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Political Narratives and their Impact on Amhara People

Shumet Amare[1]*, Mengistu Alamineh [2]

[1] Department of Political Science and International Studies, Bahir Dar University, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia
[2] Department of Political Science and International Studies, Bahir Dar University, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia

ABSTRACT

The objective of the article is to examine how competing political narratives regarding the formation of the Ethiopian state pose a threat to the Amhara people. to To this end, the article argues that the political discourses (narratives) determine Ethiopia's ethnic-based state structure and politics that dichotomizes citizens as advantageous and non-advantageous, which is not viable. The article utilized a qualitative research design as its methodology. To gather relevant information, the study relied on both primary and secondary data sources. Based on the implications of the political narratives, the study discovered unreasonable constraints on the rights of the Amhara people, both individually and collectively.

Key words: Amhara, Political Narrative, Colonialism, Oppression, Expansionism

INTRODUCTION

In the context of Ethiopia, there are competing political narratives on Ethiopia's state formation vis-à-vis Amhara. These narratives revolve around the themes of colonialism, expansion, and oppression. These narratives have emerged from the historical development of the modern Ethiopian state and have roots that can be traced back to the 1960s. These political anomalies date back to the 1960s, when the Ethiopian student movement, anticipated by socialism, started with a strident critic of imperial rule (Bahiru, 2014). Besides, these political narratives determine Ethiopia's ethnic-based politics manifested through regional states' political structure, which impedes the flourishing of genuine democracy in dealing with the rights of all Ethiopians, including Amhara.

During the 1960s, the Ethiopian student movement began to emerge, driven by a strong critique of imperial rule and influenced by socialist ideologies. This movement played a significant role in shaping the political landscape of Ethiopia and giving rise to these competing narratives. The first narrative revolves

around the idea of colonialism and argues that the formation of the modern Ethiopian state was primarily driven by colonial ambitions. It suggests that the Amhara elites, who were dominant at the time, sought to expand their influence over other ethnic groups and territories, often at the expense of these groups' rights and autonomy.

The second narrative emphasizes the expansionist nature of the Amhara rulers and their desire to build a centralized state. It suggests that the Amhara elites, motivated by a belief in their historical and cultural superiority, pursued policies that aimed at assimilating other ethnic groups into the dominant Amhara culture and language. This narrative highlights the imposition of Amharic as the official language and the marginalization of other ethnic identities. The third narrative focuses on the experiences of oppression and marginalization faced by various ethnic groups, including the Amhara, under the Ethiopian state. It argues that the Amhara, despite their historical prominence, have also been victims of political

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repression and discrimination, particularly during periods of authoritarian rule.

Accordingly, the first segment of the article examines the competing political narratives and anomalies related to Ethiopia's modern state formation. The second section construes the implications on the current Ethiopian state structure and ramifications and aftereffects of these competing political theses and antitheses on the Amhara, particularly those who reside in the regional states of Ethiopia where sovereign power is denied to them. Furthermore, the third section delineates the methodology of the research. The fourth section explains how political narratives instrumentalized to intensify plights on the Amhara as a pretext to discriminating against them.

LITERATURE REVIEW ON CONTENDING POLITICAL NARRATIVES

Analyzing competing political narratives can help us better understand Ethiopia's political predicaments and the political narratives' ramifications of labeling citizens as victims of the Amhara political system and the Amhara system beneficiaries relying on the colonial, expansion, and oppressive narratives.

Colonial Narrative

Starting with the name, proponents of this colonial narrative lament that the term "Ethiopia" was coined in the 19th century to refer to the Abyssinian Empire's geographic unit for clustering several autonomous kingdoms in the Horn of Africa (Holcomb and Ibssa, 1900). Spearheaded by Emperor Menelik II, the formation of the modern Ethiopian state shapes the political trajectory and defines the country's political destiny.

Ultra-ethno-nationalist scholars of Eritrean and Oromo origin endorsed the colonial narrative, which was later maintained by other ethno-nationalists. The narrative maintains that Eritrea and Ethiopia's southern parts, mainly Oromia, Hadiya, Ogaden Somali, Nuer, and Sidama, were incorporated into Ethiopia no less than all the colonial elements of colonialism to which the rest of Africa was subjugated and controlled (Asafa, 2020). Thus, the Ethiopian Empire arose similarly to European colonization. Lubie, for instance (1981: 93) asserts that:

The creation of the Ethiopian Empire necessitated [a] common effort by Abyssinians and Europeans, Abyssinian settler colonialism never existed as a phenomenon independent of European interest, but as an integral part of European colonialism. Colonialism has nothing to do with race, color, or geography... The colonialists we are discussing are the black

Abyssinians who settled in Oromo, Affar, Ogaden, and Sidama countries, for economic and political reasons.

Similarly, Mohammed (1990) bemoaned that by the end of the nineteenth century, the two political rival rulers, King Takla Haymanot and Emperor Menelik, had conquered Oromo's southwest provinces.

Perhaps, having a concept of colonialism may be worthwhile in revealing colonial conditions in Ethiopia's southern parts since the colonial narrative puzzles academicians and stakeholders in Ethiopia's politics. Loomba (2007:2) defines it "as the conquest and control of other people's land and goods". This definition is too narrow to capture the hallmarks of colonialism and too shallow to express the sufferings of colonized people accurately. History tells us that conquering and controlling other people's land have been conducted since human history and are a common phenomenon of mankind. Even before Emperor Menelik's march to the south, frequent crossings from the north to the south and vice versa were widespread (Messay, 1999). Thus, encounters and exchanges between and among societies between North and south have taken place for centuries. In such a condition, one society's social systems and cultures may be replaced and dominated by alien cultures and social systems. However, this process is not as violent and ruthless as Europeans were during colonialism. Moreover, essential features and techniques of colonization were missing.

Colonialism, with its different dominating techniques, is violently penetrating deep into once-peculiar society's territory. Defendants of the Ethiopian colonialization narrative, such as Holcomb and Ibssa (1990:12), among others, define colonialism as "a complicated and violent" subjugation of an inferior society by superiors "involving massive use of manpower, technology, and strategy" to thwart any victim societies' resistance to maintain their livelihoods, values, and socioeconomic systems.

What imbued European colonialism was the irresistible domestic economic need (raw materials, land, and cheap labour) for industrialization. So does Ethiopian colonialism. For generations, the Abyssinians have engaged in agriculture (Clapham, 2017:9). To this effect, the "impoverishment, deforestation, and high population density" of the area triggered Abyssinians' expansion to the south (Mesay, 1999:12). Abyssinians had the same kind of compelling economic interest in conquering the southern provinces and fostering colonial design.

The defenders of the thesis hold Oromo and other people were robbed of their treasures , including

"massacres, slavery, depopulation, cutting hands or breasts, [a] series of famines and diseases during and after the colonization" (Asafa 2020:58). The Oromo and other southern populations were defenseless against Abyssinians, just as Africans were against Europeans. Mesay (1999:13) states that the proponents of the narrative argue that Abyssinians' colonization had persisted due to: "land expropriation, heavy taxation, land grants to warlords and soldiers rewarding their service, all at the expense of the indigenous populations who, on top of losing their traditional rights to land, had to work for their new lords".

Moreover, the Abyssinians imposed their culture, and way of production, the colonies Christianized, churches were built, the feudal system (Abyssinian Feudalism) was installed, the cultures were modified and perverted, garrison towns that speak Amharic were established, the colonizers delegated administrators (ruling elites and class, and territories had been incorporated (Addis, 1975), which were alien to the locals. The colonized people were Abyssinized (mostly Amharanized) and began to act like Abyssinians to the extreme. Bereket (1980:15) remarks that "before the Abyssinian Empire expanded to the south, the peoples were marked by "egalitarian communalism". Since the colonizers one of the colonial narrative theorists, parallels Abyssinians' racial superiority to that of Zionist Jews, claiming that.

Just like the Zionists Israeli, Abyssinians claim racial superiority, as separate and exclusive people, chosen by God to fulfill a destiny. They claim that they have divine election and a historical mission they share with Israel through the bastard son of Sheba… (Gemechu Megerssa 1997:480, quoted in Merera, 2003:100).

Thus, in this way, the Empire State came into existence in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. This understanding unambiguously argues historic Ethiopia is a "deep-seated myth" that has ensconced Ethiopia for so long that it continues to cloud accurate historical understanding of 19th century Ethiopia (Addis, 1975:1).Thus, in the eyes of colonial narrative defenders, Emperor Menelik's march to the south was symmetrical to European colonialism. Bulatovich (2000) summarizes the situation of the colonized peoples in the south as follows:

The peaceful free way of life, which could have become the ideal for philosophers and writers of the eighteenth century, if they had known it, was completely changed. Their peaceful way of life is broken; freedom is lost; and the independent, freedom loving [Oromos] find themselves under the severe authority of the *Abyssinian conquerors (Bulatovich, 2000:68; quoted in Asafa and Schaffer, 2013:281).*

Colonialism may be defined by employing massive personnel, technology, and strategy to provide a colonizer society with leverage and superiority over conquered societies. In reality, explaining the topic of colonialism in the context of Emperor Menelik's march to the south must be examined in light of the considerable use of human resources, technology, and strategy to crash a society that tries to resistincluding alienation from culture, norms, language, system, and economic power.

Beyond the mission of civilization, the rise of the industrial revolution in Europe plunged European countries into the necessity of responding to insatiable domestic economic demands by locating raw resources and inexpensive human labour for their industries. They used to administer and extract surplus raw materials from their colonies. Europeans are compelled to invent a new exploitation mechanism known as colonialism due to cheap human labour and raw material demands. After incursions into territories, European governments obtained partial or complete control over conquered societies, lands, and resources (Robinson and Acemoglu, 2012). Therefore, European countries established colonies to exploit natural resources conveniently for their emerging industries (Michalopoulos and Papaioannou, 2017).

The economic condition of Ethiopian colonialism could not be a perfect illustration of European colonialism. The Ethiopian economic system was and is agrarian and never escapes an old paired oxen-ploughing system. However, Ethiopia's southern parts had experienced a different economic system, called the *gult*. It favoured officials at their disposal to exploit and plunder the landowners, regularly collecting tributes through amassed power (Shiferaw, 1995).

Nevertheless, the colonial narrative deficiency revolves around two issues: the presumption that those officials were Amhara and there was a symmetrical economic system between Ethiopia and European colonizers. The assertion that Abyssinians controlled state power during the imperial regime is an exaggeration and pure denial of non-Amhara Ethiopians' participation in the carving of the modern Ethiopian state. It came after the forgery of modern Ethiopia in the 19th century. The Amhara and non-Amhara participated in the *gult* system in exploiting and plundering farmers in the Imperial Regime (Fisseha, 2015). The economic, political, and national repression in the South continued until the 1974 uprising erupted.

By its very nature, colonialism requires a metropolitan province to maintain power in the colonized territories through a pre-capitalist mode of production, or at least one that is historically previous to its own. Ethiopia, on the other hand, experienced the polar opposite. The Addis Ababa-Dire Dawa axis, rather than the northern areas of Ethiopia, was densely inhabited with industry. The southern Ethiopian sections, rather than the north, were ahead of the north in terms of the proliferation of cash crops sufficient to feed the towns and afford the majority share of exports, the introduction of private land ownership and tenancy, and the availability of agricultural wage labourers (expelled peasants) in extensive mechanized holdings.

Additionally, Ethiopia's ancient and medieval history must be thoroughly demystified to show the recklessness of premeditated Ethiopian colonialism. Before the Gragn assault into the northern sections of Ethiopia from Harar, followed by Oromo expansion, the vast southern parts of Ethiopia were part of contemporary Ethiopia, according to history. The Oromos themselves spread out from Ethiopia's southwestern edge, Borana, near Kenya (Clapham, 2017). Aside from conquering new provinces, the Oromos pushed for the Oromization of hapless peoples, turning them into *gabbaro* and enslaving them cruelly (Mohammed, 1990; Negaso, 1984). Unless they explicitly acknowledged it, the defendants of Ethiopian colonialism could not avoid the fact that many areas now controlled by Oromos were not theirs (Mohammed, 1990). Therefore, it is beyond reasonable doubt that earlier Ethiopian kingdom tributaries that had been cut off due to Oromo expansion. Messay (1999:22-23) illustrates how Oromos treated the pre-Oromo Peoples of Ethiopia

"I [Messay] fail to understand why in the case of the Amhara it is called colonization and in the case of the Oromo coalescence or assimilation. Should it be due to the assistance provided by the Western colonizers? But one has not yet proven that Menelik conquered the southern land on behalf of the West rather than himself. The use of firearms bought from the West does not make the conquest a Western conquest any more than the muskets provided by the Turks would have made Gragn's rule over Ethiopia a Turkish conquest. Facts present indigenous forces vying for superiority in the Horn of Africa; the external assistance was simply grafted onto a process already in action.

So conspicuous is the similarity and parallel between Ethiopian and European colonialism that the defenders of it assert that modern Ethiopia was crafted independently while the rest of the African countries came under European colonizers.

Expansion for Making Modern Ethiopia State

After the decline of the Abyssinian political hegemony due to Gragn's war and the expansion of the Oromo in the second half of the eighteenth century, local governors and warlords challenged and overshadowed the central government's power (Bahru, 2002). With the fall of Abyssinian political hegemony, regional lords strengthened their political influence within their provinces to the extent that they may be termed quasi-independent. They expanded their political power across the country. They fought each other to increase their territory at the expense of others and become the King of kings. A lord Kassa Haylu brought the end of the Era of the Princes. Emperor Tewodros II (ruled from 1855 to 1868) initiated the expansion of modern Ethiopia. He laid the groundwork for modern Ethiopia (Abir, 1968).

Following his death, Emperor Yohannes IV had been busy defending his country from intruders- Mahdists (Sudanese), Egyptians, and Italians (Getachew, 2009). Menelik was hard at work, advancing southward, and gaining influence over Begemder (Gondar), Gojjam, and Wollo. Following the death of Emperor Yohannes IV in 1889 at the battle of Matamma fighting Mahdists, Emperor Menelik II took control of power. However, one thing must be made clear: the expansion to Ethiopia's southern sections was a project that began long before Menelik became Ethiopia's Emperor (Henze, 2000).

Emperor Menelik's southern march was not his original idea. He conceived expansion from Showa aristocrats to incorporate the historical land of the Ethiopian Empire, which was more closely linked with Ethiopia than with any other state before the sixteenth century (Messay, 1999). Menelik II carved up Ethiopia's present shape despite his claim to historic Ethiopia, which extended to Lake Nyanza toward the south and Sudan in the west (Merera, 2003). He

The narrative's core assertion is that modern Ethiopia is the result of a nineteenth-century political process (Ibid). It harboured the goal of forging a nation by forming a multiethnic society that resembled historic Ethiopia. The multiethnic society was sought to be based on the Amharic language, allegiance to the nation above and beyond one's attachment to villages, tribes, or ethnic groups, and common shared national symbols. However, reaching a consensus on the central theme of the expansion thesis is challenging. The colonialist and oppression theoreticians could not accept the primary purpose of the expansion thesis. Therefore, Menelik's expansion to the south and southwest was not driven by colonial motives into the utterly alien territory; instead, it was a process and

mechanism of political integration of different ethnic groups with historical affinities. Messay (1999) maintains that encounters and exchanges of culture and system had taken place between northern and southern peoples, even before Emperor Menelik's march to the south. These encounters were critical because, before the Oromo's advance from southwest Ethiopia to the north, some of the provinces in the south were part of historic Ethiopia. As a result, southern peoples did not have completely different social, political, and cultural systems than northern Abyssinians. Furthermore, the Amhara are neither "cohesive nor a close-knit ethnic group" (Gillespie, 2009: 71).

The Abyssinians Oppression Narrative
The oppression narrative, also known as the "Nationality Question," contends that Ethiopia is a centuries-old nation that emerged from Abyssinian military conquest at the end of the nineteenth century. Though the distinction between Northerners (Abyssinians) and Southerners was overtly recognized, the conquest took place to construct a nation-state government comprising many ethnic groupings (Temesgen, 2016). Consequently, the narrative's advocates claim that those from the north dominated politics and the economy, either directly or through loyal military chiefs and nobility delegated to oversee the country's southern regions. People from the south, on the other hand, were marginalized in politics and the economy (Ibid, 2016). However, the southern kingdoms that peacefully submitted to Emperor Menelik had more autonomy than those subjected militarily (Bahru, 2002).

Young (1996:532) deplores that many of the captured lands were handed to "court and church officials, soldiers", and northern "settlers" who were urged to settle in the area since the southern regions were fertile, and suited for essential export products such as coffee. Consequently, indigenous peoples were evicted from their ancestral land. The captured land benefited the Abyssinian nobility, not necessarily the ordinary Abyssinians (Ibid, 1996). Therefore, the conquered peoples of the south were stripped of their land and deprived of political power in its affairs.

The defenders of the thesis condemn that, apart from the selective incorporation of a few indigenous peoples who embraced Amharanization-assimilation into Amhara identity, there was little possibility for ethnic integration in the process of nation-state building (Temesgen, 2016). As a result, Amhara identity was propagated as the national identity and dominated in all spheres of Ethiopia's multi-nation Ethiopia. Dissatisfactions among Somalis, Eritreans, Tigreans, Oromo, and Afar drive them to join liberation movements seeking regional autonomy or independence from Ethiopia (Ibid, 2016). Kassim (1985:333) criticizes the system for giving Amhara a privileged advantage over other communities "by giving a new dignity" to the Amharic language and making it Ethiopia's national language. As the idea of Amhara cultural supremacy and the Amharanization of the country spread, assimilated nations began to voice their displeasure.

Meanwhile, in the 1960s and 1970s, changes occurred in the country's political atmosphere that profoundly shaped Ethiopia's politics and history. In 1974, creating a homogenous community out of various ethnic groups spread the Amhara identity as national identity was thwarted, and Ethiopian feudalism was eliminated. To this effect, there was a belief that the overthrow of the imperial regime also terminated class exploitation and oppression (Ibid, 1985). However, this is still far from being realized, and it is still a long way off. Two interconnected reasons explain this process, 1) the abrogation of the Ethio-Eritrea Federation since it waged the Eritrean nationalist war (Markakis, 1974). Second, the radical Ethiopian student movement (ESM), from Haile Selassie I University-since the most unyielding opposition to the Haile Selassie rule came from the students (Bahru, 2002:220).

Many proponents of the oppression thesis insist on Amhara's cultural and linguistic dominance. Scholars, on the other hand, have differing opinions. Messay (1999) demonstrates that cultural exchange and encounters in different forms have been conducted even before Emperor Menelik headed south. No more precise indication of the syncretic aspect of Ethiopian culture can be found than in the form of Amharic, he continued. Messay was not the only one who thought this way. As stated by Bende (1983), Amharic is a Semitic language, although it appears non-Semitic due to non-Semitic syntax such as Cushitic and Omotic languages. Amharic is a language spoken by the vast majority of Ethiopians, and there are numerous reasons for this. It is the only language in Ethiopia, and possibly all of Africa, to have its alphabetic letter. Furthermore, no literature exists that shows the extinction of languages since Emperor Menelik

RESEARCH DESIGN
This study utilized a qualitative research approach, which is widely employed in social science research for various reasons (Creswell, 1999). In this context, Dawson (2002) justifies the use of qualitative research by examining the attitudes, behavior, and experiences of respondents through interviews, aiming to obtain a comprehensive understanding of their perspectives. The qualitative approach facilitates an in-depth

exploration of all aspects of the phenomenon under investigation due to its thorough and intensive nature. Both primary sources, including official documents, and secondary sources, such as books and articles, were utilized.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Political Narratives Implications nn Ethiopian State Structure and the Amhara

In many ways, understanding Ethiopian politics after 1991 is inextricably related to political narratives of Abyssinian (Amhara) colonization, dominance, and expansion. These caricatured and sometimes inaccurate political narratives are familiar with ultra-ethno-nationalists and the political elites of the 1960s, sometimes referred to as "that Generation". Accordingly, Ethiopia is organized into ethno-federalism, promoting ethnic diversity, autonomous regional *republics* with self-rule, and the homeland of ethnic groups that make up the majority of the regions.

Ethiopia's current state structure and definition of citizenship within nations, nationalities, and peoples is the product of contending political narratives from various political factions and elites. The Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), for instance, are the outcome of a strong belief in the Amhara people's political domination and colonization over other ethnic groups. True to OLF's founding principles, the organization's primary purpose is to build a "Democratic Republic of Oromia," which may be accomplished. At the same time "settlers" are expelled from the province, and the imperial regime is deposed (OLF, 1979). Therefore, the fall of Derg in 1991 not only meant a military victory of insurgents but also the imposition of TPLF's flawed assumption of Ethiopian statehood-the sense of victimhood induced by the Amhara. To this end, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), particularly the TPLF, has shaped and influenced Ethiopian politics for the past three decades.

According to some ultra-ethno-nationalist intellectuals who support the colonization narrative, nationalism has yet to achieve the emancipation and self-determination of subject peoples (nations) annexed during the foundation of the modern Ethiopian state (Asafa, 1998). Abyssinians' (Amhara) colonization was not only enforced systematically in the past, but the Amhara elites skillfully planned the restoration of the previous administrative regime to enslave the conquered people (Ibid, 1998). As a result, annexed peoples are subjected to dominance, exploitation, and discrimination by Amhara elites and their non-Amhara partners, just as they were before 1991. The Amhara imposed a system on the conquered peoples in the nineteenth century, is still in use today. They hold the belief that the Amhara and their allies still oppress conquered peoples as a nationalist desire Therefore, ultra-ethno-nationalists propagandize that the conquered people must avoid "alien minority rule" (Ibid, 1998:96) to select their political system, pursue economic development in their republic. People who live outside of their ethnically designated regional state are labeled and differentiated as aliens, settlers, and non-indigenous.

Colonization, expansionism, and oppression narratives, explicitly or implicitly, agree that Abyssinians controlled, oppressed, assimilated, and at the very least, dominated other ethnic groups with different cultures, languages, and norms (Messay, 1999). This situation indicates two groups: the Abyssinians (Amhara), who subjugated peoples outside of their territory and homeland, and the peoples who were conquered, and annexed by the Amhara. As a result, Abyssinians (Amhara), including anyone living outside their ethnic group, are not eligible for membership in the ethnonational group's political community, that is, "subnational citizenship," which denotes that some individuals are members of an ethnic group, and the regions are their homeland. In contrast, others are not members of the ethnonational group's ethnic group.

Citizenship is thus differentiated based on belonging to an ethnic group that makes up the regional state. In such circumstances, benefits (political, economic, and social) are conditional on belonging to an ethnic group that makes up the majority of the population in the region. Subnational citizenship is expected to protect sub-national identities and ensure preferential allocation of local natural resources and access to their use, as well as limits on citizens' internal movement, in a divided society where indigenes and non-indigenes live in dissected communities (Gagnon, and Tremblay, 2019).

Therefore, the prevailing view is that the colonizers, expansionists, and oppressors who seized and dominated southern Ethiopia during the nineteenth century when modern Ethiopia was formed are non-indigenous, or at the very least, foreigners to the area. Yonatan and Beza (2020) do a good job of revealing the living situations of ethnic groups and people outside their home region in Ethiopia's regional states. They revealed (2020:270) that Ethiopia's regional states "have limited or attempted to limit the right [s] of individuals to protect their newly found demographic and political supremacy from those they consider as non-indigenes".

The Political Narratives' Plight on the Amhara People

In the twenty-first century, anyone can be bombarded with terrible news via television, social media, and other means. Apart from the overall case, we have repeatedly heard numerous vicious Amhara's mass murders, carnage, displacement, annihilation, and vilification, particularly in the Oromo, Benishangul Gumuz, SNNPRS, and other regions of Ethiopia (Bekalu, 2018). These egregious crimes against Amhara arose out of nothing. Rather, as was stated earlier, it is the outcome of a decades-long propaganda effort that has branded the Amhara ethnic group as the mastermind of Ethiopia's political crises, and the ringleader of national oppression since the 1960s. However, no one compares to the TPLF when it comes to labeling Amhara as a menace to Ethiopians. Since its establishment, the TPLF has made the Amhara people the principal focus of vilification, demonization, discrimination, and other forms of harassment, using the entire media and governmental apparatus at its disposal to criminalize the Amhara people's identity. And scholars and political elites systematically provide this vilification, defamation, and other characteristics in the form of political narratives. These political narratives, no matter their correctness or wrongness, define the Amhara ethnic group's fate as miserable and perished.

The competing narratives of colonialism, expansion, and oppression portrayed Amhara as intruders and troublemakers. Those political tales all share an animosity for the Amhara. According to Tezera (2021:298), those political narratives assist people in creating an unfavorable attitude toward Amhara, and they feel that their national areas were either integrated or occupied "by the Ethiopian empire" and that Amhara culture dominated theirs. Furthermore, they think that the invading Amhara had exploited all non-Amharas at least for a century (Ibid, 2021). To this effect, the Amhara have been labeled as oppressors, colonizers, and expansionists in Ethiopia. In particular, the national oppression narrative, which claims to be the foundation base of Ethiopia's post-1991 political system (Ibid), the questions of students' in 1960s such as land to teller, nationality questions, and democracy were questions raised by the domination of Amhara in all spheres of life of non-Amhara Ethiopians.

The EPRDF deliberately labels Amhara and Amharic speakers as adversaries of all Ethiopian nations and nationalities. Consequently, Amhara people have been driven out of various sections of the country where their fathers, forefathers, and ancestors have lived for ages (Bekalu, 2018). They have been deliberately exterminated and forcibly expelled on the basis of the simple charge that they were exploiters and oppressors for centuries and dominated the non-Amhara Ethiopians, as EPRDF dubbed nations, nationalities, and peoples. Though TPLF-led EPRDF is to highly restrictive to permit documents to be propagated and censorship is to the extreme, there are some documents and media outlets, which exposed ethnic cleansing on Amhara.

The eviction of Amhara from the area where they live, they need to live, and they established family and social fora for years. For instance, on 1 November 2011, a letter was written by South Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS) Guraferda Woreda Agriculture Office to Shurae Kebele Administrative Office, which ordered the cadres to evict Amhara from their Kebele and to "take over" the land they plow as they are "illegal settlers" (Administrative Zone of Guraferda Agriculture Office, "Letter to Shurae Kebele Administrative Office." Reference No. 727/ ťØ-4/2011, Biftu 1 November 2011. [In Amharic]). The Ethiopian Raeie Party condemned the act and underlined that the eviction of Amhara from Guraferda Woreda was done "unlawfully by the federal government" (https://hornaffairs.com/2013/05/14/ethiopiabenshangul-guraferda-evictions-deliberateopposition-party/).

As Teshal Serbo, Raeie Party President, at the time "told journalists that the letter ordering the eviction was written by State Chief Shiferaw Shigutie himself reads: 'go back to where you came from!'" (Ibid). Bekalu (2018:85) further consolidates this fact that regional, zonal, and kebele officials could not evict anyone "without TPLF's seal of approval", and party members of EPRDF "endorsed decisions made by TPLF officials". The saddest thing was that the way they were evicted was very disgruntling as Mohammed (2015:351) succinctly puts the victims [Amhara] claimed to have been evicted without advance notice and time to even collect their personal belongings let alone agricultural produce. Some of them even alleged to have been forcibly loaded onto trucks and buses and dropped in Addis Ababa, from where they were finally sent to their place of origin, situated in some part of the *Amhara* National Regional State.

In the parliamentary session held and televised on 17 April 2012, the late Prime Meles Zenawi addressed the issue in favour of the evictors saying that "It [the eviction] is not a crime against the East Gojjam

settlers. Attempts to interpret it in this way are irresponsible" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZjQXjTLmbE4) . The action, Assefa (2012) goes so far as to say, was part of a systemic attack aimed specifically at the Amhara people (https://tassew.wordpress.com/2012/04/20/why-have-the-amaras-once-again-become-victims-of-ethnic-cleansing-by-tplf/). Surprisingly, nearly 90 Amhara ethnic families displaced from the Bench Maji Zone, Gura Farda Woreda in SNNPRS, less than a week after Hailemariam Dessalgn promised that no forced evictions would take place during his office term. There was no attempt either to stop or sue the government to stop ethnic cleansing for forced eviction of Amhara.

The most stunning development so far is that business as usual is continuing. The Amhara people were optimistic when the EPRDF regime toppled down and was replaced by the Prosperity Party government, as Abiy Ahmed promised to introduce just political systems and ensure accountability in his government. In his televised address upon assuming the position of prime minister, he denounced the EPRDF government as a terrorist and authoritarian regime (https://youtu.be/ajjlYTbJm4U).

Nevertheless, since 2018, the Amhara community has encountered a series of formidable obstacles, encompassing political uncertainties, intercommunal tensions, and violations of human rights. The Amhara people have been affected in the Benishangul-Gumuz region, exacerbating the situation due to ongoing conflicts and subsequent displacements. Notably, in Oromia, particularly in the Wollaga Zones, thousands of Amhara individuals have witnessed the burning of their homes and belongings and their relatives and loved ones. The Tigray conflict, which was initiated in November 2020, has resulted in the displacement of people, loss of lives, and extensive damage to properties, inflicting significant hardships upon the Amhara, and disrupting their means of sustenance. These conflicts have resulted in the forced displacement of the Amhara population, as well as the tragic loss of lives and extensive destruction of property.

CONCLUSION

The opposing political narratives surrounding the formation of modern Ethiopia have formed its politics and dictated the current Ethiopian state architecture. Political elites need ethnicity to achieve their political programs and objectives; thus, political narratives are most adapted to manipulating ethnicity. The narratives of colonization, oppression, and expansion feed into the dichotomy of victims, all non-Amhara Ethiopians, andculprits (the Amhara). These narratives imply that state-owned ethnic groups, except for the Amhara, were the least well-off (victims of Abyssinian politics) for a long time and deserved better off in the region's affairs.

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