



ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

INSTITUTE FOR PEACE AND SECURITY STUDIES (IPSS)

FRAMING MOMENTS OF LYNCHING IN ETHIOPIA ON SOCIAL MEDIA:
REVITALIZATION, INEVITABILITY, AND REVERSAL

BIRAANU GAMMACHU

JUNE 2023

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES OF ADDIS ABABA
UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF MASTER OF ARTS IN PEACE AND SECURITY STUDIES

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Undoubtedly, the journey has been arduous and strenuous, but it is only through divine mercy that I have persevered. The experience has been rewarding though.

Here, I express profound gratitude to Dr. Fana Gebresenbet for the invaluable professional expertise and mentorship throughout the course of this thesis work. I am sincerely appreciative of his thorough review, engagement, and constructive feedback. Without his significant input, this project would not have materialized in its current shape. This process has aptly positioned me on a firm foundation for my future academic, professional, and research career.

I also extend my appreciation to the active academic and administrative personnel at IPSS for their contributions.

Lastly, I would not be remiss in not mentioning resourceful family, brothers and sisters, and friends during this undertaking. They have been a constant source of encouragement and resourcefulness.

ACRONYMS

APA	American Psychological Association
EPRDF	Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front
MTA	Macha and Tulama Association
NaMA	National Movement of Amhara
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
OSPs	Online Service Providers
SMPs	Social Media Platforms
TPLF	Tigray People’s Liberation Front
US	United States

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DECLARATION

This thesis project is my original work, and has not been presented for a degree in any other University, and that all sources of materials used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Name: Biraanu Gammachu

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Date: June, 2023

ABSTRACT

In 2018, Ethiopia welcomed a contestable political transition that is initially encouraging but essentially rhetorical in nature, leading to unprecedented experiences of mob violence including lynching (i.e. extrajudicial killing by groups of people, or mob justice targeting individuals or few groups) across the country. The moments of the lynching attracted attentions of prominent online activists from Amhara, Oromo and Tigray origin with important consequences. Lynching is a less covered topic in the literature of violence in the context of Ethiopia. Thus, in-depth qualitative investigation is important to understand how such frame narrations and representations of the different episodes of mob violence unfolds among the key actors is significantly impactful in popular interactions, perception, and practice of national political narrative of the contemporary Ethiopia. Drawing on constructivist framework the research followed qualitative case study to explore how the notable online actors frame the different moments of lynching. Qualitative data are obtained from 9 key Facebook page posts of the research informants, 3 from each of the key social media actors' origin. The meaning-making followed inductive content analysis. That is, specific contents of each of the qualitative data collected are analyzed, and then the thematic-level analysis finally are abstracted into conceptual patterns of frames. The research findings essentially indicates significant contrast of frame narratives and representation, that is, the revitalization frame for the Amhara, the inevitability for the Oromo, and the reversal frame for the Tigray Social Media actors. The contending frames fundamentally reflects continued complexities and fragility of perception and practice of ethno-nationalism, and politics of difference. The in-depth exploration contributes to addressing knowledge gap, and it supplements discussions that have academic and policy relevance. Further, notably the background thinking that this in-depth qualitative case investigation findings suggests pervasive mob violence in the country is an emerging space of narrative contestation.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

This research is titled *Framing moments of lynching in Ethiopia on Social Media: revitalization, inevitability, and reversal*. It is a thesis project principally aimed at exploring to understand how recognizable social media activists particularly Facebook of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray origin respond to various lynching (i.e. extrajudicial killing by groups of people, or mob justice targeting individuals or few groups) phenomena unfolds during post-2018 political transition in the country.

This introduction chapter presents the relevant context of the investigation, then discusses the research problem, further lists research objectives and questions, followed by discussions of the relevance, scope, and limitations of the research work, and finally it highlights the ethical considerations observed before an outline section.

1.1 Research context

Despite grass-tops democratization and peace rhetoric – that is essentially hypnotic and reprehensible, Ethiopia experienced unprecedented mob violence during the post-2018 political transition. Notably, some encouraging political measures introduced during this period were impliedly can be linked to healing the national political climate, at least at the beginning, but it gradually fadeout, and at the same time shockingly birthing atrocious acts of mob violence including a number of lynching incidents across the country. Lynching concept is defined as a form of physical violence in which a group of people (mob), under the guise of administering justice without trial, executes a suspected criminal, usually after exacting torture and mutilation (Moore, 2017; Clark, 2011). Several such moments of mob violence acts have attracted serious social media engagement, particularly Facebook, among notable online activists of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray origin. Comparatively, online activists of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray descent played a significant role during the 2018 government reform (political transition).

In this research – semantically – the term post-2018 is used to refer to a period immediately after April 2, 2018, but it spans only until November 2, 2022 in Ethiopia. But the important research phenomenon associated with this investigation has occurred in the year 2018. Mob violence in

this context of political transition is an important subject of discussion. Partly because, an act of mob violence – regardless of the actors and the environment, is undeniably consequential. In recent times, the various incidents of mob violence that occurred in different parts of Ethiopia have drawn attention, and are observed to have important implications on the Ethiopian state and the society as a whole. Closer observation by the researcher indicates that the mob violence is still unabated and increasingly emerging. An evolution of the mob phenomenon arguably is a function of several factors. In this regard, many scholars agree, in this process perception and practice of ethno-nationalism and politics of difference are prominently figured out.

With the inception of the debatable reform in 2018 in Ethiopia, the contestation of control power continued unfolding among the major ethno-nationalist groups in the country namely Amhara, Oromo and Tigray on an online discourse. The notable narrators belonging to each of these ethnic group continued utilizing social media, particularly Facebook, to framing and shaping popular discourse still in the circumstances of mob violence that often involves lynching in the country.

Drawing on constructivist paradigm, this in-depth qualitative case research employed qualitative data collection and content analysis method to understand key Facebook activists frame narratives of different episodes of lynching incidents belonging to Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray. The social construction framework argues that there are many ways to construct meaning and that it is therefore important to understand different structures of the same phenomenon, and the analytical method used in this study, content analysis, emphasizes taking into account different concepts and capturing the meaning attached (Creswell, 2018; Merriam, 2002; Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2020).

Accordingly, 9 notable social media activists are purposely sampled, primary data are collected from each of the research informants' Facebook page posts, and then qualitatively analyzed. The indicatively analyzed qualitative data indicates important contending frame narrative among the key online activist groups. As such, the framing and representation of the different episodes of lynching are found significantly contrasting. It is structured into three conceptual frames, namely revitalization for Amhara, inevitability for Oromo, and reversal for Tigray online activist group. Therefore, I argue, the background thinking, explanation, and reading of the various lynching phenomenon taking place during the post-2018 principally implies a continuation of narrative

contestation. In other words, the analytical investigation suggests that mob violence is an emerging narrative contestation space in Ethiopia.

1.2 Statement of the research problem

In 2018, Ethiopia welcomed a contestable government reform. Scholars assess that the reform, and the much hyped political transition is initially encouraging (Semir, 2022; Yohannes, 2021), but essentially rhetorical in nature, leading to inauguration of Abiy Ahmed as prime minister. The reform, and the political transition however is observed to have gradually introduced unprecedented mob violence that is exhibited across the country. The violence includes a series of lynching incidents which attracted attentions of popular Social Media conversation and interaction, especially Facebook, among prominent activists from Amhara, Oromo and Tigray origin.

In the post-2018 political transition, Ethiopia witnessed unprecedented mob violence including record cases of lynching in different parts of the country. The transition hosted a number of promising political landscapes (at least during its first year) with interestingly bold political measures (Semir, 2019; Semir, 2022; Verjee, 2021; Yonas and Fana, 2023) that span from the release of notable political prisoners, the lifting of media censorship, the signing of a peace deal with Eritrea, the promotion of gender equality in government, and encouraging rhetoric of national healing from decades damage from negative effects of ethnic nationalism are commendable. In the face of the short-lived changes ushered in by the political transition in the country, there were frequent appalling instances of mob violence targeting individuals and/or a few groups. Further, the political transition unfolds while there were growing cases of contestation on narrative politics particularly among social media activists affiliated with Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray nationalism (Semir, 2022; Tazeb, 2021, Verjee, 2021).

The political transition which is associated with power consolidation around Abiy Ahmed, at the cost of the Ethiopian state and society (Yonas and Fana, 2023), has introduced quite anomalous mob violence including horrendous lynching incidents across the country. Some of the violence involves one of the bloodiest wars in northern, and another devastating counter-insurgency operations in the western part of Ethiopia (The Economist, 2020, de Waal, 2021). Various mob violence such as lynching incidents, relevant literature indicates, which for different reasons has

drawn the attention of notable online activists particularly those using Facebook, were communicated on the platform to mean different things to different Facebook agents (Anduiza et al., 2014; Blaker, 2015, Muluken et al., 2023; Tazeb, 2017). Little is known about how important Facebook conversations, discussion, debate, dialogue, and/or interactions about the different moments lynching is ongoing, and understanding the defining elements in the conversation and interaction, and how it is related to the crucial political narrative in the contemporary Ethiopia.

Sharing episodes of mob violence on Facebook poses significant national political implication, ethical issues and raises questions about the moral agency of the online actors. In this regard, no notable prior research has been undertaken. Particularly, the horrific violent episodes have drawn notable social media (essentially Facebook) engagements among key activists of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray origin. How recognizable online actors respond to the practice of lynching witnessed in the country during the post-2018 political transition is not thoroughly investigated. Yet the online engagements were impactful on overall contemporary social, political, economic, and environmental realities in Ethiopia.

Some authors like Abbink (2011) and Tazeb (2017) suggestively indicates that there are very limited dimensions of violence knowledge documented in the country. Further, it is observed that the very few prior research largely lacks in-depth examination and consideration of multiple research phenomena to provide analytical information on framing and representation of different lynching moments across the country. As a result, framing and representation of different episodes of mob violence are obscure and controversial, with each activist responding from his/her own perspectives, perhaps contributing to complexity and fragility of peace and security, fledgling democracy, lack of good governance, and violent political narrative. Thus, systematization of patterns of the frame narratives are important in order to develop structured conceptualization of mob violence representation in online discourse, and it is applicable to enhance informed policy formulation and humanitarian intervention. Hence, this research is largely aims at contributing to lynching literature coverage which is very limited in the country, and as such exploration of how key online people (de-)rationalize and (de-)legitimize moments of mob violence is very useful.

1.3 Research objectives

1.3.1 General objective

The principal objective of the research is to understand and conceptualize background thinking of framing and representation of different moments of lynching by notable Social Media activists of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray origin.

1.3.2 Specific objectives

- a. To explore how key online activists of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray descent frame episodes of lynching incidents in Ethiopia.
- b. To analytically present the major terms of debate that engage the key online activists.
- c. To understand the dynamics of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray ethno-nationalism, politics of difference, and morality in the post-2018 political transition in Ethiopia.

1.4 Research questions

The key research questions:

- a. How do key online activists of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray descent frame episodes of lynching incidents in Ethiopia?
- b. What are the major terms of debate that engage the key online activists?
- c. What are the dynamics of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray ethno-nationalism, politics of difference, and morality in the post-2018 transition in Ethiopia?

1.5 Significance of the research

The research conducted has the potential to resonate with various audiences, and specifically has great significance in the academic sphere of violence literature pertaining to Ethiopia. The study, therefore, serves as a contribution to the knowledge community, with the potential to improve practices for peacebuilding and conflict transformation, and provide well-informed decision-making.

Given the current emergence of mob violence in Ethiopia, it is important to note that certain insights discussed in this research paper can serve as a supplementary resource for areas pertaining to governance and/or humanitarian intervention.

Additionally, the report has the ability to stimulate academic discourse and serve as a complement to future relevant research studies.

1.6 Scope and limitations of the research

This qualitative investigation is delimited to frame narratives of specific phenomena of lynching that were exhibited during the year 2018 at different research areas namely Addisalem (Gonja Kola), Alamata (town), and Shashamane, Ethiopia. Thus, the case study is thematically limited to interactions of ethno-nationalism, politics of difference, and moral agency of key online actors in order to analytically understand framing and representation of the various episodes of lynching events. The researcher's closer observation implies that these notable Social Media activists from the three ethnic group play significant role but that never intend to undermine such an important narrative contributions from other groups in the country during the post-2018 transition period.

1.7 Ethical considerations

A research practice is expected to aim at maintaining high ethical standards, and strictly observe manners of scientific processes and procedures during the whole research project (Merriam, 2002; Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2020; Creswell, 2018). Thus, this qualitative case study keenly observed important research ethics in every piece of undertaking the investigation. During data collection and (data translation in some cases), the researcher strived to remain as objective as possible, and avoided misrepresentation of the views or opinions of the research informant. Further, the researcher observed standard academic ethics and professionalism in this research process. All secondary data sources consulted are properly acknowledged, cited, and referenced.

1.8 Outline of the research

This thesis project follows the American Psychological Association (APA) academic writing format which is adopted by the School of Graduate Studies of Addis Ababa University. The research paper is organized into five chapters. The introduction chapter discusses the context of the research work, then presents the research problem, followed by the research objectives and

question respectively, proceeding to sections that carry the significance, the scope and limitations of the research, and finally before the section that highlights the outline of this paper, ethical dimensions of the research is discussed. The literature chapter presents relevant accounts of relevant theoretical and empirical literature reviewed. As such, it discusses significant knowledge framework documents that are relevant to the research problem, question, and goal. Then, the methodology chapter is devoted to explaining and justifying different research design choices (define the research design, states specific methods to be used, sampling techniques and procedures, techniques and tools of data collection, and techniques of data analysis), and the last section of the chapter discussed methodological limitations and challenges, and how the methodological limitations are managed. Chapter four, findings and discussions chapter presents detailed accounts of the data analysis findings, the discussion incorporates interpretations, explanations, and meaning-making. Finally, Chapter 5, provides conclusions and recommendations of the research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Broadly speaking, Social Media framing and representing mob violence in Ethiopia, for different reasons, is largely less covered, particularly when it comes to lynching (i.e. mob violence often targeting individuals) literature is essentially absent. This in turn is indicative of a documentation gap in the study of violence in the country. The discussion of this literature chapter, thus, selectively contextualised different research resources involving other dimensions of violence like ethnic-based violence, communal violence, gender-based violence, domestic violence, and armed violence in Ethiopia to give an analytical highlight to this research theme.

This literature review is systematically linked to the analytical understanding of the research themes identified as (1) framing moment of lynching, (2) interethnic dynamics (major terms of debates among the key Facebook actors), and (3) politics of difference and moral dimensions of rhetoric of reaction of the episodes of lynching. In this context, the review was further augmented with comparative experiences from other parts of the world on bases of relevance. Presenting reviewed literature into two broader sections, theoretical and empirical, the chapter explored existing research findings. It attempted to establish how the prior knowledge reviewed relates to the research aim. It described what is trending, discussed the major debates, and indicated gaps in terms of either knowledge, methodology, and/or context in reference to these research questions. As such, the literature review chapter is thematically structured.

The first section sets on by providing a theoretical accounts of key themes of the research including violence, ethno-nationalism, politics of difference, morality, and framing; and how each of these theories relates to Social Media. In its subsection it further debriefed major debates on concepts of violence studies. The empirical section discusses about Social Media activism, and the practice of framing of moments of lynching. Against the background of digital activism (particularly Facebook), relevant literatures of politics of difference, interethnic dynamics among Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray, and legal and moral accountability framing lynch moments. Before conclusion of the chapter, political communication and violence governance in Ethiopia is highlighted.

2.2 Theoretical Literature

2.2.1 Theory of violence

In general, many notable scholars including Galtung (1969) define violence as the use of physical force or harming someone or something. This is a complex phenomenon with many causes, effects, and consequences. This section introduces some of the most popular theories of violence, mentions their main proponents, and provides a brief explanation. One of the earliest explanations of violence dates back to the writings of the French philosopher Émile Durkheim. Durkheim believed that violence was an important and necessary part of life. He believed that there should be a certain level of violence in society in order to ensure unity and order (Durkheim & Swain, 2008).

Another theory of violence is cultural studies. The theory, developed by psychologist Albert Bandura, states that people learn bad behavior through observation and reinforcement. Bandura argued that aggressive behavior is acquired through social behavior and that people who observe bad behavior will repeat it (Bandura, 1978).

Evolutionary psychologists have also studied the role of violence in human development. According to this theory, violence is an adaptive process that develops in response to environmental problems. The theory proposes that humans evolved as a means to obtain resources, conserve land, and protect future generations (Buss, 2005).

In this context, violence against women has also been extensively studied. Feminist scholars believe that violence against women is the result of a patriarchal society in which women are oppressed and humiliated. They emphasize the need for a gender analysis of violence that takes into account the strengths of men and women (Brownmiller, 1975).

In summary, the theory and evolution of violence has been studied by different researchers in different disciplines. From Durkheim's theory of violence as a necessary part of society, to Bandura's theory of social science, Bath's approach to evolutionary psychology and feminist scholars, 'Analysis of violence against women, understanding and dealing with violence' has many theoretical and practical approaches. Each of these perspectives provides a useful perspective and helps us understand the complex nature of violence.

2.2.2 Theory of violence and Social Media

Many advocates in the literature have discussed the link between the theory of violence and social media. According to Bandura's social learning theory, individuals can learn aggressive behaviors through modeling and reinforcement (Bandura, 1978). This theory is supported by Anderson and Diehl's general aggression model, which suggests that exposure to hostile contexts makes a person more aggressive over time (Anderson & Diehl, 2000).

In addition, Fiske's social cognition shows that people's cognitive processes are affected by their environment, including the media (Fiske, Taylor, & Carrillo, 2013). The theory applies to social media, where exposure to offensive content can lead to aggressive behavior in people online and offline.

Proponents of the link between violence and the media argue that the media amplifies violence. In this case, Anderson et al. (2010) suggested that exposure to social media can increase discontent and reduce responses to negative behaviors. In addition, Levinsen & Wien, (2011) argue that social media provides a platform for the dissemination of negative thoughts and can lead to acts of violence.

However, some advocates argue that social media can be effective in reducing crime. For example, Huesmann and Taylor (2006) argued that exposure to different contexts can help increase people's ability to empathize with others, thereby reducing their tendency to behave differently.

In general, theories of violence and social media suggest that exposure to violent content can lead to violent behavior, while some advocates say social media can also provide opportunities for understanding and diversity. More research is needed to address the relationship between socialization and violent behavior.

2.2.3 Theory of ethno-nationalism

Ethno-nationalism is a political theory that emphasizes the importance of the nation or national identity in the formation of identity and behavior. It includes the belief that people of a particular race or culture have preferences, customs, and traditions that need to be protected and preserved.

Anthony D. Smith is a British sociologist who has written extensively on the subject. According to Smith (2013), ethnicity is the creation of a sense of belonging and connection among members of a society or nation based on a common history, language, religion and culture. He argues that race is a natural and legitimate human drive that underpins social cohesion and identity in an increasingly fragmented world.

Another important figure in ethno-nationalism studies is the American political scientist Donald L. Horowitz. Horowitz (1985), who has written extensively on the role of ethnic identities in politics, argues that ethno-nationalism occurs when a group is threatened by external forces such as other ethnic groups or the ruling state. He argues that democracy is not a negative phenomenon, but can be a way to motivate people to achieve political goals and build unity.

Another prominent race theorist is the American political scientist Walker Connor. According to Connor (1994), nationalism is a reaction to the erosion of culture and the rise of globalization. He sees nationalism as a form of resistance to the homogenizing forces of modernization, emphasizing the importance of protecting the individual nation and the nation. Connor also noted that nationalism can be a powerful force in conflict, as various groups compete for resources and influence.

These theorists had different views on the nature of ethno-nationalism, but all emphasized the importance of ethnic identities and/or nation in the formation of stable political culture. Their work demonstrates the complexity and diversity that can lead to good relationships or conflicts in different contexts.

2.2.4 Theory of ethno-nationalism and Social Media

The evolution of ethno-nationalism and social media is intertwined with the nation's elite using the power of the media to propagate their ideologies. One such example is the rise of the alternative right movement in the United States, which is closely associated with white nationalists and ethnic minorities. According to a study by Lamerichs et al. (2017), the alt-right movement is "significantly influenced by the media's ability to create a voice in people's minds." Prominent supporters of the alternative right like Richard Spencer and Milo Yiannopoulos have

used social media platforms like Twitter and YouTube to spread their message and gain followers.

Likewise, there are ethno-nationalist movements in Europe and the media plays an important role in their development. Supporters of these movements use social media to spread their message to a wider audience and mobilize supporters. For example, Germany's far-right party (AfD) has successfully used social media platforms like Facebook to reach voters and gain support.

The link between ethno-nationalism and the media has also been studied by scientists and analysts. According to a report from the group of these scholars, social media "provides a permissive environment for hate speech and the spread of hate speech." According to the report, social media platforms have become an important tool for right-wing groups to spread their knowledge and gain new members.

In summary, the evolution of society is associated with the rise of social media, which the main proponents of religion used to spread their message and gain followers. This has raised concerns about the social media's role in promoting hatred and bigotry.

2.2.5 Theory of politics of difference

The politics of difference is a body of thought that emphasizes the importance of recognizing and celebrating diversity rather than absorbing or eliminating differences. This approach recognizes that individuals and groups have unique identities, experiences and feelings that need to be valued, respected and protected.

One of the most influential political figures is the American political scientist Iris Marion Young. According to Young (1990), the politics of difference involves recognizing and challenging the ways in which dominant groups in society protect their values and norms against marginalized groups. While recognizing different and overlapping paths, she argues that more society can be reached by creating space for marginalized groups to express themselves and participate in decision-making processes.

Another important figure in the politics of difference studies is the American lawyer and academic Kimberlé Crenshaw. Crenshaw (1989) is perhaps best known for the concept of

intersectionality, which refers to the ways in which different forms of oppression (such as racism, sexism, and homophobia) interact and overlap to create specific experiences of marginalization. He said that the politics of difference must take these intersections into account and try to resolve them in order to achieve greater justice.

Another talented theorist of the politics of difference is the German-American philosopher Nancy Fraser. Fraser (2014) argues that the policy of difference should be accompanied by a policy of recognition that includes recognition and self-evaluation of marginalized groups. He argues that recognition is necessary for marginalized groups to participate in society, but must also be accompanied by the provision of power and resources to resolve conflicts.

In sum, these theorists have differing views on the nature of diversity politics, but all emphasize the importance of recognizing and leveraging diversity. Their work highlights the importance of addressing systemic inequalities and creating space for disadvantaged groups to participate in decision-making.

2.2.6 Theory of politics of difference and Social Media

According to some commentators, politics of difference and social media are intertwined. Political scientists like Francis Fukuyama, in his book *The Self: The Need for Power and the Right to Democracy*, argued that the media platforms led to the emergence of individual rights by providing a platform for individuals to express and inspire themselves. He argues that social media makes it easier for people to find like-minded people and create communities based on identity markers such as race, gender, and gender (Fukuyama, 2018).

Likewise, political scientist Taylor and Gutmann acknowledge the role of media platforms in the formation of individual rights in contemporary identity formations. He believes that social media makes it easier for people to express their unique characters and allows them to express their differences. According to Taylor, social media enables people to connect with others who share their identities and create a sense of belonging and community (Taylor & Gutmann, 1994).

In addition, Bennett said that social media contributed to the change of personality rights by making it easier for people to organize and share among themselves. He argues that social media allows people to create and participate in public discussions about issues affecting their

communities (Bennett, 2012). As such, the evolution of politics of differences and social media are intertwined because social media provides a platform for individuals and/or organizations to express and support what can lead to personal, political consequences with huge implications on the human environment.

2.2.7 Theory of morality

Common morality refers to the principles and values that guide the behavior and decisions of people in society. Developed by many prominent advocates, moral theory provides a unique perspective on how people should live their lives and interact with others. German philosopher Immanuel Kant was an influential moral teacher. According to Kant (1785), morality is based on the concept of duty, which he defines as the duty to act in accordance with morality. The moral law is universal and applies to all people, whatever their personal needs or preferences. Kant's theory emphasizes the importance of following principles rather than feelings or desires.

Another important theorist of morality is the English philosopher and economist John Stuart Mill. Mill (1863) believed that morality should be based on the principle of utility, which he defined as the principle of maximum happiness. This principle holds that actions are moral to the extent that they produce happiness or alleviate suffering. Mill's theory emphasizes the importance of thinking about the consequences of our actions to determine their morality.

Another longstanding and important moral theorist is the Greek philosopher Aristotle. Aristotle (350 BCE) believed that morality could be understood in terms of virtues, which he defined as habits of behavior that lead to a flourishing life. He believed that the goal of human life is *eudaimonia*, which is often translated as "happiness" or "prosperity." Aristotle's theory emphasizes the importance of cultivating such virtues as wisdom, courage, and compassion for living a good life.

These theorists have different views on morality, but they all have an understanding of how people should behave and interact with others. Kant's theory emphasized the importance of acting by law, Mill's theory emphasized the importance of thinking about the consequences of actions, and Aristotle's theory emphasized the importance of virtue. These views are still relevant to the social justice debate today.

2.2.8 Theory of morality and Social Media

As some supporters have said, moral theory and the evolution of social media are linked. Psychologist Jonathan Hayter, in his book *The Righteous Mind: Why Great People Come From Politics and Religion*, says that social media has changed the way we think about and discuss justice. He argues that social media creates echo chambers, in which people only express ideas that are compatible with their current beliefs, hindering their ability to engage in dialogue and express themselves (Haidt, 2012).

Likewise, political scientist Kwame Anthony Appiah said that social media has changed the way people form and express their moral values. He believes that social media allows people to connect with others through the value of honesty, creating communities based on moral values. Appiah argues that social media allows people to expand their understanding of morality as they encounter new ideas and ideas (Appiah, 2018).

Moreover, philosopher Rebecca Newberg Goldstein argues that social media has developed a new kind of ethic based on online communities. He argues that social media creates a world and contains a framework for ethical discussion, enabling people to interact with different groups and explore different ethical issues (Goldstein, 2020).

In conclusion, the evolution of justice theory and social media are interrelated because social media changes the way people think and discuss issues of justice, fosters and teaches ethical behavior, and participates in ethical debates.

2.2.9 Framing theory

Framing theory is widely discussed by leading academics in communications and politics. According to Entman (1993), framing means "the process by which communication selects and emphasizes certain aspects of reality in order to make it more effective in communication" (p. 52). This means that framing includes the decision to choose words, images, and other rhetorical tools to help the audience perceive the problem or topic.

Another influential researcher in framing theory is Gamson (1992), who focused on the role of collective action in social formation and political empowerment. He argues that frames provide a

way for people to understand complex social issues and provide a sense of collective identity and purpose.

Recent research in framing theory explores the role of the media in shaping public opinion and political discourse. Maxwell and Donald (1972) conducted a study showing that advertising methods can influence the importance of public issues. Iyengar (1994) expanded this theory further by emphasizing the role of the media in shaping beliefs and attitudes.

In summary, framing theory has been widely discussed by academics in communication and politics. It involves making selective and critical decisions about certain aspects of reality to enhance the viewer's perception and understanding.

2.2.10 Framing theory and Social Media

The dynamics of framing theory and Social Media are widely discussed by a number of academics in communication studies and other related subjects. Entman (1993) considered selecting certain types of information and emphasizing it over others in order to describe a problem, problem, or solution in a particular way. Gamson and Modigliani (1989) argue that frameworks are not fixed concepts, but evolve over time and are influenced by the media, organizations, and individuals. As the popularity of social media platforms continues to grow, the role of the media in shaping public opinion has become more important than ever.

Groshek and Al-Rawi (2023) talked about the influence of the media in forming the basis of political discourse, especially in relation to the 2012 US presidential campaign. They claim that politicians and their campaigns use social media to position themselves to appeal to specific constituencies. They also believe that social media platforms like Twitter are becoming an important place for public discussion about current events and issues.

Kahneman and Tversky's (1984) prospect theory is often used in conjunction with framing theory to explain how people make decisions based on the information presented. As more people consume news and information through social media, knowledge generation becomes more important. As Kahneman (2011) argues, the way we frame problems can greatly influence the decisions we make, and the media can reinforce these frames.

In conclusion, researchers have validated the power of Social Media framing in creating thought and perception shaping the imagination of the audiences. As people increasingly turn to especially using social media platforms as their primary source of news and information, the process of analyzing information and the consequences of the decision-making process become important.

2.3 Empirical literature

2.3.1 Concept of violence

A number of authors agree on a commonly used definition of violence ¹ as an act of physical force (intended and/or unintended) resulting in damage or harm. In this sense, the impairment exacted could be physical and/or psychological, and it is related to universal human behaviour. Violence can take various explanations. It can be approached from how it is planned, nature, motivation, and agency of the actor. As such, violence can be political, economic, social, environmental, physical, or psychological (Galtung, 1967). Without regard to specific details, violence is undesirably part of human experience as a result of over difference of interest, commonly involving force or power resulting to damage (Galtung, 1967; Abbink, 2002; Farmer, 2003). According to Abbink (2002), violence is unavoidable part of human existence; it is a constituting element of human society. Informed by findings of sampled case studies, the scholars suggested interpretation of violence based on its context of occurrence – i.e. it is not simply universal, but it is a progressively contingent and context-dependent phenomenon shaped and reshaped by power relations (Ibid.). In order to give readers an introduction into ongoing dimensions of violence conception and help easy read on this investigation, below are highlights on selected areas of points of departure in violence research.

2.3.2 Highlights on focus areas of violence studies

Violence study, deep and complex as it might sound, is an interesting topic with multiple relevance. In the interest of providing a wider context to this research, in the following

¹ “An act of physical force that causes or intended to cause harm”. Jacquin, K. M. (2023, March 30). Violence. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/violence>

paragraphs the review highlighted five important dimensions on the notion of violence and its contribution on the ongoing scholarly debate:

i. Structural violence vs direct violence

Structural vs direct violence are one of the commonly debated conceptions of violence. One principal author is Johan Vincent Galtung, a Norwegian Sociologist and the founder of the discipline of Peace Studies who introduced the concept of structural violence in the early 1960s. Galtung's conception of violence is anything below the potential of individual or groups' condition of marginalisation, deprivation, or disadvantage due to socially constructed and institutionalised structure in the form of race, ethnicity, gender, or economic class. Galtung uses direct violence to show both the physical and psychological aspects of aggression against individuals and groups. Thus, he presented structure, culture and direct as crucial interacting forces behind an explanation of violence. More recently, another important figure is an American medical anthropologist and physician, Paul Farmer, who argued that structural violence is a public health issue, particularly in the context of global health and healthcare systems. In his book *Pathologies of Power (2003)* Paul Farmer, a pioneer of global health, drawing on his first-hand experience of the health system of the global south, strongly advanced addressing structural violence² is an important element of curing health problems of the poor people. He argued structural violence can lead to disparities in health and the development of conditions that put individuals at health risk.

ii. Micro-violence vs macro-violence

Another important violence discussion is concerned about its scale and level. In her book *On Violence (1970)*, Hannah Arendt, cogently discussed the origins of violence at the societal level. Another promoter is Susan Brownmiller, who sightsaw the prevalence of gender-based violence in her book *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape (1975)*. More recently, American Anthropologist Nancy Scheper-Hughes in her book *Death without Weeping: The violence of Everyday Life in Brazil* (cited in Bossen, 1994), has argued that structural and cultural violence

² "Structural Violence" - a phrase Farmer adopted to describe atrocities impoverished people endure that many people simply regard as "the way things are." [Top 10 Books Written by Dr. Paul Farmer | Partners In Health \(pih.org\)](#)

contribute to the global trade in human organs. Her work portrayed the micro and macro level of violence, i.e., violence can happen at local (individual or cultural), national, or global level.

iii. *Cultural violence*

In the cultural violence paradigm, norms and values are squarely at the centre of the debate. This perspective of violence has been viewed by many authors, including Erich Fromm, who examined the ways in which cultural norms and values can lead to destructive behaviour in his book *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (1974). In this seminal work, Fromm contends to explain the driving conditions behind mankind to destruction and violence. From his multidisciplinary research that included fascinating analyses of the personalities of Stalin, Hitler and Himmler, Fromm argued how failure to use human faculties of love and reason leads to the development of the opposite. Another scholar, James Gilligan, has argued that violent behaviour is a learned response to social injustice in his work titled *Violence: Reflections on a National Epidemic* (1996). More recently, a South African Psychologist Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela in her acclaimed book *A Human Being Died That Night* (2003), has explored the psychological effects of cultural violence³, a concept that Galtung (1967) interestingly explored, particularly in the context of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

iv. *Justifiable violence*

This debate assumes a rational motive that violence cannot be ruled out. In his book *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Frantz Fanon interestingly discussed topics around the relations between emotional and psychological dimensions of violence related to colonial experiences. Frantz Fanon, an Algerian revolutionary, philosopher, and pan-African thinker whose work was influential in post-colonial studies of Africa, advanced the act of violence as an important element of anti-colonial movement. In an aspiration to mitigate what he claimed was the colonialist action towards “systematic eraser of the black culture”, Fanon justifies violence because, he argued, decolonization continuously involves an act of violence. On a similar note, Black Nationalist Malcolm X, supplemented that violence is a necessary response to

³ [What Can America Learn From South Africa About National Healing? - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#) and [Looking for Hope in an Apartheid Monster's Eyes - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#) for further detailed accounts of how the psychological dynamics in the development and process of healing the victims of violence.

institutionalised racism in the United States (US). More recently, an American feminist philosopher Judith Butler has explored the limits of nonviolent resistance in her book *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (2009). Butler, in this provocative work, challenged the process and means the state sanctions to frame and justify violence against entities it casted as existential threat.

Standing on legal and/or moral ground, this school of thought justifies an act of violence in certain defined circumstances perpetuated against a designated “enemy”. But for pacifist violence is never legitimate and thus, the debate is far from settlement.

v. *Epistemic violence*

Epistemological violence, relatively an emerging perspective, has been another matter of intense debate among scholars, with varying views on its meaning and significance on the study of violence. Applying deconstructionist method, Gayatri C. Spivak, in her essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988), argued that epistemological violence is a form of systematic domination that occurs through the imposition of Eurocentric values onto non-Western cultures. She contends that this imposition suppresses the knowledge and voices of the subaltern, resulting in the gradual erasure of their existence as valid sources of knowledge. More recently, Brunner (2021), following an interdisciplinary conception of epistemic violence he has brought the discussion into the scrutiny of international relations.

On another side, authors like Collins (2000) and Harding (1998), have challenged this view, arguing that epistemological violence is not solely a product of Western universalism. Instead, western universalism is presented as a pervasive and systemic issue in all knowledge production and that it is related to circumstances in which certain entities are excluded, alternatives are unaccounted for, or participation is delegitimized in the knowledge-making process. Tuhiwai (1999), another important scholar, took a more nuanced approach on the discussion, significantly pointing out the ways in which epistemological violence intersects with other forms of oppression, such as racism, and sexual discrimination. They argue that this intersectionality renders some voices and knowledge systems more vulnerable to epistemological violence than others. On a similar note, Galtung’s way of violence conception, epistemic violence could count

as a form of cultural violence as some modes of knowing and some forms of knowledge are prioritised over others.

According to a recent study, McGregor (2021) examined the relationship between epistemological violence and environmental harm, arguing that the failure to recognize indigenous knowledge systems and their relationship to the environment is a form of epistemological violence. In similar note, Messay Kebede, in his provocative book *Radicalism and Cultural Dislocation in Ethiopia 1960 – 1974* (2008), contends how the spirited upheavals of the 1960s Ethiopian students and elites against the imperial regime adopting the Marxist-Leninist ideology consequently disconnected from the local worldview. Messay charges harsh epistemic dislocation as a major underpinning factor to the sociopolitical and cultural elements that contributed to the radicalization of the students and the political elites in Ethiopia. More recently, with depth Yirga (2017) further writes on epistemic violence in Ethiopia what he termed as “Native Colonialism”. He in his insightful book titled *Native colonialism: Education and the economy of violence against traditions in Ethiopia* elaborates how traditional knowledge in Ethiopia, a country that he argues is not significantly colonized, has arguably westernized its indigenous knowledge practices and institutions. In this sense, he asserts the colonial education system, and legal system essentially consumed the local knowledge. While bringing important dimensions of thinking into colonialism from within, Yirga sheds light on the concept of epistemic violence. Though these debates are still ongoing, there is significant understanding and relative consensus among scholars who are researching on violence that an equitable knowledge production system promotes social justice. For instance, Tassone et al. (2018) advocates re-imagination of school curriculum is important.

2.3.3 Analytical conception of direct violence

Direct violence is relatively a common concept that has been widely studied by notable scholars in various disciplines. According to Galtung (1969), direct violence involves physical harm, injury or death inflicted upon individuals by other individuals or groups. Direct violence is often associated with conflict or war and is characterised by the use of force or coercion (Galtung, 1967). In his work *Violence, Peace, and Peace Research* (1969), Galtung also argues that direct violence is not limited to physical harm but can also be psychological. He suggests that psychological violence involves threats, intimidation, and other forms of emotional harm, while

structural violence refers to systematic and institutionalised forms of oppression and discrimination (Galtung, 1967). Johan Galtung's conception of direct violence includes lynching, a form of mob violence where perpetrators are usually group of people targets an individual or certain group victim.

On a similar note, scholars like Farmer (2004) define direct violence as “the intentional use of force to harm or injure someone” (p. 13). Farmer argues that direct violence is often used by those in possession of power in order to maintain their dominance and control over marginalised groups. However, Farmer also notes that direct violence can be used as a means of resistance and liberation by those who are oppressed (Farmer, 2004). There are a number of overlapping themes with the notion of direct violence and as such, it is still a debatable concept.

On another account, authors like Hannah Arendt's classic work *On Violence* (1970) differentially shades light on the area of political violence research. Quite famously, she distinguished an important notion between power and violence, and argued that violence must be excluded from the political space. In this regard, she elaborately explains that violence primarily forces compliance through physical coercion. Furthermore, she strongly supports her perspective by asserting that violence is most of the time important in the service of “power” and as such it can never be the basis of governance. Instead, Arendt argues that power is the ability of a social entity to act synchronously and that it empowers individuals to work together; it is therefore, she asserts that it is the essence and ultimate aim of all governance activities.

Human Rights Watch's 2019 World Report (2019) stated that Ethiopia has a long history of political violence and human rights abuses, including direct violence such as torture, extrajudicial executions and forced coercion missing. According to this report, the physical violence is often perpetrated by government security forces, and the circumstance is used as a means to control dissent forces. Across the country, there are a number of non-state actors perpetuating various mob violence reportedly for different reasons.

A similar argument is made by Abbink (2011), who highlights the role of ethnicity in perpetuating violence and conflict in Ethiopia. Abbink notes that direct violence in Ethiopia is often used in inter-ethnic conflicts, which are fueled by historical grievances and competition

over resources. He argues that the government's policies favouring certain ethnic groups over others have contributed to this violence.

In another note, there are a number of research works on sexual and gender-based violence in Ethiopia adding further experience on direct violence. For instance, Beyene et al. (2020) paper discussion focuses on the issue of gender-based violence bringing important insights into the debate of direct violence as taking and being reinforced by a form of social values. Women in Ethiopia, based on this survey conducted, experience direct violence including sexual abuse and culturally induced female genital mutilation tradition. The scholars argue that government efforts to tackle these forms of violence are insufficient and that sociocultural norms continue to contribute to their prevalence. The literature review indicates a limited coverage of documentation on mob violence and particularly analytical information regarding rhetoric reactions towards lynching incidents.

2.3.4 Social Media activism and mob violence

Social media⁴ is a web-based communication infrastructure used for sharing different forms of information (personal and/or institutional), ideas, messages, and other visual or non-visual contents. According to Chong & Druckman, (2007) advancements in digital communication technologies have offered institutions, especially individuals, one of the most cost-effective communication tools to reach a wide range of online communities. Social media literature indicates that the number of social media users across the globe is multiplying. As such, social media activists progressively embraced Facebook infrastructure to reach out to their target groups. According to Chaffey (2023), Global Social Media Statistics Research Summary (2023), social media users stand at 59% of world population as of January 2023; Facebook, a top ranking social media platform alone account 2.95 billion users (Statista, 2023), a record high social media networking infrastructure attracting massive subscriber, thus can influence and engage such a large digital audience. Specifically, the scholars indicate, it is being utilised in communicating violence. Comparative literature reviewed research has found implicative evidence of how these platforms are used to purposely orient, inform, or misinform a particular information (Chong &

⁴ “Communications on the [Internet](#) through which users share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content”. For further information, please see, Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopedia (2023, April 11). Social media. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/social-media>

Druckman, 2007). As such, the platform is increasingly creating an infrastructure for online activism, which might fuel destructive violence on the ground.

Reviewed literature indicates, social media has played a significant role in shaping and reshaping social movements and revolutionising digital activism around the world. Facebook is not only a social media platform servicing diverse perspectives and sharing news and information about diverse social, political, economic, and religious issues, but it enables individuals and/or institutions to form communities and a quick mobility platform (Muluken et al., 2023). On the other hand, Slot and Oprea (2021) stress that Facebook user surveys indicated significant disinterest to use the platform linked to certain specific issues around the infrastructure, time factors, privacy issues, and social influence. In this context, social media activism has also been linked to various violence and aggressive behaviour, with some scholars alarming about the dangers of online activism. This literature review summarises selected findings in this area and provides critical insights to better understand the complex dynamics of social media and mob violence.

Studies show that social media activism has been criticised for promoting a culture of outrage and aggression, leading to the spread of hate speech, creating an environment in which violence and intimidation are normalised, and enabling populist discourse (Muluken et al., 2023). Some social media users abuse the platform's anonymity to voice their opinions without fear of retribution which can indicate lack of courtesy and respect within the industry. This has been seen in some online contexts where misogynistic, xenophobic, and racist messages are frequently posted (Papacharissi, 2016). Furthermore, violent rhetoric can fuel polarisation and further divide communities, as well as instigate physical violence (Castells, 2015). Closer observation shows that some social media activists, on a similar note, have been criticised for its lack of accountability and its tendency to exaggerate and misrepresent events. For instance, the Human Rights Watch report on Pakistan (2019), reported false information circulating on social media regarding the alleged abduction and forced conversion of Hindu girls in Pakistan led to violence against the Hindu minority community. Misinformation can inflame tensions and contribute to both online and offline violence.

Another observation is the link between incitement during violent protest and civil unrest with social media activism. The role of social media in the Arab Spring and other mass protests

demonstrates its power to mobilise people towards a common cause (Tufekci & Wilson, 2012). However, social media has also been criticised for contributing to the escalation of violence during protests and riots (Dencik & Leistert, 2015). The use of social media to coordinate protest attacks on police officers, businesses, and public spaces has become a major concern for law enforcement agencies worldwide (Dencik & Leistert, 2015). These scholars following a critical approach method investigated the analytical relationship between social media activism and protest. Overall, relevant literature reviewed suggests that social media activism has complex relationships with (mob) violence. Much as the social media platforms can be applied for social change, it can also be a powerful tool leading to the spread of extremism, hate speech, disinformation, misinformation, and violent behaviour among its audiences. It is important to cultivate ethical and responsible forms of social media activism that promote constructive dialogue and engagement, rather than an exaggerated and misleading representation of events that fuel anger and aggression.

2.3.5 Framing moments of lynching in Ethiopia by online activists

Social media platforms, such as Facebook, have become important infrastructures and spaces for activism, providing opportunities for people to bring attention to various public issues and mobilise collective action (Gerbaudo, 2012). More recently, Facebook activism has significantly surged in various parts of the world, especially in response to mob attack like lynching incident. According to Moore (2017), lynching is an extrajudicial killings that happens outside the purview of legal institutions and are motivated by prejudice, revenge, or social tensions. Facebook activists have used various strategies to frame episodes of lynching, including narrative construction, mobilization of collective action, and emotional appeals (Harlow et al., 2020; Joyce, 2010). In this paper, the notion of the term framing and rhetoric of reaction are used to refer to a similar idea, and the researcher interchangeably used them. Framing is the process by which the source develops and provides 'interpretation plans' (Goffman, 1974, p. 21) for public discourse. Entman (1993) defines framing as selection and emphasis on certain aspects of an issue "in a manner that promotes a particular problem definition, causal explanation, and ethical judgement and / or recommended treatment" (p. 52). It is interesting reading dimensions that arguably could be part of conceptualization on how Facebook activist frame episodes of mob violence including lynch in Ethiopia. As such, this chapter, in the following subsections,

discussed the politics of difference and interethnic dynamics (Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray political discourse), legality and moral accountability, and the 2018 political transition context to explore how these factors unfold in Facebook activist rhetoric reaction to various moments of lynch in the country.

Reviewed literature indicates that one of the dimensions of Facebook activist framing episodes of lynching is narrative construction. Through the use of storytelling, Facebook activists create and disseminate stories about the victims, the perpetrators, and the underlying issues that led to the lynching (Mason, 2021; Clark, 2011; De Jong, 2015; Khamis and Vaughn, 2012). These narratives often challenge dominant discourses that portray the victims as deserving of punishment or the perpetrators as justified in their actions. For instance, in India, Facebook activists framed lynching incidents as a result of the spread of fake news and hate speech on social media, thus highlighting the role of technology in facilitating violence (Gowen, 2018). Similarly, in the United States, Facebook activists narrativized victims of lynching as innocent people who were targeted because of their race or ethnicity, thus exposing the systemic racism that underlies such incidents (Anduiza, Cristancho, & Sabucedo, 2014). Matamoros-Fernández and Farkas (2021) study critical prior online race and racism investigation lacking the dynamics of geography and diversity to unpack racism on social media.

In addition to narrative construction, Facebook activists also mobilise collective action by leveraging the platform's features such as groups, pages, and events (Joyce, 2010). Thus, in such circumstances online activists can form and mobilise direct action of interests. For instance, in Kenya, a Facebook page called "Stop Mob Justice Kenya" was created to mobilize people against lynching incidents by sharing information about the incidents, providing updates on the legal process, and organizing peaceful demonstrations (Joyce, 2010). Similarly, in Brazil, Facebook activists led a campaign against lynching incidents by creating an online petition that gathered over a million signatures, leading to a legislative proposal on enforcement of the law on lynching (Mason, 2021; Clark, 2011).

Finally, emotional appeals are another key aspect of framing episodes of lynching on Facebook. By using emotive language, images, and videos, Facebook activists evoke strong emotional responses from their audiences, such as anger, outrage, and empathy (Harlow et al., 2020). In an effort of gaining belonging to the community, these emotional appeals are often meant to get the

people to take action, such as signing a petition, joining a protest, and other collective action that signals group solidarity. In this regard, for instance, in India, several online activists responsibly publicised brutality of victims and emotions of bereaved families using Facebook page (Gowen, 2018). These emotional appeals helped to create a sense of urgency and mobilise people to demand justice and accountability.

Facebook page posts, in Ethiopia context, as many scholars agree, is an important platform to publically engage multidimensional social, political, economic, and environmental issues. Depending on a number of factors and positionalities, the Facebook platform provides an important online space where individuals and/or institutions undertake such issues of diverse interest and purpose. Thus, Facebook activism allows individuals to share their thoughts and ideas with a broader audience and connect with like-minded people who have similar social and political views (Tazeb, 2017, Muluken et al., 2023). Facebook activism has been used to draw attention to various issues that are significant to the public or to the state, for instance, corruption, human rights violations, socioeconomic interests, violence, or ethnic tensions.

The concept of Facebook activist framing refers to the way information is presented to influence people's perceptions and attitudes about an issue. Framing is a powerful tool that can be used to shape social and political opinions (Breuer, Landman, & Farquhar, 2015; Tazeb, 2017). In the case of the episodes of lynching in Ethiopia, Facebook activists have used framing to raise awareness and mobilize people. Facebook activists have framed the episodes of lynching as an act of violence against a particular ethnic group. The activists have used images and videos to document the violence and shared them on Facebook. They have also used language that highlights the ethnic aspect of the violence (Muluken, Mulu, & Biset, 2023; Tazeb, 2017). The framing of the episodes of mob violence, as Tazeb (2017) indicates, is essential in gaining support for the victims and condemnation of the perpetrators. On several occasions, similar study shows Facebook activists have taken it upon themselves to frame the incidents in a way that highlights the ethnic aspect of the violence.

Facebook activism has become a significant mechanism for broader social change advocacy in Ethiopia. By framing the incidents as an act of violence against a particular individual or ethnic group, the Facebook activists hope to pressure for desired outcome depending on the circumstance and interest of the source. They also used to frame the incident to seek collective

action and appeal to their audience. Tazeb (2017) implied that the power of framing highlights how information is presented, and the language used can influence people's perceptions and attitudes towards an issue. However, there are also challenges and limitations to Facebook activist framing, such as the potential for fake news, disinformation, misinformation, the risks of censorship and surveillance, lack of moderation, and subjectivity to promoting aggressive behaviour. Future research should continue to explore the complex dynamics of Facebook activism and (desirable) social change.

2.3.6 Politics of difference, interethnic dynamics in Ethiopia

The politics of difference and intersectionality of identity remains a widely debated topic in academia. Recent research highlights some of the key debates surrounding this concept. The conception and attitudes towards power and power relationship inform one of the major debates about politics of difference. Scholars specialising in identity politics explain power relations in a society from social identity perspectives, such as ethnic groups, religion, race, sexuality, or other social groupings (Mamdani, 1996; Markakis, 2011). They argue that presumably disadvantaged groups face discrimination, marginalisation, and/or disenfranchisement because of their social identities, and that recognition of these identities is necessary to achieve social justice and equality (Lilla, 2018). On the other hand, those who reject identity politics as an important element of social organisation argue that social identity-based political mobilisation capitalises on differences instead of holistic approach to any public issues. They argue that a focus on social identity can distract from broader issues of economic inequality or systemic injustice (Haidt, 2018), and largely ignores intersectionality of identities.

Another major debate concerns the role of the state in solving issues related to claimed social identity. Some argue that the state has a responsibility to repair historical and ongoing damage based on race, gender, ethnic group, and other social identities. They argue that policies and programs that promote diversity and inclusion or provide affirmative action are necessary to create a more just and equitable society (Darity, Mullen, & Slaughter, 2022). Critics, on the other hand, contend the state's rule of engagement is based on social groupings instead of exercising neutrality and treat individuals as the defining element in society. They argue that identity-based politics can lead to resentment and division among different groups (Haidt, 2018). Yet others define politics of identity from the accommodative capacity of social structure. For instance, Iris

Marion Young conceptualising the notion of difference, in her book, *Inclusion and Democracy* (2002), argues that the normative legitimacy of democratic decisions is based on the extent to which those affected by those decisions are included or have the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process. Young, beyond the other ends of inclusion and exclusion, she critically upscale the ideals of difference included in both theory and practice of democracy. Further, Young (2008), discussed politics of difference from cultural and positionality perspectives. All in all, she provided an argument towards instrumentation of institutional framework for the explanation of the politics of difference.

Further, the intersection of different political ideologies with the politics of difference continues to be a subject of debate. Other scholars argue that liberalism, which emphasises individual rights and freedoms, is insufficient to address inequality based on social identity, still others refute that liberalism alone by itself can not address the matter. Socialism, which emphasises economic inequality, does not address other forms of social marginalisation (Meley, 2021). Others argue that the intersectionality of different social identities requires a new kind of politics that integrates both liberalism and socialism to address specific forms of oppression that weak groups go through (Collins et al., 2019).

Mukherjee (2020) analysed how ethnic identity based predominant nationalism plays out in the dynamics of social media (Facebook and WhatsApp) and mob attacks in contemporary India. He explained Hindu nationalism which he branded as Hindutva chauvinists self-styled as gau-rakshaks (cow protectors) excuse themselves to mob attack minorities in the name of protecting gau-taskars (cow smugglers). Further, he pointed out how such practice is being reinforced as the participants seek to gain recognition from their community. He explained, the majoritarian Hindutva boys recording and sharing the violence materials as an act of gaining stature status within their community. In this case, Mukherjee admits, the utility of Facebook and WhatsApp is justifiable because of its affordance (ready and available) and the agents can easily make a performative ritual i.e., routine micro-actions and societal practices.

The debate is relevant in Ethiopian context. Ethno-nationalism has been in exercise engaging with multiple forms of hotly contested nationalisms, including what is termed as “imperialist-imposed unitary nationalism”, “multinational nationalism”, and “territorial nationalism” leading partly informing ethno-linguistic form of federal arrangement (Leenco, 1999; Markakis, 2011;

Semir, 2019; Záhořík & Godesso, 2022). For various reasons, the contestation and incompatibility among those forms of nationalism is far from over and it continues to translate into various social, economic, political and environmental interactions in the country (Merera, 2004; Semir, 2019; Messay, 2008). In the following sections the concept of politics of difference and the major points of departure to particular narratives from Oromo, Amhara, and Tigray are discussed.

Notably since the imperial regime, the beginning of the 19th century, an interethnic dynamic in Ethiopia is largely documented. Since then, it has been evolving taking various shapes and contents with significant implication on political, social, economic, and environmental realities of the country. As controversial as it could be imagined, with relatively different intensity, intent, and practice, identity often taking ethnic, cultural, or religious form arguably informs the main body of political history of Ethiopia (Merera, 2004; Semir, 2019; Leenco, 2004). Before 1991, less substantively or tacitly and after 1995, institutionally and by design, the interethnic dynamic is ethnic oriented. There has been a long-standing debate among the various nationalisms present in Ethiopia, including Oromo, Tigray, and Amhara. Additionally, Fana and Yonas (2023) argues that “ethno-nationalism will dissipate from the political scene but will remain an important organising force including for violent conflicts” (p. 8) in the country. While each of these narratives has distinct characteristics and agendas, there are remarkable terms of debate that are commonly discussed by prominent scholars.

There are fundamental points of departure on the politics of difference and the defining elements of the interethnic dynamics among Oromo nationalism, Amhara nationalism, and Tigray nationalism. The discussion principally rests around five major interconnected issues – identity, framework of governance, resource (control, distribution and management), historiography, and language (Bahru, 2001; Assefa, 1988; Leenco, 2004, Messay, 2008, Semir, 2019; Clapham, 2009; Markakis, 2011; Leenco, 1999; Messay, 2008). The relevant reading shows these issues largely appear as both the means and the end with the interaction of the competing narratives.

Analytically, the politics of difference and interethnic dynamic in Ethiopia, some scholars defend, is arguably framed as national operation thesis (Merera, 2004; Leenco, 1999), and colonial thesis (Asafa, 2010). Another proposal, comes from EPRDF key figure Bereket Simon who insists the contemporary political crisis in Ethiopia is not a question of nationality. In this context, he further

describes the contradictions as emerging from economic growth leading to the rise of rent-seeking classes that exploit identity politics to their own advantage (Bereket, 2010)⁵. Closer observation, ethnicity as an important marker of identity politics continues to unfold in the face of Facebook activism responding to different moments of mob violence in Ethiopia.

The politics of difference plays a significant role in the historical and contemporary context of Ethiopia. The country is home to diverse ethnic and linguistic groups, which have shaped its political landscape (Clapham, 2004; Schlee, 2003; Lidetu, 2012; Bahru, 2001; Leenco 1999; Messay, 2008). As Mamdani (1996) argues, ethnicity can be seen as a product of colonialism, rather than an inherent cultural phenomenon, and the politics of difference in Africa can be traced back to its colonial history. The politics of difference in Ethiopia is progressively emerging complex and controversial concepts with many different views and arguments. Recent research highlights ongoing debates about identity and power relation, the role of the state in managing social inequalities, and the compatibility of political ideologies with different sociopolitical, cultural, economic and historical contexts. Yet little is known how the politics of difference continue to unfold during this heightened age of social media and social activists being essentially consumed by the digital communication infrastructure, particularly Facebook. Thus, for particular interest of this study, it is interesting to sightsee principally considering what usually appears significant political discourse – Oromo nationalism, Amhara nationalism, and Tigray nationalism that is ongoing in Ethiopia.

2.3.6.1 Amhara ethno-nationalism

From reviewed literature there is near complete consensus that Amhara nationalism is progressively emerging in recent years, but remains decidedly controversial (Yilkal, 2021, Tezera, 2021; Yared, 2022). Philosophically standing on essentialist and orientalist ground, Tezera (2021) applying systematic document analysis, discussed the recalibration of Amhara nationalism in recent years. He essentially links the discussion to the inception of the National Movement of Amhara (NaMA), a nationalist political party claiming to advocate for the Amhara people. He challenged the national operation thesis, a position principally occupied by Oromo and Tigray ethno-nationalist groups, through bringing the debate of Amhara ethno-nationalism

⁵ The publication year is originally dated according to the Ethiopian calendar but here it is converted to the Gregorian year.

into the realm of contemporary politics in Ethiopia. He argued Amhara ethno-nationalism is emerging as a “counter discourse” (p. 298). Further, he characterised the Amhara nationalism as under construction of a reverse-discourse process reclaiming legitimacy and recognition.

In addition, Yilkal (2021) asks if Amhara ethno-nationalism is following suit of a primordial sense of ethnic identity, or it is to complement Ethiopian national identity. His qualitative analysis shows Amhara’s version of identity politics does not want to compromise on cohesion of Ethiopia national identity which he claims as largely promotes the building of “super ethnic identity”. As such, Yilkal (2021) reports that Amhara ethno-nationalism distanced itself from Marxist-oriented discourse in favour of associating with moderate liberalism. Heavy reliance, particularly, on social media, relatively Amhara nationalism more digitised nationalism. Amhara Facebook activists utilised the technological communication infrastructure to spread messages, mobilisation, protest, and other desired communication frames to have the audience easily access it.

On the other side, some scholars argue that the Ethiopian state has historically been dominated by Amhara and Tigray elites, leading to the marginalisation and exclusion of other ethnic groups (Leenco, 1999; Markakis, 2011; Bahru, 2001; Clapham, 2004). However, the birth of Amhara nationalism is interestingly introducing reconceptualization of Amhara identity, unusually associating it with an imagination of nationhood. Amhara nationalists assert that their movement is to protect and develop the Amhara nation in what is now the Amhara region and of the Amhara people wherever it is found (Yilkal, 2021; Tezera, 2021; Yared, 2022). The origins of Amhara nationalism are indeed controversial. For its supporters, the roots of Amhara nationalism lie in the confluence of political, economic, and sociocultural factors: feelings of alienation, "statelessness", lack of security, i.e., a threat to Amhara's (physical and cultural) existence and extreme poverty and economic marginalisation (Yilkal, 2021). The framing and reframing of Amhara nationalism is ongoing still interestingly during this fascinating social media communication technologies across the globe, particularly Facebook. As such, Amhara nationalism is imagined as a form of responding to threats the Amhara as a people are purported to face.

2.3.6.2 Oromo ethno-nationalism

Contending ethnic-nationalisms, including Oromo ethno-nationalism and Tigray ethno-nationalism, have persisted and dominated the Ethiopian political scene since the late 1960s. The underpinning mobilisation frame of these ethno-nationalist movements principally generated hostility towards what is termed as Amhara's conception of a political project in Ethiopia. Broadly speaking, the nationalist movements obdurately claim that their national territories had been systematically annexed, sometimes colonised, history and culture facing an official policy bias, and economically marginalised (Clapham, 2004; Leenco, 1999; Markakis, 2011; Bahru, 2001) by the Amhara dominated Ethiopian Empire. As such, the national operation and/or colonial thesis scholars present Ethiopia as an Amhara dominant ethnic patchwork. For instance, Assafa Jalata in his book *Oromo and Ethiopia: State Formation and Ethnonational Conflict 1868-2004* (2005), discusses Oromo nationalism as quest for self-determination and democracy against what he claimed as 'Ethiopian State coloniser' and that reinforce the racist capitalist world system.

Oromo nationalism has essentially taken shape with the birth of the Macha Tulama Association (MTA), further politico-military discourse introduced with the coming of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) in 1973, as an Oromo-centric political project it evolved for over half a century in Ethiopia (Asafa, 2010; Leenco, 1999; Clapham, 2004; Markakis, 2011). Largely, proponents of Oromo nationalism characterize Oromo as a nation and submit the OLF as progenitor of the contemporary Oromo narrative (Assefa, 1988; Leenco, 1999; Ezekiel, 2002) but some critics challenge it. For different reasons, "outsiders tend to view Oromo nationalism as highly organic and democratically sound discourse, but all along it has proved itself progressively controversial and functionally incoherent" (Leenco Lata, personal communication, February 4, 2023).

Oromo discourse, as it seeks to assert political, economic, social, and cultural rights of the Oromo people in Ethiopia, has been associated with different forms of violence and conflict. Promotion of the narrative has been characterised by a history of struggle against domination, exploitation, and human rights abuses; as such, violence has often been part of the Oromo national experience (Ezekiel, 2002, Assefa, 1998). Some scholars have pointed out that a response to violence in the context of Oromo nationalism must be understood within the larger context of Ethiopian politics, which has been marked by a history of violence and conflict (Markakis, 2011; Semir, 2019;

Ezekiel, 2002). As Merera (2004) noted Ethiopian politics has long been defined by competing nationalisms and conflicting visions of the Ethiopian state, which have often resulted in violence and conflict. As such, Oromo ethno-nationalism has had a long history of resistance against, what he claimed, Amhara dominated Ethiopian state-led economic, cultural, and political marginalisation (Assefa, 1998). Between 1991 and 2018, the resistance significantly continued and has also been met with repression and violence by the Tigray dominated Ethiopian state, at least arguably, leading some Oromo nationalist groups to resort to violent means to achieve their goals (Ezekiel, 2002; Semir, 2019). Quite interestingly, some other Oromo ethno-nationalist group has still not settled though, after arguably the de facto Oromo dominated Ethiopian state surfaced beginning the 2018 government reform, and violence relationship with the state has substantially continued (de Waal, 2021; Yohannes, 2021; The Economist, 2020).

Drawing on his significant research experience on Ethiopia's political history, John Markakis in his book *Ethiopia: The last two frontiers* (2011) described the challenge of the state-making process in the country. He discussed the class and ethnicity divide in a bottom-up approach, and the marginalised cultural communities from the periphery perspectives in the country, sharing an important insight on how the nation-state making process was far from over. He indicated that the elites in charge of political power essentially utilise war, violence, and conflict as an important element of an attempt to make Ethiopia a nation-state. Semir (2009) argues that various ethno-nationalist groups in Ethiopia seek to shape the country's image in their own interests. He submits ethno-nationalist frame assert that every cherished socio-cultural image of Ethiopia is meant to be the foundation of Ethiopia as opposed to the essential cultural identity i.e. Amharic-Christian Ethiopia. Thus, there is yet unsettled debate among different nationalist discourse in the country that is being reflected in the social activism of social media.

2.3.6.3 Tigray ethno-nationalism

Tigray ethno-nationalist narrative is essentially linked to the inception of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) in 1975 which began its movement in defiance of what it claimed as Amhara dominance in Ethiopia. This Marxist-Leninist ideology-oriented organisation is less contested for authoritatively representing its constituent still with ever-changing ideologue and flag bearer of the discourse. Tefera (2019) discussed how the TPLF built a strong social base among Tigray population overtime and consolidated the social fabric to dominate its ethnic

homeland. He further argued, TPLF began with “ethno-nationalist first before it adopted Albanian socialism, revolutionary democracy, and democratic developmental state” respectively until it was pushed off the dominant position (p.464).

As Medhane and Young (2003) contend the TPLF has been arguably a pragmatic organisation that selectively applied ethnicity to fit its political purposes of dominance and power deliberation. The elites then managed to cling to political power and economic resource control. Arguing the TPLF's unusual degree of dominance in the state of Ethiopia, Medhane and Young, (2003) literally equates it to or above the state of Ethiopia itself. They asserted, sometimes it is “hardly discernible to mark their role”, for instance, “the Prime Minister is accountable to the party not functionally to the Parliament, a branch of government that is controlled by the Ethiopia People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)” (p. 396). The literature imply, Tigray narrative is related both as a means of political mobilisation and as an agency in achieving a new norm among and between social groups in Ethiopia. According to de Waal (2021), since the inception of Tigray nationalism in the mid-1970s, the movement has been characterised by intact leadership but a shift of ideological focus without losing focus on redefining Ethiopia’s polity in terms of social identity. Principally, Tigray political discourse obdurately advances the Ethiopian constitution of 1995 as sound and sufficient framework defining Ethiopians public life as opposed to other notable ethno-nationalist groups in the country including Oromo and Amhara.

Like Oromo ethno-nationalism, Tigray ethno-nationalism has been influenced by historical experiences of Tigray people, such as the marginalisation and oppression they faced under previous rulers of Ethiopia (Adhana, 1988). Moreover, it is important to note that Tigray ethno-nationalism has also been shaped by broader political and economic factors in Ethiopia. Some scholars' note the political and economic dominance of the TPLF over the Ethiopian government since the early 1990s has led some to view Tigray ethno-nationalism as synonymous with TPLF total rule, which has sparked resentment and opposition from other ethnic groups (Clapham, 2004; Markakis, 2011; Aregawi, 2004; Kaplan, 2021).

Overall, the politics of difference and ethno-nationalism, and intersectionality of identity in Ethiopia is a complex and contested concept with many different perspectives, actions and interactions. The literature review importantly discussed the dynamics of social-identity based interaction and counter-interactions especially in Ethiopia. Capitalising on differences, in real

terms, the identity formation process is principally characterised with construction of one's identity as opposed and in reaction to actions of the others' identity formation. This is significantly true to the ethno-nationalism discourses of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray.

Many scholars agree the student activism of the 1960s in Ethiopia as an important underpinning of the evolution of ethno-nationalist movements in the country. The ethno-nationalism discourse debate is still ongoing, further utilising digital communication infrastructure. In this regard, in his inquiry on how political protest framed on social media in Ethiopia, Tazeb (2017) shows that activist framing of the moments of protest explicitly promotes the version of the respective institutions' interest. He followed mixed research design, analysed contents of data collected from three different institution's Facebook pages reacting to protest news. The analysis indicates the Facebook activists' frame of the news of the protest at various times is preferentially covered, institutionally oriented and incompatible ground of moderation. Further investigating and engaging with these debates is essential to achieving a more conception of how it play out in activist Facebook reaction on circumstances of mob violence like lynch in Ethiopia.

2.3.7 Moral accountability

What do we know about moral aspect of engaging moments of mob violence particularly lynching on Facebook posts? How does the moral agency of a notable Facebook activists post be conceptualized in the circumstance of framing lynching episodes?

Dunn (1999) states accountability is critically important in a democratic state, thus ensuring balance between power and accountability is fundamental. He concludes accountability as at least a condition in which demand for an opportunity to make power answerable to those whom it is being exercised on. As such, a key element of accountability is power holders (governor) must explain and justify actions and what it is about to do and/or have already done; and those who are governed can challenge and criticise such actions as per their realities to conform to their ideas of what is appropriate (Dunn, 1999). In Social Media Platforms (SMPs), Facebook in this case, accountability can be contextualised to stand to imply Facebook activist as a moral agent is the power holder answerable to his/her moral and/or legal agency; and to his/her audience / target group' (the governed) moral and/or legal norms.

In recent years, literature reviewed indicates, there has been a significant increase in the use of social media platforms, particularly Facebook, to discuss, share and disseminate instances of mob violence including lynching in various countries (Blaker, 2015). However, in a number of incidents prominent activists using their Facebook posts to react to moments of violence like lynching has raised concern on legal (Papacharissi, 2010) and moral accountability (Cohen-Almagor, 2020) dimensions. Utilities of Facebook activist posts in sharing and disseminating rhetoric reactions of mob violence materials including lynching practices have important legal and moral implications in Ethiopian context. Here the main concern is on the moral agency of the Facebook actors instead of the social media utility and the violent act per se.

The moral perspectives of Facebook activism have profound implications on a political transition involving mob violence, aggressive moral behaviour, and challenge on the rule of law. Literature indicates, a philosophical conception of a word morality is deep and debatable. But literally, the term morality⁶ presents a moral belief and practice of a culture, society, community, or religion with a code or system of ethical rules, principles, or values. An ingenuous shot at a descriptive definition of morality might consider the notion as the most important code of conduct formulated by a given group or society and be observed by its members. But the existence of large and heterogeneous societies raises conceptual problems for such a descriptive definition, since no such society-wide rule can be most important. Accordingly, a definition can be given where morality refers to the most important code of conduct that is put forward and accepted by any group, or even an individual. In addition to containing some prohibition against harming (some) others, different morality can be understood in content specific terms (Frankena, 1966; Gert & Gert, 2002; Brayana et al., 2015, P. 641).

In a normative sense, morality most often refers to a code of conduct accepted by anyone who meets certain intellectual and volitional conditions, including the condition of being reasonable. So, it needs further qualification, for instance, codes can be understood to imply fairness, or to have features that enable people to live together in groups (Gert & Gert, 2002; Frankena, 1966). In this particular literature review the main concern is not the legal and moral dimension of the

⁶ Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopedia (2023, April 6). Morality. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/morality>

violent act per se but the Facebook agents in the event of rhetoric reaction to episodes of lynching.

According to Taddeo and Floridi (2017) online service providers (OSPs), including Facebook, meaningfully shape the informational environment (infosphere) and impact users' experiences and interactions within the environment. Their study concluded that no significant agreement is in existence about what principles should shape the OSPs moral responsibilities and practices. But their overall analysis highlighted two important results. One, emerging relevance is documenting OSPs gatekeeping function, corporate social responsibilities, and its role in executing and enhancing human rights; while there is limitation of defined ethical framework that inform OSPs' business conduct and that's relevant within a multicultural global environment.

The customary practice in operation in various cultures across the country clearly sanctions any form of involvement in a mob attack targeting individuals or groups as inhumane. In a normal circumstance, typical Amhara, Oromo, or Tigray culture public displaying a fatal attack of a fellow human being is immoral (in some incidents even against animals). For instance, any member of the community in an event he/she finds a slayed human being, at least, the first thing one could do is to gracefully cover the graphic display with materials like cloth, leaves, or grass. Across these ethnic groups, the symmetric sanctity of human beings is expressly inviolable.

In this context, inconceivably, the practice of ethnic nationalism evidenced in the face of social media platforms, Facebook activists in this case while engaging episodes of mob attack including lynching essentially morally going corrupt. The sanctity of humanity in defining the framework of code of conduct is shifting and being replaced by often ambiguously framed ethno-nationalist interest. Significantly, thus, the traditional society, which is morally visible, definable, organic, and predictable is being consumed off its environment with a new form of society that is hanging on between online and offline which is morally blur, ambiguous, artificial, and unpredictable.

Against this background, the prevalence of lynching act across the country and the moral dissipation involved in framing the moment of the violence is inconceivable. Further focused investigation is needed to understand this abnormal moral depravity.

2.3.8 The post-2018 political transition

In analysing how recognizable Facebook activists' frame narrative to episodes of mob attack in Ethiopia which targets few groups or individuals, considering analytical information about the political transition in the country is important. Relevant literature indicates that there is quite a considerable relationship between violence and political transition. Scholars have explored various factors that contribute to violence during the evolution of political transition and the strategies to mitigate them. In the following paragraphs, relevant context of political transition and how it unfolds with mob violence is highlighted. Quite briefly before conclusion, transition context of the 2018 change of government in Ethiopia is discussed.

Huntington (1991) labels the political transition in the current era as constituting third wave democratisation. He explains some of the significant instituting elements towards the occurrence of third wave democratisation relating to legitimacy problems linked to authoritative regimes, heightened values of democracy, continued regime dependence on performance to survive and their inability to maintain regime durability due to economic pressure. More specifically, Samuel Huntington argues that political transitions that occur rapidly without adequate institutional capacity are vulnerable to violence. Huntington contends that successful political transitions require a gradual process of democratisation that is inclusive, participatory, and encourages civic engagement to build on the state's capacity to govern.

Bratton and Van de Walle (1994) while discussing the political transition in Africa in the context of patrimonial regime, they reject the view that transition is abrupt. They instead argue that the structure of the previous regime commonly shapes the dynamics of transition. Comparatively, they argue, transition from neo-patrimonial regime quite differently is pushed by social disobedience, competition over patronage, and reinforced by rising middle class. Further, they assert that different regime variants are associated with different transition trajectories. However, they conclude transition to democracy is problematic in regimes absence with tradition of institutional political practice. Further, they explored the conditions that precipitate violence in Africa during transitions from authoritarian rule. For instance, they posit that the likelihood of violence increases when political contender groups adopt tactics of mass protest, state security forces likely to engage coercive force, and then the state loses its monopoly over violence.

In his comparative analysis of political transition in Ethiopia and Sudan, Verjee (2021) explains a number of contextual similarities between the two countries. He identified decline in governing capability of the Ethiopia People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) regime due to different factors, elements of the regime picking interest to grab the emerging internal reform, heightened expectation of societal change, the growing influence of subnational politics, and economic factors as profound context of the political transition in Ethiopia.

Yonas and Kassahun (2021) applied an ethnographic narrative framework in analysing protest-transition-reform relationships placed within Ethiopia's political dynamics. The scholars claimed the post 2018 transition trajectory is relatively accommodative and negotiates important state-society relationship issues in a more liberalised political economy context. However, they contend, the transition met significant constraints characterised as misreading within the ruling coalition, intergroup rivalry, ethnic polarisation, lack of democratic institution, and emerging conflict and instability.

Mamdani, in his book *When Victims Become Killers* (2002), analyses the relationship between political transition and violence. He concludes that in areas where state power is weak or fragmented, movements for ethnic groups or sections of society to gain power are integral to transforming the political landscape. However, these movements often lead to animosity between groups that lead to violence. Addressing historical legacies and fault lines through skilled intervention is therefore crucial in mitigating violence during political transition.

Similarly, Goodwin and Evans explored the relationship between political transition and violence in their work *From Voting to Violence* (2012). They postulate that political transition can lead to violence when societies undergo rapid transitions that produce a loss of cohesive social order. They further suggest that the successful management of political transitions requires a combination of institutional reform, political moderation, and international intervention.

In 2018, the political transition context in Ethiopia can be characterised as essentially exhibiting and reinforcing in-group and out-group alliance based on a number of factors, but notably ethno-nationalist narrative of amity/enmity towards the narratives of the TPLF, a principal partner in the EPRDF coalition ruling party in the previous regime (Semir, 2019; Ezekiel, 2018, Yonas & Kassahun, 2021; Tazeb, 2017). The TPLF as a key actor, its failure to maintain performance

legitimacy before the 2018 reform and its inability to manage the reform. Further, ethno-nationalist discourse remained strong, producing and sustaining contestation usually horizontal but again vertically against the state of Ethiopia involving action and counteraction (Semir, 2019; Tazeb, 2017; Fana and Yonas, 2023). In this case, Abiy Ahmed's manipulative *rhetoric-performance*⁷ influenced the process and the public perception about the relationship. Thus, notable Facebook activist's rhetoric reactions to various moments of mob violence like lynching in country should be approached from the context of the political transition.

In sum, this subsection of the literature review highlighted the importance of understanding mob violence in the context of political transition. The main discussion spelt out the important trajectories of mob violence during the post-2018 political transition in Ethiopia. In this context, ethno-nationalist narrative and politics of difference assumes significant online space. Here, in this research, the transition trajectory is discussed in relation to notable Facebook activists framing of moments of lynching incidents exercised in the country.

2.3.9 Political communication and governing through violence in Ethiopia

An examination of political communication literature reveals that emerging digital communication technologies, particularly social media, have a clear impact on public narratives, news media, citizens' perceptions, and, most importantly, the nature of communication among wider society (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013). However, in Ethiopia's 2018 reform context we lack a piece of important knowledge about the dynamics of political communication and governance during a political transition that is characterised by mob violence. Thus, exploration of the dimensions of political communication is imperative to understanding how notable Facebook activists frame moments of mob violence at certain points in time in Ethiopia.

Political communication is a crucial aspect of governance (McNair, 2017), particularly with respect to the prevention, management, and transformation of violent conflict (Cap, 2016). Effective political communication strategies can enhance government anticipated and address potential sources of violence, while ineffective communication can inflame tensions and lead to increased violence. Political communication can take different forms including social media to

⁷ The researcher used the term to characteristically describe public speeches Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed usually makes. The speeches commonly sound manipulative and hypnotic, and largely found to be palliative, and less substantive on addressing the subject head-on.

reach out to its target audience (McNair, 2017). A reviewed literature of political communication, in this era of emerging digital communication technologies particularly social media, evidently influences public narrative, news media, and citizens' opinion, and importantly communications among a larger group (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013).

On another account, the works of Medhane, Alagaw, and Desta (2021), interestingly presents violence as communication in a state-building process. Thus, it is essential to understand the role of political communication in governance during violent moments, and the other way round – violence as a form of conversation demanding particular interest. In this regard, for instance, Cap (2016) argues that political communication can help reduce violence by providing credible information about security threats and government actions to address them. Similarly, Parker et al. (2019) discusses communication strategies that emphasise social cohesion and inclusivity can help prevent ethnic and radicalised forms of violence. Stressing the governance element of conflict, Barma (2016), presents that strategic communication is linked to peacebuilding and as an important element of the conflict transformation process.

However, other scholars have pointed out the misplacement of political communication gap in governance through violence. In this sense, McNair (2017) argues that politicians often use communication to appeal to emotions rather than reason, which can lead to the politicisation of violence. The scholar noted that there are incidents where the government manipulates the political communication industry to discredit legitimate dissents. Moreover, many governments use censorship and media control to limit access to information, which in turn can fuel rumours and conspiracy theories that exacerbate tensions and lead to violence.

In Ethiopia, cognizant of the impact of media communication on violence and peacebuilding, the government enacted media law to provide a regulatory framework. The media communication landscape remained worryingly polarised and featured opinion journalism (Tewodros, 2021). Social media activism in the country, for various reasons, related to a number of mob violence and raised legal implications (Tazeb, 2021). Accordingly, on 13 February 2020, the reform government enacted the Declaration on the Prevention of Hate Speech and Misinformation 1185/2020, to provide a regulatory legal framework partly towards managing its negative input into the emerging violence in the country.

In sum, relevant literature reviewed clearly indicates that political communication is an important factor in violence governance and the frames of news media. However, we lack an important knowledge in the communication media industry in Ethiopia how notable Facebook activists frame moments of mob violence at certain point in time.

2.3.10 Conclusions

In recent time, Ethiopia is a country that has experienced record cases of direct violence that includes lynching, especially following the 2018 political transition. A number of literature reviews submit that the concept of violence is emerging and debatable, at least, in academia. Many scholars agree there is an element of power relation at the centre of the notion of violence. However, there is significant variation on the purpose, form, source, nature, and agency of violence. In this regard, highlights of direct violence, justifiable violence, macro vs micro violence, cultural violence, and epistemological violence are provided. Giving particular focus on direct violence that take in mob attack including lynching, the dynamics of social media (Facebook) is discussed.

In this sense, prior research, how notable Facebook activists frame episodes of lynching is reviewed. Social media activists engage social media platforms which are becoming powerful tools to disseminate information, frame incidents, share news, and entertain ideas to a vast audience. However, still social media is both consequential for individuals and societies alike and it cannot be simply ignored. One of the issues that have received attention in recent years in academia is social media activism and rhetoric reaction to episodes of mob violence. Agents engaged in social activism, individuals or organisations inquired found to be largely loyal to their respective political orientation.

On a similar note, another important theme discussed in the literature review is the concept of politics of difference and interethnic dynamic in the context of framing lynching. The review selectively looked into Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray political discourse. The discussion highlighted the major terms of debate among these narratives as – identity, framework of governance, resource (control, distribution and management), historiography, and language. In connection, the legal and moral accountability, and the context of the 2018 political transition are

as well highlighted. The relevant reading shows these issues largely appears as both the means and the end with the interaction of the competing narratives.

Finally, the literature review discussed political communication and governance through violence practice in Ethiopia. It looked into an important dynamic of political communication that is at play in association social media (Facebook) activist framing of episodes of violence in the country.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The main purpose of this methodology chapter is to tell the reader the researcher designed and present its justification. As such, a detailed description and rationale for all the study design options employed are provided. The chapter is organized into three main sections. Introduction, the first section, provides a brief chapter overview. In section two, the research design is elaborated with appropriate descriptive details on various research design choices adopted and its justification. Finally, under the methodological limitations section, significant challenges and setbacks encountered during the research process are discussed. This section allowed the researcher to explain the limitations and how such limitations are minimized so that the challenges did not essentially have distorted the research outcome.

3.2 Research design

A research design provides an overall framework for the collection and analysis of data and a choice of comprehensive research plan that reflects decisions about the priority being given to a range of dimensions of the investigation (Creswell, 2018; Merriam, 2002; Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2020). A design of a research clarifies the philosophical underpinning of the investigation, the overarching outline of the research process, how the research was planned to be performed, which methods of data collection and analysis were adopted and why. As such, the researcher adopted a qualitative research design and in the same manner, in the following subsections the researcher discussed accounts of the various research design choices and justifications.

3.2.1 Research paradigm

The underpinning philosophical paradigm of this research is ontologically constructivist and epistemologically interpretivist. That means reality is a social construct and knowledge is an outcome of subjective experience (Merriam, 2002; Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2020; Creswell, 2018). The philosophical framework informs how data about the research should be collected, analyzed, and used during the research process. In this sense, the subjective and context of the

research instrument was acknowledged as an important component of this investigation in order to have explored the research events and to assign meaning as a whole.

3.2.2 Research approach

This research adopted an inductive qualitative approach. Inductive qualitative approach and interpretivist frameworks are very concerned with capturing and understanding what is being said in the moment (Merriam, 2002; Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2020; Creswell, 2018). This is largely because in both cases the concept of objectivity is challenged. In this regard, qualitative scholars identified two basic theoretical research frameworks showing the direction of conducting scientific inquiry – deductive and inductive processes (Creswell, 2018). Each may sometimes be done in a similar way, but definitely lead to a different research outcome. In terms of procedure, the deductive approach starts from and builds upon a predefined structure, theory, or framework to confirm or disprove an established theory or thought pattern. On the other hand, in the inductive approach, the researcher essentially imposes his own structure, model or theory from the specific research phenomenon based on the collected field data (Merriam, 2002; Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2020; Creswell, 2018).

This study is primarily concerned with examining how prominent online activists respond to different episodes of lynching incidents in the country. In this case, little was known about the framing narrative of the various moments of the lynching that attracted the attention of prominent online activists of Amhara, Oromo and Tigray origin in Ethiopia. Thus, an inductive approach is usually appropriate when little or nothing is known about the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2018; Burnard et al., 2008). Therefore, in this qualitative case research the use of the inductive research process is justified because little is known about the research phenomenon. Determining how the research is approached informs the research methods to be utilized.

3.2.3 Research method

Drawn on the research paradigm, approach, questions, problems and objectives, this study applied a qualitative case study method to collect and analyze data. Qualitative case study is a research method used in many fields in which the researcher develops practical steps on how a research project is done - "an in-depth analysis of a case, often a program, event, activity, process, phenomenon, or one or more individuals" (Creswell, 2018, p. 51). In the following

paragraphs, the researcher discussed the main points of justification for adopting the qualitative case study method. The rationale is related to the context and role of the researcher in data collection and analysis, the complexity and non-linearity of qualitative analysis, and the position of the researcher and interpretation in the meaning-making process.

In qualitative design, context is very important and the need to consider the embedded world view in which the research participant lived is essential (Creswell, 2018). Thus, the qualitative researcher tends to collect data in the field, in the place where the participants faced the question or problem being studied. In other words, the researcher actively participated in the research process as he collected research data and interpreted it. Furthermore, the qualitative method emphasizes data triangulation (Merriam, 2002; Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2020; Creswell, 2018). This means that collecting multiple forms of data instead of relying on a single data source was highly demanded. In this sense, the researcher actively collected field data from primary data sources. The field data are a freely shared thought, belief, opinion or attitude of each of the research participants.

The data analysis process was quite complex and not strictly linear (Creswell, 2018). In this case, the researcher worked inductively; creating bottom-up patterns, categories, and themes by organizing field data into increasingly abstract units of information. The induction process illustrated moving back and forth between themes and databases until the researcher had created a complete set of themes. According to Creswell (2018), the importance of the research participant is crucial. During this qualitative research, the researcher focused on understanding the meaning the participants had about the research problem, not the meaning the researcher brought to the study or embodied in the literature.

Often in qualitative research methods, the personal position, experience, beliefs, and/or orientations of the investigator are likely to influence the generation of meaning from field data (Merriam, 2002; Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2020; Creswell, 2018). This means that the researcher plays an active role in the research process.

3.2.4 Sampling method

In a research exercise, the main objective of sampling is to create a representative sample to ensure that the characteristics of the samples are plausibly generalizable to the research

population (Creswell, 2018; Merriam, 2002). In particular, with a qualitative case study design, the researcher is usually less interested in generalization than in an in-depth and holistic understanding of the research phenomenon. This means that the researcher focuses on the sample that can produce the basic data for the investigation (Merriam, 2002; Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2020; Creswell, 2018). The research participants were purposefully selected. First, the research sample was not very large. Second, the exploratory and in-depth nature of qualitative case study research usually involves purposive sampling methods. Third, the researcher considered professional advice regarding the use of a purposive sampling technique. In order to conduct an in-depth investigation, the researcher identified three research cases. The research cases are selected on the basis of comparability and its quality and relevance to the research objectives. Each figure of a mob violence practiced in the sample areas are qualitatively generalizable, corresponding to the ethnicity of each of the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray key online Facebook activists.

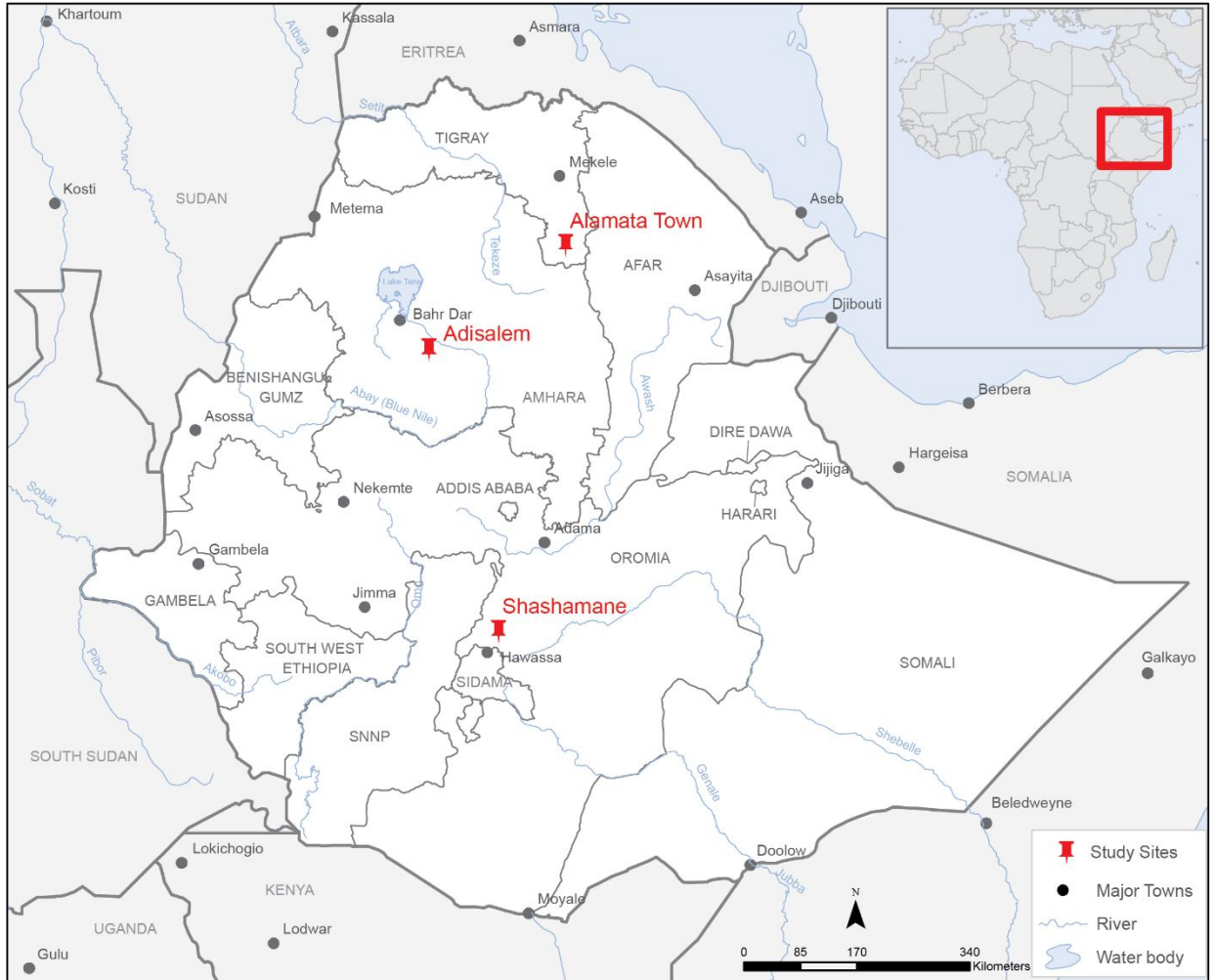


Figure 1: Study area location

As per the current administrative map in operation provided in Figure 1, **Alamata**, **Addisalem**, and **Shashamane** are comparably like-sizable district towns with similar socioeconomic and other demographic features in the Tigray, Amhara, and Oromia regional states in Ethiopia. Each of the study areas are located within an ethno-territorial regional administration namely Alamata in Tigray, Addisalem in Amhara, and Shashamane in Oromia. The lynching experience observed in 2018 between the month of June and December at each of these areas are arguably on a par with one another in terms of time, nature of the mob violence, and its degree of attracting key Social Media (Facebook) framing and representation.

3.3 Description of the research cases

In 2018, Ethiopia was hit hard by lynching – mob violence that involved targeted extrajudicial killings of individuals or few groups which ravaged three of its regions - Amhara, Oromia, and Tigray. Violence in these regions was characterized by its brutality, widespread destruction of property, loss of life and displacement of individuals.

In Amhara, the violence was largely fueled by ethnic tensions and political grievances. The ethnic Amhara groups accused the government of showing favoritism towards ethnic Tigrayan groups, resulting in growing distrust and animosity between the two communities. The government's heavy-handed response to these frictions only exacerbated unrest and violence. The impact of mob violence in Amhara was severe, causing significant property damage, rampant looting, and a loss of life. This paper is interested to look at an incident of mob violence witnessed at Addisalem town in Gonja Kolela district of Amhara region of Ethiopia.

Three researchers, who had travelled from Addis Ababa to the village of Gonji in Ethiopia's Amhara region, fell victim to a mob attack while conducting field research. Their purpose was to investigate intestinal worms and the eye disease trachoma at a local school. Tragically, two of them were killed by the mob violence, who mistakenly believed they were there to harm the children. The incident took place on October 23, 2018, in the town of Addisalem. Two of the victims were stoned to death, whereas another team member who was assigned to assist the researchers, survived the attack but sustained life-altering injuries (Dawit, 2018; *The Rumour That Led to Medical Researchers in Ethiopia Being Killed by a Mob*, 2019)

The Oromia region was also affected by mob violence, which was rooted in political and economic marginalization. Ethnic Oromo communities have long felt marginalized and excluded from national decision-making, leading them to accuse the government of neglecting their needs. This resulted in prolonged protests and violent outbursts, leading to loss of life, displacement, and property damage. One such incident which is considered for investigation has occurred in Shashamane town on August 12, 2018.

Shashamane is a town situated in the Oromia region of Ethiopia, covering an area of 10.74 kilometers square. As of the 2007 national census, the town had a population of 100,454, with 50,654 men and 49,800 women. However, according to mid-2022 estimates, the population has

increased to an estimated 208,368 inhabitants. The town has a population density of 19,401 per kilometer square with a 5% annual population growth rate. Among the inhabitants, Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity is the most commonly practiced belief, with 43.44% reporting observation, followed by 31.15% practicing Islam, 23.53% Protestantism, and 1.3% Catholicism.

On August 12, 2018, Shashamane experienced yet another instance of mob violence, which tragically claimed the life of a young and innocent man. The purpose of the gathering was to welcome an Oromo activist who have been one of a notable figure in the Oromo social movement that contributed to the 2018 government reform. However, this peaceful event quickly turned violent when a mob targeted the young man, accusing him of carrying a bomb. Shockingly, they proceeded to hang him upside down on a utility pole and mercilessly beat him to death. In response, the regional police strongly condemned this act of brutality, revealing that no bombs were found on the victim. Furthermore, the car that was set on fire by the mob, originally believed to be carrying explosives, was actually owned by a local government bureau. Tragically, this incident is just one among many instances of ethnically oriented violence and mob attacks that have plagued the country in those months, resulting in senseless deaths of innocent citizens (Engidu, 2018).

In Tigray, tensions between the regional government and the federal government resulted in escalating violence between various ethnic groups. Political differences between the Tigrayan Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Prosperity at the federal level, fueled unrest and violence that devastated the region.

Alamata is situated in the southern zone of Tigray and covers an area of 6 kilometers square. The city is located roughly 600 kilometers north of Addis Ababa and approximately 180 kilometers south of the Tigray Regional capital city, Mekelle. According to the 2007 national census, Alamata has a total population of 33,214, with 16,140 men and 17,074 women. The city has a dense population, with around 11,740 inhabitants per kilometer square, and an annual population growth rate of 5.1%. The majority of the population, approximately 82.35%, practice Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, while 16.96% practice Islam. Alamata's strategic location will be further enhanced by the addition of a Weldiya-Mekelle Railway station in the city.

On October 22, 2018, Alamata town, located in the Tigray region of Ethiopia, experienced a devastating outbreak of mob violence that claimed the lives of several innocent civilians. The incident sparked widespread concern amongst the local population and highlighted the urgent need for increased security measures to protect the wellbeing of all citizens. As a responsible and conscientious society, it is incumbent upon us to do everything within our power to prevent further tragic occurrences of this nature and to ensure that those responsible are brought to justice (Observer, 2018).

According to local informants, though the underlying reasons for mob violence varied across these regions, there were also common factors contributing to the unrest. These included ethnic tensions, political grievances, and the growing economic inequality. The violent outbursts resulted in substantial loss of property, forced displacement, and loss of life. Over time, the instability caused by the mob violence destroyed communities, weakened social structures, impoverished the region, and caused psychological trauma and human suffering. The researcher observed that the impact of this outbreak of mob violence would remain felt for years to come.

Table 1: Participant demographic, their Facebook profile, and info on reaction per case post

Participant	Amhara descent			Oromo descent			Tigray descent		
	Achamyeleh Tamiru (AT-A)	Getachew Shiferaw (GS-A)	Muluken Tesfawu (MT-A)	Awol Kassim Allo (AK-O)	Dereje G. Tullu (DG-O)	Jawar Mohammed (JM-O)	Alula Solomon (AS-T)	Senait Mebrahtu (SM-T)	Daniel Berhane (DB-T)
Case	Lives in D.C.; joined fb in October 2009; followed by 179,120	Lives in Addis Ababa; joined fb in 2012; followed by 255,679	Lives in Helsinki, joined fb in 2010; followed by 203,000	Lives in the UK, joined fb in 2010 followed by 204,156 people	Lives in Addis Ababa, joined fb in 2012; followed by 142,598	Lives in Addis Ababa, joined fb in 2006; followed by 2,200,000	Lives in D.C.; Joined fb in Feb. 2010; followed by 303,172	Lives in Mekelle; joined fb March 2014; followed by 186,094	Lives in D.C.; joined fb in 2009; followed by 213,679
A Shashamane	668 likes, 56 comments, 198 shares	326 likes, 60 comments, 60 shares	469 likes, 109 comments, 89 shares	619 likes, 96 comments, 208 shares,	835 likes, 114 comments, 292 shares	3900 likes, 830 comments, 1300 shares,	409 likes, 109 comments, 17 shares	228 likes, 87 comments, 83 shares	929 likes, 491 comments, 318 shares
B Addisalem	686 likes, 56 comments, 198 shares	Not responded	580 likes, 81 comments, 60 shares,	295 likes, 31 comments, 105 shares,	417 likes, 67 comments, 74 shares,	Not specifically responded	844 likes, 163 comments, 300 shares	228 likes, 42 comments, 63 shares	241 likes, 67 comments, 27 shares
C Alamata	456 likes, 53 comments, 183 shares	423 likes, 42 comments, 200 shares	432 likes, 31 comments, 215 shares	Not responded	415 likes, 67 comments, 74 shares	14000 likes, 5700 comments, 18000 shares	200 likes, 5 comments, 9 shares	342 likes, 105 comments, 37 shares	530 likes, 148 comments, 46 shares

In this context, as elaborately presented in Table 1 above, the researcher purposely sampled 9 key social media activists (exclusively Facebook) with origins in Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray, three from each ethnic group. Proclaimed positionality hints an ethnic origin or affiliation of the key selected research sample. Each of these notable online activists have a recognizable profile in the public domain of Ethiopia. At least on average, each of them have more than 200,000 followers, they are very active on Social Media (Facebook) for the last decade, they regularly engage in topical (local and/or national) affairs, and such other public matters before and during the 2018 reform in Ethiopia. Their Facebook page posts, interaction, debate, dialogue, or conversation in the form of texts, images and audiovisual materials on various public issues, provides important insights into understanding contemporary Ethiopian political discourse. This study principally focused on exploring the frame narrative of the various episodes of lynching that were observed at different time and place in the country. Therefore, the researcher believed that the textual Facebook contents that the key online activists share and/or post have essentially generated the primary data needed for this research.

3.4 Data collection method

Data collection is a systematic process of obtaining data using various techniques and tools for a specific scientific activity or any relevant project (Merriam, 2002; Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2020; Creswell, 2018). In accordance with the defined philosophical basis of this research as epistemological interpretivism and ontologically constructivism, the research is guided by the method of qualitative data collection. The choice of method for data collection aligns with the objective, the type of data required and the methodological approach of the research (Merriam, 2002; Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2020; Creswell, 2018). The main goal of this research is to explore ideas, understand experiences, and gain context-specific insights into the framing narratives of the moments of the various sampled lynching cases. Therefore, the use of a qualitative method of collecting qualitative data is relevant and most justifiable.

3.4.1 Primary data source

A particular Facebook page of each of the research participants are the sources of the primary data for this investigation. The Facebook pages have provided firsthand accounts of the research phenomena. The primary data, a textual communication or written document downloaded and

saved as softcopy in pdf format, are manually collected from a particular Facebook page of each of the key social media activists of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray descent identified as the research participant. Fake accounts are detected, and genuine owners of the research informants' Facebook pages are verified. The primary data were corroborated with the secondary data deemed relevant to the research topic.

3.4.2 Secondary data source

In order to obtain an interpreted (synthesized) information germane to understanding the research theme, the researcher consulted relevant secondary sources. In this context, he has selectively consulted relevant books, journal articles, and/or secondary documents.

3.5 Data analysis methods

According to Mouton and Marais (1991), data analysis method is discussed as a process whereby a research phenomenon is systematically broken down into its important components in order to create meaning or understanding. It is further elaborated as the practice of examining, cleaning, describing, transforming and modeling raw data in order to discover useful information, draw conclusions, and support decision-making (Creswell, 2018). This study followed a qualitative research design, qualitative methods for data collection, and thus applied a qualitative content analysis method to analyze field data and find meaning in the research phenomenon.

3.5.1 Data analysis approach

As this study placed great emphasis on the descriptions and contents of the research participants' reality in order to create patterns of meaning, a content analysis approach is found to be most appropriate. According to Creswell (2018), content analysis is one of the most widely used qualitative data analysis techniques to interpret meaning from written, spoken, and/or visual artifacts and thereby identify important aspects of content. It is a method of qualitative research analysis that is suitable for drawing valid and repeatable conclusions from research data in context to provide knowledge, insights, facts and actionable guidance (Merriam, 2002; Creswell, 2018). In this research, textual data are collected from each Facebook page posts of the key online activists, and set up for inductive qualitative content analysis.

In data analysis, an inductive data-driven approach moves from the specific to the general, where specific cases are observed and then combined into a larger whole or general statement (Creswell, 2018). A deductive approach is based on a previous theory or model and thus moves from the general to the specific (Burns & Grove, 2005). In this study, the researcher is interested in critically understanding the frame response of prominent online activist to the specific episodes of different lynching in the identified research event. As such, inductive content analysis is followed as the most appropriate data analysis method for this research.

3.5.2 Data analysis procedure

Depending on the research paradigm, methodological approach, aims, and research methods, the process of qualitative data analysis can involve several steps and can involve different factors. In this case, the researcher adopted a six-step outline of a qualitative framework for data analysis (Merriam, 2002; Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2020; Creswell, 2018). The procedures are divided into three interlinked phases. The first phase, the preparation phase, involves selecting the unit of analysis and understanding the data as a whole. Second, the organizational phase, in which open coding undertakes grouping, categorization and abstraction, and in the final stage, the report of the findings and the presentation stage involves the development of a model, conceptual system or pattern. As such, these qualitative data analysis procedures do not necessarily follow a linear line from a specific observation of a research event to the creation of a conceptual pattern of understanding on how the research informants respond to the different moments of mob violence under investigation.

By design, first before setting up for coding, the research topic was divided into three interrelated research themes corresponding to the research questions and objectives. In this case, the research uses analysis at the thematic level. Because in this process the researcher focused primarily on finding a conceptual meaning that ties the themes together. That is, the theme is the unit of analysis for grouping, categorizing, or abstracting the collected field data. In other words, the themes that the researcher identified as themes 1, 2, and 3 presented in Table 2, are the thread that connects them all, and these themes are associated with the research questions.

In this sense, the inductive process requires the researcher to move back and forth between themes and databases until a complete set of themes is created (Merriam, 2002; Creswell, 2018).

As it is often common in qualitative research, the researcher in this study creatively created categories and/or themes from scratch using inductive work and organized the data into increasingly abstract units of information. In this context, the researcher adopted Creswell's (2018) phased content analysis procedures to make sense of the qualitative data obtained from primary and secondary sources. In order to analytically understand and present the research questions, raw data from 9 key Facebook activists, 3 from each ethnic lineage, namely Amhara, Oromo and Tigray, were extracted, and analyzed in stages as outlined in the following sections.

i. Phase 1: Preparation

The researcher chose to adopt the three phase-based content analysis process discussed Creswell (2018). The analysis process clearly outlined the process of qualitative data analysis, which includes qualitative raw data, organizing and setting up raw data for analysis, reading all the qualitative data, coding the data, connecting themes or descriptions, and finally interpreting and giving meaning to the theme or description. Due to the subjective nature of qualitative analysis, the researcher found it important to represent the logic of the thematic analysis in tabular form because such tables help readers easily gauge the reliability of the description. The qualitative data were triangulated from different data sources in order for the analysis to achieve credible interpretation.

The researcher easily accessed the required Facebook pages of each of the research participants. He filtered the specific page to get data for each episode of mob violence by the calendar date the incident occurred. He was able to establish a calendar date for each research incident from multiple sources - personal diary, media personnel, political party and government institution (police). Finally, the researcher had qualitative data collected from each of the activists, 9 for each case, and a total of 18 qualitative data from Case (A), Case (B) and Case (C), and saved in pdf format for easy reference and to facilitate the field data analysis process. The researcher is actively collecting and analyzing the raw data and is therefore expected to control significant bias in this process.

Another important activity during this stage is the management of researcher bias. In qualitative research, a discussion takes place between the participant and the researcher in a natural environment. They are contexts – where research is conducted, actors – people observed or

interviewed, events – agents observed or interviewed, and processes – the evolving nature of events caused by actors, realized within (Creswell, 2018). The researcher essentially and carefully considered the topic of investigation and identified any bias that might affect the content analysis – this is known as bracketing. Therefore, he included significant and potential points of bias related to his experiential knowledge, political orientation, religion, culture, and worldview. Since graduating from college in 2002, he has had first-hand experience in various capacities participating in social movements demanding better democratic governance, equitable sharing of resources, and quality political representation in Ethiopia. He comes from a less hierarchical community and tends to place less value on a highly centralized form of state and governance. With a firm stance on the nature and sanctity of individual human beings, he has had no experience of being absorbed by ethnicity, although he appreciates social groups as enablers of individual capabilities. This process helped him become aware of potential areas of bias and less likely to see them subconsciously to influence the data analysis process. The bracketing process took place as he continuously engaged in reading and re-reading the qualitative data and the research topic.

ii. Phase 2: Organization

Three important processes take place during the organizing phase – coding, grouping and categorizing qualitative data in ascending order. Coding is the process of labeling and organizing data so that the researcher can easily identify themes in his data and the relationships between those themes. Open coding means that notes and titles are written into the text as it is read. The written material is thoroughly read and many necessary headings are written in the margins to describe all aspects of the content (Creswell, 2018).

In any case, it is clear that the data do not speak for themselves and the researcher needs to develop an analysis of what is happening, formulate these ideas and illustrate them with carefully selected quotes from research informants. As such, in this case the researcher presented a qualitative data analysis in the form of a table with the key frames, core messages and contexts of the research participants' conversations on Facebook. As such, he developed a data matrix in the form of a table to group the code so that themes and their relationship can be easily identified. The code table is supplied in two formats - the initial code and the final code. The qualitative data

are populated in the initial code and listed under each theme identified as the frame of the moment of lynching, key message and context against each of the research participants.

Another useful data analysis element that this procedure involves is classification that includes categorizing the research objects or events into groups based on the characteristics or connections they share. This categorization can be done in one of two ways: by logically dividing the population or by grouping similar individuals (Creswell, 2018). In the final code, the data are relatively reduced and simplified for easy analysis. The research topic is specified and the research participants are systematically grouped. This procedure helps the researcher classify significant words or phrases and categorize them according to their thematic group as shown in Table 3. The codes are grouped according to their relationship to each of the qualitative data in the immediately preceding step.

The final step in the organization phase is categorization. The purpose of creating a category is to provide a way to describe research phenomena, improve understanding and create knowledge (Creswell, 2018). When creating such categories using inductive content analysis, the researcher uses interpretation to decide which codes should fall into the same category. As such, the content extracted from the field data are again systematically categorized based on their thematic similarities as shown in Table 3. Finally, in *Phase 3*, reporting / presentation of the findings are provided in the proceeding findings and discussions chapter.

3.5.3 Maintaining high quality standard of data analysis

A qualitative researcher often tries to reveal a comprehensive picture of the problem under study. This involves a number of reporting from numerous perspectives, and identifying multiple factors that meaningfully describe overall research picture or phenomena (Creswell, 2018). On top of the subjective nature of qualitative research, social science investigation is generally complex. In this context, qualitative scholars have offered important insights, outlines, and elaborate standards of practice to be followed while conducting qualitative research to help a possible level of excellence in qualitative research is maintained (Tracy, 2019; Creswell, 2018). Thus, the overall conduct of this research process has closely followed high standard qualitative research procedures including. One such standard is ensuring a value theme that is concerned with whether the research topic is current, significant, and/or relevant. This concern is reviewed and

successfully approved by a panel of scholars during the proposal presentation of this research. Second standard is the issues of rigorousness, if the research process includes robust, appropriate, and comprehensive theoretical/conceptual framework, methods of data collection and analysis, and research design and methodology. Another issue is related to credibility, if the research has highlighted important specific details, explanations of knowledge, and methods of data collection and analysis used have considered appropriate triangulation and reflective participation of participants. These two immediately preceding concerns are addressed in the methodology chapter. Further area of concern to maintain high standards is associated with significant contribution and ethical considerations of the research. In this regard, the significance of this research in terms of theoretical, practical and/or methodological gap, and ethical dimension that includes if the research process is sensitive to human subjects, situational and relational ethics and cultural specificities are discussed in the introduction chapter. Lastly, concerns of meaningful coherence that deals with standard logical framework or research design is presented in the methodology chapter.

3.6 The research methodological limitations

Every research project has limitations and shortcomings, and these should be openly acknowledged to give readers a better picture and understanding of the research project (Creswell, 2014). In this way, the researcher explained details of an important trade-off but without losing the value of his research work despite its limitations and/or challenges.

In qualitative research such as this, methodological limitations can vary widely between studies, from common issues such as time and budget constraints to challenges of subjectivity. For example, the researcher played an active role in the production of meaning, in which case maintaining the ideal balance of assigning meaning with zero influence from the researcher's worldview was almost impossible. One of the most celebrated practices of qualitative research is self-reflexivity, which is considered honesty and authenticity with oneself, one's research, and one's audience (Creswell, 2018; Tracy, 2010). Self-reflection encourages writers to be honest about their strengths and weaknesses. Researchers can practice self-reflexivity before even entering the field by being introspective, assessing their own biases and motivations, and asking whether they are appropriate for researching their chosen sites or topics at this time (Tracy 2010). As such, the researcher exhausted the points of bias in the form of a checklist (parentheses

technique) and tried to maintain a possible compromise. In doing so, the researcher acted honestly while also showing the audience challenges that could otherwise significantly affect the research process.

Another significant methodological limitation was the quality (in terms of reliability) of the field data. Triangulation in academic inquiry refers to the adoption of multiple data sets, methods, theories, and/or researchers in order to better understand a research question (Creswell, 2018). The researcher used a data triangulation scheme to improve the generalizability of his research findings and to minimize the presence of research bias. The process of data triangulation involved the use of data from multiple sources in the research process to increase the value of research findings by minimizing research bias (Creswell, 2018). For this purpose, the research had multiple sources of data and thus collected more data.

Intricacy of Social Media and its contents are another limitation. The researcher relied on the target Social Media content as it is not as it was. The contents are not in full control of the researcher, it might have changed. However, content triangulation is employed to reduce risk on the research outcome.

Finally, poor internet connectivity and inability to access latest digital data collection tools is another source of problem the researcher faced during data collection. He couldn't manage access to the most recent software to easily filter and download old Facebook pages and shared documents. For example, imagine downloading a page with more than 5000 comments, it is cumbersome and time-consuming. However, the researcher used manual means to filter the calendar date to find the required dates and then successfully managed downloading all data required.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

Notably the latest reform of government in Ethiopia in 2018 includes a number of horrific incidents of mob violence transpiring in various parts of the country. Understanding the dynamics of underpinning factors of mob violence is not the prime interest of this particular investigation. Nevertheless, these moments of violence targeting individuals drew reactions from key social media activists of Amhara, Oromo, or Tigray descent and claimed to represent their respective groups. These notable activists were observed framing and representing different moments of lynching on social media particularly on their respective Facebook page posts. The Facebook page post not only communicates how they narrate and frame the lynching incident, but it also has attracted reactions from their followers and/or any other relevant digital content creators, which were manifested through the comments and counter-comments provided on that particular Facebook page post. This, understanding of how people react to an episode of lynching event is the main concern of this research. As such, qualitative data was collected, analyzed, and discussed in this chapter.

This research is primarily concerned with understanding and conceptualizing patterns of frame narratives about the different moments of lynching incidents of the research events. Guided by the research questions: (1) how do key online activists of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray descent frame episodes of lynching? (2) what are the major terms of debate that engage the key online activists?; and (3) what are the dynamics of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray ethno-nationalism, the politics of difference, and moral accountability in the post-2018 political transition that involved lynching, the findings and discussions are provided. The researcher applied Creswell (2018) inductive qualitative content analysis method to make sense of the qualitative data and presented the data analysis findings. As such, the analysis process determined the unit of analysis, obtained a comprehensive understanding of the data, formulated an initial and final scheme of open coding of the data, the data were further grouped, categorized, and made abstraction into different thematic areas, and finally into a conceptual system of understanding or patterns of thinking of the research topic is presented.

Based on these major contexts, this chapter positions the findings and discussions of online framing of the lynching incidents by the key online activists, as including the major terms of debates among Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray nationalism, and the dynamics of ethno-nationalism, politics of difference, and moral accountability in the post-2018 political transition in Ethiopia. Preceded by presentation of conceptual framework as an important section, the discussion is based on the data analysis findings generated through inductive content analysis that involved thematic level analysis. Thus, this meaning-assigning process largely accounts for the actors' perspective as provided in Table 3 and themes are conceptually interrelated, and thus meaning-making was interdependent on each other's concept frames formulated.

4.2 Conceptual framework

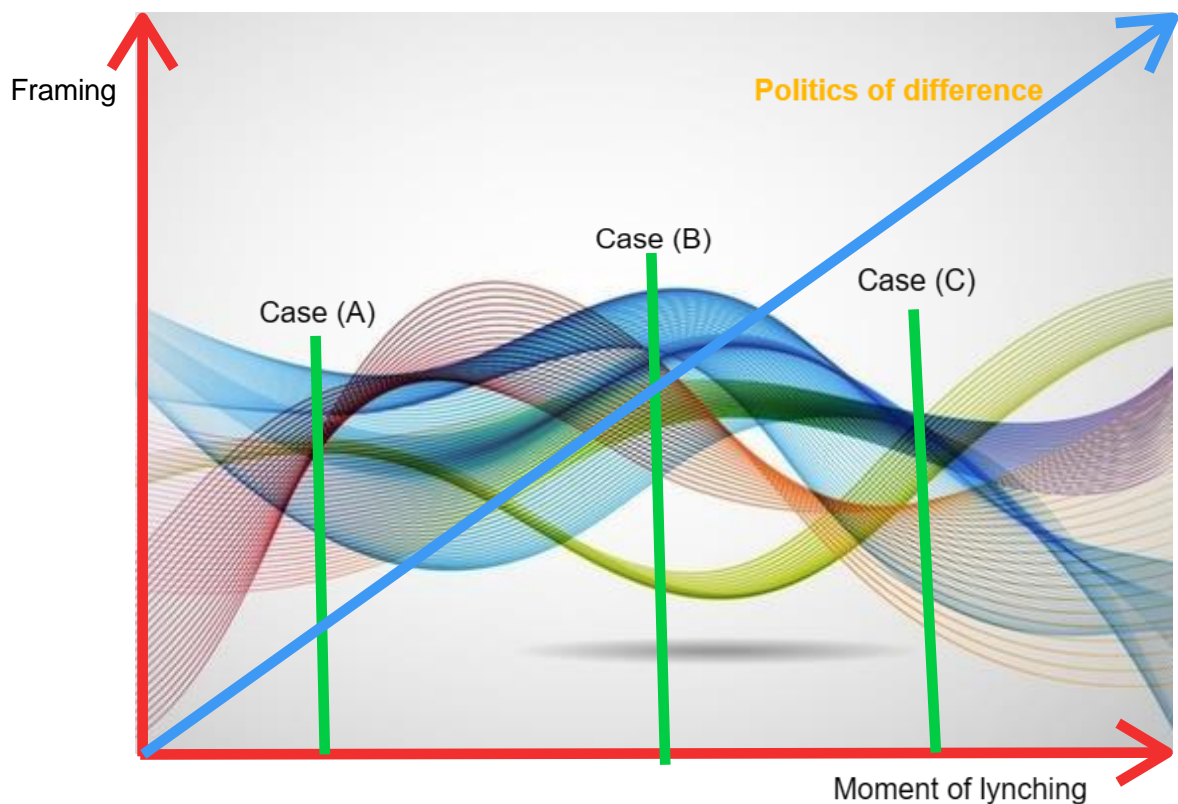


Figure 2: Conceptual framework

The variant colorful wave in motion is adapted to symbolize a fluid and complex interactions among Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray ethno-nationalist discourse – claim and counterclaim, contrast and complement, and construction and deconstruction in contemporary Ethiopia. The

wave is composed of three significant beams of color highlighting each of the identified ethno-nationalist narrative. At each point of episodes of mob violence which is labeled as Case (A), Case (B), and Case (C) there is an intersection and contrast. Along the continuum of the ethno-nationalist discourse, political difference have continued surfacing and resonating between frame narration and moments of lynching from Case (A) through Case (C).

4.3 Findings and discussions

According to Creswell (2018), the final step in analyzing qualitative data is abstraction involving modeling, conceptual system formation, or pattern of thinking. Abstraction involves forming a general description of the object of study by creating categories (Robson 1993, Burnard 1996, Polit & Beck 2004). Each category is named using content-specific words. At this point the code is fully developed and focused on telling the story to the audience. A coherent summary of qualitative research, findings, and evidence are essential for discussion and debate among stakeholders before they formulate meaningful courses of action. Bernard (1988) argued that qualitative data analysis relies heavily on the presentation of selected anecdotes and informant comments, i.e., citations that enable the reader to quickly understand the topic under discussion. He also mentioned construction of visual representations as another important part of qualitative data analysis. Organizing the data in tabular or matrix form and plotting theory or concept in flowchart or map enhance better communication. In this sense, the researcher has taken a proven approach to assembling the data analysis findings into a series of charts, tables, and other visual elements that weave into a presentation narrative. Thus, the researcher created systematically reduced and abstracted data narrative as given in Table 2 (A), (B), and (C), and Table 3 respectively in the following sections.

In this particular research, the findings and discussions are incorporated into a single chapter. An inclusion of the key report of the data analysis findings into the discussions would give readers an easily accessible referenced accounts of the themes and it would maximize better readings of the research findings as a whole.

Table 2(A): Initial coding scheme of the key activist’s lynching frame, message, and context on case (A)

Participant	framing of moments of lynching incidents	Major terms of debate / key messages	the politics of difference in the post-2018 political transition
Activist (AS-T)	“Ethiopia is a country of mob justice and anarchy- features of a failed state”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new leadership is failing the state of Ethiopia • Justifying the TPLF as a principal actor as a force of peace and stability • claiming the primogeniture status of the federalism discourse in Ethiopia • Uncertainty and looming political crisis • Fledgling change agent • Disruption of civil order 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsuccessful management of a demanding change and same time not comfortable with the political transition that slowly but surely went off the typical Tigray nationalist discourse (TPLF) comprehension • Denying a relevant and emerging political space in the name of an adversary (historical, structural, or imagination) • It boils down to the failure of the war transition in Ethiopia
Activist (DB-T)	“Rule by anarchy”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the <i>Medemer</i> is not a well thought political line/project and has invited civil disorder • the discourse is not tested, an obscure agenda • pervasive lawlessness • the reform is exploiting religious forces for its political mission and then the moral ground of Orthodox and Protestant institutions are seriously questionable • centralist discourse is dominating the reform • tendentious communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the lead reformer is teaming up with a disgruntled group with a low profile of experience running a complex state like Ethiopia • the TPLF discourse is highly ostracized and suffering from resultant desperation • discomfited with Ethiopia’s centralist rhetoric • change intransigent • absence of central governance / central authority • attack and charge religious institutions (Orthodox and Protestant) siding with the reform that’s evoking chaos in the country
Activist	“scowl/disdain/disapproval of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • challenged public media framing and censorship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • depicting the pre-reform public media as upholding truth

(SM-T)	the public media's framing as stamped"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compared public media framing and censorship before the reform and after the reform • undermining media governance in reporting events • discrediting an evolving public media framing and content • implied the victim is belonging to a Somali ethnic group • heavy-handed disinformation and misinformation from the mainstream media house 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the same period there was an ongoing conflict between ethnic Oromo and ethnic Somali along the borderline and at Dire Dawa • Reductionist and simplistic approach to state-building narrative in Ethiopia • double standard public media framing • factual distortion information manipulation for a certain predestined political goal
Activist (MT-A)	"crime atrocity" and "barbaric act of violence"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rudimentary means of seeking justice • Oromo elites' exclusive discourse is rudimentary and atrocious • Narrative centered around ethnicity is not a sign of social advancement and peace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great hope of Ethiopia nationalism took momentum • charge Oromo elites • Capitalize on the excitement of undermining ethnic politics as a lifeline of politics in Ethiopia
Activist (GS-A)	"anarchism" "barbaric", "mob justice"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During political transition reasonable breakdown of law and order is inevitable but should be controlled • The reform should mind the role of the spoilers – ethnocentric discourse promoters • "Violence is inevitable during the transition... the reform suffers from the clash of narratives" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glorious past and utopian future took the currency • Low level of seriousness in accounting historical, cultural, and structural factors of understanding political, social, economic, and memory of the evolution of state-making in Ethiopia • Ethno-nationalist narrative portrayed as a spoiler agent
Activist (AT-A)	"act of fiendishness"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • artificiality of change/reform • the reform is palliative so long as the structural issues remain the same • mainstream ethnic Oromo discourse as besieging an agency of violence • "the reform is showing-off... how it's handling incompatibilities continue producing more violence" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ethnic-nationalist "intellectuals providing ideological underpinning" • the devil is in the hand of ill-conceived ethnic nationalism • "intellectuals providing ideological underpinning"

<p>Activist (JM-O)</p>	<p>“mob attack”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “When a country moves from authoritarianism to democracy, the rule of guns gives away to the rule of law. We are now in that transition where the rule of guns has been defeated and the rule of law is yet to take root. That is a vacuum where lawlessness and anarchy lurk” • absence of concerted effort to support the transition partly blamed for the violence • Given the transition circumstances the reactionary reaction is not a surprise as such, a proactive reaction is encouraged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of negotiated transition roadmap • outraged youth groups are not demobilized • transition vacuum • the mob violence is a result of the transition vacuum • transition vacuum crowds lawlessness and anarchy • contagious mob violence across the country • speed up the transition to democracy for the rule of law to take charge
<p>Activist (AA-O)</p>	<p>“mob justice”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • observe the rule of law to seek justice • stop taking the law into your own hands • the violent act is completely undesirable and damages the true spirit of the desired change/transition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “denounced the mob justice” implied being carried out by certain groups in the process • breakdown of the rule of law
<p>Activist (DG-O)</p>	<p>“dangerous ungoverned act”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the local authority is charged with failing to maintain law and order • Governance responsibility and a vigilant eye missing • significant magnitude of the fragility of the transition needs serious attention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a degree of desperateness from the key supporter of the transition

Table 2(B): Initial coding scheme of the key activist’s lynching frame, message, and context on case (B)

Participant	Framing of moments of lynching incidents	Major terms of debate / key messages	The politics of difference in the post-2018 political transition
Activist (AS-T)	“fragility of law and order” in the ARS” and a “total breakdown of governance”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the ARS government is a bad apple of the federation • promote a perception that ARS is a no-go zone area including for university education • the emerging narration in the region is not only wild externally, but it is also the same internally • Amhara political discourse is unwarranted in many accounts • demonizing the ARS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • disowning elites behind Amhara’s narrative and other principal narratives in Ethiopia • continued attempt of excluding and attacking the Amhara elite’s discourse • “characterizing the fragility of law and order in the ARS as a total breakdown of governance”
Activist (DB-T)	“denial/deliberate avoidance of the horrible mob attack”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • institutions and individuals alike who are sympathizers of the Amhara elites’ narrative do not want to acknowledge the mob attack in public • deliberately avoid recognizing moral guilt from the public realm • worried about their image, less concerned about the humanity • attempt to disassociate from barbaric act • show how institutions play in the politics of denial and othering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overlook the mob attack not to tarnish the image of the presumably established moral authority • concern for self-image over humanity (universal values)
Activist (SM-T)	“Othering”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instrumenting the mob attack to undermine the social capital of “them” and its ability to make an alliance • attempt to depopulate the narrative of “them” from the perceived federation discourse alliance in Ethiopia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • portray Amhara nationalism as one and similar to “Ethiopia Nationalism” and for different reasons deny it significant space in the multinational federation discourse • paint Amhara nationalism as a threat to the multinational federation • questioning the moral ground of “them” to make an alliance based on humanity
Activist (MT-A)	“mob justice”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • act of justice isn’t relative, it stands its own ground • stress on the humanistic dimension of approaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accept guilt instead of blame trade • there is an element of inevitability

		<p>moments of violence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accept responsibility instead of blame game for acts of violence in your environment • we accept and learn from the wrong act and “let’s move on” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We hold responsibility, the mob justice is completely wrong and shouldn’t be repeated” transformative approach to understanding acts of violence
Activist (GS-A)			
Activist (AT-A)	“othering”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliberately avoid commenting on some of the specific acts of violence in ARS and instead link all the wrongdoings to the TPLF and its program partners in the region state as they are fully responsible for the national political framework. • For certain reasons back stepped from publicly opinionating about such a significant moment of violence in ARS • Deny group responsibility and instead want to trade blame on “others” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • want to handle the “home wrong” quite differently or solely link it to the former political force i.e. TPLF, and its implementing partners • hold the Tigray discourse led by TPLF and its partners responsible for all acts of violence and crime in Ethiopia
Activist (DG-O)	“transition challenges”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • challenges are principally inherited ...able leadership can handle it • indicate that the government should be mindful of “wrong elements” in this process • the emerging violence is a minor incident – but consequential if not handled well, likely to derail the transition from its main course • not avoidable but manage the degree of destruction • “lack of focus on the bigger picture” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerned about missing leadership that maintains a rational balance between inevitability and compatibility of the political transition • Implied urgency to build up a new political capital • The transition leadership is insensitive to: simplicity, complexity, incompatibility, and unprofessionalism • “the emerging outbreaks of violence are attributed to failure to expertly manage transition challenges”
Activist (AA-O)	“unacceptable level of violence in the country”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Moving from a farcical and excessive use (abuse) of law & order to what a government extremely reluctance to keep law and order” • the government is not taking the law and order seriously • violence changes the conversation and the transition can be compromised 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is an effort of supporting the transition • ownership of the transition was not challenged

Activist (JM-O)	“indicator of transition failure”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “the mob violence is expected but shouldn’t be politicized and the authorities must contain it” • good witnessing Amhara nationalism shaping in to its true nature but worrying seeing it dangerously emerging • concerned to maintain “Oromo-Amhara” alliance against Tigray • lack of the transition roadmap ... expertly managing complexities” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • heightened power politics – within and without; in-group and out-group dynamics • fragile relationship – amity and/or enmity among the major political narratives • “the transition’s failure to manage subversive acts and saboteurs”
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Table 2(C): Initial coding scheme of the key activist’s lynching frame, message, and context on case (C)

Participant	Framing of moments of lynching incidents	Major terms of debate / key messages	The politics of difference in the post-2018 political transition
Activist (AS-T)	“chaos”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remain focused and resilient • Build force • “no backsliding, remain resilient” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived threat from Amhara regional state, federal government, & Eritrea government
Activist (DB-T)	“targeted tragedy”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not supposed to happen in the Free State of Tigray • Shocking tragedy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the tragedy wouldn’t have happened in the free State of Tigray • Internal and external enemy actor • Instrumentation of the violence to advance independence of Tigray
Activist (SM-T)	“an excuse to attack the position of Tigray”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no identity question but demand for development • hold the federal & Amhara regional state responsible for the attack 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implicate the federal & Amhara regional state alliance as threat to Tigray • Raya identity is settled
Activist (MT-A)	“state force attack”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the regional state of Tigray is attacking the Alamata people • defense force not mitigating the attack 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • proxy conflict between the neighboring state of Tigray and Amhara state • regular force coercively engaging the people at Alamata
Activist (GS-A)	“atrocious, barbaric”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demand for “Amhara” self-rule and recognition of identity • ethnic mobilization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the peace anomaly and mob violence are linked to the institutional practice of ethnic mobilization

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> political demand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> politicized identity Political othering
Activist (AT-A)	“manifestation of the constitution”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the change must be deep – structural not nominal the peace anomaly and mob violence are linked to the institutional practice of ethnic mobilization the agency of ethnic mobilization should be challenged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The discourse of the reform is incompatible with the typical elitist narrative from Tigray and Oromo The constitution that institutionalized ethnic form of governance is the source of all these major evils
Activist (DG-O)	“minor short-term discordance”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inherited problem Internal challenge Address leadership gap to overcome the challenge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political capacity New political capital
Activist (AA-O)	“Unjustifiable response”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unjustifiable response to an identity demand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unaccommodated identity questions
Activist (JM-O)			

4.4 Framing and representing lynching

In this section, the qualitative data which were extracted from the primary sources of 9 key Facebook activists, 3 from each ethnic lineage namely Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray, and secondary data sources, were coherently presented. As provided in Table 2 (A), 2 (B), and 2 (C), the field data collected from the key Facebook activists' page post were systematically coded, and the initial code later grouped and categorized, and finally thematically abstracted as presented in Table 3. Thus, the data analysis led to the following three most relevant inter-related findings.

The notable activists from each group named the lynching moment compatibly, while between the line readings meant quite different for each of the groups. Thus, the online framing of the moments of the lynching incident are ideologically driven and fall under . The analysis findings imply that the framing is invariably associated with a dominant political narrative to which the online agent subscribes to. In other words, the sociological imaginations and constructs of the actors are manifestly observed. In other words, in terms of narration – descriptive story – the online activists' frame narrative of the lynching moments means almost similar that it is an abominable extrajudicial killing, crime atrocious, mob attack, or mob justice but in terms of frame narrative – narration of the incident from the actors' point of view – it is found essentially means different for each ethnic group.

Thus, online activists coming from all of the groups frame the various lynching episodes investigated as substantively associated with ethno-nationalism and political othering prominently figuring “revitalization frame” for the Amhara, and “inevitability frame”, and “reversal frame” for the Oromo and Tigray cases respectively. The discussion of these contending frames, therefore, involves such factors of different perspectives of the perception and practice of ethno-nationalism and politics of difference, and the engaging future of Ethiopia particularly introduced in the post-2018 transition. Further, the data analysis findings shows that the online narration of the lynching moments utilized to promote and/or deconstruct political narrative contestation, claim, and counterclaim between and among Amhara ethno-nationalism, Oromo ethno-nationalism, and Tigray ethno-nationalism. The popular mob violent moments frame are observed being presented as (de-)legitimizing factor of a politics of difference, and justified a pervasiveness of moral in the post-2018 political transition in Ethiopia.

Table 3: Final coding scheme, participant group against categories of the research theme

Participant (Origin)	Theme 1: Framing moments of lynching incidents	Theme 2: Major terms of debate / key messages	Theme 3: Politics of Difference in the post-2018 Political Transition
Amhara	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barbaric • Mob justice • Anarchy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative centered around ethnicity is not a sign of social advancement and peace • Exclusive discourse is rudimentary and atrocious • Violence is inevitable • the reform/transition must be deep – structural not nominal • “Othering” the violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethno-nationalism is linked to violence and portrayed as a spoiler agent • Ethiopia’s state-making narrative is significantly and deliberately distorted in favor of ethnic mobilization • Discourse ambiguity • Implicate the incident onto the group who want to maintain the status quo
Oromo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mob attack and failure of law and order • Mob justice • Dangerous act for governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition vacuum • narrative incompatibilities • elite bargain • observe the rule of law to seek justice • stop taking the law into your own hands • transition is fragile and there is a tolerable degree of uncertainty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of negotiated transition roadmap • leadership challenged and political crisis • political ineptness and inevitable circumstance • not to maintain status quo • charge the incident on spoiler group want to disrupt the reform
Tigray	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disruption of civil order and crime atrocity • Rule by anarchy • Pervasive lawlessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reform crisis • the TPLF is an important reform actor but pushed off • Othering, <i>Medemer</i> is an obscure project causing disruption of peace, othering • deliberate manipulation of stories • political leadership crisis • hold the reform & its leadership responsible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political crisis / uncertainty as mode of governance • The centralist discourse is dominating the reform • Anti-ethno nationalist discourse is distorting factual information • Political dislocation • Reductionist and simplistic approach to state-building narrative in Ethiopia

4.4.1 Contending Frames: revitalization, inevitability, and reversal

The research findings indicate that framing and representing lynching among notable online activists belonging to Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray ethnic origin are essentially contending. The key online Amhara's frame is systematically conceptualized as "Revitalization frame", the Oromo's online discourse as "Inevitability frame", and the Tigray online narrative as "Reversal frame". This online frame dynamic is approached within the important topics range from the history of nation-building to the perception and role of ethno-nationalism in nation-building, as well as the practice and perspicacity of politics of difference. Broadly speaking, the social media frame narrative meaning-making is situated in the historical perspectives of nation-making and historiography in Ethiopia as it is critical to the construction of social contracts and their sustainability.

A social change Activists engage social media platforms which are becoming a powerful tool to disseminate information, frame incidents, share news, and entertain ideas to a vast audience. However, the potential negative impact of social media on individuals and society cannot be ignored. One of the issues that have received attention in recent years in academia is the dynamics of social media activism and violence (Fanti et al., 2012; Blaker, 2015; Young, 2017).

In this context, a number of literature indicate that notable social media activists make targeted use of online framing to justify their positions and actions and justify their roles. In doing so, they exploit a complex feature of a narrative to generate meaning, solve problems, and generate knowledge (Mühlberger, 2020). Scholars specializing in the study of online service providers (OSPs) and violence have explored the dynamics of social media and violence narrative from different perspectives, but there is limited knowledge in the context of online framing of mob violence incidents in Ethiopia. Framing is often used as a structure for understanding how actors emphasize certain aspects of an issue and how such portrayals influence the audience's perception of the issue (Aukes et al., 2020; Chong and Druckman, 2007). On a similar note, Entman (1993) to frame is "to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation" (p. 52). Thus, an online frame narrative can refer to the targeted use of social media activism to tell a story usually to influence or shape the audience's understanding, perception, or knowledge. The frame narrative

commonly entails different perspectives of the narrator with a purpose essentially to influence its imagined audience's perception, knowledge, or understanding of the topic. Reviewed literature indicates that Facebook activists have used a variety of strategies to frame lynching, including narrative construction, collective action mobilization, and emotional appeal (Harlow et al., 2020; Joyce, 2010). In this research online frame strategy is of less importance but how the framing is paramount relevant to the research goal and objectives.

In the following subsections, referring to the data analysis findings, the meanings of each of the contending frame narratives, how each of the frames unfolded in the online discourse, and how the frames relates to ethno-nationalism and politics of difference is contextually discussed.

i. Revitalization frame

How did the notable online activists coming from Amhara ethnic origin frame different moments of lynching that occurred at various places in Ethiopia? The data analysis findings provided in Table 2 (A), (B), and (C), and Table 3 clearly supports “Revitalization Frame” construction of the frame narrative of the episodes of different lynching practice by online activists from Amhara origin. Lexically, the word “revitalization” is used to denote an action of “imbuing new life, energy, activity, or success to something”. As such, for this group regardless of ideological footings, the moments of various lynching incidents were portrayed as a tip of a “dead end” of a social contract or an adopted grand interaction, particularly ethno-nationalism and ethnocentric structure of governance as metaphorically “losing life” in contemporary Ethiopia. In this case, the basic structure of the frame narrative underpinning the popular discourse of the online activists of the Amhara group clearly urges “immediate popular action” to give “life” to the ethnic oriented federal structure it charges as bedeviling the unprecedented and emerging mob violence in the country. Thus, the frame narrative is clearly linked to the practice and perception of ethno-nationalism and politics of difference in the country.

The Amhara groups' Facebook frame narrative of each of the lynching phenomenon does not stand in isolation of the context of the birth of Amhara ethno-nationalism. Scholars studying the Amhara political discourse essentially agree on an inception of Amhara ethno-nationalism but the intensity of the emergency is debatable (Yilkal, 2021, Yared, 2022); because some present it as a counter discourse (Tezera, 2021). However, many ethnic Amhara online mobilizers and activists

argue “Amhara mobilization” as distinctively unique to the normal ethno-nationalist narrative like Tigray or Oromo ethno-nationalism. For them, the emerging Amhara identity narrative is a constitutive element of “saving Ethiopia” from consequences of ethnocentric social interaction allegedly ravaging the social fabric, breeding conflict and instability, and near-resulting complete disintegration. Further, they significantly perceive it as an induced political adventure that evidently came following the 2018 reform.

While framing the different mob violence investigated, the popular action that this group essentially advocates for is clearly observed as a future-oriented call for embracing a regeneration task about the social contract that they believed as failing Ethiopia. In other words, the frame narratives out rightly appeals to a wider audience to reject what they call forced ill-judged ethnic-oriented federal form of governance in Ethiopia. In this case, most of the key activists strongly charge what they labeled as few hateful ethnocentric elites and their external enablers as behind this project of “disowning and/or disintegrating Ethiopia”. For instance, in Table 2 (A), AT-A mob violence was put as resulting from a hare-brained political exercise as it is asserted as “ethnic-nationalist intellectuals providing ideological underpinning”, and “the devil is in the hand of ill-conceived ethnic nationalism”. Further supporting narrative that the 1995 ethnically oriented constitution which institutionalized ethnic politics as strongly associated with the mob violence, the data analysis finding indicated in Table 2 (B) and (C), the lynching episodes were exhibited as “political other” and “State force attack” respectively. In this process, for different reasons, what is less considered is the willingness to furnish capacity to strategically embrace tested advantages of ethnic narrative instead of only being occupied with its abnormality. In this sense, quite worryingly, the data analysis findings show any attempt of compliance to reprehension of the tunnel-vision narrative is progressively less publicized making it more dangerous. Of course with different perspectives this circumstance is equally true to the other two ethno-nationalist groups that underwent an investigation.

Based on the data analysis finding expressed in Table (A), (B), (C), and Table 3, the Amhara group online activists’ frame narrative of the lynching moments were comparatively full of “Othering” leading to a presentation of incompatibility discourse. But save the perspectives, this is also true for other key online activists coming from the Oromo and Tigray ethnic groups. According to Powell (2017), the concept of “Othering” is used to refer to neither liking nor

disliking someone, but it is based on the conscious or unconscious assumption that certain identified groups pose a threat to priority groups. It is driven primarily by political activists and the media, rather than personal contact. He notes that “Othering” is a common experience that societies essentially face during social transition. In this case, the online activists rely slightly on geography but strongly on the identity narrative which is to them incompatible to support the “othering” element during the frame narrative situated in the context of ethno-nationalism in Ethiopia. Their framing semantically involved the customary conception of mob violence and largely emphasized the structural loopholes of the politicized ethnic identity in the country. Thus, their frame narrative puts greater emphasis on the “reconstruction of an establishment” that was in existence before the introduction of institutionalized ethnicity in Ethiopia. In this particular case, this sense of framing essentially came in clear contrast with that of the online Oromo and Tigray nationalist activist groups’ frame. For instance, as specified in Tables 2 (A) and (C), respectively online activists GA-A, and AT-A describe the different lynching episodes at different places in the country as “barbaric”, and a “manifestation of the constitution”. In this case, the term “barbaric” which frequently appeared in the data analysis of case (A) for this particular group, is utilized to consciously connote the cruel act of the distant world quite in opposition to what is roundabout to one in this era of nobility and civility, and that Ethiopia is expected to be a party. The frame narrative of this group as a whole subliminally uncovers an argument that the “foreign” and emerging mob violence is being exercised mainly due to the failure to essentially reconstruct institutionalized ethno-nationalism. In sum, the frame narrative of this group constitutes what can be termed as political othering largely constituting a “revitalization frame” in the post-2018 political transition in Ethiopia.

Overall, the revitalization frame largely emphasizes on saving the common good, it argues that the unwarranted prominence of ethnic identity in Ethiopian politics needs to be systematically undermined, otherwise power domination and struggle for ‘liberation’ will recycle and nowhere to end. In other words, a circumstance where certain ethnic groups dominate state power, thus monopolizing resources, resulting into other groups’ perception as being marginalized and oppressed, and then induce violence to change the status quo. The solution, according to Bekri (2020) is introduction of a meritocratic democratic system that focuses on human identity rather than political nationalization. A recollected effort is truly needed to initiate a qualitative national

politics that genuinely bear human element at its best dispensation, and revitalize institutions that are responsive, accessible, and responsible to its immediate constituency.

ii. *Inevitability frame*

The in-depth qualitative investigation on how the notable Oromo online activists describe the various episodes of different lynching sampled cases are aggregately abstracted into an “Inevitability Frame”. The conception of “inevitability frame” draws on a semantic meaning of the word “inevitable” situated in how the online activists from Oromo ethnic group principally relates to the post-2018 political transition in Ethiopia. Many agree, contrary to what is hoped, the political reform introduced quite unprecedented incidents of mob violence. These moments of mob violence including lynching were engaged in an online popular discourse. The popular online discourse of this group, essentially and consciously, does not want to go beyond reading the moments of the mob violence as a mere reform challenge and leadership crisis. They did understand and present the lynching phenomenon as an unavoidable process of the post-2018 political transition – a byproduct of the reform and/or limitations of the change agency.

By design, therefore, this group avoids going to the background explanation of the phenomenon. But, at the bottom-line of the “inevitability frame” survival and maintaining status quo is the core value. Standing on the data findings, this is significantly because, sometimes at the expense of the Ethiopian state and society as a whole, the mainstreamed perspective of Oromo ethno-nationalism is progressively taking the center stage, and quite boldly self-making (re-)calibrator of the often time challenged ethno-nationalist institutions in Ethiopia.

Analytical thinking of the internal complexity and fragility among the variant groups of ethno-nationalist and Oromo elites discourse is important. But generally it relates to external stimuli as largely proper and unified contrast (less coherent). Unlike with the cases of Amhara and Tigray in-group variations, a considerate dynamics of diverse footing among the Oromo groups often results in significantly different conception of ethno-nationalism and politics of difference in Ethiopia. All in all, in so many ways the online frame narrative of the lynching moments by activists linked to Oromo descent relates with an ethno-nationalist discourse of the Oromo group. Critical observation has it that the notable activists are obdurately self-styled with particular space claim – “principal ownership and historical responsibility” in the process of the political

transition to its much unknown end. For the online discourse limiting itself to an arguably rational space, the data analysis findings show, that it might risk substantial dominance. This less culpable positioning transcribes into disinteresting such thinking required about the moments of the mob violence beyond its surface description. Formally, like Tigray ethno-nationalism but unlike Amhara ethno-nationalism, Oromo ethno-nationalism goes far back beyond the recent reform in Ethiopia. Still, it qualitatively unfolded differently during the post-2018 political reform in the country.

As stated in a number of occasions indicated in the data analysis findings in Table 2 (A), (B), (C), and Table 3, regarding the episodes of the lynching incidents of the notable Facebook informants of Oromo origin largely imply that the moment is undesirable but a manageable degree of transition crisis. Their frame narrative is significantly contrasted with the “Reversal Frame”, and “Revitalization Frame”. But almost all of the frame narratives seriously acknowledge the emerging phenomenon as negatively impactful and implying danger in the post-2018 transition in the country. Nevertheless, the inevitability frame misplace the responsibility for the mob violence that includes terrible lynching incidents unlike the other two online groups belonging to Tigray and Amhara. Here, the Amhara groups of the online activists' frame, some of them, claim attribute to the spoiling role of the Tigray subversive actors. While some other Amhara and Oromo link it to a non-state political actor.

The frame narrative of the online activists of Oromo descent principally associates the moment of the lynching incidents with a universal transition challenges. For instance, as indicated in Table 2 (C), key online activist DG-O frame the lynching moment as “minor short-term discordance”, and in a similar note in Table 2 (B), another informant, JM-O, frame a similar case but that occurred at a different place as “indicator of transition failure”. In this case, it can be observed that the framings are generally less sensitive to geography but to the actors’ worldview and his/her targeted key message. Thus, in aggregate terms, the data analysis findings in the cases of online activists belonging to Oromo origin principally emphasizes “survival” while framing and representing the moments of different lynching phenomenon across the country.

Another important dimension that comes out well is that the frame narrative undermines any attempt to associate the moments of mob violence to structural factors. In this regard, the online activists from the Oromo origin strongly resist ethno-nationalism as the principal source of the

problem rather strongly attribute it to the malfunction of ethno-nationalism under the care of the Tigray ethno-nationalism. This is clearly to justify and present Oromo elite led ethno-nationalism as the next best leader and purifier – boldly contextualizing some socioeconomic, population, and geostrategic location advantage, of the ethnocentric institution in the country. In this regard, the data findings in Table 2 (A), one of the informants put it this way, JM-O “When a country moves from authoritarianism to democracy, the rule of guns gives away to the rule of law. We are now in that transition where the rule of guns has been defeated and the rule of law is yet to take root. That is a vacuum where lawlessness and anarchy lurk”. This statement implies asserts that the out-going regime which was in real terms Tigray ethno-nationalism dominated is presented as invariably existing, leaving violence and instability a breeding ground. In a similar note, another frame capitalizing on inheriting the problem has carried, “moving from a farcical and excessive use (abuse) of law and order to a government extreme reluctance to keep law and order” AA-O, the informant argues that the government is not taking the law and order seriously while suggestively implicating the previous regime.

Further, the “Inevitability Frame” while treating the Tigray ethno-nationalist online actors as spoilers involved in a subversive act, its frame narrative admits an element of ineptness of the transition leadership and lack of focus. In doing so, the frame justified the moments of the mob violence as a less surprising natural phenomenon during a contested political transition.

iii. Reversal frame

The qualitative findings have implied that the online activists of Tigray origins’ frame narrative of the lynching episodes prominently depicted a serial cynicism about the “good intentions” of the post-2018 political transition and the agency of the reform. In other words, the lynching frame for this group cannot be explained without substantive reference to analytically understanding how they perceive and relates to the 2018 reform. At least until November 2, 2022, this position continuously undergoing much stronger qualification as the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) – essentially an ideologue of the Tigray ethno-nationalism, is involuntarily drifted away from the power center and its relationship with central power has then significantly shifted.

The data analysis findings clearly imply the key online activists of Tigray descent lynching representation is strongly associated with Tigray ethno-nationalism. The association is not simple

and innocent, it is a design to utilize the online communication infrastructure and shape the popular discourse to its taste. Thus, like the other two groups' advocates, the notable online activists from Tigray origin are also on their own do play an active role promoting their respective nationalist variant. In this sense, the data findings presented in Table 2 (A) as DB-T described "centralist force is dominating the transition" implicitly supports the association where the important progenitor of the Tigray ethno-nationalism actor progressively distanced from the key decision making process in the reform. Further in Table 2 (B), SM-T expressed the circumstance as "attempt to depopulate the narrative of Tigray from the perceived federation discourse alliance in Ethiopia", and in Table 2 (C), the same informant narrated the lynching moment as "an excuse to attack the position of Tigray" implicating the Amhara regional state government and the federal government.

Like the other two groups, there is a recognizable degree of "Othering" in the frame narrative of the various lynching incidents of the online activists coming from the Tigray ethnic group. The data analysis findings largely imply that political transition skepticism has its root in the interest to promote "political othering" against the emerging elite group in the leadership of the transition and its alliance all labeled as "the centralist camp". Thus, the lynching moment is framed as a resistance construction against the agency of change, while deconstructing any spirit of centralization in the process of the transition. For instance, the primary data which were collected regarding Case (A) and (C) from the key online activists' Facebook page posts and analysis indicate that Facebook activists' of Tigray origin frame the episode of the lynching incidents as "Ethiopia is a country of mob justice and anarchy- features of a failed state" and "targeted tragedy". While analyzing the data, "an excuse to attack the position of Tigray" is found to appear as the most frequented theme in the analysis which implies a strong "othering" and the expression "the *Medemer* is not a well thought political line/project and has invited civil disorder" imply skepticism of the transition that relatively, at least at the beginning, enjoyed support from the other two groups. In this regard, most of the data analysis findings suggestively connote the association of relative stability and rare incidences of mob violence with the region that remained resistant to the transition as a constitutive element of out-grouping the post-2018 political transition in the country. In other words, they significantly mobilized and remained resistant to the transition finding no substantive space or not perceiving they belong, they relatively remained mob violence experience free. This can be termed as "transition othering". Thus, a critical look

into the notable Tigray group online framing of the various lynching incidents sampled essentially implied transition “Othering” i.e., skepticism founded on change resistance in favor of constructing the established federalist premises, and deconstruction of the centralist perspectives – characterized by claim and counterclaim, and misplacement of the post-2018 political transition process in Ethiopia.

Overall, the notable online activists coming from Tigray ethnic groups’ frame narrative literally describes the mob violence moments as “crime atrocity” or “disruption of civil order” as denotatively indicated in the data analysis findings presented in Table 2 (A) (B), (C), and Table 3. But from the data analysis, the core message presaged is skepticism about the post-2018 political transition in Ethiopia. Hence, they attribute the various lynching moments to the reversal of peace, reversal of democracy, reversal of federalist discourse, development reversal, etc.

4.4.2 Interactions between activists/frames

The data analysis findings cogently revealed that the reform and the future of Ethiopia, and the practice and perception of ethno-nationalism, and the politics of difference has had significantly drawn popular discourse among notable online activists belonging to ethnic Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray. These two major inter-related debates shaped the online interaction among these groups’ notable activists. These multidirectional interactions (conversation) among the key online actors belonging to different social identity origins are importantly different from one another depending on ethno-territorial space where the research phenomenon is observed. In this particular process the time factor is less important. Within this spirit, discussion in one of the proceeding sections considered dimensions of moral agency of the key actors in this phenomenon.

In modern-day Ethiopia, then a frontier in the 1960s, this time round, institutionalized with the enactment of the 1995 constitution, politics of difference (the Marxist-Leninist conception of ethnic identity) remained an important component of public life (Clapham, 2009; Asnake, 2013; Merera, 2004; Markakis, 2011; Leenco, 2004). Arguably situated in a similar environment but from different perspectives, ethno-nationalism remained a hotly debated topic and far from a settlement, and it has continued to unfold during this era of the social media industry, essentially Facebook and other relevant digital communication technologies.

In this particular case, there is prior knowledge on how intersectionality and the dynamics among different ethno-nationalist groups particularly Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray have been unfolding. In contemporary Ethiopia ethno-nationalism progressively evolved taking the center stage of the political organization in the country (Markakis, 1989; Markakis, 2011; Clapham, 2004; Messay, 2001; Messay, 2008; Merera, 2004; Semir, 2019; Yirga, 2017) and it still remained a crucial force of mobilization (Fana and Yonas, 2023) during the post-2018 Ethiopia. Depending on the data analysis findings, the major engagements among these groups can be characterized as complex, increasingly fluid, intersectional, horizontal/vertical, and amity/enmity. A number of factors can be provided to explain these features. However, a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of ethno-nationalism situated in the era of social media particularly during Facebook's engagement of political transition with different cases of mob violence narration is complex and it seeks further investigation. Before moving to the discussion, it is important to sightsee the highlights of the key engagements in existence among Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray nationalism.

In his critical work titled *Nationalism in Historic Ethiopia* (2010), Alemseged Abbay not only exclusively portrayed Amhara as traditional Ethiopia's ruling elite. He claimed the elites successfully utilized 'the glimmers of modernity to build an Ethiopian state in their image' but also holds it accountable to have "launched and led the process of political centralization aimed at de-resourcing the country's socio-cultural diversity and disregard the power base of the local elites like the Oromo or the Tigray" (p. 270). In this case, there is a considerable alliance between Oromo and Tigray nationalism against the "Ethiopianism" whom they claimed the "Amhara" to have exercised a substantive dominance. At least for a longer period, this development has created significant uncertainty from the pan-Ethiopian nationalists, and "since then, Ethiopian nationalism, like ethnic nationalism, has been used to foster various kinds of opposition movements" (Semir, 2019, p. 7). The ethno-nationalist interaction, quite interestingly, changed immediately after the demise of the socialist regime in 1991, marking the beginning of formalized ethno-nationalism in the country.

In contrast to the traditional Ethiopian polity, the introduction of a seemingly new political order with the adoption of a new constitution in 1995 that promulgated the decentralization of power, ethnically defined federal structure, and governance, and self-administration and self-rule has exhibited that a new power alignment has occurred in Ethiopia. In this event of Tigray

nationalism predominantly controlling the central authority, a shift in alliance and enmity has significantly changed. Asafa (1993) captured the process as a replacement of political hegemony from the Amhara elite by the Tigray elite that also shifted the major contention from Oromo-Amhara to Oromo-Tigray (p.383). Both Oromo and Tigray ethno-nationalist elites charge the Amhara elite's hell-bent state nationalism project which is characterized by cultural homogenization and centralization of power, as their major source of insecurity. The Tigray nationalism dominance of the central power induced a shift of alliance and engagement, this round "Amhara" and "Ethiopian Nationalists", and Oromo nationalism primarily focused towards what they commonly claim as minority-control of the political power. This short-lived but impactful alliance pushed Tigray dominance from the center leading to the gradual control of the space by the "Oromo nationalism" (but it is still debatable). According to Tazebew (2021), this latest political engagement birthed relatively an articulated Amhara nationalism in the year 2018 which is highly attributed to the mobilization and political undertaking of the Amhara National Movement (NaMA). The shift of alliance and amity/enmity, and intersectionality narration with the relation to power center among these groups features an emerging online engagement too.

But little is known about how the subject of ethno-nationalism is being engaged online, narrated, and the major terms of debate in the online framing, particularly while Facebook storytelling of different moments of mob violence including lynching cases. In this context, it is not only the concern of this research but practically Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray ethno-nationalism remained an impactful political force. In this case, without having any intention of undermining other similar elements this thesis work focuses only on the notable Facebook activists' online framing of different episodes of lynching incidents coming from these three ethnic groups. This discussion is only concerned with the dynamics among Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray nationalism situated in the politics of difference and online frame narrative of moments of the lynching incident by notable activists from each of these ethnic-nationalist groups.

In post-2018 Ethiopia, a political shift is taking place amid increasing instances of clashes over narrative politics and inciting mob violence, especially among social media activists belonging to Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray nationalism (Semir, 2022; Tazeb, 2021, Verjee, 2021). Online activists associated with Tigray nationalism typically take the TPLF's stance, challenging transitions that they allege as increasingly deviating from a desirable path and equating it with an

introduction of elements that threaten Ethiopia's established federal narrative. While those belonging to Amhara descent are skeptical about clarification and refinement of the move from an ethno-nationalist stance to a compellingly “Ethiopian” and more centralized stance. On another account, the main Facebook activist of the Oromo lineage seems confident and claims about an introduction of a new norm where a multinational version of “Ethiopia” is fully embraced but clearly risking dominance.

In order to analytically present the major terms of debate that engaged the key online activists of these groups, data were extracted and analyzed from a number of page posts of 9 key Facebook activists, 3 from each ethnic lineage namely Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray. The data analysis showed that the notable online activists coming from Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray ethno-nationalism have in essence hold contrasting positions with some instances of overlap between the groups. Thus, as shown in Table 3 in Chapter 4, the field data collected and analyzed from the page posts of the key Facebook activists (informants) identified four major terms of debates as involving mob violence (lynching) narrative, identity narrative, governance and rule of law narrative, and the post-2018 transition narrative. With an important difference in focus narrative, in contrast to frame, can be understood as a form of a story or an account of an event, phenomenon, or experience, and in this case, the communication is purposeful. Aukes et al. (2020) clearly frame the actors' points of view, and the narrative is the expressed product of those points of view. In this manner, in terms of narration of the lynching moments the notable online activists are semantically intersecting, whereas in terms of framing the episodes of the various lynching incidents, there is importantly a conception difference among each group of the key Facebook activists. That is fundamental because framing includes actors' perspectives.

Overall, the data analysis findings suggestively indicate that the notable Facebook activists belonging to the Amhara ethnic group's frame of the episodes of lynching incidents have sympathetically aligned with an emerging Amhara ethno-nationalism and/or Ethiopia nationalism (here the term “Ethiopia nationalism” is employed to refer to a collective aspiration and practice, or reimagining Ethiopia's body politics where ethnic identity is progressively depoliticized). In this way, online activists coming from the Tigray lineage frame narrative of the various episodes of the lynching phenomenon clearly promoting the Tigray nationalism stance which dominated Ethiopia in the previous decades following the demise of the socialist regime. Whereas, those

online activists linked to an Oromo family line principally observed to have promoted the perspective of Oromo ethno-nationalism which is progressively taking center stage, and self-portrayed as informing alternative institution compared to the other previous ethno-nationalist practice in Ethiopia.

i. Reform/Ethiopia future where to?

One of the major terms of debate recounted among the key online activists that this qualitative investigation explored and identified is the 2018 reform and how it is transcribed into the future of Ethiopia discourse. The prominent online actors of various political, social, and historical orientation from different perspectives have spelt out the 2018 reform and its space in defining the future of Ethiopia. This different positions were manifestly reflected in the frame narratives of the phenomenon of lynching witnessed at different place and time. The following paragraphs discuss the divergent accounts of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray notable online activists on perception and practice of the 2018 reform and the future of Ethiopia.

In the context of the 2018 reform, the online activists belonging to Oromo and Tigray ethno-nationalism are closer to each other –relative differences, but strategic differences with Amhara online activists. While trying to manipulate one another’s’ resource for rooting the new dominance (Oromo), and regain the dominance (Tigray), the two present an emerging Amhara ethno-nationalism metaphorically as “a lone wolf”, which this round less camouflaging “Ethiopian nationalism”. But many agree that there are rational causes to the birth and blossoming of Amhara ethno-nationalism. The Amhara online activists argue the prevalence of dangerous discourse ambiguity that needs an immediate popular redress and “other” ethno-nationalism narrative in the body politics of Ethiopia. Whereas Tigray online activists, in so many ways like Oromo activists, distastefully argue against demeaning ethnic politics and its association with mob violence in the country. In favor of ethnically oriented federation alternate to centralized Ethiopia, they argue it as playing a resuscitate role, and strongly present the reform’s tenacious grip on centralist discourse as “political dislocation” risking what it can be related to the concept of Pandora’s Box. According to Greek legend, Pandora's Box is a receptacle of woes and evils and in this context it is used to express an action that once begun generates many more complicated problems. Conversely, the Amhara ethno-nationalist and Ethiopianst discourse significantly relegate ethnocentric oriented constitution as the main sources

of evil – original sin, literally *Tinte'abiso* (ጥንተ ክብሩ) in Ge'ez, in the country. They are rather wordy, charging the ethnocentricity as quite remained headstrong and deplorable – too much insensitivity to damaging effects, failing to learn from the consequences of ethno-nationalism in Ethiopia.

All the key online activists, from different perspectives and motives, agree on an assessment that the unwarranted reductionist and simplistic approach of the elites in charge of the reform to state-building narrative in Ethiopia is equally dangerous. This directly points at an interest of each of the online actors to win the state power by their respective side and enforce their frame narrative. Thus, among these groups there is an interesting process of construction and/or deconstruction of one another's narrative to legitimize one's own frame. Each of the groups' definition of the reform and the destination of Ethiopia is dependent on each other's perception and practice of both the reform and the future of Ethiopia. The Amhara online activists propose the future of Ethiopia in the context of revitalization frame and so do the perception of the reform. This group is observed to clinging to regenerating its historic social, political and economic capital placed in the emerging equation. While the Tigray group asserts that the reform has lost its focus and derailed, and therefore the future of Ethiopia is greatly uncertain and fragile. On the other side, the Oromo key activists are negotiating the middle ground while pushing for an unusually stronger position and dominance, and holding the new norm. This group strategically exploited the sharp and organic contrast between the Amhara and Tigray populist discourse, advancing the periphery-center power discourse to dominate the new center. Thus, forming a south-south⁸ narrative against a north-north discourse. Yet, the Tigray discourse is south by make-up but north by geography as it's working for a come-back to the south-south premise. Interestingly, the elites in charge of the reform rhetorically play north discourse but actually new south-south on the real ground.

⁸ The term *south-south* is used to refer to a political tendency – practice and perception, against the context of historic centralist establishment, in favor of multiethnic federation as *the new norm* in Ethiopia. But the *north-north* is employed to conceptually refer to a political landscape where ethno-nationalism is less prominent. Both conceptions are situated within the context of the federal system in Ethiopia. But in real terms this is less realistic as the new elites are just doing all they can to grip on power and control resources for reasons that are less publicized if not an *inherited dream* of an individual. The national resources and power dividend rarely go off the new coterie in the name of a certain social identity or region unlike a hypnotic rhetoric.

ii. *Ethno-nationalism and politics of difference*

A perception and practice of ethno-nationalism and politics of difference are other features this research examined as one of the constituting elements of the major terms of debates among the notable online activists belonging to Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray lineage. Many scholars agree that ethno-nationalism is a variant form of nationalism that fundamentally is based on ethnicity and ethnic ties for an advocacy or support for a political quest of a specific social identity group. Drawing on Young (2008) conceptions of politics of difference which is based on cultural differences and positionality, this discussion focuses on the perceived perceptions of the politics of differences among the key online activists that is informed by cultural and ethno-nationalist narrative. Accounts of difference drawn on positionality and culture, in this case, were substantiated with a number of assertions presented in Table 2 (A), (B), (C), and Table 3 and discussed in the following paragraphs.

In contemporary Ethiopia, quite formally, the perception and practice of ethno-nationalism and politics of difference are hotly debated. For scholars of relevant expertise and practitioners alike, the contentious discussion – sometimes involving and informing violent political mobilization and consequential social interaction – on whether an ethnic-oriented federalism is good or bad for Ethiopia, but no substantive similar reading is achieved yet on its merit (Bekri, 2020, Semir, 2022). Within the context of federal arrangement, the Amhara online activists sound to advocate for political north (wanting to see ethno-nationalism cease being the lifeline of the body politics), while the other two groups namely the Oromo and the Tigray are essentially political south (wanting to maintain the status quo that ethnicity and ethnic tie remain defining element of politics) in Ethiopia. For a number of reasons, the perspectives of the ethno-nationalisms among the three groups are essentially made incompatible, but in some instances it sounds natural instead of construct.

The research findings indicated that conversation of ethno-nationalism among the key online activists are importantly different depending on ethno-territorial factors but time is insignificant. In other words a particular incident occurred at a specific ethno-territorial space that receives a different frame narrative from each of the key online actors. In this sense, the data analysis findings as presented in Table 2 (A), (B), (C), and Table 3 supports significant contrasting interaction among the notable online activists in terms of positionality of ethno-nationalism. One

such sense of contention arising from a perceived perception during the post-2018 political transition is related to either being dominated or wanting to dominate the reform discourse.

On the research phenomenon occurring within the Oromo territory, refusing a subordinate position, the research informant from Tigray online activists identified as DB-T in Table 2 (A) expressed concern as “the TPLF discourse is highly ostracized and suffering from resultant desperation”. The statement clearly indicates a push off the decision making circle implicitly occupied by Oromo ethno-nationalism, in this context, another emerging power adversary. On the Amhara online activists’ side one of the key informant, namely MT-A responding to mob violence occurred at Shashamane, in Table 2 (A) shared strong discontent it perceived as progressively emerging dominance, “Oromo elites’ exclusive discourse is rudimentary and atrocious” cogently arguing Oromo ethno-nationalism as a dominant discourse in the reform.

In another account, frame narratives drawn on the research case observed at Amhara dominated ethno-territory largely implies “othering”. Key informants from both Oromo and Tigray origin frame the incident to imply Amhara political narration as completely incompatible and void in federation conception and practice in Ethiopia. For instance, notable activists from Tigray origin AS-T in Table 2 (B) disowning narrative coming from the Amhara and stating “bad apple” of the federation. The activists frame of the lynching moment occurred at Addisalem imply the emerging narration in the Amhara region is not only wild externally, but it is also the same internally.

Another online frame narrative of both Amhara and Oromo descent activists that is raised as a response to a research phenomenon occurred at Alamata which is within the Tigray ethno-territorial region shows failure to move on and cling on to exclusive ethno-nationalism. The online activists coming from Amhara and Oromo charge the Tigray ethno-nationalism as finding it difficult to accept the new norm and significantly exercise détente. The data analysis finding given in Table 2 (C) AT-A among the key research informant from Amhara ethnic origin represented the lynching episode at Alamata put it “the discourse of the reform is incompatible with the typical elitist narrative from Tigray and Oromo”. The informant noted the association of mob violence with the perception and exercise of an institutionalized ethnic mobilization and explicitly implied an immediate adoption of deep and structural reform. Notably, the key Oromo online activists except one who pushed it to “leadership gap” did not seriously engage the

lynching circumstance at Alamata like they did in other cases. There could be several factors that can explain the situation but the Oromo and Tigray ethno-nationalist strategic alliance against the Amhara ethno-nationalist, Oromo-Amhara “alliance” against the outgoing ethno-nationalist discourse situated within Alamata identity contestation is important. The Oromo notable activists’ claim Alama belongs to the ethnic land of Oromo as Raya the principal inhabitant of Alamata is claimed to be Oromo. The Amhara claim Raya as Amhara and then Alamata as Raya homeland virtually belonging to Amhara territory. Tigray activists hold on to the status quo arguing the administrative boundary that enclaved the Raya into Tigray ethno-territorial region and so do the Raya social identity.

The interaction among the notable online activists from the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray origin is observed to have taken notable political differences and self-defining characteristic features. Political exclusivity of the Tigray notable online activists that prominently came out during the data analysis can be defined as social interaction and/or governance characterized as “effective”, “efficient”, and “control”. The Tigray online activist framing mob violence as given in Table 3, “rule by anarchy ... the new leadership is failing Ethiopia ” clearly indicates lack of important governance characters justifying the TPLF as a principal actor of peace and stability in the country.

The Amhara ethno-nationalist often self-presentation as principal party to the state-making process and civilization space in the political economy of Ethiopia suggests these factors as an important element of politics of difference. During the data analysis spirited differences were observed placed in the framing and representation of different lynching episodes at different research area. Referring to data findings in Table 3, the term “barbaric” is most frequented strongly implying ethno-nationalist narrative as anti-modernism and totally othering ethnicity as an important space in social advancement, and collective peace.

In the frame narration, Oromo’s portray as culturally relational, inclusive, and accommodative, and near-peace positionality are some of the major features observed as making this group politically different from other groups. In this regard, thematically categorized data in Table 3, states “the reform is in good hand” suggestively showing that Oromo ethno-nationalism which self-style as accommodative, drawn from culturally relational and relative peace is distinctive.

4.4.3 Pervasive moral reversal

The data analysis findings suggestively indicates a ubiquitous moral decadence in the frame narratives of the episodes of lynching investigated. Beneath the surface of the representation and characterization of the mob violent moment, there lies “targeted interests” to be achieved utilizing the incident which is contrary to an established norm in the society. The background explanation of the frame narrative arguably constitutes elements of epistemic violence against a traditional knowledge especially social cohesion. In this regard, referring to the data provided in Table 2 (A), (B), (C), and Table 3 the following paragraphs discuss dynamics of the moral dimensions in the online frame narrative of the episodes of lynching phenomenon occurred at a different place labeled as Case (A), Case (B), and Case (C). The notable online activists belonging to each of the ethnic groups namely Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray are moral agents in this action and/or decision to execute the act of framing which is subject to moral judgment. The discussion more importantly focuses on a thematically categorized data as provided in Table 3. Therefore, the discussion squarely rests on the act and/or decision of the act of framing by the framer (the key online activists).

Every action and/or decision involved in an event has a moral property, and thus they are subject to moral judgment from different perspectives. Scholars studying morality commonly intellectualizes moral accountability from two broad dimensions of moral explanations – intention and consequence, as every action includes motive and effect. In other words, a moral agent’s intention or sense of duty defines morality as Kantianism promotes, and utilitarianism’s moral explanation is approached from emotion, consequences, or other external factors of the moral agent’s action. Highlighting the existing knowledge of the two broad philosophies of ethical judgment, substantively enhance the discussion of the moral accountability of an online activist while they frame the various moments of lynching actions.

According to Rawls (1980), discussion on Kantian moral philosophy, asserted that only good intentions are inherently good. In this sense, Rawls asserts that “Will” is the driving force behind our actions and justifies the intentions of our actions. Kantians asserts, “It is good if you act out of a sense of duty”. Impliedly, Kant is of the opinion that only good intentions are of value. When we think about other goods and things that we value, they are clearly sometimes not good. For example, we value science, but sometimes science is behind human destruction in this world,

and therefore science is not good sometimes. The same is true of courage. We value courage, but we also show courage in suicide bombings. That means courage is only good sometimes implying the good of the unconditionally of goodwill. According to Kantian moral theory will is only benevolence as long as it does not breach its sense of duty. Thus, Kant's moral philosophy focuses on fairness and individual worth. His perspectives prioritize the moral agent's ability to reason, self-autonomy, and ability to maintain logical coherence.

On a different account there is another ethical philosophy that is basically founded on the principle of utility. According to Byrne et al., (2015) utilitarianism emphasizes the idea that it is more useful and beneficial to the majority in moral judgment. Utilitarianism considers the ethical goodness of a decision or action and places that moral goodness in people's emotions to bring more happiness and joy to the majority. For utilitarianisms, decision and/or action is morally correct in the event it brings greater joy or happiness. That is the consequences of an action must be considered while determining the morality of a particular action and/or decision. In other words, if more people benefit from a particular action or decision, it is considered ethical and morally right. Even if the intention of an action or decision is not moral, under utilitarianism it is ethically and morally correct if that particular action leads to greater happiness. In this case, it can be said that the utilitarian moral perspective is perceived as focused on promoting the compromise of individual interests while promoting a greater sense of common good in society.

Morality, roughly translated as “*Sinemigbar*” (ሥነ ግንባር) in both Amharic and Tigrigna and “*Safuu*” in Oromo language occupy singular importance in typical Ethiopian religious and cultural traditions. Many authors have argued that moral considerations should "take precedence" in everyday life activities. But some studies have revealed that observation of morality has undergone a significant shift in popular discourse, including online engagement. In this sense, moral dislocation is associated with widespread socio-political polarization, an increase in everyday social violence, especially aggressive behavior among young people, and unprecedented online hate speech and everyday dehumanization in the country (Tena, 2015). Little is known about an implication of a “singular importance” of morality in Facebook engagements among notable activists coming from Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray origin.

Based on this context, the discussion of the moral agency of the notable Facebook activists framing the episodes of different cases of lynching incidents was situated between a sense of duty

and a consequence of the moral action. In this regard, the data analysis findings were drawn from three comparable (in terms of time and nature of the research event but at different environments and actors) cases of the lynching phenomenon.

Reviewed literature supports that traditionally in religious and customary practice, morality is singularly important. But little is known about how it unfolds in online popular discourse. In this regard, Atari, et al. (2023) recognizing the primacy of morality in popular discourse and academia, conducted an inquiry to explore its dynamics in everyday conversation. The examination includes different contents of Facebook posts. This draws attention to analytically look into important ethical issues of various framing of the lynching moments on Facebook and suggests that the platform users can share disturbing imagery or content that violates public standards. Because, the lynching materials moral consequences like creating an environment of fear and violence spectacles, perpetuating a culture of hate, aggressive behavior, etc.

The data analysis findings imply that the online activists' frame coming from Amhara origin have mainly judged the lynching episodes at Case (A), Case (B), and Case (C), as “barbaric”, “mob justice”, and “anarchy” respectively. These concepts are all value-laden and have included moral judgments. Comparatively, the judgment given to Case (B) is analytically different from the other two cases which are supported by additional narration in the body of the Facebook post. The moral judgment of Case (B) suggestively justifies the good intention of the moral agents' actions, unlike the other two cases which are impliedly valued as immoral and with no sense of duty. However, from a consequentialist perspective, the moral value of the framing act is right, and it promotes the utility of the political discourse that this group subscribes to which is rethinking the practice of politicized ethnicity in Ethiopia.

The data analysis findings denote that the online activists' frame coming from Oromo origin have mainly judged the lynching episodes in Case (A), Case (B), and Case (C), as “mob attack and failure of law and order”, “mob justice”, and “dangerous act for governance” respectively. These terminologies are carefully selected to reflect the actors' perspectives which in turn refers to the ethical judgment of the actors' decision to post the moment of the lynching phenomenon in different cases. Broadly speaking, the framing content analyzed largely indicates the moral acts of framing support a sense of duty, it sounds like the actors are forced to frame as part of a

response and justify their political discourse. Thus, the framing is morally right both in terms of intention and consequence.

The data analysis findings refer that the online activists coming from Tigray origin have mainly judged the lynching episodes in Case (A), Case (B), and Case (C), as “disruption of civil order and crime atrocity”, “rule by anarchy”, and “pervasive lawlessness” respectively. Like the others discussed above, this framing both in terms of content and concept is not innocent, it is with purpose. Suggestively, the data analysis findings in Table 2 (A), (B), and (C), and Table 3 particularly in reference to the moral dimension indicates that the motive and effect of the act of framing are morally right. Principally, the perspectives of these actors’ political frame are that the transition challenges including mob violence are an indicator of discourse reversal. In this sense, the expression “disruption of civil order and crime atrocity” implies the actors’ judgment as peace and stability are reversed. Further, analysis of the concept of a “rule by anarchy” shows an ethical judgment about the act from both Kantian and Utilitarianism sounds right because the actor carefully framed the moment such that it justifies the motive and the consequence aligns to build up the political narration that the transition is regressive.

In sum, the data analysis findings summative shows that the primacy of moral being in online communication is essentially compromised in favor of advancing a political discourse. The researcher argues, an analysis of moral accountability importantly makes sense if the moral agency of the act or decision of the act is approached from the purpose it serves i.e. teleological, rather than focusing on what arose the act. As such, the framing act consciously prioritizes maintaining desired “status” to the community he/she belongs in the course of communicating the lynching incidents that were exhibited at different places. Thus, closer observation into actions and counteractions between, and among commenters, together with the perspective of the actor in framing the moments of the various lynching incidents of each of the groups impliedly show moral reversal, an epistemic violence against an established traditional knowledge, traditional religious and cultural society settings in Ethiopia.

4.5 Conclusions

This in-depth qualitative analysis indicates that data were systematically abstracted and thematically categorized into three significant frame theses. In addition to examining the frame narration, the process of meaning-making involved a close examination of various online comments and counter-comments related to each of the primary data sources identified for the investigation. The exploration employed an inductive content analysis approach to analyzing the frame narratives of various online activists and their representation of different episodes of lynching observed at different research events, labeled as Case (A), Case (B), and Case (C).

The analysis of the frame narratives of various online activists of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray heritage regarding different episodes of lynching highlights three significant themes. First, the frame narratives and representation of each of the research informants are distinct in terms of their individual background and orientation. Corresponding to the respective Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray online activist groups, the contrasting perspectives are conceptualized into three important frames: revitalization, inevitability, and reversal. This implies an intrinsic contradiction within the frame narratives.

Second, the findings show a significant link between the defining features of the interaction that takes place between online activists and their frames, and perceptions and practices of ethno-nationalism and the politics of difference in the context of post-2018 political transition in the country. The interaction between the online activists involves important claims and counterclaims, and the construction and deconstruction of frame narratives on lynching episodes observed at different places.

Lastly, the research findings are linked to the moral agency of the online actors in the eventuality of mob violence. The findings of the data analysis suggest pervasive moral reversal, which could arguably constitute epistemic violence against established norms and traditional knowledge of Ethiopian society.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

This chapter is outlined into two main sections. One, the conclusions section summarizes the major research findings, addresses the research questions, communicates the main contributions of the thesis work, and finally highlights the important limitations of the research work. Second, the recommendations section presents notable points of takeaways for further academic exercises and/or policy actions.

In 2018, Ethiopia welcomed a contentious government reform which remained good at the beginning and essentially rhetoric in nature, resulting in an ascension of Abiy Ahmed as Prime Minister. Arguably, Abiy's leadership has progressively ushered-in unprecedented mob violence across the country. The mob violence involved a number of lynching incidents that drew attention of a popular discourse on social media, particularly Facebook. The online discourse is essentially run among notable activists from Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray origin. In this sense, research for a particular knowledge about the notable online narration of the episodes of the different mob violence is an important subject for academic consummation. The academic exercise is relevant because it contributes to a less covered topic, and at the same time the outcome can be helpful input for informed policy actions. This sparked a question to explore how the key online activists frame and represent various moments of lynching experiences occurred at different place in the country.

The qualitative case exploration to understand how notable activists coming from Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray origin frame and represent various episodes of lynching phenomenon are found as essentially contending. The contrast significantly takes a characteristic feature of the revitalization frame for the Amhara case, the inevitability frame for the Oromo case, and the reversal frame for the Tigray case. Overall, these contrast of the frame narratives of the different moments of lynching significantly reflects progressively emerging complex and fragile political economy of ethno-nationalism and politics of difference, and imply vulnerability on a perception and practice of historiography, and political narratives in Ethiopia.

With an important implication to Ethiopia's national politics and social interaction, thus, the research findings clearly indicated that the departing features of the contention among the online frames are associated with substantive perception and practice of ethno-nationalism, and politics of difference located in the wider context of the post-2018 political transition in the country. Further, the research findings arguably unpacks the major issues of interaction among the key online actors frame narrative belonging to Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray descent as ethno-nationalism and politics of difference, and the 2018 reform and the future of Ethiopia.

Lynching is a less covered topic in the literature of violence in the context of Ethiopia. Thus, this in-depth investigation could contribute to addressing the knowledge gap. Further, the research findings have academic and policy relevance. In this account, researchers, especially in the areas of peacebuilding, human security, violence studies, and political economy of Ethiopia can find some important insights discussed in this research findings. Practitioners can benefit from the research findings to conduct peace dialogue, peacebuilding and conflict transformation, social media and violence governance etc.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the data analysis findings and discussions, as well as the research conclusions, the following points are recommended for potential actions or considerations within the context of Ethiopia. Background thinking of the Social Media framing of moments of lynching among notable online activists is a continuation of narrative conversation in another form. Given this perspective, Social Media affordance in the midst of an emerging narrative dispute is undeniably challenging. Hence, it is imperative to take note of the following suggestions:

- i. Qualitatively domesticate Social Media

The term "qualitative" is utilized to characterize the process, content, intent, and framework of the specific domestication process. An essential objective must be to achieve the most beneficial outcome for the "common good." The successful qualitative domestication of Social Media infrastructure could, therefore, significantly improve Ethiopia's ability to manage its violent content. In addition, it could continually shape its consequential impact on human security, good governance, and qualitative development in the country and the region.

- ii. Embrace an intelligent community-based design to manage imbalance between the negative impact of ethnicity, and state-making process in Ethiopia

The findings of the investigation strongly suggest the necessity of discouraging the use of ethnicity as a lifeline means of gaining and maintaining political power while simultaneously emphasizing the importance of adaptive, community-driven social organization. It is of paramount importance to prioritize community over ethnicity through intelligent design. The observation made within the context of lynching incidents reveals that ethnic loyalty frequently supersedes "the common good" and undermines established ethical norms and social sanctity. Given this reality, it is imperative to substantially revitalize the foundations of an ethnic oriented constitution.

- iii. Place modest political infrastructure, and embrace inclusive discourse to sustain peace and good governance in Ethiopia

Despite the patronizing rhetoric of peace emanating from the upper echelons, peace, security governance, good governance, and development efforts at the grassroots level in Ethiopia after 2018 remains alarmingly fragile. These developments have been consistently undermined by the increasingly pervasive wave of violent acts across the country, which continue to intensify despite the touted reform initiatives. The explanation can be traced to a number of factors at play – causes related to state and non-state actors, internal and external dynamics, historical and structural factors, etc. However, it is clear that further comprehensive analysis is necessary to investigate why the 'prosperity peace' is essentially a hollow slogan with little actual implementation yet.

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