Tabachnik, M. (2019). Untangling liberal democracy from territoriality: from ethnic/civic to ethnic/territorial nationalism. *Nations and nationalism*, 25(1), 191-207.
- Taddese Tamrat (1988). Processes of Ethnic Interaction and Integration in Ethiopian History: the Case of the Agaw. *The Journal of African History*, 29(1), 5-18.
- Tadesse Tamrat (1972). *Church and State in Ethiopia 1270-1527*. Doctoral dissertation, University of London.
- Takkele Taddese (1994). Do the Amhara exist as a distinct ethnic group? In Marcus Harlod (Ed.) Papers of the 12th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies (pp. 168-186). Addis Ababa University
- Tamir, Y. (2019). Not So Civic: Is There a Difference Between Ethnic and Civic Nationalism? *Annual Review of Political Science*, 22, 419-434.
- Taye Gebremariam (1921). *YeEthiopia hizboch tarik* (A history of Ethiopian peoples), Addis Ababa: St. George Press.
- Tedla Melaku (2018). *The Glory of the Amhara* (2nd edition): A Pillar of our Identity (2nd Ed.). Washington DC: Create Space Independent Publishing Platform.
- Tegegne Teka (1998). Amhara ethnicity in the making, In Mohammed Salih and John Markakis (Ed.), *Ethnicity and the state in East Africa* (116-126). Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet
- Tekletsadik Mekuria (1983). *Atse Menelik ena ye Ethiopia andenet* (Emperor Menelik and Ethiopia Unity). Addis Ababa: Kuraz publishing
- Temesgen Gebeyehu (2016). Gojjam (Ethiopia): peopling, Christianization, and identity. *African identities*, 14 (3), 255-272.

- Tesfaw, M. (2018). *The Amhara Holocaust: Accounts of the Hidden Genocide of the Amhara People in Ethiopia: 1991-2015*. Talem Publishers.
- Teshale Tibebe (1995). *The making of modern Ethiopia: 1896-1974*. Trenton NJ, The Red Sea Press.
- Teshale Tibebe (2008) Modernity, Eurocentrism, and radical politics in Ethiopia, 1961–1991. *African Identities*, 6(4), 345-371
- Teshome M. (2018). What is the point in Amhara nationalism? Available online at: <https://www.ethiopia-insight.com/2018/12/10/what-is-the-point-in-amhara-nationalism/>, (last accessed September 20, 2019)
- Tewodros Hailemariam (2013). A history of nationalism in Ethiopia. PhD dissertation, Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa
- Tewodros Hailemariam (2021). Nationalism in Ethiopia: From Where to Where? A paper presented in “Remembrance, Ethiopian/ethno-nationalism” Workshop, organized by Admita, December 24, 2021, at Golden Tulip Hotel, Addis Ababa
- Thiel, M. (2007). Identity, societal security and regional integration in Europe. *Jean Monnet/Robert Schuman Paper Series*, 7(6), 1-15.
- Tigrai Online (2018). Establishment of National Movement of Amhara and its danger for Ethiopia, *Tigrai Online June 11, 2018*, Available at: <http://www.tigraionline.com/articles/amhara-national-movement.html> (last accessed July 2020)
- Tigray People Liberation Front (1976). The TPLF Manifesto February 1976. Available at: http://www.satenaw.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/First_TPLF_Manifesto_1968EC_In-amharic-tigrigna-1.pdf (last accessed July 2020)
- Tigray People’s Liberation Front (1983). People’s Democratic Program of Tigray People’s Liberation Front, Adopted by the Second Organizational Congress of the TPLF May 1983, Available at: <https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/ethiopia/tigray-program.pdf> (last accessed July 2020)
- Tilahun Takele (1971). The national question “regionalism” in Ethiopia, *Newsletter of the New York Chapter of Ethiopian Student Union North America* 1(3)
- Tilley, V. (1997). The terms of the debate: untangling language about ethnicity and ethnic movements. *Ethnic and racial studies*, 20(3), 497-522.

- Tilly, C. (1975). Reflections on the history of European state-making. In Tilly, C. (Ed). *The formation of national states in Western Europe* (pp.3-83). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Tinsley, M. (2019). Decolonizing the civic/ethnic binary. *Current Sociology*, 67(3), 347-364.
- Trimingham, J. S. (2013). *Islam in Ethiopia*. Routledge: London.
- Tronvoll, K. (2009). War and the Politics of Identity in Ethiopia: the making of enemies and allies in the Horn of Africa, Woodbridge: James Currey.
- Tronvoll, K. (2021). Ethiopia's Tigray War Is Fueling Amhara Expansionism, Foreign Policy, available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/04/28/ethiopia-tigray-war-amhara-abiy-ahmed-expansionism/> (last accessed January 2022).
- Tsegaye Birhanu (2022). Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State: May – November 2022, Rift Valley Institute, Available at: https://riftvalley.net/sites/default/files/publication-documents/PRF%20Conflict%20Trends%20Analysis_Benishangul%20Gumuz%20.pdf (last accessed January, 2023).
- Tsegaye R Ararssa (2018). The lemma Megerssa moment and the Oromo dilemma: between resistance and governing, *addis standard*, available at: <https://addisstandard.com/opinion-the-lemma-megerssa-moment-and-the-oromo-dilemma-between-resistance-and-governing/> (last accessed June 2020).
- Tumtu Lencho (July 1971). The Question of Nationalities and Class Struggle in Ethiopia, *Challenge* 11 (2), 3–66.
- Ullendorff, E. (1965). *An Amharic chrestomathy: introduction, grammatical tables, texts, Amharic-English glossary*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Ullendorff, E. (1967). The Anglo-Ethiopian Treaty of 1902, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 30 (3), 641-654
- United States Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, Ethiopia. Status of Amharas, 1 March 1993, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6a6077.html> (last accessed November 2022).
- University of Gondar (UoG) (2022). *Annexation and Structural Genocide in Welkait-Tegede and Telemt*, Gondar: University of Gondar Press.
- van den Berghe, P. (1987). *The ethnic phenomenon*. London, UK: Greenwood Publishing.

- van Dijk, T. (ed.) (1997). 'Introduction', in *Discourse as Structure and Process: A Multidisciplinary Introduction*. Vol. 1. London: Sage.
- Vaughan, S. (2003). *Ethnicity and power in Ethiopia*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK.
- Wæver, O. (1993). Societal Security: The Concept. In Wæver, O., Buzan, B., Kelstrup, M, Lemaitre, P. (Eds.). *Identity, migration and the new security agenda in Europe* (17-40). London, UK: Pinter Publishers.
- Wæver, O. (1995). Securitization and desecuritization. Lipschutz, R. (Ed.), *On security* (pp. 46-86). New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Wæver, O. (2008). The changing agenda of societal security. In Brauch, H., Spring, U., Mesjasz, C., Grin, J., Dunay, P., Behera, N., ... Liotta, P. (Eds.), *Globalization and Environmental Challenges* (pp. 581-593). Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg.
- Waite, M. (Ed.). (2012). *Paperback Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Walleign Mekonnen (1969). On the Question of Nationalities in Ethiopia, *Struggle* 5 (2), 4–7.
- Williams, G. (1960). The Concept of "Egemonia" in the Thought of Antonio Gramsci: Some Notes on Interpretation, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, XXI, 586–99.
- Wodak, R. (2006). *Discourse-analytic and socio-linguistic approaches to the study of nation (alism)*. London, UK: Sage.
- Wodak, R., Cillia R., Reisigl, M., & Liebhart, K. (2009). *The Discursive Construction of National Identity* (2nd ed). Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press.
- Woldemeskel, G. (1989). The consequences of resettlement in Ethiopia. *African Affairs*, 88(352), 359-374.
- Wosenyelew Tedla & Moges Kelklie (2021). Welkait, Ethiopia: Geo Strategic importance and the Consequential Annexation by TPLF, Available at: <https://www.hornofafricainsight.org/post/welkait-ethiopia-geo-strategic-importance-and-the-consequential-annexation-by-tplf> (last accessed July 2022)
- Wright, M. F. (1974). The National Question: A Marxist Critique. *The Black Scholar*, 5(5), 43-53.
- Yack, B. (1995). Reconciling liberalism and nationalism. *Political Theory*, 23(1), 166-182
- Yates, B. J. (2017). Ethnicity as a Hindrance for Understanding Ethiopian History: An Argument Against an Ethnic Late Nineteenth Century. *History in Africa*, 44, 101-131.

- Yates, B. J. (2019). *The other Abyssinians: The northern Oromo and the creation of modern Ethiopia, 1855-1913* (Vol. 85). Rochester: University of Rochester Press.
- Yesewsew Amu (1992). Should the Amhara be represented by a national party? *Addis Zemen*, January 5, 1985.
- Yeros, P. (Ed.) (2016). *Ethnicity and Nationalism in Africa: Constructivist Reflections and Contemporary Politics*. New York, NY: Springer.
- Yilkal Ayalew (2021). The terms of debate on the existence of Amhara ethnicity with a focus on the emerging Amhara ethno-nationalism. *African Identities*, 1-19.
- Yin, R. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Yin, R. (2011). *Applications of case study research*. London, UK: Sage
- Yin, R. (2014). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (Applied Social Research Methods). Sage: London.
- Yinebeb Nigatu (2019). Political discourse and the securitization of democracy in post-1991 Ethiopia, PhD Dissertation, University of Leiden.
- Yonatan Fessha (2017). Ethnic diversity and federalism: Constitution making in South Africa and Ethiopia. London, Routledge.
- Yonatan Fessha (2022). *A federation without federal credentials: When politics trumps law*. In Between Failure and Redemption The Future of The Ethiopian Social Contract (pp. 143-156). Evanston, Illinois: Roberta Buffett Institute for Global Affairs and Northwestern University Libraries.
- Yoseph, B. & Temin, J. (2018). Reform in Ethiopia: Turning Promise into Progress, *Freedom House Policy Brief*, available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/policy-brief/2018/reform-ethiopia-turning-promise-progress> (last accessed July 2020)
- Young, J. (1998). Regionalism and democracy in Ethiopia. *Third World Quarterly*, 19(2), 191-204.
- Zernatto, G and Mistretta, A. (1944). Nation: The history of a word. *The Review of Politics*, 6(3), 351-366.
- Zhou, Y. R. (2022). Vaccine nationalism: contested relationships between COVID-19 and globalization. *Globalizations*, 19(3), 450-465.
- Zoli, C. (1937). The Organization of Italy's East African Empire. *Foreign Affairs*, 16(1), 80-90

Annex 1: List of Publications

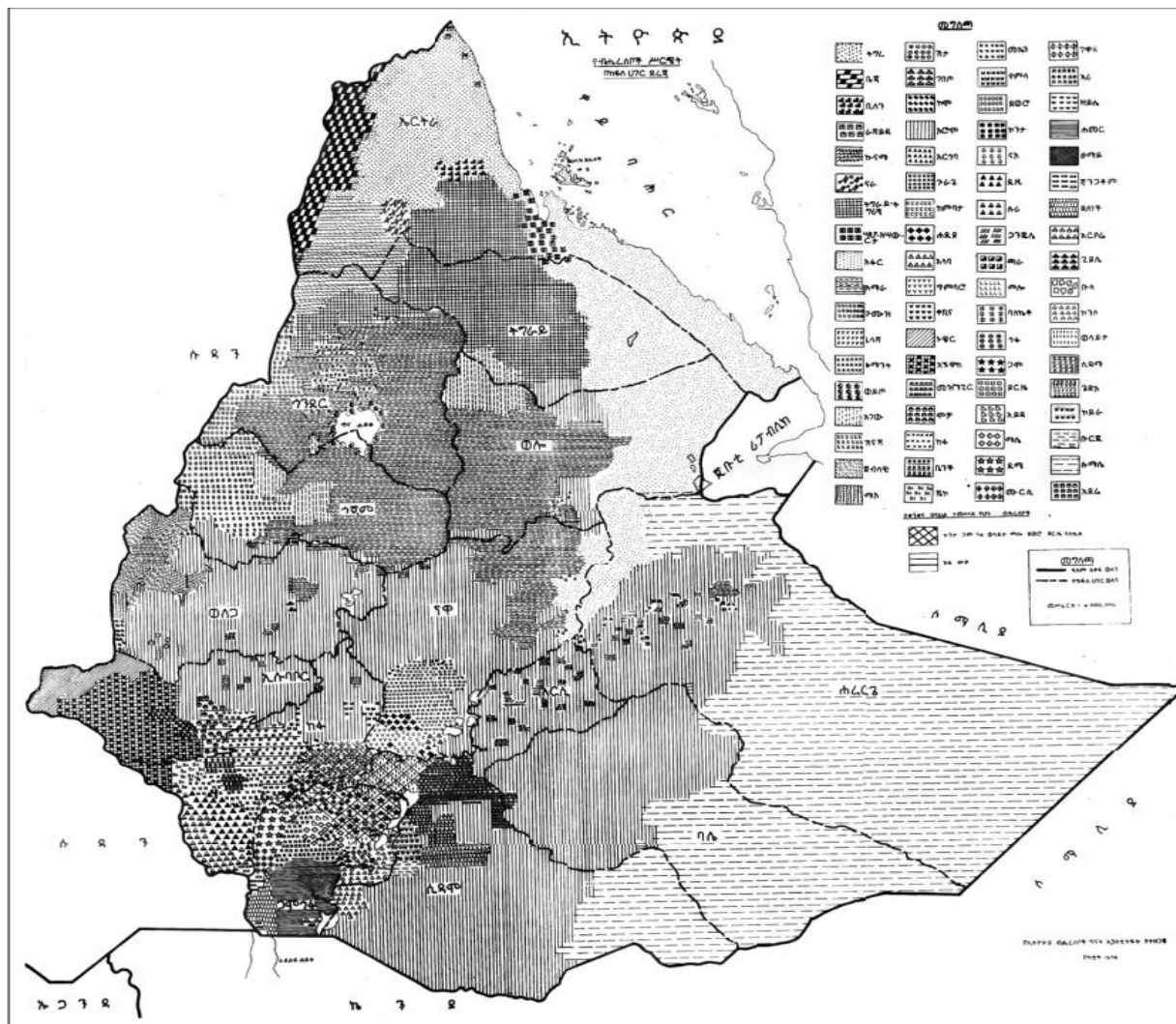
1. Misganaw Andualem (2018). *Gionawinet: Ye Amhara menesha ena medaresha* [Giohinism: The roots and routes of Amhara] (Self-published).
2. Tedla Melaku (2018). *The Glory of the Amhara: A Pillar of Our Identity*, Self-published.
3. Muluken Tesafw (2022). *The Amhara Holocaust: Accounts of the Hidden Genocide of the Amhara People in Ethiopia: 1991- 2015*, Self-published
4. Misganaw Andualem (2021). መልክ -ሃራ [Melke-Hara], Self-published
5. Habtamu Tegegne (2020). *Barara (Addis Ababa's Predecessor): Foundation, Growth, Destruction and Rebirth (1400-1887)*. Trenton, Red Sea Publishing.
6. Getenet Yirsaw (2022). ፋኖኒት በምስጢራዊው ጥባኤ [Fanonit Bemistrawi Gubaye], Self published
7. Chuchu Alebachew (2019). ዳገት ያበረታው የአማራው ፍኖት , Self-published
8. Achamyeleh Tamiru (2020). *The Welkait Affair: A Study of Welkait, Tegede, Telemet and Humera boundary and geographical history (330- 1991 AD)*, Rohbot Publishing
9. Sisay Mengistie & Alemu Kassa (2019). የራያ ህዝብ ታሪክ (The History of the People of Raya), Addis Ababa, Mankusa publishing.
10. Gashaw Mersha (2018). *Ye'Amara tegadlo* [The Amhara resistance], Addis Ababa, Self-published
11. Melkamu Teshome (2018). የአማራ ብህሄር ተኝነት [Amhara nationalism], Addis Ababa, Self-published.
12. Moresh Wogene Amhara Oreganization (2016). *The Amhara Genocide Ignored by the World: A study of the genocide and ethnic cleansing of the Amhara ethnic group from 1991 – 2015*, Addis Ababa, Self-published.
13. Abere Adamu (2009). አማራነት [Amharanet], Addis Ababa, Self-published.

Annex 2: List of informants

S.No.	Informants	Remarks
1	Amhara National Democratic Movement former members	
2	NaMA members in Gondar, Bahir dar, Debre Berhan, Woldiya and Addis Ababa	
3	Internally Displaced Amhara from Wollega and Metekel in Bahir Dar and Debre Berhan	
4	Members of Amhara Youth Association	
5	Members of Amhara Students' Union	
6	Ghion Peace and Development Association	Local peacebuilding association highly involved in Qimant-Amhara conflict resolution and reconciliation process
7	Gondar Development Association	
8	Amhara Scholars Council	
9	Amhara Regional State Peace and Security Bureau	
10	Amhara Activists in Ethiopia and Diaspora	
11	Members of All Ethiopian Unity Party	
12	Members of EZEMA	
13	Former member of <i>Kefagne</i> Movement	
14	Members of Fano	
15	Employee of Amhara Media Corporation	
16	Member of Moresh Wogene Amhara Association	
17	House of Federation	
18	Experts/Academician	
19	Amhara Prosperity Party	
20	Welkait Amhara Identity Committee	
21	Raya Amhara Identity Committee	
22	Dera/Shoa Amhara Identity Committee	

23	Telemet Amhara Identity Committee	
24	Metekel Amhara Identity Committee	
25	Informants from Oromia and Benishangul-Gumuz Region	
26	Diaspora-based activists mainly from USA, Washington Area	
27	Members of the Prosperity Party	

Annex 3: Distribution of Ethnic Groups in Ethiopia



Source: Institute for the Study of Ethiopian Nationalities. 1978 (EC). Catalogue and Map of Ethiopian Nationalities, Hedar 1978 (as cited in Mulatu, 2017:117)

Annex 4: Ethnic-based violence against the Amhara, 1991-2020

Moresh	EHRCO	EHRC; International reports	Places
1992-1994— EBC • Death- > 10000 • House burned down • Men castrated • Crops and livestock looted	May 1991— EBV • Death- 270 • Burned houses- 6833 • IDPs- 60000		Benishangul Gumuz - Metekel -
2011/12— EBV • IDPs- 5200 heads of households			
2015— EBV • Death- 160 • Cannibalism (Kidney and Liver)			
1991— EBV • Death- 109; • IDPs- > 10000	1991— EBV • Death- 46 Christians	1991— EBV • Death- 46	West Hararigie— Habro Awraja
1992— EBV • Death, Unspecified, yet 16 sacks of human skulls (1500) were found • People were thrown from a cliff called Tirso		1992— EBV • Death, 50 civilians were reported killed, forced to jump off cliffs	
1992— EBV and Religious • Death- Christians massacred • Properties looted	1991— EBV and Religious • Death- 154 Christians	Dec. 1991— EBV and Religious • death 154 Christians, mainly	Arsi Province— Arba Gugu, Jeju, Godana, Gololcha Weredas Arsi zone, Kofelewareda, Kore

Intimidated not to use Muslim's flour mill	2006; Religious conflict between Orthodox and Muslims - Death- 7 - Fatally wounded; 3 - IDPs- 2000 194 Houses and one church were burnt - Cattle raided	Amhara, Houses burned down	town
1992— EBV - Death- 60 deaths (Amhara and Kembata) - Wounded- 60 6205 cattle looted 64 houses destroyed >7246 houses set on fire, 1200 barns set on fire, and etc.			Arsi Negele
1996— EBV Detained; an unspecified number of Amharas for weeks			
1991— EBV - TPLF and OLF expelled Amharas from Garamuleta - Death- 32 (shot and thrown from a cliff called Jillecha) - Houses burned down- 32			East Hararghe- - Weter - Gara Muleta

1992 – EBV • Death- 48, slaughtered using a machete • Detained - 300 people			
1995— EBV • Death- 15 (killed by TPLF militia)			
1992— EBV • Non-Oromos forcefully disarmed, • Properties looted • Churches looted and closed • Intimidated not to trade amongst themselves, but only with them and Oromos. • Not allowed to leave their villages and report the incidents			Illubabur— Limu Awraja
1998— EBV • Amharas individually targeted; for instance, millions worth of property of Ato Molla Erqe Bitew were confiscated by local official			
2000— EBV • Death- 1100 • IDPs- 14000 • Told to evacuate • Possessions and homes redistributed	2000— EBV • anti-Amhara mobilizations • death- 8 • rape, damages to property, looting etc.		Oromia (Eastern Wellega) • Seredeno, • Abidengero, • Gida Kiramo/ Gida Kiremu, and

	• 484 people also died due to malaria 2001— EBV • Death- 60 (religious conflict) • IDPs- 11000		• Awaro
	2002— EBV • IDPs- 28,000 forcefully evacuated		Oromia • Wendo Tika and Shashemene areas
2011/12— EBV • IDPs- 20,000			SNNPR • Bench Maji (GuraFerda)
2014— EBV • Death- 600 • IDPs- 3364 • Homeless- 860 children under the age of 5			
	2016— EBV • Death- 1 • Injured- 10 (minor) • Houses set ablaze- 124 • Unlawful Arrest- 85		Oromia • West Shewa Zone (Nono Ale Kebele)
	2017— EBV against non-Gedeos • Amhara were prominent targets		SNNP • Gedeo Zone

		2020— EBV prompted by the Death of Hachalu • Death- 123 • Injury- 500 • Property damage- 900	Oromia
--	--	--	--------

Source: Compiled from various national and international human rights reports (1991-2020)