

Ethiopia and the Running Sores of Ethnic Federalism: The Antithetical Forces of Statehood and Nationhood

PETROS B. OGBAZGHI

Abstract: Ethnic federalism in Ethiopia proved non-viable in practice because it came to be widely seen as a political tool used by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF)-dominated Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), whose ideological foundation was inspired by Soviet system of 'democratic centralism': a benign façade that venerated an authoritarian vanguard party operating under a token parliament. This article examines the dynamics of statehood and nationhood: antithetical forces of integration and differentiation, which play out around the commonly shared albeit highly contested polity of the nation-state. The need to dialectically resolve these antagonistic though mutualistic stakes lies at the epicentre of political debate in contemporary Ethiopia, ultimately pointing to the constitutional reform dilemmas it now faces. By drawing on literature on political theory, the article argues that the federal constitution proved antagonistic to the inherited politico-cultural orientations that posited the nation-state as the principal supranational identity. By redefining narrow forms of collective identity that were anchored precisely on ethnic sentiments that grew largely in reaction to perceived injustices, the federal constitution appeared neither to embrace, as a system of legitimation, the characteristic and authoritative dimensions of 'Ethiopian' identity as a supra-national universal habitus of loyalty and identification. Nor did it provide integrative cohesion to an otherwise essentially differentiated primordial ethnic and linguistic identity features that now came to be diffused and indeed accentuated at sub-national regions as rigid and hermetic sites of conflict and strife, rather than discursive, reflexive, and interactive domains of cultural and social life.

Key words: Ethiopia, ethnicity, nationhood, statehood, federalism, constitution.

Introduction

This article tries to examine the dynamics of statehood and nationhood: antithetical forces of integration and differentiation, which play out around the commonly shared albeit highly contested polity of the nation-state. The need to dialectically or at least dynamically resolve

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these antagonistic, though mutualistic, stakes lies at the epicentre of political debate in contemporary Ethiopia, ultimately pointing to the political and constitutional reform dilemmas it now faces. By drawing on literature on social and political theory, the article argues that the failure of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia can be attributed to the flaws in the federal constitution itself, not just because it did not truly induce the enforcement of its own provisions, in which self-rule—much less the right to self-determination—was hardly a bona fide possibility of the federated units. But more importantly, the ethnic-based federal constitution and the polity it entailed and constituted failed to generate compatibilities between synchronistic hierarchies and diachronistic networks: collective identity features that are crucial in shaping the dynamics of statehood and nationhood. By redefining narrow forms of collective identity that were anchored precisely on ethnic sentiments that grew largely in reaction to perceived injustices, the federal constitution appeared remarkably ineffectual in embracing, as a system of legitimation, the characteristic and authoritative dimensions of ‘Ethiopian’ identity (however defined) as a supra-national universal habitus of civic loyalty and identification. Nor was it reasonably construed to provide, at the very least, the integrative and conjugative cohesion to otherwise essentially differentiated ethno-cultural identity features. But what is more, such emotive forces of primordiality appeared now to be diffused and indeed accentuated at sub-national component political units as rigid and hermetic sites of conflict and strife, rather than discursive, reflexive, and interactive domains of cultural and social life.¹

The Antithetical Nexus of Nationhood and Statehood

In the analysis of state-society relations, two issues stand out quite prominently. At one extreme end of the spectrum lie ideas about the genesis and formation of states, including the historical and logical continuity of their structural and institutional matrix. At the opposite end are the dynamics of social, cultural, and ethno-linguistic identity features of national societies, including the manifold ways the imageries and memories of collective life are shaped, expressed, and mobilized, giving rise to the common feelings and sentiments of nationhood that opt in certain groups while excluding others. The fields of social and political theory, and more specifically, literature on nationalism, nation-building, ethnicity, and social movements research, offer vital contributions to the empirical and theoretical exploration of such pressing contemporary issues of state-society relations. Issues of national identity and nationhood convey notions of individual agency, passion, ideology, and spontaneity. They are largely framed and analysed in terms of nationalism: a political instrument through which the radical and recalcitrant resistance of disenfranchised and oppressed people is expressed and acted upon by people who organise and empower themselves in response to epically dysfunctional political, social and economic structures, and outcomes. The sense of alienation and disaffection that is experienced is in fact nothing but the very by-product of a defective nation-building process that failed to foster and nurture what it created in the first place: stimulating and generating a sense of community where identification and attachment with the nation-state is a vital and indeed an essential component to the induction of that process.²

Such collective action mobilizations are justified by the desire and aspiration of national societies and the various categories that are subsumed therein, involving social classes, democratic forces, economic interests, as well as spatial and cultural identity groups, for the

achievement of homeland autonomy and statehood through the exercise of the right of self-determination.³ This corporate yet aggregated body of cultures, languages, religions, and traditions, which inherently contain a tacit stipulation of moral agency, exist as national society or *pacte d'association*—as understood by the social contractarian theorists from Hobbes to Locke to Rousseau.⁴ This form of social contract, moreover, which emerged largely in reaction to hegemonic and absolutist monarchical power, and hence relatively newer and particularistic form of ethno-nationalist mobilization corresponds to what Hedetoft called 'subjunctive' nationalism, giving rise to or at least facilitating the creation of the nation-state from below, and as such, it can be seen as the highest and integrative form of collective action.⁵

In contrast to that, the idea of statehood and the corollary institutional and structural artefacts it entails are analyzed in terms of how state institutions act as bridling and taming influences on the otherwise unwieldy nature of civil society. The goal is ultimately to consolidate the nation-state by maintaining the stability and the status quo of the institutionalised and structured, albeit historiographically defined, patterns of state-society relations.⁶ The traditional paradigm of statehood is rooted in what Billig called 'banal' nationalism in which the state mobilizes society under the banner of populist patriotism both as an ideology and as natural and institutional embodiments of collective identity built out of the dominant albeit commonly shared values, feelings, and bonds of attachment.⁷ The dominant state nationalist identity features render ethno-linguistic and cultural cleavages irrelevant, or at least secondary, in favour of a more differentiated and holistic integration, and it is most commonly facilitated in periods of war, social upheavals, and political uncertainties during which individuals and social groups are swept in patriotic and altruistic self-sacrifice.

Moreover, as a centrally steered state project, it is justified by the discourse of historical continuity and, as such, championed and proclaimed as the highest social virtue upon which the very existence of the nation-state ultimately depended. Such national historiographical narratives, which reproduced primordial, traditional, and conventional forms of identity, found themselves strongly manifest in the manipulative, coercive, and overarching legal, political, economic, and social structures and ideological constructs, which helped integrate the diverse ethno-nationalities into the nation-state.⁸ In consequence, there is very limited room for social and political mobilisation by ethno-nationalist forces who might otherwise wish to challenge the dominant nationalist version of history and its underlying ideological basis upon which the status quo is maintained. In fact, anyone who does not subscribe to attempts by the state to build a shared national identity might be faulted as subversive and even treasonous: a universally recognised and indeed constitutionally enshrined political (and moral) principle of the modern state system. In essence, the nation-state, which is variously expressed in terms of a historical accident, ontological given, natural object, and an *à priori* fact, is conceived of as a monolithic and composite extension of power relations, or as the *pact de gouvernement*—as developed by Hegelian and Platonian ethical theorists and amplified by Catholic and Calvinist political theologians.⁹

Federalism as Political and Constitutional Category

It is a truism that any political nation that is delimited by legal and territorial jurisdictions within which the body politic is reposed, is characterized by a double nature: state and society.

For this reason, the relationship between state and society is essentially a relationship of two orders: the political and the voluntary or civil society. State and society relationship, however, does not occur in a vacuum, but rather it requires ideological and institutional anchoring: a framework of ideas, beliefs, worldviews, and visions. These are often used by political and social actors as justifications to sway thoughts and shape identities, thereby offering opportunities that enable society to meaningfully relate with the political projects of the state, all the while winning over narratives, values, and sentiments that do not necessarily always comport with the mainstream nationalist orientation, or worse yet—lend themselves to threatening the status quo.

Bearing in mind, as one must, the fact that state political and institutional forms are influenced by socio-cultural and historical contexts that obtain in a given society, federalism is one such ideological and democratic institutional mechanism, defined by *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Political Institutions* as: “a form of territorial organization in which unity and regional diversity are accommodated with a single political system by distributing power among general and regional governments in a manner constitutionally safeguarding the existence and authority of each.” Less obvious, but perhaps even more significant is the strength of a federal constitutional arrangement, which lies in its capacity to hold together societies otherwise split, or at least susceptible to civil war and conflict as a result of ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious cleavages.¹⁰

By and of itself, federalism lays greater emphasis to the promotion of inclusive and integrative identities by offering a constitutional compromise between a centralized and unitary state, on the one hand, and antagonistic and secessionist tendencies in the nation, on the other. The institutional frameworks of federalism thus provide the synchronistic and integrative institutional complexes of the state that consolidate and diffuse vertically the national culture, including the normative and affective nationalist values it upholds. The propagation and diffusion of dominant nationalist identifications and ideologies is enacted through the institutional and functional structures of state power, nationally (branches of government) and territorially (sub-national government) and are conveyed more concretely on the ground through state mass media and educational and cultural institutions.

Furthermore, core and periphery are defined structurally and operate functionally on the principles of complementarity, subsidiarity, interdependence, and divisibility of sovereignty in which autonomous jurisdictional competencies are vertically integrated. In contrast to that, the horizontal and coordinating conjunctions of federalism simultaneously promote asymmetric relations of power among multiple and diverse ethno-linguistic groups by providing such territorial power constellations a measure of self-rule, the opportunities for political engagement and school of citizenship, conflict minimization, as well as inter-jurisdictional institutional incentives for competition, collaboration, and innovation.¹¹

Ethiopia in Perspective

Far from proving to be the personification of *Cornucopia*—the mythical quintessence of plenitude and abundance, nor *Tranquillitas*—the epitome of peace and tranquillity, Ethiopia has long remained in the doldrums. If real and perceived injustices, gross inequality, and socio-cultural polarisations or at least ‘class’ divisions were the order of the day during the reign of

the monarchical regime of Haile Sellassie, the period immediately following the Marxist revolution of the early 1970s, which installed the dictatorship of Mengistu Haile-Mariam, was associated with war and belligerent military adventurism, ravaging poverty and chronic famine—human tragedies which turned out to be even more catastrophic.

Most ironically, the Marxist revolution of 1974 that was meant to free Ethiopia from the scourge of poverty and backwardness only condemned the country to even more profound political and economic thralldom. Of course, Mengistu Haile-Mariam's Afro-Marxist rule brought about quite a few ambitious, if not successful institutional reforms that sought to extend social and economic rights to minority ethno-nationalist groups.¹² But conditions soon turned dire, and the hope of a new dawn was shown to be illusory. The political environment regressed into a blatant military dictatorship, where basic freedoms were routinely quashed, and the democratic and civic virtues of tolerance, political accommodation, and peaceful dissent, if any, were regarded as overly imperialistic and indeed hostile to radical and collectivist form of Marxist-Leninist rule. In short, Mengistu found it hard to muster enough political will needed to resolve the so distinctly *sui generis* political question of Eritrea, much less settle the numerous, albeit no less significant, intramural political grievances in Tigray, Oromia, Afar, Sidama, Somali, and other regions. Consequently, the political atmosphere steeply digressed into further radicalization and militarization giving rise to the proliferation of various urban-based revolutionary movements, such as the EDU, EPRP, MEISON, MALRED, ECHAT, and the Waz League.¹³ Such inescapable institutional and politico-structural quandaries soon crippled the state's capacity to respond effectively to domestic socio-economic development, inevitably, and indeed quite rapidly, plunging the nation into a spiralling downward trajectory whose effects continued to play out into the present.

The result was an upsurge of insurgency by the so-called liberation movements in various regions, including Oromo, Tigray, and Somali. These armed movements, which were drawn from a diverse set of ethno-national, economic, and social 'class' backgrounds, were largely inspired by real and perceived injustices and national wrongs allegedly perpetrated by the Amhara ethnic group, which was seen to have imposed its dominant imperial culture and language over the rest of Ethiopia's ethno-nationalist groups.¹⁴ Perhaps no other country offers such a vivid test case of how the imageries and realities of ethno-political domination and counter-domination play into nationalist sentiments and narratives, which find their ultimate political and ideological manifestation in ethno-nationalist mobilization.¹⁵

The TPLF: the Trek to Ethnic Federalism through Swamps of Marxist Ideology

The Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) was formed in 1975 and had a lowly and humble beginning before it transformed itself from a ramshackle hit-and-run guerrilla organization into an indomitable political and military machine. In what Pischedda termed "wars within wars" the TPLF knocked over its rivals, including the TLF in 1975, TPLM-CC (Ternafit) in 1976, EDU between 1976-78, and the EPRP between 1978-79 before it stood tall and truculent as an unrivalled insurgent movement in Ethiopia.¹⁶ But the TPLF also entered into a deeper political and military alliance with other ethno-nationalist movements, formed mostly from breakaway factions, local militias, and defected Ethiopian soldiers, such as the Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (EPDM), Oromo People's Democratic Movement (OPDM), and Southern

Ethiopia People's Democratic Movement (SEPDM)—all building a common front against the Ethiopian army, which hitherto possessed the strongest military of its day in the entire sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁷

Under the chairmanship of Meles Zenawi, the TPLF—having partly co-opted by 1989 all the other ethno-rebel factions such as the OPDM, the ANDM, and the SEPDM, which simply formed an appendage without having real influence to the TPLF—expanded its power base by forming an umbrella party called the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF).¹⁸ The TPLF Central Committee functioned on Soviet-style 'democratic centralism' with fiercely-held, if not always coherent secular ideological perspectives that were based on rigid Marxist-Stalinist formulations. In fact, the TPLF's ideological position over the decades, both as a guerrilla movement and as a coalition ruling party, was underpinned by shifting ideological allegiances and motives, purely adopted for pragmatic reasons and political gains.¹⁹ Thus, for example, leftist-Stalinist ideological stances, as expressed variously in terms of Albanian Socialism and Marxist-Leninism were held in the highest esteem by the TPLF during its formative years.²⁰ Of greater importance from the perspective of maintaining party cohesion, loyalty, compliance, and discipline within the TPLF ranks was, however, laid down under the principle of democratic centralism and "anything that did not conform to the Stalinist theoretical framework had no place and was labelled reactionary, revisionist or bourgeois."²¹

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, however, there was a marked departure from leftist orthodoxy towards distinctive, if not novel, expressions that underpinned the notions of a democratic developmental state.²² Of course, the uptake of such ideological positions that highlighted the discourses of democracy, development, and poverty eradication were instrumentally calculated in order to buy influence or at least curry favor with the international community.²³ But domestically, they also represented another pragmatic and potential means of shoring up the legitimacy of the regime in the eyes of ordinary citizens, thereby justifying its highly interventionist, hierarchical, and authoritarian political structures (which perhaps also precipitated its downfall).²⁴

This ideological shift would continue to inform all aspects of government policy, especially following the end of the bitter border war with Eritrea at the end of the 1990s, which coincided, and indeed led to the onset of irreconcilable fissures among the top TPLF ranks. This led to purges and show trials, which involved the expulsion of "a significant portion of the leadership, including five of the nine-member politburo of the organisation."²⁵ Established in 1985 as a scion of the TPLF, the semi-clandestine 'party-within-party' organ Marxist-Leninist League Tigray (MLLT) essentially represented a form of dual control, serving as a surrogate for the Central Committee committed to the peculiar "ultra-left ideological brand of Marxism-Leninism (Stalinism specifically)" and, as such, it was the 'brain box' of the party: an ideological and propaganda organ of the TPLF.²⁶

No sooner had EPRDF forces taken control of Addis Ababa on 28 May 1991, ending the seventeen-year dictatorship of Mengistu Haile-Mariam, than they formed a provisional, and soon afterwards a transitional government, with Meles Zenawi appointed as a president until 1995. A Marxist-Leninist-cum-Stalinist vision that emphasized the discourse of nationalism and self-determination was the hallmark of the TPLF, which it held in the highest regard ever since its genesis and proceeded to implement with the utmost dedication, ultimately seeking to

reorient the inherited social and political order. Indeed, a major feature of TPLF's agenda following the ousting of Mengistu Haile-Mariam was the radical transformation of Ethiopia's political and ideological terrain by promoting the narrative of oppression, domination, and even notions of de facto colonialism in which minority ethno-nationality groups were alleged to have been subjugated by the sole dominant ethno-linguist group—the Amhara.²⁷

To give life to this ideological enterprise, the EPRDF, whose “real power and direction...continued to be with members of the TPLF core leadership and more specifically with the Prime Minister Meles Zenawi...chairman of the Central Committee of the EPRDF”²⁸ proceeded, in 1995 to formulate a national constitution. The key purpose of the constitution was to structure and reform Ethiopian polity under ethnic federalism that sought to guarantee the “Rights of Nations, Nationalities and Peoples.”²⁹ Notions of overarching Ethiopian nation-state identity and national culture, which have evolved out of the conglomerate of politico-structural, traditional and historical constructions—views with which the regime had never had any sympathy—were regarded as detrimental to the national and cultural aspiration and indeed to the survival and preservation of the ethno-linguistic and historic heritage of minority groups. It was such ideological convictions, accompanied, as it were, by historical revisionist reconstructions that led to the reification and legitimation of ethnicity as the ultimate unit and basis of cultural and political identification and was to be given an unequivocal expression in a federal constitution.³⁰ To this end, on 5 June 1994 a Constituent Assembly was tasked to draft a constitution, which was adopted and came into force the following year, formally declaring the country as The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

More specifically, under the federal constitution, which consisted of 106 articles and eleven chapters, the hitherto thirteen provinces were reorganized into nine ethnically-based region-states, and two special status city-states (to be directly administered by the federal government), operating under a parliamentary system of government. In fact, the territorial modification of regions in which state boundaries were redrawn to fit ethno-national and linguistic borders was carried out in 1992, to which the federal constitution only gave a formal countenance. But perhaps most salient was the clause that provided ethno-nationalist regions the express guarantee, at least in principle, of the right of self-determination up to secession in which a mere adoption of a regional referendum, where a vote of two thirds majority sufficed.³¹

Ethnic Federalism and the Quest for Legitimacy: The Achilles Heel of the TPLF

When the revolutionaries took hold of the reins of power militarily, the main questions that they initially faced were not essentially economic ones but those of political legitimacy: how to secure and establish the right to rule a culturally, linguistically, and ethnically diverse society by a regime that was largely characterized by a specific ethno-linguistic composition. The approaches that the regime sought to shore up its legitimacy were two pronged: 1) endorsing a left-wing economic agenda that advocated high degree of government intervention in the economy in order to bring about rapid economic growth and development; and 2) devising a constitutional mechanism that favoured ethnic federalism as a legitimacy-enhancing project. Indeed, the basic problem the TPLF-dominated ruling EPRDF party faced was that it could not, unlike the military dictatorship of Mengistu Haile-Mariam, stand out of the ethno-nationality divided society over which it came to rule. Having been drawn from the minority Tigray ethnic

nationality, the TPLF failed to win the legitimacy and good will of the diverse nationality groups who made up Ethiopia.

The extension of the ideology of democratic centralism by the TPLF to the branches of government, not least of all, parliament, practically reduced it, as it did, as a subordinated appendage of the executive arm of the state, and if it existed at all, it was in name only.³² This breached the incompatibility rule, effectively subverting and undercutting the role and independence of elective representatives as their role was, to describe in graphic terms, taken over by the wolf of party apparatchiks posing in parliamentary sheepskin. Indeed, the tendency to use ethnic federalism both as a mechanism of state organization and ideological tool of state legitimation—maintained and exploited under the guise of the ideology of a democratic developmental state—came off as problematic. It undermined the principle of the separation of powers that provided for checks and balances, and the corollary structures that served as a bulwark against centralization and anti-liberal ideological and political currents. The end result was that it engendered exclusive sub-national identities horizontally, while vertically producing an all-powerful and extensive state that controlled practically all spheres of social, political, economic, and cultural life of society.³³

When seen from the perspective of the exceptional melange of circumstances that made authoritarianism, ethnocracy, and the highly ideological polity incendiary, there are adequate grounds to conclude that the federal constitutional arrangement “proved to be long on the rhetoric of self-determination while in practice allowing a series of regional allies to maintain an often kleptomaniac control.”³⁴ Thus, for example, although the constitution stipulated that the regional states would be endowed with decision making powers that are not explicitly reserved for the federal government, in practice, however, real power was “concentrated in the hands of the central government.”³⁵ In fact, the federal government not only “systematically neutralised political opposition” using revenue and budgetary disbursement controls, but also “placed the political elite and party cadres who support it in positions of power and authority at the regional level.”³⁶

The intense concentration of power in the hands of the central state did not only breach the basic tenets of the federal constitution but also stood in the way of the rule of law, which undermined democratic participation and institutional supremacy. The consequence of this was that it embittered ordinary citizens, whose capacity for meaningful participation in social, economic, and political life had been diminished, leading them to stigmatize ethnic federalism as neither ethnic nor federal. Such negative imputations, which furnish a telling testimonial to the hollowness of the federal constitution, affirm Aristotle’s axiom safely: a constitution that does not promote the rule of law is “not a constitution at all; for where the laws have no authority, there is no constitution.”³⁷ Moreover, when seen from the perspective of the standards and requirements for self-determination, which are so “strikingly minimal [that] no other nation has adopted such a lenient view regarding the secession of its member states,” the federal constitution is nothing more than window dressing.³⁸

The Proverbial Last Straw: The Death of Meles Zenawi

Heightened consciousness of ethnic cleavages, which took various forms ranging from political discontent and disaffection—which manifested themselves in demonstrations, social media

agitations, and activist movements—to paramilitary and subversive armed resistance were primarily in response to “an accumulation of years of frustration from ethnic groups who say they have been marginalised by the government.”³⁹ Such sentiments and perceptions of ethnic marginalization further added to the accumulated stock of ethno-nationalist factionalism, which grew far more strident and much more frequent following the death of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, on 20 August 2012. Zenawi had chaired both the TPLF and the EPRDF since 1989, before he became the Prime Minister of Ethiopia in 1995, remaining in power until his death in an unassailable and uncontested pre-eminence.

Following his demise, however, the cracks that had been running through the TPLF ranks became a yawning chasm, leading to a fierce power struggle and the power vacuum or at least the inadequacy of the legitimacy of the party. This culminated in the nomination of Hailemariam Desalegn, a member of the SEPDM—one of the lesser coalition minority parties that constituted the EPRDF. Although Desalegn had served as Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, as well as chairman of the 2010-12 ruling coalition—and hence the legitimate successor of Meles Zenawi—his nomination could indeed be seen as a carefully crafted political feint primarily aimed at creating a symbolic sense of ethnic balance and representation. It was not, however, too long before increased political instabilities, initially ignited by an urban planning decision to expand Addis Ababa by incorporating Oromo farmlands, further threatened the fragile national unity, throwing Ethiopia into new waves of ethnic violence and clandestine insurgency. This prompted the regime to declare a state of emergency, reacting in the most expectedly brutal way in which at least eight hundred protesters were left dead, while tens of thousands of political activists were detained.⁴⁰ Desalegn’s efforts to diffuse political tensions by granting amnesty or at least commutation to seven thousand political prisoners did not bear much fruit.⁴¹ It was amid the turmoil and tumult which racked almost all parts of Ethiopia—bringing the capital city and indeed the major cities and towns in Oromia and Amhara States to a virtual standstill—that Hailemariam Desalegn announced his resignation.

Ceaseless ethnic antagonism, political repression, decadence, corruption, and economic mismanagement of the TPLF faction eventually exhausted its political goodwill and legitimacy. When it became all too apparent that the country had been swept by interminable riots and demonstrations by citizens who showed little appetite to see the current political structures in place, the embattled leaders of the TPLF—with fraught and palpable reluctance—concluded that the regime was near implosion. Indeed, it was a political crisis of the first order, which could only be traversed or at least contained by making overtures to the minority parties—a stratagem Meles Zenawi made use of in his bid to quash his rivals during the early 2000s.⁴² Growing discontent also began to find expression in these very political parties, hitherto the palladium of the TPLF, which found the opportunity to exploit the fissures among the latter’s ranks by forging what appeared to be an underneath electoral ring to ostracize TPLF candidates, leading to the election of Abiy Ahmed of the OPDM.

Abiy, who was a key player in a clandestine reformist faction which famously came to be known as Team Lèma, sought and indeed succeeded in overthrowing TPLF hegemony, seemingly placing Ethiopian politics onto a different trajectory. Having grasped the reins of power more tightly in his hands, within seven months of his political tenure he began cracking down on TPLF officials, arresting some of its top political, intelligence, and military officials and

causing the rest of its ruling elites to retreat to their regional state of Tigray. This turn of events effectively reduced the region into what could be identified as the resistant medieval vassal state under a suzerainty, with its leadership holding out although under increasing pressure to jump onto the bandwagon of Abiy's sweeping reforms. But no sooner did the TPLF raise the ante by launching a sudden attack on several bases of the Northern Command of the Federal forces stationed in Tigray than the Ethiopian government declared what it called a 'law enforcement' operation. Indeed, this cold and premeditated blitz on the flanks of the Northern Command camps at Mekellé, Adigrát, Agúlla, Dánsha, and Ser'ó was the immediate spark that fomented the conflict, ultimately providing *casus belli* for the war in Tigray.⁴³

Abiy Ahmed and the Dilemma of Constitutional Reform

With the coming to power of Abiy Ahmed (who won the 100th Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts in achieving 'peace and international cooperation' by offering a way to end to the 20-year impasse with Eritrea), Ethiopia had finally awakened (or so it seemed) from its long slumber that benumbed its eyes for centuries.⁴⁴ His bohemian charm, tumid oratory, and prolix eloquence, which made him an emblem of auspiciousness in the midst of desolation, seemed to have stirred up hope and expectation in millions of ordinary Ethiopians that endured decades of social, political, and economic anarchies, whose consequences still continue to reverberate. Indeed, Abiy's tenure began with a fresh breath of real political freedoms and liberty of the press, remarkable and indeed unprecedented in the modern political history of Ethiopia, earning him sympathy with the aspirations of ordinary citizens for stronger national unity and a long-wished-for constitutional and democratic reform. In a word, if the masses ever had any doubts in what political peril they stood, Abiy cleared it up by creating a sense of urgency with which they ought to act in order to cast off the slough of ethnicity, which continued to threaten Ethiopia with disintegration.

His political and economic liberalizing reforms—including introduction of gender parity in government, lifting the ban on opposition parties, release of thousands of political prisoners, and calling on political dissidents of the TPLF in the diaspora to return to their homeland and actively contribute to the democratic reforms underway—brought him a huge dose of legitimacy, if not always popularity. Breaking with the natural order of things, he was able to quickly achieve significant breakthroughs in not only resolving or at least ameliorating the long-standing border stalemate with neighbouring Eritrea, but also in brokering and facilitating peace deals in the conflict ravaged geopolitical hotspots of East Africa, including Sudan and Somalia. Such feats of political tact and public relations manoeuvres, which can be considered as prefatory steps towards getting a handle on the more complex geo-political dynamics of the Horn, appeared to have been primarily driven by the more benign charm offensive missions of promoting mutual friendship and economic cooperation as opposed to purely achieving geopolitical strategic objectives. Indeed, such efforts may well play a critical role in mustering the political will for putting an end to personal animosities, regional rivalries, and cultural prejudices, thereby enabling regional actors to bridge a divide and turn themselves into allies or at least not a threat to each other, militarily or politically.

Domestically, Abiy's ascendancy to power perhaps might have offered ordinary citizens some consolation or at least made it possible for them to cathartically reflect on the deep

constitutional quandary that has left Ethiopia fragmented into ethno-national compartments. Thus, the case for a thoroughgoing constitutional reform is patent. The question that should be asked in these circumstances is from what source will such changes be generated? Put in the most simple way, will geopolitical developments and domestic intra-state dynamics make it desirable and perhaps even more urgent for reform, providing Abiy the opportunity and the room to make his influence felt in lending vitality and new life to a polity that has become atrophied and moribund by an otherwise impotent ethnic federal constitution? Or leave him between the hammer and the anvil, unwittingly, and indeed unwillingly carrying on the legacy of his predecessors in elevating the ethnos above the demos as he responds to the pertinacity of ethno-political forces which would rather play the part of a 'petty prince' in their ring-fenced ethno-regional enclaves than subscribe to the agenda of building a more united national life?

This returns us once again to the labyrinthine enigma of ethnic federalism. The appeal of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia obviously no longer has the power that it once had. The charge or at least the challenge to it has begun with Abiy's concept of *Medemer* (literally, to come together, a 'pseudo-philosophical' critique of Euro-centric worldview, whose underlying idea is animated by Ethio-centric revisionist historiographical claims) and it arguably appears to be a watering down or at least a loosening of it, if not entirely dissolving it. And yet, the current discourse of ending ethnic federalism will not go unchallenged by ethno-nationalist movements not least of all by the young generation of the various ethnic groups, to say nothing of the 'ethnic entrepreneurs' across Ethiopia and indeed in the diaspora at large who have never ceased placing their political, social, economic, and cultural marginalization on the political agenda of the central government. Thus, the vision of a unitary government in which the diverse ethnic communities would be harnessed together under the umbrella of an overarching 'Ethiopianism' appears to have been rudely shattered by these young generations of Ethiopia's diverse ethno-linguistic and cultural identities who feel empowered over the last three decades.

Prompted as much by competing political and constitutional visions as by power struggle, the protagonists of ethnic federalism seek real, genuine, and substantive regional autonomy and self-government if they are to retain their affinity and sense of belonging within the Ethiopian 'nation-state' and its federal polity. Indeed, these ethno-nationalist elites feel that they have a stake in maintaining and broadening the scope and depth of the federal arrangement. Accordingly, they have, time and again, reaffirmed their determination to achieve their objectives even where it requires violent resistance in order to thwart what they see Abiy's ambivalent or at least ambiguous stance on the desirability and viability of ethnic federalism. It is within the context of such empirical (and analytical) furrows that we can understand the motives, aspirations, and rationale that guide the ethnically inspired federalist opposition political parties that daily rail against the institutions of the state. The fact that they appear to be more susceptible to sliding into subterranean political sects, which has already befallen some of them, demonstrates the potency of insurgency, and with it too of becoming Trojan horses for international actors with an international agenda. But seen in the larger context, what this paradoxical state of affairs has done is lay bare the fragility of democratic transition in Ethiopia, which manifests itself in the phenomenon of political marginalization of dissident repertoire, thereby preventing them from making concrete contributions to the shaping of a more democratic political order through the institutionalization of party politics.

Conclusion

The article started out from the premise that while the consequence of real and perceived injustices during the monarchical regime of Haile-Selassie and the socialist-military dictatorship of Mengistu Haile-Mariam was the political development of ethnic federalism, it proved superfluous in holding together the diverse ethno-nationalist groups much less protect the rights of the heterogeneous minority ethnicities existing within the larger ethno-nationalist boundaries. Indeed, ethnic federalism, though representing a radically different approach to governing, was in many ways antagonistic to upholding the pluralism of the multi-faceted ethno-linguistic identifications that had already become politicized. It was also at odds with offering an alternative for providing a basis for accommodating some form of a single polity under some form of 'Ethiopianist' supranational collective identification that could transcend parochial and primordial attachments of race, language and ethnicity. As such, it remained devoid of any institutional sobriety in proactively drawing together the various ethno-nationalist groups through the promotion of horizontal diachronistic institutional networks. Nor were the synchronistic institutional structures adapted to the common conjectures, if not commonly shared historical orientations, about how people see themselves, define their expectations, and express their sentiments, including about how and why they should remain Ethiopians over and above other features of identity, thereby attaching themselves to the body politic that had bound citizens together hierarchically, if not always uncontroversially.

Most significantly, however, was the fact that it was far from anchored on minimum democratic structures, institutions, and processes where joint competences between the federal state and autonomous regional states were complemented by meaningful commitments to see to it that these factors hold. In a word, it was neither underpinned by power sharing arrangements, nor by meaningful self-governance rights. This would in practice mean that the federal order failed to act as a counterpoise to the centralist proclivities of the regime and the incongruities stemming from its rupture with the dense or at least ample nation-state identifications and the corollary bonds of emotional attachments that such ties bring along with them.

Nor was this all. The state's highly ideological economic model that was characterized by a highly centralized and statist fashion failed to adequately address the material and economic necessities and opportunities of citizens, and hence to tackle the increasingly growing poverty and inequality critical in bringing about national integration. Indeed, judged from the endless ethnic conflicts that have convulsed the country and left it threatened with disintegration, the jagged state-society relations laid bare the inapplicability and indeed the superficial nature of the ethnic-based federal constitutional framework. Taken as a whole, the TPLF, far from emancipating Ethiopian politics from its unsettled political past where it should have belonged, further made conditions worse, making it, in many ways, the culprit of its own downfall too, winding up in the same bog of political intransigence that its predecessors had been swallowed in. There can be little doubt that right now Ethiopia is down. But neither would it be correct to think that it's out. Indeed, the current seismic tribal and ethno-nationalist upheavals, black clouds, so to say, that have swept Ethiopia, leaving behind a trail of human suffering and destruction, might perhaps have, though coming at a higher cost, a silver lining that would give her the opportunity to once again make the ultimate 'soul search' and indeed a 'deathbed

repentance' by connecting its deep-running ethno-nationalist conflicts with its prevailing politico-institutional arrangements as it maps out a new political and constitutional terrain.

Epilogue

Since May 2021, dramatic and indeed in many ways unprecedented political sea-changes have taken place in Ethiopia. The corrosive accumulation of ethnic tensions and decades of pent-up socio-economic frustrations that have been giving rise to ethnic violence found fresh expression immediately following the first stage of the Tigray war in November 2020. In a political context characterised by schismatic domestic and diaspora political activism and heated media platforms in which evoking and sustaining the flow of sentiments of ethnic self-identification is politically more salient (and indeed a *sine qua non* for political office) than social class and democratic citizenship, ethnic violence has inexorably, if not inevitably acquired unprecedented dimensions.

The phenomenon of ethnic violence in Ethiopia is to a large extent the consequence of a well-orchestrated and planned enterprise, instrumentalized to exert not only personal and political influence over state institutions but also settle perceived old scores and past wrongs. One such major ethnically-mobilized insurgency movement that has compounded the current climate of ethnic instability and the insurrection in Tigray—crippling the federal government's ability to enforce law and order, much less deliver desperately needed development and humanitarian assistance, including the resettlement of internally displaced persons—is the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), locally known as the *Oneg Shené*.⁴⁵ A splinter group of a once larger armed faction—the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)—the OLA is supported by a loyal armed Oromo youth vigilante nationalist movement called the *Qeerroo*, whose formation served to open the floodgates for rival and emulative ethno-nationalist youth movements, such as the *Fàno* (Amhara), *Zarma* (Guragè), *Yelega* (Wolayta), *Ejeeto* (Sidama), and *Barbaarta* (Somali), to mention but a few, which emerged partly in reaction to the threat posed by the foremost, and indeed by one another.

But ethnic conflict in Ethiopia has also much to do with lack of viable and sustainable livelihood options, lack of resources and opportunities for employment, education, and training, lack of avenues for political participation and self-representation: manifestations of a desperate plight that can be neatly summed up as structural ethnic marginalization. The ethnic upheavals reached epic proportions in recent times, spiralling into a nationwide violence that claimed the lives of thousands of people and the destruction of homes and property, forcing hundreds of thousands to flee their villages. Such wanton inter-ethnic cleansing, of course, involves the masterminding of local activists, political party leaders, local and diaspora media networks, and not least, regional officials and grassroots benefactors of the incumbent party and government, apparently seeking to assert their ascendancy over their respective regions by maintaining exclusivist and separatist ethnic claims and allegiances.

Yet another major development were the parliamentary elections of June 2021. The local and national parliamentary elections that were initially scheduled to take place on 29 August 2020 (but had to be postponed twice due to Covid-19) were eventually held on 21 June 2021. Despite having been overshadowed by the Tigray war, the daunting prospect of famine conditions, constant ethnic turmoil, and violence-induced internal displacements—to say

nothing of the technical and logistical obstacles, which gave rise to hundreds of complaints from local and national political actors—the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) decided to proceed with the elections. Although they were conducted largely peacefully and without major incidents, they were beset from the outset by the fallout over the decision to postpone them, leading to the pulling out of two major political parties—the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC) and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF).

The election result in which 78 percent of registered voters (representing close to 38 million people) participated, was a resounding victory for Abiy, winning 410 out of 436 seats.⁴⁶ Given the fact that Abiy has been at the helm of the political scene since the 2 April 2018, his landslide electoral success did not come to many as a surprise. What is perhaps new is the concomitant politico-institutional reform process that he launched, marking it a new era or at least the promise of a new dawn that saw the gradual, albeit protracted, transformation of Ethiopia from a tightly centrally dominated political environment to one marked by putative party system accompanied by a symbolic gesture towards the principles of free and open society. But this fledgling democratic transition has been interspersed by unstable political conditions often degenerating into almost constant spasms of ethno-nationalist conflicts.

Enter the war in Tigray. Contrary to what many assumed spelled the end of the TPLF, the war did not actually die out with initial defeat and disintegration of the TPLF in November 2020, following its ouster from Mekelle (capital of the regional state of Tigray). Indeed, the short-lived Ethiopian government's meteoric and somewhat astounding military victory over the TPLF was reversed. Having regrouped and joined forces under an umbrella of loosely aligned groups called the Tigray Defence Forces (TDF), it ripped through the rugged highland plateaus of northern Ethiopia with alarming speed and ferocity, getting as far as Shoa Robit, all the while putting the federal forces to an almost total rout. Having come a long way from its base and making deep inroads into the hinterland, the TDF itself eventually fell into disarray caused by disjointed and overstretched resources, rendering it unable to push any further into the capital.

Taking personal lead of the army and supervising the war from the frontlines may seem unconventional and indeed a bit ostentatious for a sitting prime minister, but this adverse state of affairs—an existential menace of the highest order—would perhaps merit such a desperate move. Abiy, for his part, a media-savvy, avant-garde, and bumptious political trailblazer, found the expedient paying off immensely. Indeed, it boosted what appeared as a vastly sapped morale of the army, while also revitalizing popular energies and dampened spirits of a befuddled nation. The recapture of the strategic town of Gashena, one of several towns where a fierce battle took place, caused the TDF to retreat from the vast swath of northern and eastern regions of Ethiopia which it had managed to capture following its resurgent offensive. The military of the federal forces was spearheaded for the most part by fresh recruits, recalled veterans, local and regional militia, and paramilitary units, known as special forces, thereby immediately replacing war casualties. This counter-offensive campaign, which appeared to have the hallmarks of strategic surprise, flanking, and force concentration, branched out into a three-pronged attack that coalesced in Kobo (in the far northern reaches of North Wollo zone of Amhara regional state) and seemed to have given some indication of the heaviness of the casualties sustained by the TDF. Indeed, this decisive defeat drove the TDF once again back into

Tigray from which it has since been launching pitched battles trying to cut a corridor across the border with the Sudan.

From security, humanitarian, and human rights perspectives, the Tigray conflict, in particular, has not only claimed the lives of thousands of civilians but has also left behind an indelible mark on those who survived the tumultuous and cataclysmic moments. Much of the local and international media is hit with conflicting and skewed reports that appeared to have been influenced by propaganda or at least by vested interests aimed at swaying public opinion. Nonetheless, although it is premature or at least very difficult to reach any conclusions on the impact of the war, it is indubitable that “[d]eeply distressing reports of sexual and gender-based violence, extrajudicial killings, widespread destruction and looting of public and private property” have been perpetrated either directly by the parties to the conflict and/or by some other secondary groups loyal to them.⁴⁷ Thus, for example, reports of the Mai Kadra massacre, which emerged early on when the war was just starting, appeared to have been assessed and confirmed by credible and competent domestic and international human rights agencies and media organizations.

As far as attribution of blame is concerned, however, preliminary assertions appear to be contradictory or at least ambiguous. Amnesty International, Ethiopia’s Human Rights Commission, and the Ethiopian Human Rights Council seem inclined to throw the blame on a youth vigilante group the Samri (who are loyal to the TPLF) thereby corroborating official government accounts. Others, however, such as Reuters and the *Financial Times*, which collated their reports from interviews made with civilians who fled to the Sudan, categorically or at least predominantly put the blame on local Amhara militias. Still, others, including, the Associated Press (AP) and Agence France-Presse (AFP) appeared to have attributed the massacre to members of both the federal army and Amhara militias who fought alongside the former.⁴⁸

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Notes

¹ The need to generate compatibilities between the synchronistic and diachronistic components of (con)federalism have long been recognised in European constitutional and political thought. Thus, for example, whereas the pre-1798 Swiss Confederation "did not form a real State, but was made up of a bundle of States held together with difficulty by more or less close alliances...[the 1848] Constitution transformed the Swiss 'League of States' into a Federal State, which ...formed a compact whole...guaranteed the Cantonal Constitutions...that they

should continue to be of a Republican, purely representative, or democratic character, it established equality before the law, liberty of residence, liberty of belief for all Swiss citizens belonging to any of the Christian denominations, and the liberty of the press and of public meeting” (Oechsli 1934, pp. 253-54).

- ² Kedourie 1960, pp. 76-90; Hechter 1975, p. 137; Olzak 1992, p. 37; Greenfeld 1996, pp. 9-10; Gellner 1997, p. 48.
- ³ Olzak 1983, pp. 355-56; Delanty and O’Mahony 2002, p. 45; Aelen 2011, p. 12.
- ⁴ Udehn 2001, pp. 7-9; Rowley 2001, pp. 69-96.
- ⁵ Hedetoft 1995, pp. 34-43.
- ⁶ Hobsbawm 1990, pp. 1-13; Rokkan 1975, pp. 592-95; Delanty and O’Mahony 2002, p. xvi.
- ⁷ Billig 1995, pp. 30-35.
- ⁸ Smith 1996; 1998, p. 145-53; Greenfeld 1996, pp. 11-20.
- ⁹ Rowley 2001, p. 78.
- ¹⁰ Erk 2006, p. 105.
- ¹¹ Maiz and Losada 2011, p. 103.
- ¹² Gellner 2006, p. 82.
- ¹³ Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU), Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Party (EPRP) and the *Mela Ethiopia Socialist Niknakie* (MEISON), were some of the Marxist inspired clandestine revolutionary paramilitary political parties that had taken to armed struggle against the socialist rule of Mengistu Haile-Mariam. They were largely drawn from student activists and urban middle-class workers and initially emerged with the goal of toppling the monarchical regime of Haile-Selassie. After the collapse of the monarchy, and indeed immediately before, they had engaged in fierce urban warfare, attacking each other as they vied for control of state power, before the socialist regime of Mengistu Haile-Mariam gained the ascendancy and turned against all of them, thus eliminating any trace of resistance to his rule. Other lesser breakaway factions of the major movements include the Workers’ League (the Waz League), the Ethiopian Marxist-Leninist Revolutionary Organization (abbreviated in Amharic as MALRED) and the Revolutionary Ethiopian Oppressed People’s Struggle (ECHAT) (Fiala, 2013).
- ¹⁴ Young 1997, p. 154; Milkias 2008, p. 26; Vaughan 2003, p. 236; Gudina 2004, p. 33; Zewde 2007, p. 215; Berhe 2004, p. 580; Abebe 2014, p. 163, 185; Barata 2012, p. 97.
- ¹⁵ E. Gellner, for example, speaks of how the spread of Christianity, Biblical literacy and closely intertwined Church-state relations on the part of the Amhara feudal lords, together with their early contacts with Europeans for guns and supplies, facilitated the consolidation of a centralised, albeit with loosely held territorial power constellations, state apparatus, morphing as it did into “a prison house of nations” (Gellner 2006, p. 82).
- ¹⁶ Pishedda 2018, pp. 139, 155; see also, Milkias 2008, p. 16; Teshale 2018, p. 131. TLF (Tigray Liberation Front); TPLM-CC (Tigray People’s Liberation Movement Coordinating Committee) also called *Ternafit*; ELF (Eritrean Liberation Front, which was eliminated by EPLF-TPLF joint action); Eritrean People’s Liberation Front (EPLF); EDU (Ethiopian Democratic Union); EPRP (Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Party).

- ¹⁷ Milkias 2008, pp. 14-15.
- ¹⁸ Milkias 2008, p. 15.
- ¹⁹ Gudina 2004, p. 33; Berhe 2019, p. 153; Gebregziabher 2019, pp. 1-2.
- ²⁰ Hammond 1999, p. 446; Berhe 2019, p. 153; Lavers 2020, p. 74.
- ²¹ Berhe 2008, p. 215.
- ²² Gadzala 2015, p. 92; Gebregziabher 2019, pp. 1-2.
- ²³ Gebregziabher 2019, pp. 14-17.
- ²⁴ Gebregziabher 2019, pp. 14-17.
- ²⁵ Berhe 2019, p. 225; see also Milkias 2008, pp. 20-21; Young 2004, p. 28; Tadesse and Young 2003, p. 391; Gebregziabher 2019, p. 11; Abebe 2014, p. 141.
- ²⁶ Berhe 2004, pp. 591-592; 2008, p. 209; Tadesse and Young 2003, p. 397; Young, 1997 p. 139.
- ²⁷ Young, 1997 p. 154; Milkias 2008, p. 26; Vaughan 2003, p. 236; Gudina 2004, p. 33; Abebe 2014, pp. 163, 185. In this regard, it is worth to note the fact that the spread of nationalism both within Europe and around the globe was the result of de facto colonialism in which national categories of language, norms, and rules were forced on national and ethno-linguist subjects against their will and without their consent (Bieber 2020, pp. 68-69).
- ²⁸ Ishiyama 2012, p. 6.
- ²⁹ CFDRE (Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia), 1995.
- ³⁰ Eshete 2003, p. 21; Lavers 2018, pp. 468-9.
- ³¹ CFDRE, Article 39.1,4.
- ³² Milkias 2008, p. 41; Ishiyama 2012, p. 6; Abebe 2014, p. 206.
- ³³ One of the idiosyncratic aspects of the Ethiopian Constitution is that 'the power to interpret the constitution and to rule on issues of constitutionality is not left to the courts but rather to a political body' (Fessha and van der Beken 2013, p. 40; see also Milkias 2008, pp. 41-49).
- ³⁴ Swift 2012.
- ³⁵ Ishiyama 2012, p. 8.
- ³⁶ Ishiyama 2012, p. 8.
- ³⁷ Aristotle 1996, p. 99.
- ³⁸ McCracken 2004, p. 193.
- ³⁹ BBC 2016.
- ⁴⁰ BBC 2017.
- ⁴¹ According to *The Guardian*, as of March 2014, there were 20,000 political prisoners from the State of Oromia alone, a region which is home to the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia and one that has suffered systematic marginalisation and persecution (Chala 2015).
- ⁴² P. Milkias, who examined in detail the TPLF leadership fissures of 2001, noted that the 'paradoxical effect of the TPLF crisis is that it has forced Meles to fall back on the EPRDF, which he had, in the past, taken for granted' (Milkias 2008, p. 25).
- ⁴³ Those surviving members of the Northern Command forces eventually escaped to safety by crossing the border into Eritrea. Deeply incensed by the act, and having received technical and logistical backing from Eritrea, they regrouped and reorganised to launch a successful counterattack against the TPLF. This state of affairs, together with previous missile strikes by

the TPLF into Eritrean territory raised the stakes high, providing the catalyst that intumesced the conflict into a regional one, drawing neighbouring Eritrea into the fray, acting pre-emptively to counter the threat posed by the former.

⁴⁴ BBC 2019.

⁴⁵ In what appears to be adding fuel to an otherwise already explosive situation, the OLF recently announced that it had struck an alliance with the TPLF in what they said were aiming “to overthrow this government militarily” (*Aljazeera* 2021).

⁴⁶ BBC 2021.

⁴⁷ UNHCR 2021.

⁴⁸ Abuelgasim, Fayet al. 2020. “Shadowy Ethiopian massacre could be tip of the iceberg.” <<https://apnews.com/article/sudan-ethiopia-massacres-d16a089f8dcb0511172b5662b9244f78>> *Associated Press*. 12 December; Idris, A. 2020. “Escape from massacre: Ethiopians recall Tigray conflict horror.” *AFP*, 17 November. <<https://money.yahoo.com/escape-massacre-ethiopians-recall-tigray-092740037.html>>; Steers, Julia. 2020. “He’s Planning to Exterminate Us All.” *Vice World News*, 24 December. <<https://www.vice.com/en/article/qjpzqw/hes-planning-to-exterminate-us-all-ethiopians-speak-of-ethnic-massacres>>; *Africanews*. 2020. “Amnesty International releases findings on Mai-Kadra massacre.” 25 November. <<https://www.africanews.com/2020/11/25/amnesty-international-releases-findings-on-mai-kadra-massacre/>>