

From the Great Nationalism to Narrower
Ethnonationalism in Post-1991 Ethiopian Federalism:
Counter Narrative Advent of the Amhara Ethnic
Nationalist Movements

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Abstract

Ethiopia is a multiethnic and multi-linguistic state. The country's political history has shown that it has been an empire state since ancient times. However, its diverse ethnic groups existed together as Ethiopian nationalists. Following the introduction of the socialist-oriented federal state in 1991, ethnonational movements took place in Ethiopian politics. The 1995 FDRE constitution gives the sovereign power to "nations, nationalities, and peoples" to maintain unity along with diversity. It also created ethnic federalism-based territorial units to liberate other ethnic groups from the past Amhara 'Neftegna' domination system. However, the recognition of these rights has promoted ethnonationalism rather than Ethiopianism. And also creates a tendency in other regions as Amharans have historically oppressed the different ethnic groups. Thus, the Amhara people who live in other areas have been discriminated against. This phenomenon has intensified the advent of Amhara nationalist movements. This

study explores the theoretical frameworks of ethnonationalism and federalism. It also examined the causes and impacts of the deterioration of Ethiopianism and the advent of the Amhara nationalist movements in the case study areas. In the end, it provides mechanisms to maintain unity along with diversity in future Ethiopia.

Keywords: ethnic-federalism, nationalism, conflict, Amhara; Ethiopia

1. Introduction

The history of Ethiopia experienced the centralized state autonomy and empire state for at least the last 2,000 years (Assefa, 2009, p. 1-4). The modern Ethiopian state appeared in the second half of the 19th century with the rise of Menelik II to the throne. Since all time, though there were regional conflicts, the different regimes were exclusively orchestrated to foster pan-Ethiopian feelings rather than ethnic manners (Lubo, 2012, p.65-66).

After the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front/EPRDF came to power in 1991, it established a new Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia/FDRE Constitution in 1995. Then it adopted socialist ethnic federalism based on ethno-territorial units and granted each ethnic group the right of self-determination, including secession (Temesgen, 2019, p.18; Asnake, 2010, p.615-16). This ethnic-based federal Constitution aimed to end the past Amhara ethnic domination political system, maintain ethnic identity equality with the national identity, and reduce internal ethnic conflicts (Abebaw, 2013, p.22).

In common with other countries where socialist federations were introduced, *it* promoted ethnic identity more than national identity. Whereas, in democratic federations, every citizen promotes the national identity rather than ethnic identity because the federation established consent-based boundary demarcation by creating a cross-cutting relationship between different ethnic groups, like India and Switzerland (Juhász, 2005,p.247).

Like the former socialist federations, Ethiopia's socialist federal system has promoted ethnonational identity by deteriorating the general national identity. First, recognizing Ethiopia's Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples to have the unconditional right of self-government, including secession, has promoted ethnonational movements (Girma and Getahun, 2019,p.97). Second, the Tigray People Liberation Front/TPLF political tactic directly or indirectly flagged the pan-Ethiopian nationalism sentiment in Ethiopia's political arena. For this reason, TPLF assumed Ethiopian nationalism should be the 'backbone of *neftagya* (Amhara) or tool for Amhara operations. Its intention was too hostile to Amharan through coining as an exploiter group and controlling the power alone (Semahegn, 2014, p.74).

Therefore, this state of affairs created the emergence of an ethno-nationalist secessionist struggle by deteriorating the Ethiopian sense of identity. In turn, this has become a cause of ethnonational movements and conflicts in Ethiopia (Temesgen, 2019, p.19). Since the introduction of ethnic federalism, the Amharas' have been violently marginalized in the South,

Oromia, and Benishangul-Gumuz regions but advocated the national identity rather than Amharanism. In the last five years, the Amhara people have ostensibly been attacked, and killed throughout the country, and resulted in the advent of Amhara ethnonational movements that has not happened before in Ethiopian history (Tezera, 2021,p.302).

This research seeks a theoretical understanding of ethnonationalism and Ethnic Federalism. It also assesses the deterioration of Ethiopianism and the advent of Amhara ethnonational movements. Then it determines the factors for the advent of the Amhara ethnic nationalist movement. In the end, it provides a mechanism to balance and maintain the ethnonational identity and the Ethiopian national identity.

The research method of this study used both discourse analyses and qualitative case studies. The discourse analysis includes various scientific publications. The qualitative case study was collected using key informant interviews and focus group discussions/FGDs based on semi-structured and open-ended questions. Therefore, the study will select a limited number of informants strategically, whose in-depth information will offer insight into how Ethiopianism was undermined and the Amhara nationalist movements emerged. The sample respondents were selected from the Amhara region, particularly at the federal level. The discussion was made with 13 individual interviews and Four FGDs based on the informants' interests. The data analysis used a narrative case study and thematic analysis to analyze and interpret the data.

2. Theoretical Understanding of Ethnic Federalism and Ethno-nationalism

Nationalism as a concept refers to captivating the pre-existing traditions, memories, and symbols to control political power. There are two forms of nationalism: state Nationalism and ethnonationalism (Semahegn, 2014, p.20-21). Hence, federalism has become a popular instrument in most multicultural states to maintain diversity and unity. However, there are different arguments on federalism's significance in maintaining ethnonationalism and state nationalism based on the level of democracy.

On the one hand, some argue that the socialist multicultural federation is associated with ethnonationalism. When a multicultural federation is socialist, it is established upon ethnic-based territorial arrangement. One of the constitutional features of socialist ethnic federations was the principles of separation of powers and the rule of law. It also recognized that the ethnic party serves for particular interests of one ethnic category. But the accurate political and policy decisions are made at the central party and government level networks (Sakwa, 1998,p.107-117).

In this view, ethnic groups' movements tend to claim representation in socioeconomic, political power, political autonomy, self-determination, and recognition of the minority language as an official language. Therefore, "ethnicity becomes a form of nationalism when it assumes a political dimension that challenges the legitimacy of the state in question" (Semahegn, 2014, p. 20-21).

In this type of federation, the individual ethnic groups had or had a separate national identity. Therefore, each nation's loyalty is mainly linked to its narrow ethnic-regional state than the union state. Due to this reason, everyday nationalism and patriotism deteriorated. In turn, it led to political independence and secession as applied in the three disintegrated socialist federations (Juhász, 2005,p. 246-9).

On the other hand, some argue that the democratic federation system has protected the state from civil war, devastation, and disintegration with spices of social capital is tends to nation-building/national integration and diversity management. Hence, to achieve national unity, federalism devotes its time to developing systematic management formulas for diverse people (Aroney, 2010, p.17-46). Scholars state that the most common typical cause for forming a federal state structure is to set up peace and security. Based on this concept, national unity in federation refers to building unity within diversity by bringing together culturally and socially discrete groups concerning differences to eliminate sources of internal conflicts. In this regard, the main objective of federalism is accommodating diversity, maintaining unity, and sharing power among different groups (Tasew, 2007,p.37-69).

Moreover, in the democratic federation system, state nationalism refers to the association of people who identify themselves as belonging to the nation with equal rights and duties in all political aspects. This association of people is not based on ethnic background but on common economic prosperity and preserving and maintaining their shared culture and the nation's political unity (Semahegn, 2014,p.20-21).

With these controversies in mind, most scholars argued that following socialist or democratic federalism alone does not preserve state and ethnic nationalism. Instead, it depends on managing a national or ethnic problem in a civilized and democratic way; on the demographic structure, history and political traditions, the country's economic and international situation, and the ethnic groups' identity, their relationship, and geographical pattern, several other options can come into question besides different forms of federalism. These can range from the equality of the citizens at the individual level within a unified state or from different forms of autonomy to the various types of consociational techniques and peaceful breakups (Feeley and Rubin, 2008,p.17-20).

Moreover, others elucidate that a consociational democratic federation should be arranged upon mixed-based boundary demarcation, promoting ethnic and national interests, and resolving ethnic conflicts. It accommodates the diverse interests of ethnic groups and the nation-building process. Therefore, the consociational democracy introduced in successful states such as Switzerland in which every citizen defines themselves as Swiss first and expresses their ethnic group as a secondary group identity. The post-Soviet Russia and India are moving towards this form, too (Juhász, 2005,p.247).

In such a perspective, the Ethiopian ethnic federation's rhetoric exaggerates democratic, multiethnic federation and consociational arrangement. However, it is democratic, multicultural federalism in the form of ' but 'socialist multicultural federalism in content and

practice which is why it promotes ethnic identity rather than national identity.

3. The Advent of Ethno-National Movements and the Making of Ethno-federal System in Ethiopia

Throughout Ethiopia's long history and cultural civilization, ethnic identity and ethnic group have mattered less than religion, historical tradition, and a sense of participation in a shared cultural continuum (Assefa, 2019,p.156). It implies that Ethiopians had a more robust common identity under the idea of Ethiopian citizenship (Temesgen, 2019, p.23). However, TPLF establishing evidence indicating the consciousness of ethnic and linguistic differences and translating that realization into political actions is related to Menelik's modern public and secular education system in Ethiopia (Teshome, 1999, p.78-79).

In contrast, others argued that Menelik II's reign (1889–1913) was a milestone in Ethiopia's political history. Hence, "the Ethiopian empire was consolidated administratively and became a modern East Africa's lasting political fixture after the Italian colonial forces were defeated at the battle of Adowa (1896)" (Veen, 2016, p.11). Menelik's victory over Italy at the Battle of Adwa in 1996 had respected the Ethiopian independence. It symbolized him as the heroism of the black people throughout the world. Immediately, the victory of Adwa recognized Ethiopian sovereignty by external powers (especially Italians, French, and British). They had articulated the first diplomatic representation at Menelik's court in Addis Ababa (Bahru, 2002, p.76-79).

Temesgen (2019) demonstrated that since the 1960s Ethiopian Student Movement/ ESM, the students started ethno-political movements and regenerated their ethnic identity against the Amhara elites' hegemony (p.17). Then ethnicity became stressed simultaneously, and conflicts in Eritrea, Sidamo, and Somalia were perceived by the student leadership in Addis Ababa as directly related to the country's ethnic issues (Teshome, 1999,p.78-79).

Then, Marxist revolutionary ideas of the right of self-determination and secession influenced the students. Then, for those who struggled on the part of the ESM, the Stalinist principles of self-determination, including secession, were a remedy for the Ethiopian ethnic problems and ethnic inequality (Asnake, 2009, p.61). Accordingly, ethnic-regional movements developed in Eritrea, Tigray, Oromo, and Somali communities, establishing ethnic-based political parties. The Eritrea People Liberation Front/EPLF, TPLF, Oromo Liberation Force/OLF, and the Oromo National Liberation Force/ONLF, respectively. Their main objective was independence from the Ethiopian empire (Semahegn, 2014,p.116-117).

Subsequently, "the nationality question, that is, addressing the claims by ethnonational groups to self-rule, fair representation in public institutions, and ensuring equality, has remained a crucial point in the agenda of Ethiopia's political parties." And then, through continuous struggle by the driving force of the ESM, the Emperor's regime came to an end in 1974 (Temesgen,2019,p.17).

Emperor Haile Selassie's monarchical system was formally abolished in May 1975 by the Derg military junta. Then the Derg was proclaimed the Marxist-Leninist ideology as a state apparatus. Moreover, the Derg socialist government established a party known as the Worker's Party of Ethiopia as a vanguard party formed in 1984, transitioning from a no-party system to the one-party system in Ethiopia-WPE (Assefa, 2009,p.54). The issue of diversity was assumed to threaten the nation's unity. The Marxist-Leninist ideology of the Derg demolished the agenda of ethnicity and religion (Abebaw, 2013,p.21).

In response to one-party power centralization, numerous ethnic-based political parties began opposition against the regime, to recognize each ethnic group the right to self-determination and socioeconomic and political rights (Tsegaye, 2010,p.19). The degree of disappointment and struggle among these ethnic and national political parties increased to overthrow the Derg regime (Assefa, 2019,p.155). Then the EPRDF was established by the TPLF in early 1989. EPRDF's four coalitions ethnic parties were the TPLF, Amhara National Democratic Movement/ANDM, the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO), and Southern Ethiopia Peoples' Democratic Front /SEPDF (Salih, 2018,p.19).

Thus, EPRDF with different dissident groups had overthrown the Derg regime in May 1991. After the demise of the military junta in 1991, the EPRDF took power and established a federal structure in line with the Marxist-Leninist ideology of the TPLF under cover of the EPRDF in a similar vein to the Derg regime (Asnake,2010,p.615).

Hence, after EPRDF came to power in 1991, it established a new FDRE Constitution in 1995. Then the Constitution adopted ethnic-based state formation based on ethno-territorial units and granted each ethnic group the right of self-determination, including secession (Temesgen, 2019,p.18). Consequently, Article 8 of the 1995 FDRE Constitution gives considerable sovereign power to nations, nationalities, and peoples of Ethiopia/NNP, rather than to Ethiopian people at large or every individual citizen, as commonly stated in the 'we the people' manifestation that applies in many modern constitutions (Aalen, 2002,p.54-55). It indirectly implies that "every Ethiopian should first identify himself/ herself with one of the ethnic groups in the country before he/ she claims the Ethiopian nationality" (Semahegn, 2012,p.170).

Empirically the country was ruled by the TPLF's Marxist-Leninist ideological doctrine and its divide and rule system for decades. Thus, boycotting the balance between self-rule and shared rule and the politicization of tribal identity results in ethnic conflicts. (Alexander, 2019,p.17). Moreover, ethnonational federalism promotes the uniqueness of a particular ethnic group to have the right to self-rule in their homeland, which worsens public clashes into clashes of tribalism (Ibid,17).

Therefore, this ethnic-based federal arrangement recognized the formation of ethnic political parties that have strengthened ethnonational sentiments and encouraged discrimination among Ethiopian ethnic groups (Abebaw, 2013,p.22). Moreover, ethnic-based boundary demarcation empowers ethnolinguistic groups. It expedites intra and inter-ethnic conflicts,

which have become a dominant feature of the Ethiopian state (Alemu, 2018,p.44). These include a lack of a democratic political system and competition among political elites, creating ethnonational mobilization, demands for political representation, distinct identity, economic resources, and territorial issues (Feleke, 2020,p.2-5).

Then the 1995 constitutional establishment of an ethnic federal structure shifted the common Ethiopian identity to a distinct ethnic identity. This means it has transported new forms of ethnonational identity. This ethnic identity politics has created conflicts and animosity among Ethiopians. Hence, in all regional states, the Amhara ethnic minorities who live outside their state of origin have no right to political representation, live, work, and are internally displaced (Temesgen, 2019,p.23).

Moreover, Article 39 of the FDRE Constitution recognizes nations, nationalities, and people to have the right to self-determination. Similarly, all regional constitutions have parallel provisions, but they differ in granting these rights to residents. The ANRS constitution reflects all the FDRE Constitution premises that acknowledge other ethnic groups' political participation (Ketemaw, 2020,p.51-55).

However, other regions' constitutions didn't recognize such rights. For example, in the Benishangul-Gumuz Region as 'indigenous and non-indigenous; in the SNNPs Region as 'native and non-native'; in the Gambella and Harari Regions as 'owner and non-owner the Oromia Region' peoples of the region and non-regional peoples'. This difference creates an identity distinction among Amhara ethnic groups who live in these regions of Ethiopia (Assefa, 2017,p.178). That is why the Amhara ethnonational movements' have disturbingly developed because of this identity discrimination from other regions (Dagnachew,2018,p.73). Of course, the Amhara ethnonational movement developed over time but had not ever happened in Ethiopian history.

Overall, Gizachew (2019) argued that to maintain the general national unity and ethnic diversity, Ethiopia should ban the ethnic party system and establish an effective consociational federation together with geographic boundary lines (p,197).

4. Counter Narrative and the Advent of the Amhara Nationalist Movements

EPRDF was a political organization product of the four regional ethnic political parties representing four large regions, holding 86.41 % of the population. These consisted of the Amhara (25-6%), Oromo (35'3%), Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples (19.8%), and Tigray (5.8%). These regional ethnic parties were named the ANDM, OPDO, SEPDM, and TPLF (Paulos, 2007,p.362).

However, the TPLF ethnonational front, which consists of 6% of the country's total population, was the dominant political force under the umbrella of EPRDF. Because the 1st Prime Minister Meles was the unopposed intellectual and ideological guide of the party and government. Consequently, he has accumulated uneven power in Ethiopia since his death

(Anwar, 2018,p.5-9).

EPRDF established the FDRE constitution based on the primordial approaches of Marxist-Leninist principles that granted sovereign power to nations, nationalities, and peoples (Tezera, 2021,p.303-4). The 1995 FDRE constitution has also recognized the ethnic-based boundary lines between the nine regional states. These are the states of Tigray, the state of Afar, the state of Amhara, the state of Oromia, the state of Somali, the state of Bemshangul-Gumuz, the state of Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples, the state of Gambella, and the state of Harar (Aklilu, 2006,p.92; Alexander, 2019,p.18).

Moreover, EPRDF had adopted an anti-Amhara territorial administration system. Since its advent, TPLF had created a hidden agenda that flagged the Amhara's hegemony and followed an aggressive approach towards the Amhara nation by branding the Amharas as '*Neftegna*' and '*Tihmekitegna*.' Likewise, to maintain its power, the EPRDF mobilized other ethnic groups that were discriminated against and oppressed by the Amhara ruling class during the imperial regimes (Muhabie, 2015,p.103; Tezera, 2021,p.302).

This fabricated EPRDF rhetoric has predominantly created systemic discrimination and violence against the Amhara ethnic groups. Hence, since the introduction of ethnic federalism, the Amharas' have been violently attacked, killed, and marginalized, mainly within the Oromia and Benishangul Gumuz regions (Tezera, 2021,p.302).

More Amhara elites have resisted the ethnic-based regional administration and promoted Ethiopian Nationalism. Even after the coming of the current ethnic-based federal system in 1991, the residents of the Amhara region typically assume themselves as Shewe, Gojjame, Gondere, Wolloye, and Menze, instead of using the general rubric of Amhara (Semir, 2019,p.12; Tegegne, 1998,p.119). However, due to TPLF's misindoctrination, all ethnic groups assumed Amharas were satisfied and oppressors. It results in the discrimination and assassination of Amhara people everywhere (Legesse, 2015,p.473; Muhabie, 2015,p.103).

In such a situation, even the Amhara representative ethnic party (the so-called ANDM) did not keep the Amhara interest. For this reason, the Amhara elites strongly argued that the ANDM leaders were missionaries of TPLF for the Tigrean hegemony of Ethiopia; instead of maintaining the Amhara people's interests. Even the higher leaders were not famous because they did not cater to the general popular demands (Ketemaw,2020,p.48). Moreover, the Amhara elites have reprovisioned decentralization and heatedly condemned the ANDM members/Amhara regional state governing party leaders who did not represent the Amhara people (Tezera, 2021,p.303-05).

Evidence shows that this connotation has become a base for the current Amhara ethnic nationalism and probably for future inter-ethnic conflicts. Following this perspective, the National Movement of Amhara/NaMA was established as a model Amhara nationalist party on June 9, 2018 (Tezera, 2021,p.303-05; Muhabie, 2015,p.103).

Pointedly, the Ethiopian ethnic federal structure promoted the creation of Amhara ethnic nationalism. However, the Amhara nationalism did not emerge without encounters. The word 'Amhara' was lightly defined in Ethiopian political history because it was challenging to understand separately from Ethiopia (Semir, 2019,p.12). Most Ethiopian scholars considered the Amhara ethnic identity the same as the broader Ethiopian national identity. Both the Ethiopian academics in general and the Amhara elites, in particular, have been mainly challenged to distinguish the word Amharanet (Amhara identity) from Ethiopiawinet/ Ethiopians (Tezera, 2021,p.301; Salih and Markakis, 1998,p.11).

Of course, in the Pre-Derge regime, the Amhara people were baptized and believed in Ethiopianists or Ethiopiawinet. That means the majority of the Amhara people didn't feel aware of ethnonationalism politics. Even in the struggle against the Derg regime, they were organized in line with pan-Ethiopian political parties out of various ethnic-based political organizations. Nevertheless, Amhara ethnonationalism and Amharanet have recently gained momentum and rise (Bantanyehu and Ishiyama, 2021,p.1037).

Thus, due to the absence of a clear definition of the word 'Amhara,' the Amhara nationalism movement became a recent phenomenon. However, some Amhara-based political parties were established following the 1991 transitional period; the Amhara nationalism mass movement has fundamentally started in the last five years, resulting in the advent of current political liberalization (Semir, 2019,p.12).

The year 2015 has recorded that the Amhara nationalism mobilization in practice took place by the Amhara activists and political elites. The leaders of the Amhara national movement have described the Amhara identity as "the formation of a reverse discourse" that the already hated group identity originated a claim for legitimacy and acknowledgment (Tezera, 2021,p.302). According to Tezera, the Amhara reverse discourse formation takes different forms, which:-

Though the common denominator is a subscription to the idea of a collective identity, this makes the question of group identification inevitable. As noted above, Amhara identity is marked by shifting definitions, used differently in different times and places. Notably, the emic and etic conceptions of Amhara identity appear to vary significantly. The etic concept presupposes the existence of a cohesive Amharic-speaking social group. In this regard, what is unique in the rising Amhara nationalism is the absence of a commonly accepted definition of Amhara. (p, 302).

That means, yet the geneses of the Amhara nationalism are disputed, the Amhara nationalists remarked that the movement's origins aimed to develop the Amhara nation and protect the Amhara people who live throughout the country (Tewodros, 2020,p.2-10; Tezera, 2021,p.303). Moreover, to protect Amharas from economic deficiency, political and socio-cultural marginalization, a sense of oddness and statelessness, and lack of security challenged Amhara's physical and cultural existence (Ibid. 2-10; Ibid.303).

In such circumstances, Bantanyehu and Ishiyama (2021) argued that the rise of Amhara nationalism was based on four factors. First, it tends to be a reaction to the Amharas' demonization and the security dilemma of Amharas people living for a long time across the country, particularly in the Oromia, SNNPR Gambella, and Benishangul-Gumuz regions. Second, the Amhara people have been deprived in the past decade because they lived in widespread poverty. Third, ethnic federalism has isolated tens of millions of Amhara who live in other regions. The Amharas have been treated as non-indigenous people outside of the Amhara region. For example, the Oromia and Benishangul-Gumuz regional constitutions do not recognize the citizenship rights of the Amhara people. Fourth, the Amhara-born new generations have more emphasized Amhara ethnic-nationalist sentiments than Ethiopianism (p.1038-40).

Others argued that Amhara's interests were not duly voiced during the TGE's period. No ethnic-based political party represented the Amhara ethnic group in the restructuring process. The system did not represent the Amhara people. The so-called Amhara representative EPDM was a multinational party that did not secure the Amhara interests compared to other ethnic-based political parties. Even the Amhara ethnic party representative, the AAPO leaders, members, and supporters were killed, intimidated, and arrested (including the chairperson of AAPO Professor Asrat Woldeyes) by TPLF/EPRDF (Tegegne, 1998,p.122-123; Ketemaw, 2020,p.47-48). Therefore, there was no room to organize Amharan-based political parties that articulated the Amhara interests in the Ethiopian ethnic federal structure. Because the ethnic-based boundary demarcation recognizes the rhetoric of titular versus non-titular classifications, the Amhara ethnic group victims are framed in its absence. In such views, the Amhara elites have propagated an Amhara ethnicity together with pan-Ethiopian identity (Ibid,47-48)

Even these mistakes have happened due to the illegitimate recognition of the 1995 constitution and ethnic federal system. The TPLF/EPRDF executed it without the willingness of the Ethiopian people as a whole. That means representatives of all ethnic groups were not participating like how the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia constitution was drafted (Bantanyehu and Ishiyama, 2021,p.1041). In addition, since the introduction of ethnic federalism, all key political positions had been monopolized by the TPLF which represented a small ethnic group. In contrast, the second prominent Amhara ethnic group representative had not taken significant roles in politics. That is why this TPLF-dominated system creates ethnic discontent among the Amhara elites and contributes to the emergence of Amhara ethnonationalism (Ibid. 1042).

The other factor for the emergence of organized political groups based upon the Amhara ethnic identity was exposing the conspiracy made by TPLF that downgraded the Amhara ethnic identity. The advent of these Amhara nationalist reformist groups emanated out of the ANDM that advocated the Amhara nationalist movement. Then ANDM called a general assembly in 2018 and replaced ANDM by the Amhara Democratic Party (ADP). Accordingly, the NaMA) was established in 2018 to meet the Amhara national interest (Semir, 2019,p.12-13).

Moreover, NaMA has continued its opposition to the regional ruling party. ADP officials were also inspired to endure their opposition. Not only did the NaMA movement motivate ADP officials, but it also reinforced other Oromo competing nationalists that struggled with the government for the Oromo cause, like the Bale rebellion and Macha-Tulama Association, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) (Ibid,13)

This shows a new era in Ethiopian ethnic politics that created an all-Amhara ethnonational identity movement. The Amhara people are raising questions being they have a shared history to appreciate an Amhara ethnicity. Then began their mobilization to confirm the Amhara identity and redefine an Amhara horizon'. In a situation, the former ADP and the TPLF had started a war of words in mid-July 2019 for the first time. The two conflicts have strengthened the ADP's real propaganda. This certifies the rise of Amhara nationalism in Ethiopia over the past five years (Tezera, 2021, p.297).

Overall, since EPRDF's regime pan-Ethiopianism de-emphasized, societal Nationalism is never absent. With these challenges, the NaMA has emerged to voice the Amhara interests and protect their ethnic group from the current harassment and killing in all country regions.

5. The Demolishing of Ethiopian Identity and the Rise of Amhara Ethno-national Identity (Case Study of the Amhara Region)

For centuries, all ethnic groups were more Ethiopian than the current ethnic identity. All of them were inspired by Ethiopian Nationalism. Emperor Menelik had founded modern Ethiopia. Since its founding, the TPLF and OLF have cast Menelik as a pretense for the current ethnopolitics. However, it is far from reality because he created contemporary Ethiopia through fighting against external colonial expansion.¹

This period was a springboard for TPLF to hostile Amhara ethnic groups. Menelik came out of the Amhara and gave the name, being he had oppressed other Ethiopians'. It is also the root of the current ethnic Nationalism that tends to dew the Amhara group. Therefore, since the 1991 ethnic-federal system, the Ethiopian identity has increasingly diminished, and the ethnic identity has grown. This category of Ethiopian identity (Amhara) and ethnic identity (Others) has become a source of conflict in today's Ethiopia.²

Thus, the Ethiopian national identity outside the Amhara ethnic group; was snatched away by the scissors of the TPLF. The TPLF bands, for personal gain, have propagated that Ethiopia was a land of the Amhara and exploited other nations as old as its history. For 30 years, this TPLF's lie rhetoric has blurred the innocent Ethiopian people's identity, especially

¹Personal Interview, deputy President of the Amhara Regional State and the head of Peace and Security Bureau, Bahir Dar, 02 July 2021.

² Personal Interview, the All Ethiopian Unity Organization/ AEUO Polite Bureau member and coordinator of northern Ethiopia, Bahir Dar, 04 July 2021.

the youth who have lost their identity; they have stood by a racial fence, and it has forbidden them to walk forward.³

Therefore, after introducing ethnic federalism in Ethiopia, the standard denominations are blurred instead of strengthening the common values because of its particular attention to ethnic identities. The separate identities of ethnic groups have been maintained. Therefore, after this constitution and federalism system has come through emphasizing differences, creates the existing conflicts and animosities among Ethiopians'. Consequently, it is an organized document of abandonment of unity and common identity. In practice, differences have grown, and agreement has eroded. All this problem is that the Constitution's contents have such values as someone being oppressive, a transgressor, or others being oppressed and a rescuer. That means the Constitution generally fails us because it focuses on differences instead of strengthening tolerance, unity with diversity, and forgiveness.⁴

Therefore, the relationship between Ethiopianism/Ethiopian national identities and ethnic, national identities has become paradoxical. Some of them are shown to give Ethiopia first/ Ethiopian citizenship 100% in a competitive way and provide for idioms, such as the language, religion, municipality, birthplace, etc. 0 /zero%. Others give 100% to ethnonationalism and 0 /zero to Ethiopian Nationalism or Ethiopian citizenship. Yet, these are two extreme manifestations of who they are. In contrast, as shown in Switzerland, Canada, and India's growing federal systems, there is no zero-sum link between broad state nationalism and narrower ethnonationalism. In other words, one is not seen giving zero, another 100%. However, Ethiopia's federal system did not maintain the two Nationalism; instead, it promoted narrower ethnonationalism and weakened broad Ethiopian nationalism.⁵

Ethnonational identity politics fuels the fire for the conflict in Ethiopia, particularly between the Amhara (Ethiopianness), Tigray, Oromia, and Benshangul-Gumuz (ethnonationalism) regions. Hence, this system became a cover for the conflict entrepreneurs in these regions. Regarding the issue of these regions, the division of the ethnonational and Ethiopian national identity complicates the conflict that led to an ending and insoluble violations, massacres, and displacement.⁶

³ Personal Interview, a Journalist and Activist who was displaced from the B-G region and lives in Bahir Dar city, Bahir Dar, 13 July 2021.

⁴ Personal Interview, the former president of the Amhara region and the Ethiopian Foreign Ministry, is currently the prime minister's security adviser, Addis Ababa, 14 June 2021.

⁵ Personal Interview, the law adviser of the Amhara Regional Council chief speaker at the attorney general level, Bahir Dar, 04 July 2021.

⁶ Personal Interview, the Amhara regional council chief speaker and Member of the House of Federation, Bahir Dar, 15 July 2021.

In such a way, others argued that although Ethiopianism has been utterly blurred since 1991, the Amhara still reflects Ethiopian sentiments and identities. However, for the last five years, the Amhara counter-narrative and ethnonational movements have ostensibly emerged throughout the country.⁷

Thus the advent of the Amhara ethnonational movements depends on three factors. First, the basis of Ethiopia's Constitution is tribal/ethnic federalism, which is deeply contemptuous of Ethiopia's unity, history, and cultural values. It also isolated those persons who have Ethiopian values and identities. It contributed to the deterioration of Ethiopia and Ethiopianism and significantly contributed to its destruction. Thus, ethnic federalism in Ethiopia promotes all ethnic groups to build their sub-government and plant their form. It also enhances not to respect for the universal rights and interests of other ethnic groups rather than their subordinates. Hence, this ideology is a paradox from Ethiopianism because ethnic federalism has resulted in the Amhara ethnic group's intangible murders, displaces, and deaths, as shown in Benishangul-Gumuz, Welega, and other areas in the country.⁸

For this reason, some argued that many ties in Ethiopia held togetherness in the past. However, the work of diluting the Ethiopian identity is intentionally done by the TPLF government's team, which has abandoned common values and created ethnic identity. Especially as TPLF tried to destroy Amhara and the Pan Ethiopians, the Amhara have not lost the Ethiopian identity following the 1992 ethnic-federal system. However, the Amhara ethnonational movements recently emerged in Ethiopian history that had not happened before.⁹

The means and ends of the 1995 Constitution that we follow are rooted in the tyrant and exploitation nature. The substance on which it was built is a revolutionary democracy. The idea of revolutionary democracy scans the Constitution and federalism. The Constitution's preamble and Article 39 are similar, and they have denied understanding among the people. When the federal and the regional constitutions were organized for the first time in Ethiopia were orchestrated on the idea of TPLF to deteriorate the Amhara people who live throughout the country.¹⁰

⁷ Personal Interview, the Ethiopian Citizen for Social Justice Party central committee / EZMA, and chief coordinator of the Bahir Dar Electoral district, Bahir Dar, 19 July 2021.

⁸ Supra note 3

⁹ Personal Interview, the former chairman and the current central committee of NaMA, 06, July 2021, Bahir Dar.

¹⁰ Personal Interview, head of the Amhara Prosperity party and pollute bureau of the PP, Bahir Dar, 10 July 2021.

For example, an Amhara living in the Oromia, Gambella, and Benishangul-Gumuz region is not considered a citizen. However, other ethnic groups in the Amhara region are citizens. Significantly, in the Benishangul-Gumuz region, except for the five ethnic groups, the Amharas do not have such rights. Because, according to article 39, sub-article 3 of the Constitution's protocol is defiant and limited to providing a balance of representation and right of citizenship. For example, in a city where 95 percent of the Agew, and Amhara people reside, in are not represented. However, it is controlled by a minority of titular groups, namely Shinasha and Gumuz. Thus, instead of civil servants a citizen able to join government institutions through competition, the region recruits the titular groups only because of misuse of affirmative action. Then the primary grant residential city areas for Gumuz ethnic groups, instead of the lotto system or other means.¹¹

Similarly, more than 90 percent of residents of the Pawi woreda were the Amhara ethnic group; that was why it was a special woreda. But in 2002, the Benishangul-Gumuz region improved its Constitution and patience and included the Pawi woreda in its sphere of administration. Following this, others have no rights, and no good proxies, raising the question of survival. The indigenous Amharas' have been marginalized, abused, executed, and displaced from a region.¹²

The primary purpose of the revised Constitution of the Benishangul-Gumuz region is to displace the people who are Ethiopianism, like Amhara. That's why the Amhara caused all this conflict by creating a difference between Ethiopian Nationalism and ethnonationalism. Thus, in a region, the Amhara and Agew have been displaced. For these problems, the cadres are the principal actors in the kidnapping. For example, the deputy president of the Benishangul-Gumuz region had a hand in displacing the Amharas; that is why the federal government arrested him.¹³ Hence, the government authorities systematically supported the recent conflicts in the Benishangul-Gumuz region. For example, in the last decade, hundreds of government officials at each administrative level have been fired from their positions.¹⁴

¹¹ FGD, the Amhara IDPs from the Dibatie Woreda of Benishangul-Gumuz region and a section of society took refuge in the Awe zoning-Guangua District, Chagne city Administration, 26 June 2021.

¹² Personal Interview, Lecturer of law, governance, and federalism at Addis Ababa University, is an activist and has studied extensive research in the context of conflict resolution, Addis Ababa, 14 June 2021.

¹³ Supra note 9

¹⁴ FGD, the Agew IDPs from Wonbera Woreda of Benishangul-Gumuz region and a section of society took refuge in the Awe Zon-Guangua District, Chagne city Administration, 26 June 2021.

Moreover, the Agew IDPs from the Dangur Woreda of the Benishangul-Gumuz region expressed their feeling as the following:-

Being the Amhara people are Ethiopian, we have reached a point where we cannot move and work in any country. We are measured not by Ethiopian but by color and language, especially in the Benishangul Gumuz region; they divide us into black and red. So one cannot know for being an Ethiopian. When our answer is yes, First, the ethnic groups of Gumz, Shinasha, Berta, Mao, and Komo are called indigenous ethnized. But the Amhara, Agew, Oromo, Tigre, and others are called immigrants. In this sense, when the Kebele, the Woreda, and the zone government bodies have delivered service for the community, they do not give us equal service and treatment because they see us as immigrants. We are even required to pay double taxes on a case that is unprecedented in any country. We were even restricted from joining Special Forces, police, and defense forces. When we go to the office searching for service, the first question is, what your ethnic group is? If you say I am Amhara, you will be subjected to severe harassment and discrimination. Discrimination also occurs when school grades are awarded if you are Amhara. We're charged big highlights and outstanding fees to get even an ID. Even when two men collide and go to the police, we are the ones who are considered a troublemaker, even if the so-called catastrophe is so great, the stress and abuse we suffer and experience are unbelievable. Article 39 is essential in the Benishangul-Gumuz region. If they repeatedly tell us, they are threatening us with the use of Article 39 which has the right to declare independence by taking the area as far as Gosober. Because the government gave us Article 39 to move freely and chased us, saying we can do what we want in our territory. But it is a visible truth that it is not the people but the leaders who were causing us problems.¹⁵

Accordingly, in the Benishangul-Gumuz region, the five ethnic groups are assumed to be the Agew, and Amhara people as promoters of Ethiopian identity by degrading ethnic identity. This is mainly the work of the TPLF which has purposefully designed the contradiction of regional constitutions. For example, in some regions that the Amhara predominantly populated, such as in the Regions of Benishangul and Oromia, their Constitution was designed to prevent the Amhara from participating in politics. However, the state constitution is not compatible with the standard federal Constitution beyond a fundamental problem.¹⁶

The second factor is the ethno-boundary lines that are devastating the Amhara people. The territorial demarcation made during the 1991 period concentrated on the Amharas being losers in different directions. For example, the TPLF political system transferred the

¹⁵ FGD, the Agew IDPs from Dangur Woreda of Benishangul-Gumuz region and a section of society took refuge in the Awe Zon-Guangua District, Chagne city Administration, 26 June 2021.

¹⁶ Supra note 10

Amharas' historical territories to other regions. For example, the Amhara historical territories, like the Wolkayt and Raya included in the Tigray regional state and the Metekel area in the Benishangul-Gumuz regional state and Addis Ababa within the particular interest of the State of Oromia. This creates inter-ethnic conflicts between the Amhara and the above regional States (Bantanyehu and Ishiyama, 2021,p.1041).

Moreover, in the last 30 years, it highlighted differences by distorting the long period of Ethiopian Nationalism and values that had bonded the Ethiopian unity. For example, the boundary is demarcated onto ethnic lines; the car number plate has been separated on the ethnic border; the individual citizenship identity is planted in the ethnic fence; the name of ethnicity has identified the bank, and the flag is placed on ethnic lines. Thus, these bountiful ones have become a negative identity that separates one another from another. Therefore, all things are racially motivated, so humanity and individuality have been lost. Then they explode as they please, one against the other, and destroy each other, which has led us to the present inter and intra-ethnic conflicts. The reason for all this is that a race-based administration system has been created in each region because the Constitution is not designed to promote unity but to dissolve it.¹⁷ Hence, since the coming of this ethno-federal boundary line, ethnic and racial patterns have served as the principal legs for movements and breathing longs for all Ethiopians.¹⁸

As a result, the current federalism has made ethnic groups suspicious and fearful, creating distrust. The Ethiopian people lived in harmony and peace for centuries with thousand years of history. However, this federalism has been carving for differences, which is an embarrassment for our unity and sense of national identity. Because of this orientation, people feel humiliated by their history and lose a typical hero.¹⁹ Therefore, the Ethiopian identity has been becoming blurred, but it is also almost forgotten. That is why the Amhara ethnonational movement has emerged.²⁰

The other factor of Amhara ethnonational movements and ethnic conflicts emanated from TPLF/EPRDF that recognized ethno-political parties as medicine for the multiethnic problem.

¹⁷ Personal Interview. Deputy chief of the Ethiopian National Armed Force and head of the Campaign Department, Addis Ababa,16 June 2021.

¹⁸ Supra note 6

¹⁹ FGDth e Amhara IDPs from the Mandura Woreda of Benishangul-Gumuz region and a section of society took refuge in the Awe zoning-Guangua District, Chagne city Administration, 26 June 2021.

²⁰ Personal Interview, the Amhara Democratic Peoples Movement chairman/ ADPM, Bahir Dar, 18 July 2021.

In contrast, it creates a new ethnonational conflict in Ethiopia. Habitually, the EPLF and TPLF had agreed to dump the Derg regime and began building their own independent country after its fall. However, under their agreement, EPLF has established itself as an independent Eritrean state. At the same time, TPLF remained within Ethiopia, hoping to secede from Ethiopia after the expulsion of Ethiopia by placing Article 39 in the Constitution.²¹

Thus, it is generally made up of highlighting differences rather than unity because the primary source of racial parties is the Constitution, so these ethnic political parties are causing significant problems in communities' way of life.²² In light of this, all the ethnic parties were hatched by the TPLF that they were intended to destroy Ethiopia, and these are the primary sources of conflict in our country. Therefore, over 100 ethnic-based political parties have existed in Ethiopia and become the source of all these problems by depriving one ethnic group of the other. So they have created an incarcerable crisis and turmoil in the country.²³

Accordingly, Tesfahun Alemneh, the chairman of ADPM, expressed that our party always says ethnic parties are sources of conflict. If so, the researcher asked him, why was your party organized in line with ethnic-based than a pan-Ethiopian party? For this reason, he responded that the people of Amhara had been affected, killed, and persecuted, being they reflected the Ethiopian identity rather than their Amhara ethnic identity. Therefore, though we are not interested in it, to save the people of Amhara who live everywhere, the only alternative route is organized by ethnic groups. That is why we established ADPM.²⁴

Moreover, the former chairman of NaMA, Dr. Desalegn Chanie remarks that the Pan Ethiopian organization is unknown to the Constitution. Therefore, it is impossible to manage a leap from Ethiopianism, so we managed NaMA in the name of the Amhara ethnic group. As Amhara, we tried to work in the sense of Ethiopian identity but were not accepted and seen as wrong by others; that's what we organized in this way. If the Constitution bans the ethnic party system, we have no problem changing our party.²⁵

In general, all the respondents highlighted that to resolve the existing conflicts and accommodate Ethiopian and ethnic identity, consociational democratic federalism and mixed boundaries demarcation should be arranged. And the ethnic party should be destroyed and replaced by the National Parties.

²¹ Personal Interview. A journalist, and activist, Bahir Dar, 12 July 2021.

²² *Supra note 4*

²³ *Supra note 17*

²⁴ *Supra note 20*

²⁵ *Supra note 9*

6. Conclusion

Historically, the Ethiopian state existed as a multiethnic empire over thousands of years. But it had survived by accommodating ethnic diversity and prompting national identity more than ethnic identity. After the military regime was overthrown in 1991, the EPRDF came up with total equality through the new Constitution and ethnic federal system in 1995. Therefore, the Constitution recognized ethnic groups to have self-administration, including secession rights in their respective ethnic-regional states, to maintain unity and diversity and resolve conflicts. However, it promotes ethnonationalism and the deterioration of Ethiopian Nationalism. This, in turn, creates animosity on Amhara people by other regions. This system has created the Amhara's sense of ethnonational movements.

The first reason for the advent of Amhara ethnonationalism is the ex-Soviet socialist model of the Ethiopian federal Constitution that grants a self-administration, including secession, to its constituent units. Accordingly, it has marginalized, displaced, and killed the Amhara people who live everywhere in the country. Second, TPLF established the Ethiopian ethno-boundary lines by taking the Amhara territory to other regions. It escalates and flares up the conflict between the Amhara and other regions to a more significant extent.

The other factor is the recognition of ethno-political parties. They mobilized their ethnic groups to hatred, distrust, and harm to the Amhara people, who have lived together peacefully for centuries in Ethiopia almost in all regions. These differences escalated ethnonational conflicts, deteriorating the Ethiopian identity and resulting in the Amhara ethnonational movements. In sum, I recommend that to maintain Ethiopian unity and diversity and regulate ethno-regional conflicts, it should ban the ethnic party system. And also, consociational democratic federalism and mixed boundary demarcation must exist.

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