Research Article

From Defeating Colonialism to Facing Genocide: Historical Precedents and Prospects of the Amhara Existential Struggle in Ethiopia

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Abstract

This research examines the Amhara people's existential struggle in Ethiopia by analyzing the historical, political, and ideological factors that marginalize them. It employs Historical Analysis (HA) and Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) to critique false historical narratives, ethnonationalist rhetoric, and assimilationist agendas that portray the Amhara as oppressors, fueling ethnic politics, hate speech, and targeted attacks. The rise of the Fano movement is explored as a grassroots response that reflects Amhara resilience. Three key factors—colonial conspiracy, ethnonationalist vengeance, and Oromummaa's assimilationist agenda—have fostered division, demonized Amhara identity, and eroded their cultural and political presence. Despite internal divisions within Fano regarding the strategic role of Amhara nationalism, its resurgence signifies a growing commitment to preserving Amhara identity and countering existential threats. The study underscores the need to redefine Amhara nationalism to include linguistic and cultural affiliations while retaining core values. Recommendations include preserving Fano as a public identity, unifying its leadership, and integrating Ethiopianist principles to create a balanced, inclusive approach.

አጠቃሎ

ይህ ጥናት የዐማራ ሕዝብን ለህልውና አደጋ የዳረጉ ዐበይት መንስኤዎችን እና የህልውና ተጋድሎውን ሂደት ይቃኛል። የጥናቱ ሰፊት የታሪክ እና የትርክት ትንተና ሲሆን ሰሁት የታሪክ ትርክቶች፣ ዐማራ-ጠል ብሔርተኝነት እና የህህል ስረ-መሠረት ያላቸው ስልቃጭ-የፖለቲካ ፍላጎቶች፣ ዐማራን በማንነቱ አለማ አድርገው ሊያጠፉት የተነሱ አጀንዳዎች መሆናቸው ተለይቷል። የህሰት ትርክቶች መጀመሪያ የተጠነሰሱት ቅኝ ግዛት ባልተሳካቸው አካላት፤ ሀገሩትን በውሰጥ ኃይሎች ለማፈራረስ ሲሆን፤ እያደር ግን በሀገር ውሰጥ የተፈለፈሉት ዐማራ-ጠል ጽንፈኛ የብሔር ፖለቲከኞች ፋሽን ያደረጉት ሴራ ሁናል። የህሰት ትርክቶች በዋናነት በኢትዮጵያ ታሪክ ውሰጥ ዐማራ ሌሎቸን ማህበረሰቦ ጨቋኝና በዝባዥ ሕዝብ አንደነበረ የሚገልጹ ሲሆን፤ አላማቸውም "ዐማራ በድሎናልና እነበቀለዋለን" ለሚሉ ጎይሎች ማስተባበያ መሆን ነው። አነዚህ የህሰት ትርክቶች በተሳካ ሁኔታ ዐማራ-ጠልነትን እና የ"በቀል" ስሜትን መፍጠር ችለዋል። አህን በዐማራ ላይ ለሚሰነዘሩ የጥላቻ ንግግሮች እና አየተፈጸመ ለለው የዘር ማጥፋት ጭፍጨፋ ምክንያት ተደርገው የሚነሱት አነዚህ የህሰት ትርክቶች የሴራ ክሶች ናቸው። ከዚህ ጎን ለጎን፡ በዐማራ ላይ የሚፈጸምን የትቀናጀ ጥቃት አነደ መልካም አጋጣሚ ተጠቅሞ ስልቃጭ ማንነትን እና የህህል በበለይነትን ለማስፈን አየሰሩ ያለ የፖለቲካ ጎይልም አለ። ይህ ጎይል የህዲጣገን ማንነትና አሴቶች አጥፍቶ የራሱን ማንነት በመጫን አነሩባት ማሳበረሰብን መዋጥ የለመደ ባህል አለው። ሀገሩትን በውሉ ለመዋጥ በሚያደርገው ዘመቻ በቀለለ አይዋጠኝም ወይም ያንቀኛል ብሎ የለየው የዐማራን ማሳበረሰብ ማንነትና አሴት ነው። ስለዚህ ይህ ጎይል ከውጭም ሆነ ከውሰጥ በመነጨ ጸረ-ዐማራ ትርክቶች ተጠቃሚና ጸረ-ዐማራ አሰላለፍ ካላቸው አካላት ጋር ሁሉ የሚቀናጅ ነው። አላማው በቡድንም ሆነ በግል ተጋጥሞ ዐማራን ማዲከም (ማጥፋት) እና ዘላጋማዊ የሆነ የባህል፤ የኢኮኖሚና የፖለቲካ የበለይነትን መያዝ ነው። ይህን የህልውና አደጋ በመገንዘብ ለትጥቅ ትግል የተነሳው የፋኖ ጎይል፡ ዘርፈ-ብዙ ውሰጣዊ መተጋገሎችንም አያደረገ መሆኑ ተስተውሏል። በተለይ በዐማራ ብሔርተኝነት እና በህልውና ተጋድሎው ማዕቀፍ ላይ የጠራ አንነዛዘብና አንድ ዓይነት አሰላለፍ ለመፍጠር አየተህር ነው። ዐማራንትና ኢትዮጵያዊነት የሚይምታቴ ማንነቶች መሆናቸውን በመገንዘብ የፋኖን ሚና በግልጽ ማስቀመጥ ይመከራል። ፋኖን የግል ሸሯዊቸው አድርገው የሚመሰርቱ የፖለቲካ ፓርቲዎችና አደረጃጀቶች ሕዝቡን ወይ ባርነት አነጀ ወይ ነጻነት ስለማይወስዱት፤ ፋኖ ከከትችሎም የፖለቲካ ፓርቲ ርአየት ዓለም የጸዱ፡ የሁሎም ዐማራ–ተኮር ፖለቲካዊ አሳቤዎቸና አደረጃጀቶቸ የጋራ ቤት (ማሳበሪዊ መህረቱ) የሚሆኑ፡ የሕዝብ ቅርሰና ማንነት አነዲደረግ ይህ ጥናት ያሳሰባል። ፋኖን የግል ሰሪዊቱ አድርጎ የሚፈጠር ፓርቲን በምርጫ ከስልጣን ማውረድ አይቻልምና፡ የዐማራ ትግል ጠላቱን ብቻ ሳይሆን መሪዎቹንም መመርመር ይገባዋል።

Keywords:
Historical narratives, Colonial discourses, Existential struggle, Amhara genocide, Fano, Amhara nationalism

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ፋኖ፡ የዐማራ ብሔርተኝነት፣ የህልውና ተጋድሎ፡ የህሰት ትርክት፡ የብሔር ፖለቲካ፡ የዘር ማጥፋት ጭፍጨፋ

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1. Introduction

The historical narratives surrounding the Amhara community in Ethiopia depict them as crucial pillars for the formation and sustenance of the Ethiopian state and as targets of colonial strategies to undermine their influence. The Amhara's historical defiance against European colonialism and their subsequent labeling as oppressors by colonial narratives (Campbell, 2021) have shaped present-day ethnic tensions. These narratives, perpetuated by ethno-nationalist groups and foreign influences, continue to justify discriminatory practices and violence against the Amhara (Liyew, 2024). This historical context underscores ongoing challenges faced by the Amhara, including targeted violence and displacement (Human Rights Watch, 2023), reflecting a complex interplay of historical injustices and contemporary geopolitical dynamics.

The rise of ethnic politics in Ethiopia stemmed from two primary factors: perceived ethnic marginalization (Aragaw, 2024) and the integration of Marxist-Leninist ideologies into ethnic factions (Kebede, 2003). This shift marginalized the Amhara elite, who clung to Ethiopianist ideals, failing to foresee the repercussions of identity-based politics. The adoption of a colonial narrative by ethno-nationalists further fueled ethnic tensions, resulting in systemic discrimination and violence against the Amhara community (Bitew, 2024, Workneh, 2023). Despite widespread reports of genocide and ethnic cleansing targeting Amharas (UN News, 2023), the Ethiopian elite's response has been fragmented and inadequate (Birara, 2024b), highlighting a critical failure to unite against ongoing atrocities.

Amhara nationalism emerged in response to ethnic cleansing and demonization, notably through the formation of the All-Amhara People's Organization (AAPO) in 1993. The National Movement of Amhara (NaMA) continued AAPO's legacy (Melaku, 2024), aiming to bolster Amhara's identity and advocate for their rights amidst ongoing persecution (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 1994). The AAPO, initially focused on defending targeted Amharas for ethnic cleansing, while also advocating for Ethiopian unity over ethnic federalism (Bekele, 2022). Despite AAPO's limitations in fully embracing ethnic identity politics, its efforts laid a foundation for subsequent movements like the National Movement of Amhara (NaMA). NaMA, established in 2018, intensified efforts to assert Amhara identity and address socio-political grievances (Addis Standard, 2018). However, both AAPO and NaMA have faced significant challenges, including infiltration, leadership persecution, and violent suppression by the Ethiopian government (Reuters, 2022), amid accusations of genocide targeting Amharas. The emergence of groups like Fano underscores grassroots efforts to defend Amhara's lives and interests in the face of ongoing threats.

The ongoing genocide against Amharas is seen as a combination of several factors; mainly, false historical narratives demonizing the Amhara, the rise of extremist ethno-nationalist movements, the passive involvement of Amhara elites in critical political initiatives, and the inadequacies of Amhara ethno-nationalism to effectively address these challenges.

This research aims to explore the causes and factors for the perpetuation of the war in Ethiopia between the Amhara people and the most recent ruling regimes. Specifically, it examines historical precedents to the ongoing war, assesses the political narratives and ideologies leading up to it, evaluates the role of political elites, and enables a comprehensive understanding to highlight the prospect of the escalating war.

2. Theoretical and Methodological Approach

Given the intricate nature of the causes, effects, and ramifications of the security dilemma in Ethiopia, comprehensive analyses, applying a combination of two theoretical approaches, are devised.

Historical Analysis is used to delve deeply into historical precedents impacting the Amhara community, tracing the roots of current issues back to past events such as interactions with colonial powers, and the inception and propagation of false narratives that demonize the Amhara people in Ethiopian society.

The examination of historical precedents leading to the contemporary existential threats faced by the Amhara people - Amhara 'genocide' is approached from two views (i.e., internal and external threats) and further dissected in the context of the roles of three classes of actors. External threats are analyzed, highlighting covert interventions, while internal threats are elucidated by focusing on intra-Amhara phenomena. This necessitates a comprehensive analysis that considers the impacts of three contextual actors: 1) foreign actors, their interests and interventions; 2) the ideologies and practices of secessionist ethnonationalists in Ethiopia; and 3) the internal dynamics of Amhara interactions, values, and institutions that collectively impact the vulnerability of the Amhara community.

The discussion on how negative stereotypes, land disputes, and ethno-nationalist politics have contributed to the vulnerability of the Amhara community aligns with the fundamental principles of Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA), which links power to the formation of discourse within specific historical periods (Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine, 2008). Foucauldian discourse analysis enables us to look at how political figures and government officials use rhetoric (language) to express their dominance and to perpetuate systemic inequalities in the power dynamics (Romero and Chin, 2017). Discourse is produced to govern social groups, creating ethnic tensions where group identities play a pivotal role in shaping social, political, and historical narratives (Hayward and Watson, 2010).

The article explores how the Amhara are depicted, oppressed, and marginalized based on their identity within the Ethiopian context. By integrating the Historical Analysis and Foucauldian Discourse Analysis, a nuanced perspective is established to analyze the intricate historical and contemporary dynamics surrounding the Amhara community in Ethiopia.

A thorough review of literature was undertaken, and a record of personal testimonies was systematically assessed. Interviews with purposively selected individuals have been conducted for their relevant positions and experience. The collected information is thematically integrated and analyzed in a chronological sequence.

3. Genesis of Amhara Marginalization

3.1. Historical Precedents

The historical role of Amhara in the formation and administration of the Ethiopian state and long-lasting kingdom served as a pillar of strength, despite leading to internal power struggles. However, this also led to confrontations with European colonial powers who faced defeats during the African scramble (Amare and Alamineh, 2023). As a retaliatory measure, successive attacks and demonizing narratives have been manufactured and perpetuated to subvert, undermine and ostracize the then-strong Ethiopian government and the Amhara people (Campbell, 2021, Rossini, 1935). The long and meandering evolution of the demonization of the Amhara people and "Abyssinia" is supposed to have begun in 1667 (Walelign, 2021).

Walelign (2021) explores how the Jesuit missionaries who converted Emperor Susynios to Catholicism tried to reform the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and recruit converts, and provoked a public outcry—forcing Fasiledes, the *'Abyssinian'* emperor (whose reign would end that year), to expel all missionaries. This expulsion is argued to give birth to deliberately fabricated and systematically propagated anti-Amhara narratives. Besides failing to reform the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, their horizon of influence remained in the *Fremona* - Adwa area in present-day Tigray. Hence, they stayed away from the center of the empire

- Gondar- and served as reception and orientation centers for more European delegates who visited the Ethiopian Emperors.

> *…many visitors would come to see the rulers in Gondar because most tended to enter via Massawa, geography often dictated that they first visit the ruler of Tigray, where they would have their bellies filled, their secrets spilled, their gift bags lightened considerably, and their mind primed with malicious mischaracterizations of the Amhara people and the ruler in Gondar, etc. Most of these would go on to publish 'books,' most often rehashing the same pseudo-historical sketches and tropes (Walelign, 2021).*

The era in which Jesuit missionaries had a major influence in Ethiopia also marked the dumbest gap in Ethiopian medieval art history. They fabricated and spread a theory that aimed to alienate the skills and wisdom of Amharas and, consequently, undermine their roles in art, literature, philosophy, and sciences. In an in-depth interview with the chronicler and historian of the Deq-Island monasteries (in 2019), the informant underlined the importance of ancient manuscripts, spectacular monuments, rock-hewn churches, wonderful frescoes, and artworks as crucial resources and references that the Ethiopian Orthodox monks such as Abune Hara used as evidence, at the Orthodox versus Catholic debates where the missionaries lost all debates. Hence, the informant further explained that the missionaries brought up a theory that re-introduced those referenced heritages to Amharas as the works of Angels and not of human beings. The intention was to attack the Orthodox Church directly, as it was impossible to reform it according to Catholic dogma unless its resources were annihilated and further undermined the intellect of Amharas. Their theory states that complex art and architectural works were not only sacred but also made by non-human beings. The theory spread so fast and inculcated in ordinary people's minds that outstanding architectural wonders, such as the rock-hewn churches of St. Lalibela and Axum obelisks, were propagandized/reiterated to be sculpted by white Angels, not by black people. The theory had a further impact of banning signatures of the artist on sacred paintings like frescoes and erasing them from past/ancient works of art. The theory further argues that putting the painter's name and signature on the painting or fresco of Saints and Angels was "claiming divinity" — equal status with the prototype — Angels. Artists who disobey this declaration were scolded and considered severely Sinful. It is obvious, though, that claiming a patent - which any artist deserved, was by far different from claiming the divine status /divinity of the entity portrayed in the art, as it would be considered spiritually improper to challenge the divine. The theory was effortlessly inculcated into the masses and remains largely impactful until now. It is not uncommon in Lalibela, for instance, even trained tour guides describe how and who made the rock-hewn churches using the narratives of Jesuit missionaries. Portraits of Orthodox Angels, Saints, and Church paintings, as a tradition, do not contain information about who made them altogether. This precedent served as a springboard for the contemporary "anti-vestige ideology destroying heritages in Ethiopia" (Birara, 2023).

The Aftermath of the Victory of Adwa

Following the defeat of Italy by Ethiopia at the battle of Adwa on March 1, 1896, the presumption of direct colonization to all of Africa was impractical, albeit that was impossible to admit for colonizers (Campbell, 2021). Roman Procházka, in his infamous book Abyssinia: Procházka (1934), states, "…*In this struggle, the attacked are all the colonial powers in Africa without exception. What we are witnessing is by no means a local frontier between Abyssinia and Italy.*" on page 4. Amharas not only had a historical role in the state formation but also built the military might that shook the colonial forces.

Subsequently, the colonialists targeted Ethiopia's strengths to mount a concerted attack [Campbell (2021) discusses the atrocities at great details], introducing narratives aimed at undermining the Ethiopian

kingdom in the long term. They designed strategic mechanisms to weaken Ethiopia from within. Accordingly, consuls of Western governments and religious missionaries were spawned all over strategic areas. The consuls and missionaries were predominantly engaged in recruiting and organizing rebel units against the empire and incubating separatist movements and parties. Captain Esme Nourse Erskine was amongst the notable British Consuls at *Goré* from 1928 to 1936 —during the second Ethio-Italian war, who initiated the establishment of ethnic-based political movements, being established in Ethiopia for the first time. During the second Ethio-Italian war the diplomat strived to crumble Ethiopia capitalizing on internal forces[1].

Once it was proven that winning a war against Ethiopia was impossible, a strategy was devised to foment internal conflicts within the kingdom with the hope of decomposing it. Thus, the "oppressor and the oppressed" narration of Ethiopian natives came into the picture to divide the people and antagonize each other. The oppressor versus oppressed interaction model bore social movements that claimed victimhood in the state and sought secession. Western powers sought to impose their influence by identifying and undermining Ethiopia's core strengths, mainly the Amhara people, their language (Amharic), the Orthodox Church, the Ethiopian monarchy, and symbols of national pride and sovereignty (Záhořík, 2014).

The proliferation of pseudo-stories and false historical narratives in the 1930s and 40s, deliberately crafted to distort Ethiopian history, gained traction among Oromos and Tigrayans, fostering division and animosity. European powers, following their defeat at the Battle of Adwa, promoted a colonial interpretation of Ethiopian history, portraying the Amhara as oppressors and colonizers of other ethnic groups. On the foundation of this false narrative and deep-seated hatred towards Amhara, ultra-ethno-nationalist groups and parties surfaced in Tigray and Oromo communities. Amongst the earliest are *The Western Galla Confederation*, which later begot OLF - Oromo Liberation Front (Bulcha, 2002, Hassen, 1998, Jalata, 1993), and *Qedamay Woyane* - a predecessor of *TPLF* - Tigray People's Liberation Front (Gebru, 2013, Tareke, 1991). Both came into being primarily using the roadmap that colonial agents forged to destabilize Ethiopia from within. They have been fueling anti-Amhara sentiments and inciting hatred and vengeance, under pretenses, towards the Amhara community ever since.

For instance, TPLF, in its 1976 manifesto, publicly declared that the people of Amhara are its historical enemy. Subsequently, the TPLF designed and implemented a shrewd policy and strategy to see the fruits of discord and hate targeting the Amhara people (Aguade et al., 2023, Chanie, 2024, Dagnew, 2024). Geremew (2024) elaborates on the case of *Wolkait*, where TPLF 'killed prominent elders, educated youths, and businessmen.' He further states that after uprooting Amhara from Wolkayt, the TPLF settled 32,000 demobilized TPLF militiamen and 400,000 Tigrayan civilians into local villages and towns (Atnafu, 2018) cited in (Geremew, 2024). Moreover, the TPLF degraded Amhara culture, prohibited the use of the Amharic language and changed place and personal Amharic names into Tigrigna ones in the territory (Gichamo, 2023).

Simultaneously, the indigenous values and institutions of the Amhara were systematically dismantled, rendering the community defenseless (Tsegaye, 2024). The attack on the social fabric of Amhara intended to corrupt the software of the entire system. Indigenous social control systems such as embedadé, unifying rituals, and traditions were criminalized (Birara, 2024b). Community mobilizing structures were paralyzed. The erosion of Amhara social fabric and traditions paved the way for organized ethno-nationalists to seize power who had no agenda greater than revenging Amhara (Endalew, 2024). Consequently, they perpetrated violence in the 1980s, and 1990s and revenged the innocent Amhara based on fabricated al-

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[1]Mr. Erskine supported the separatist movements to split off from Ethiopia; and even wrote and submitted an application for recognition by the League of Nations. In the aftermath of the Italian invasion of 1935-1936, Erskine was behind the scenes whilst the Macha chiefs were preparing to secede Welega from Ethiopia and seek a British protectorate (Lindahl, 2005, Triulzi, 1999).

legations. This cycle of targeted violence, including murder, mass executions, mass displacement, and disenfranchisement, was orchestrated not only on ordinary Amharas but also on university professors and political elites (Foreign Policy, 2024).

In this atmosphere of turmoil, the same anti-Amhara ethnic nationalists crafted a constitution without the representation and inputs of Amharas despite it comprising a third of the then-total population of the country (Central Statistical Agency, 2007). Their objective was to provide a legal framework for their ongoing and future discriminatory practices. Thus, the constitution only served to legitimize and justify the systematic attacks on ethnic Amharas; ultimately offering perpetrators the right to secede after obliterating the Amhara population, instead of upholding principles of justice and unity as a supreme national law.

Hence, the present-day ethnic profiling, widespread arrests, and indiscriminate violence against the Amhara community manifests the deliberate and synchronized execution of a premeditated genocide scheme that has been in place for decades (Tsegaye, 2022).

3.2. Historical Narratives

The "*Amhara domination discourse*" has been occupying the atmosphere of Ethiopian politics for the entire 20th century. The narrative was initially formulated by colonial strategists as a tool to dismantle Ethiopia (Conti Rossini, 1937). They used the discourse to stoke ethnic tensions and foster resentment and grievances among other ethnic groups who felt marginalized or oppressed under the perceived Amhara rule. Over time, it evolved into an ideological weapon wielded by TPLF and OLF to target ethnic Amharas (Atnafu, 2018, Workneh, 2023). The two ethnic-nationalist groups asserted the thesis of national oppression, enshrining it in the preamble of their constitution with the statement:

> ...***Fully cognizant that our common destiny can best be served by rectifying historically unjust relationships and by further promoting our shared interests***

The "historically unjust relationship" is the narrative that blames the previous Amhara rulers, which Workneh (2023) asserts has now shifted to accusing all Amhara. The blame on rulers of past regimes has been eventually shifted, by the ethno-nationalists, "from the Amhara ruling class to all Amhara" (Workneh, 2023).

Thus, the attack on Amhara has been constitutionally supported and systematically implemented through government structures. For instance, in the Benishangul-Gumuz region, where the Amhara community was deported en masse, both the federal and the regional governments were involved in the eviction of the Amhara farmers in a bid to clear the region off Amharas (Atnafu, 2018, Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, 2021). The involvement of the government in the act of ethnic cleansing has been confirmed by the disarmament of the Amhara farmers living in the areas. The plan to take the farmers' weapons was made before the act of ethnic cleansing (Atnafu, 2018).

The "Amhara settler" discourse has also been as gravely impactful as the Amhara domination discourse in castigating native Amharas. Despite the logical inconsistency of being both an oppressive ruling class and settlers simultaneously, this stereotype shaped perspectives that significantly influenced group dynamics at the grassroots level interactions. These dynamics resulted in hyper-ethnicized institutional design and mass violence against Amhara in different ethnic regions. Demerew (2024) reveals that the ethnic cleansing of Amharas in Oromia since 1992 has been orchestrated by local governments. Extremist youth groups, organized by these local authorities, have engaged in systematically displacing ethnic Amharas by burning their homes and crops and seizing their possessions, including household tools.

The "expansionist" discourse has been instrumental in accusing Amharas of land grabbing and resource competition based on false premises. The narrative of Amhara expansionism, which predates the *"settler"* profiling, ultimately led to ethnic cleansing. This hate-driven propaganda aimed at justifying the eviction of Amharas from their homelands. Conversely, owning to deep-rooted cultural practices, the ultra-ethnonationalists determined to cleanse Amharas have demonstrated aspirations for territorial expansion and hegemonic power.

In line with the expansion discourse, the traditional *Geda* militaristic system is based on territorial expansion, mainly through forceful assimilation of *non-Oromo* groups and neighboring communities. The legend of *Liqimssa* is credited as having been one of the main motivations for the beginning of the Oromo expansions. The *Liqimssa* roughly translates to *"The Swallower"* and was told to be a beast that consumed people one by one until there was nobody left to fight against it (Huntingford, 1955). Hence, Oromizing non-Oromos has been the process of swallowing to expand. Dozens of native ethnic groups have been exterminated by Oromo expansion only in the past couple of decades[2]. Therefore, if any group is to be blamed for expansion in Ethiopia, it is primarily the Oromo. There is a vast period in Ethiopian history that represents the *'Galla Invasion of Abyssinia'* (Mordechai, 2013), and the history of Oromo in Ethiopia begins with this expansion from Northern Kenya towards Southern Ethiopia (Huntingford, 1955).

According to Chekroun and Hirsch (2020) and Mordechai (2013), Oromo expansion/migration had three prominent stages: *Kilolé* (1538–1546) - was their first raid of *Dawaro* province (today Hararghe). In the aftermath of a prolonged war between the *"Abyssinian empire"* and Ahmed Gragn's Jihadist forces, the Oromos took advantage of the embattled state and decided to invade and occupy the Hararghe Highlands and assimilate many Somali clans; and they managed to penetrate further into Ethiopian territory. It can be argued, therefore, that it is not a mere coincidence that the current Oromumma government considers the wars in northern Ethiopia as a mechanism to devastate both Amhara and Tigrayans, and that is believed to be an advantage for Oromos to repeat history. The second is Bifolé (1546–1554), which was marked by the occupation of Fetegar (today's Arsi). And thirdly, Meslé (1554–1562), marks a fundamental change in the expansion of the Oromo, as Oromos settled permanently in the newly-taken territories, and began to ride mules and horses like the natives.

Pankhurst (1997) states that the adoption of horseback riding greatly increased the Oromo fighting power and put them on par with Ethiopian troops. In the third phase of migration adopted under Meslé, the Oromo managed to defeat Emperor Gelawdewos's Jan Amora Corps, allowing them to pillage several more towns. Then, instead of returning to their homelands, they stayed in the newly occupied territories. The entire Oromia region of today has been colonized by Oromo invaders in this strategy for the past four centuries, with successive annihilation of indigenous inhabitants, mainly the Amhara. The Oromos increased their population through a package of assimilation processes known as *Meedhicca*, *Mogasa*, *Gabbaro*, and *Gudifacha* (Erko et al., 2024). The native names of the territories were replaced by the name of the Oromo *Luba*[3] who later became a clan name and settled on it while the indigenous people were forced to assimilate or be annihilated. In cases where Indigenous communities resisted the Oromization/assimilation, their men were subject to genital amputation besides killing, their women were taken

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[2]Native ethnic groups who were enumerated as independent entities in the 2007 national census, have been completely Oromized, just in the past decade. Namely, Qechem, Mere, Qewama, Chebo, Werji, Bantu, Zay, Gebato, Bumie, Dobi, Mesengo, Fedashe, Mekan, Gerba, Chidda, and Kontoma are the most recently Oromized communities

[3]Luba is a rank in the Oromo militaristic invasion system as a leader who is responsible for invading non-Oromo communities. He led Oromo invaders to occupy new territories & established an administration once the invaders settled. He becomes chief - Abba Geda- of those Oromos and gets a clan nomenclature by his name. After 8 years, another Luba rises out of this clan and organizes another round of invasion to neighboring communities, and the cycle of invasion & expansion continues every eight years throughout the following generations (https://www.britannica.com/topic/luba-Oromo-social-class).

as concubines, and their children were raised as orphans only to become *Qerro* for the next round of invasions (Huntingford, 1955). Thus far, dozens of literature assert who is a settler and who is native, who is expansionist and who is regressionist, in a crystal clear manner.

Besides historical evidence, genetic examinations on environmental adaptation revealed that those who accuse Amharas of expansion have been expanding and occupying highland territories in Ethiopia. There has been massive scientific evidence (Beall et al., 2002, Beall, 2006, Beall and Strohl, 2021, Brutsaert et al., 1999, Cheong et al., 2016, Getu, 2022) conducted on the highland residents of Ethiopia that confirmed the fact that Amharas are the earliest people to live in Ethiopian highlands for more than 70,000 years.

A prominent study on the "Genetic architecture of adaptations to high altitude in Ethiopia" obtained phenotype data in the two distinct but closely related ethnic groups – the Amhara and the Oromo. The research confirms that "Ethiopian Amhara and Oromo differ in adaptive phenotypes" (Alkorta-Aranburu et al., 2012). In this study, all sampled individuals were born and raised at the same altitude. These samples allowed comparing phenotypes across altitudes within ethnic groups as well as across ethnic groups and helped sort out the possible factor(s) of differences. Hence, the researchers identify the length of time that the study subjects stayed or settled at these altitudes/plateaus, which affects the measurement(s) significantly. The researchers argue that phenotypic differences between Amhara and Oromo highlanders are unlikely to be due to independent genetic adaptations in these ethnic groups; rather they are likely to reflect genetic adaptations that evolved in the Amhara, due to their longer residence at high altitude (HA); while Oromos didn't have this sufficient time to be evolved. Because the earliest time they arrived in these highland areas was nearly 400 years ago.

Furthermore, the presence of Oromos in almost all eastern African countries as a nomadic population is a simple proof of expansion, while on the other hand, Amharas live nowhere in Africa other than their land as a native population. It asserts their disinterest in territorial expansionism. This argument is supported even by one of the earliest proponents of anti-Amhara narratives, R. Prochaska. He noted, "What has thrust Abyssinians [Amharas] into the forefront of everyday politics is not greed for expansion or craving for conquest but the innate interests of the natives, economic considerations of a worldwide nature, and genuine concern for peace" (Procházka, 1934)).

From the foregoing pieces of evidence, it can safely be concluded that the historical narratives of domination, expansion, and settlement of Amharas are false, and hence are accusations and allegations fabricated to justify attacks on Amhara.

3.3. Ethnic/Identity Politics

In the aftermath of African decolonization, the Pan-Africanist movement emerged as a powerful force, capable of uniting the continent into a cohesive and formidable entity. Such a united Africa held the potential for prosperity and self-determination, posing a significant challenge to Western powers that had long profited from the continent's exploitation. The prospect of a free and united Africa generated considerable apprehension among these powers, as it threatened to dismantle the structures enabling their economic and political dominance.

To counteract the momentum of Pan-Africanism, Western powers actively supported Ethnonationalist movements that contradicted its core principles. By promoting divisions along ethnic and linguistic lines, they sought to fragment the unity envisioned by Pan-Africanism. Former colonial powers portrayed independence in a highly segregationist framework, persuading communities to seek liberation through narrow, ethnically defined aspirations. For instance, the Igbo people attempted to form the independent state of Biafra, which resulted in the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) (Akresh et al., 2012, Nnabuihe et al., 2024); similarly, in Ghana, the Ashanti and Ewe peoples had longstanding rivalries with Nkrumah's dominant

Akan-led Convention People's Party (CPP), complicating internal stability and undermining Ghana's Pan-African ambitions (Keese, 2016). Katanga Secession in Congo (1960), led by Moïse Tshombe, attempted to secede from Congo shortly after independence, driven by ethnic and regional interests and the desire to control its vast mineral wealth (Hendrickx, 2021). External actors exacerbated ethnic fragmentation with a strategy to foster internal divisions, undercutting the broader vision of continental unity.

The underlying aim of these efforts was to maintain Africa in a state of fragmentation and vulnerability, enabling continued exploitation even after formal decolonization. By fostering disunity and impeding collective action, the Western powers ensured that the continent remained entangled in a cycle of dependency and underdevelopment. This deliberate strategy highlights the enduring challenges faced by Africa in its pursuit of self-determination and unity in the post-colonial era.

> *...Ethno-nationalism was aimed to serve various nationalities to proclaim independent states and thus fragment already existing states into smaller territories. From the very beginning of the formation of political parties in many of the African states, ethno-nationalism served as a major means of social mobilization, and people were instructed to vote for their ethnic parties and representatives (Záhořík, 2014).*

The rise of ethnic politics in Ethiopia can be understood as part of a broader strategy to fragment Africa and undermine the Pan-African vision. Ethiopia held a unique position in African history and consciousness as a symbol of resistance to colonization, serving as a moral and inspirational base for Black people globally in their struggle for independence. Furthermore, Ethiopia played a pivotal role in fostering and mobilizing the Pan-Africanist movement, which later included hosting the headquarters of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and championing the ideals of continental solidarity and self-determination.

The introduction and exacerbation of ethnic politics in Ethiopia were not only aimed at destabilizing the country but also served as a retaliatory measure against its historical and symbolic significance. By fostering divisions along ethnic lines, external powers sought to weaken Ethiopia's capacity to serve as a unifying force for Pan-Africanism. This tactic aligned with broader efforts to prevent Africa from achieving the unity and strength necessary to challenge global systems of exploitation and domination.

The targeting of Ethiopia, therefore, reflects its central role in African liberation movements and the profound threat its unity and influence posed to those who sought to maintain control over the continent's resources and political trajectory. By fragmenting Ethiopia, these forces aimed to strike at the heart of Pan-Africanism, diminishing the prospects of a cohesive and empowered Africa (Mengistu, 1987).

Internally, the proliferation of ethnonationalism and ethnic politics can be attributed to two main catalysts. Firstly, the perpetuation of perceived ethnic marginalization empowered secessionist Ethno-nationalists, encouraging them to adopt a colonial thesis on Ethiopian history, utilizing it as a blueprint for their liberation struggle. Secondly, the amalgamation of politically adrift Marxist-Leninist students, lacking a coherent ideological direction of their own, eventually merged with ethnic political factions. This union led to the dissipation and apolitical stance of many, leading to being hijacked by ethnic nationalists, resulting in a shift from Marxist principles towards ethnic affiliations.The fragmentation of the Marxist intellectual elite served as a pivotal advantage for advocates of ethnic politics. The collapse of the Ethiopianist elite, once proponents of Marxist ideology, came at a grave cost, resulting in the tragic loss of lives among millions of Amhara civilians. In an interview conducted with one of the early Marxists who later joined the founders of TPLF, the respondent explained that the *ethnic oppression thesis* and *ethnic liberation* as a political agenda were picked accidentally, even within TPLF.
He states;

> *"We were Marxists initially — all of us were. However, upon thorough examination of the dynamics of class struggle, we reached a consensus that the traditional Marxist concept of 'class' does not exist in Ethiopia. This realization stemmed from lacking a robust industrial sector and a distinct proletariat. Consequently, we pivoted towards a new direction, delving into ethnic struggle, as the conventional class conflict prescribed by Marxism found no foothold in our societal landscape."*

Moreover, he claimed himself to be an ethnic Amhara, and despite the political struggle he joined, was powered by accusations of Amhara. Many of alike too, jumped onto the bandwagon without proper evaluation of the pros and cons of the ethnic frontier. Ultimately, they ended up having no political space and influence in the frontier because the groups they subscribed to were already organized based on kinship and bonds that were even closer and deeper than ethnic identity. Hence, Amhara elites, even those who engaged in ethnic politics in its earliest stage, had no substantial importance, while the other majority was generally against this paradigm (Melaku, 2024). The aforesaid 'other majority' - Amhara elites, used national patriotism as an excuse for not fostering an identity-based political pathway, even though it was evident that with the collaboration of the Oromo Liberation Front, Eritrean Liberation Front, and Tigray Liberation Front, the central Ethiopian political landscape was on the brink of crisis. This was a testament to the naive Amhara-Ethiopianists of the time. From the above perspective, it can be argued that neither the Ethiopianist Amharas nor those Amharas who joined other ethnic liberation fronts thought of their positions critically. In contrast, every ethnic identity in the country has been serving as a social base for political parties, who state to revenge the Amhara. Unfortunately, for half a century after identity politics started ruling the country, the Amhara lacked a political stance, even in a defensive position or capacity; because of the elite myopia.

3.4. Elite Myopia

Since the student movements of the 1960s, the Ethiopian elite has experienced significant fissures. The prevailing historical and political narratives could have been minimized if the elite had shown genuine concern and understanding. Unfortunately, the Ethiopian elite had no effort to control the dissemination of narratives, even when they were based on falsehoods and aimed at inciting hatred towards Amhara.

Rather, these narratives exerted full influence over the elite, leading to the emergence of two distinct factions: a group of oblivious Ethiopianists - mainly consisting of ethnic Amhara intellectuals; and hyper-active ethno-nationalists. The ethno-nationalist faction successfully implemented damaging policies, while the other faction failed to grasp the gravity of the situation. The Amhara elite, in particular, failed to recognize the broader implications and long-term repercussions of the measures taken against themselves.

For example, Waleligne Mekonnen (Mekonnen, 1969) is considered a prominent Marxist in the Ethiopian students' movement and advocate of ethnic politics in the country, paradoxically portraying the Amhara as oppressors despite hailing from the Amhara community himself. He publicized the infamous article "Questions of Nationalities in Ethiopia"[4], which served as a conceptual framework for ethnic extremists to venture into anti-Amhara establishments, including ethnic liberation political parties. This reflects a form of self-deception or an inability to fully comprehend the imminent dangers. However, some argue that he was used as a convenient outlet for documenting the narrative therein by the then more organized and articulate Eritrean and Oromo groups (Markakis and Ayele, 1978, Muteki, 2020, Pausewang, 2005). To this day, Ethiopianist elites exhibit a sense of complacency and false security, potentially obscuring their true

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[4]http://www.sidamanationalliberationfront.org/WallelignMekonnen.pdf

understanding of the situation. On the other hand, the hate for Amhara within ethnonationalist factions has been escalating. Specifically, how extremist Oromo elites dictate their interests and how non-Oromo intellectuals interpret it, is unnatural.

The current president of the Oromia region, Shimeles Abdisa, made a speech on October 9, 2019, to a crowd of perhaps millions of people who were gathered for Irrecha rituals, that fundamentally declared victory for the Oromo people against Amharas, whom he derogatorily referred to as "the Neftegna"[5]. He continued, "We won the gambling with Amharas! We broke Amharas into pieces at the place where our ancestors were broken by them. We feast in triumph today at the place!". Previous to his speech, he had explained the tactic they applied to be 'convince or/and confuse' in a leaked audio — indicating that he was one of the leaders of the regime that, in crystal clear words, was a master of deception. Unfortunately, the original video containing his speech was deleted from YouTube once journalists and activists made his hate speech a popular agenda.

The gambling that Shimeles Abdisa referred to, was the assassination of top leaders of the Amhara region on 24 June 2019 at Bahirdar. Not long before his assassination, General Asaminew warned the public about the possibility of genocide on Amhara worse than the scale of the 16th century, understandably referring to the two wars of expansion that changed the course of the history of Ethiopia — first by Ahmed Gragn, and second by the Gada Oromo expansion. He explicitly showed the danger and indicated the survival mechanisms. He had played the leading role in organizing the Amhara special force, including mechanized brigades and divisions. For his defensive preparation and political consciousness, General Asaminew was feared by the regime. He was accused of a coup de tat after the assassination of Amhara regional leaders, despite there being no official investigative report presented, even after over five years since the incident. It is a common understanding by the Amhara elite that the assassination was orchestrated and covered up by the federal government forces.

The regime killing an Amhara leader, accusing Amhara civilians of the murder, and waging war on innocent civilians has been an established pattern for some time. For the Oromo ethno-nationalists, killing civilians and leaders is a success so long as both are ethnic Amhara.

Yet, the so-called Ethiopianist elite and most of the Amhara intellectuals were oblivious. Such rhetorics that officials, including generals of the national army, spoke publicly (i.e., Berhanu Jula's series of interviews to EBC, also available on YouTube) – were practically exercised at grassroots level interactions. Ethnonationalist extremists have normalized hate speeches to Amhara, and the lives of Amharas living in Oromia have been merely disposable for demanding the government to solve simple issues. They started to feel their messages would not be delivered in the magnitude they wished unless their public protests were accompanied by the mass murder of Amharas, for instance, Tsegaye (2020) analyzed the "Aftershocks of an assassination: A killing, chaos, and a crackdown" following the death of artist Hachalu Hundessa.

Oromumma eliminates differences that may emerge because of religious plurality or regional differences (Jalata, 2012).

The governing ideology of contemporary Ethiopia under Abiy Ahmed is, by design, genocidal. Nonetheless, scholars have been too slow in perceiving the magnitude of the consequences of such a political framework. For instance, Yusuf (2019) argues, "Oromo's effort to end the past power imbalance worries Amhara nationalists that a new imbalance of power is looming." The scale completely vanishes when it comes to understanding the significance of the essence. One party's preparation for committing genocide is merely equated to an effort to end previous power imbalances. The

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[5]https://www.ezega.com/News/NewsDetails/7301/The-Controversy-Surrounding-Shimelis-Abdisa-Speech

premise of 'past power imbalance' is itself a false historical narrative that the writer tends to validate, and the perception of Amhara nationalists is ridiculously simplistic, as a genocide scheme should weigh much more in the discourses than looming political imbalance. The architect of the Oromumma ideology, Asefa Jalata (Jalata, 2023), further stated how the differences should be eliminated. He authoritatively prescribes the 'intra-ethnic democracy and inter-ethnic dictatorship.' The tone of such declarations, whether by word of mouth or written *declarations*, poses more serious concerns than merely worrying about the *new power imbalance in the making.* It weighs more than power imbalance, which can become unmanageably catastrophic.

It is undeniable that the current reports of various humanitarian agencies worldwide assert that the attack on Amharas is a full-scale genocide (UN News, 2023). Amnesty International repeatedly reported the massacre and ethnic cleansing of Amharas by Oromo Shené - OLA, in different parts of Oromia. Its 2 Nov. 2020 report on the Amhara massacre in Guliso; 21 July 2022- report on Tole; and 16 February report on the Kobo Massacre by Tigrayan forces; 12 April 2024 reported Merawi massacre; Agamsa massacre, Horo-Gudru massacre by the OLA, Chenna massacre by TPLF; hundreds of indiscriminate killings allover Amhara region since 2018. Victims of these attacks all over Ethiopia manifest not merely a power imbalance, but a crystal-clear genocide.

Civil societies earnestly requested Human Rights Authorities, including the United Nations, to pay attention to and thoroughly investigate the ongoing genocide of ethnic Amharas in Ethiopia. The European Centre for Law and Justice (2023), in its August 2023 report, underlined the ethnic cleansing of Amharas in the Oromia region since 1991 has been systematically implemented by the government, especially emphasizing Christians. Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention (2023) published a Statement on the Ongoing *Ethnic Massacres of the Amhara People in the Oromia Region.* A research group from the University of Gondar uncovered hundreds of mass graves in Welkait, Humera, Tegede, and Telemt areas that assert cleansing of ethnic Amharas after the forceful annexation of the areas to Tigray and later collectively named Western Tigray. Journalists such as Jamal Countess[6], Jeff Pearce[7], and Graham Peebles[8] documented the successive plight of Amharas under the TPLF rule, including the ongoing genocide. Yet, what else worse than genocide shall happen to awaken and unite the Amhara elite remains a mystery.

3.5. Amhara Nationalism

Amhara identity has been closely associated with Ethiopian statehood since early imperial times, which endured even under various forms of pressure, including oppression and expulsion of Amharas from parts of the country (Mihiret, 2025, Workneh, 2023, 2024). Workneh (2024) elucidates the attitude of many ethno-nationalist elites who consider all Amhara as an oppressor, giving way to reactive ethnicity and Amhara political identity, with essential implications for the prevailing political discontent and the future of Ethiopia.

Amhara nationalism traces its formal beginnings to the establishment of the All-Amhara People's Organization (AAPO) in 1993. AAPO was established to defend Amharas who were targeted for ethnic cleansing in Oromia. It generally tended to be a reaction to the demonization of Amharas and the security dilemma of Amharas living scattered across the country for generations and intermarried in many cases

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[6]"Tears of Wollega", a traveling photo exhibit exploring the plight of survivors of ethnic cleansing and genocide of the Amhara people in Ethiopia's Oromia region - on display at the Friends School in Baltimore, Maryland from March 27 through April 20, 2023. https://www.instagram.com/jemalcountessphotography/p/CpaIO30L16i/

[7]i) "Amhara genocide is real and ongoing": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yx9JlM8gedA; and ii) "The Time to Help the Amhara is NOW": https://jeffpearce.medium.com/the-time-to-help-the-amhara-is-now-058bcd24fdff

[8]"The hidden genocide in Ethiopia": https://www.counterpunch.org/2024/03/25/the-hidden-genocide-in-ethiopia/

(Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 1994). Pausewang (2005) elaborates how the late Professor Asrat Woldeyes was swayed by appeals to go to the rescue of Amhara citizens who were attacked by an Oromo mob in Arsi. Deeply saddened by what he saw during his visit to the victims and survivors in Adama, he founded the AAPO in collaboration with other like-minded men and women.

Although AAPO was established with Amhara as its social base, it was cleaved into Ethiopianism. Because it promoted the idea of Ethiopian unity, arguing that excessive emphasis on ethnic federalism undermined national cohesion and stability. Hence, it opposed ethnic federalism and envisioned a more unified *national identity* and governance structure that transcends ethnic lines (Aalen, 2002). Thus, it cannot be put in parallel with other ethnic-based political parties, such as TPLF and OLF. Unlike OLF and TPLF, AAPO had no secessionist agenda that can be contrasted with them, nor attacked any other community (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 1994).

AAPO, lacking a clear vision and strategy as an ethnic party, suffered the outgrowth of factions such as the *All-Ethiopian Unity Party* (AEUP)[9]. AAPO did not have a clear vision and strategy for Amhara Nationalism, especially in comparison with the ethno-nationalist movements of Oromo and Tigray, as ethnic politics was not the former's agenda. AAPO was not an ethnic nationalist party by intent and design. Hence, it is deducible that AAPO had little contribution to Amhara Nationalism, in its ethnic identity essence.

Much of AAPO's effort was exerted to defend Ethiopian nationalism through the mobilization of marginalized, targeted and victimized Amharas under the governing ethnic federalism. Chanie and Ishiyama (2021) argue that this defensive nationalism was a product of the continuation of the "*Oppressor/Oppressed*" narrative that has been constitutionalized by the EPRDF regime and escalated to the extent of annihilating the Amhara nationwide. Having this in mind, the Amhara people embraced AAPO for its advocacy on the protection of human rights, its endeavors to address their grievances, and strategic attention to land disputes, political representation, constitutional reform, and national unity.

Therefore, Amhara nationalism did not have a viable foothold during the AAPO era; other than a proper understanding of the systemic attack against ethnic Amhara citizens. Amharas were mobilized as a means to attain the far sought Ethiopian nationalism; not to underpin the Amhara identity-based political front per se. That is why the organization ceased to exist soon after its founder passed away, and the nationalism had to seek another concrete foundation.

National Movement of Amhara (2020) came into being in June 2018 with the motto 'One Amhara to all Amhara; all Amhara to one Amhara.' The interest of the party in grassroots-level engagement and its commitment to inculcate the movement of Amhara nationalism had a wide range of support, including from the diaspora and many activists of Amhara origin. After a thorough observation of the movement, Tazebew (2021) argued that ethnic politics had entered a new era in Ethiopia. Because it invoked a thorough reassessment of Amhara ethnic identity, people were raising pertinent questions and deliberating if they have a shared history to cherish and an ethnicity of their own. The author noted the statement of the then NaMA chairperson: 'We now call ourselves Amhara, first and foremost; we are mobilizing to reaffirm our Amhara identity and redefine an Amhara horizon' (Tazebew, 2021), pp298. Hence, it can be concluded that NaMA took the AAPO version of Amhara Nationalism one crucial step further. It introduced a bottom-up approach to growing the identity consciousness.

Nonetheless, it was shortly infiltrated by non-Amhara members at the top management[10] and ended up in disenfranchisement of mobilizing its social base. Currently, NaMA is chaired by Belete Molla- an

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[9]https://irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/country-information/rir/Pages/index.aspx?doc=457116

[10]Upon a hard-talk with Seyoum Teshome - a media personality and chairman of NAMA, Belete Molla, the latter uncovered that he was ethnically Oromo. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HVBbolDC1e0

ethnic Oromo , while the real ethnic Amhara leaders and founders of the party, namely Christian Tadele (MP), Kassa Teshager (MLA), and other less notable leaders, are suffering in jail. NaMA leaders were abducted from their offices and homes without any charge of criminal offense or a court order, despite their immunity as members of the federal parliament.

Although NaMA articulated the political, economic, social, legal, and cultural injustices born on the Amhara people, it has not been able to stand as a viable mechanism to save the people from annihilation amidst these challenges. NaMA effectively warned the people that they were being targeted for mass murder due to their Amhara identity. It also exposed the perpetrators and their collaborators, who ranged from the Prime Minister's office to district-level administrators in Oromia and Benishangul-Gumuz regions (National Movement of Amhara, 2020). Furthermore, NaMA outlined ways to survive this orchestrated attack, suggesting that Amhara nationalism could address their existential crisis as well as other sociopolitical, economic, and environmental issues.

The regime's effort to cripple the Amhara Nationalist movement was among the prominent precedents of the ongoing genocide. It was expressed not only with attacks on NaMA leaders and members but also on higher officials of its administration who expressed their sympathy to victimized Amharas. A prominent, and arguably the most popular engineer in the country and the general manager of the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) project, Engineer Simegnew Bekele, was assassinated in broad daylight at Meskel Square in Addis Ababa. Similarly, ethnic Amhara officials, specifically in the higher tier of the security apparatus of the regime, were swept out. Leaders of the Amhara region, such as the region's president, Dr. Ambachew Mekonnen, adviser to the president, Mr. Ezez Wasie, Attorney general of the region, Mr. Megbaru Kebede, and the region's special force leader, General Asaminew Tsige, were assassinated, in the eyes of the Amhara public, by the federal government. The assassination of Amhara officials was instrumental for the regime to destroy the Amhara region. Following the assassination of the leaders, the Amhara Special Force was disbanded, and the Amhara people were left completely defenseless in the face of visible military preparation and exercises and prepared threats by the TPLF leadership (International Crisis Group, 2023).

With the foregoing discussion, one can conclude that the ongoing genocide of the Amhara people is the consequence of significant precedents that can be summarized as prevailing false historical narratives — that demonized the Amhara, the rise of extremist ethno-nationalist movements founded on the narratives, anti—Amhara parties founded upon these sentiments and manifestos, passive involvement of Amhara elites in political initiatives that matter, and futile Amhara ethno- nationalism.

3.6. Amhara Genocide

Amhara genocide has been going on covertly for five decades and overtly since Abiy Ahmed took power in 2018. Admassu (2022) argues there has been an Amhara holocaust in Ethiopia since 1991, whence ethnic federalism was promulgated, and Amhara professors were suspended from university positions en masse. Others mark the November 22 - 23 night, 1974 massacre of Amhara officials, orchestrated by organized Oromo nationalists under the guise of the Dergue regime, as a tragic instance of ethnic-targeted violence (Wiebel, 2021). Anyways, the targeted attack on the Amhara elite at different times appears to have been a deliberate attempt to cleanse Amharas from government offices, reflecting a broader strategy of ethnonationalist movements to assert dominance within Ethiopia's shifting political landscape and further posing an existential threat to ordinary Amharas.

Ethnic Amharas have been cleansed from several parts of the country, including complete annihilation in some areas. The continued targeted attack has been recorded and is still ongoing all over the Oromia region, Qelem Welega, Gimbi Wereda, particularly in Tole of the Oromia Region. Kamashi and Metekel zones - Benishangul Gumuz region, Gura Ferda and Tepi - South Western Ethiopia region, West and East

Hararghe, Derra[11] in North Shewa Zone of Oromia region and urban areas surrounding Addis Ababa, West Arsi; and several districts in Afar, Somali and Sidama regions (Birara, 2024a, Ethiopia Peace Observatory, 2024, Foreign Policy, 2021).

During the war between the Federal Government and TPLF-led forces of Tigray, the northernmost region of the country, the Amhara Region was a battlefield by design, intending to destroy infrastructure, industrial establishments, and development institutions; above all, Amhara lives that outnumber the total causalities of the two fighting parties combined. The war between the two parties cost Amhara's lives as both collateral damage and direct victimization, with both combatants' gross human rights violations (Amnesty International, 2022, Human Rights Watch, 2024). When the two parties agreed to cease hostilities with their *Pretoria Pact*, the war against Amhara by the Oromuma-dominated regime in Addis Ababa continued till the date of compiling this report. The war between the two parties cost Amhara's lives as both collateral damage and direct victimization, with both combatants' gross human rights violations.

The very cause that put the two parties into the bloody war - the attack on the Northern Command of the federal army by TPLF, selectively massacred ethnic Amhara soldiers while it incarcerated others. TPLF not only selectively murdered Amharas in the military but also organized a youth mob known as *'the Samre group'* and deployed them arming machetes and handguns in Maikadra town to exterminate ethnic Amhara civilians[12]. The Samre group committed a house-to-house massacre indiscriminately[13], beginning at midnight between the 9th and the 10th of November 2020 Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (2020). According to the Amhara Association of America - AAA (2021) report, at least 1,515 Amhara civilians were massacred by the Samre group overnight.

The massacre of civilian Amharas at Agamsa, Chenna, Kobo, Gashena, Shewarobit, Ataye, Kombolcha, and Gobye-Robit are estimated to be upwards to tens of thousands. Besides the lives of civilians, the official report of the Federal Government revealed that the two years of war took the Amhara Region back to its status 30 years ago in terms of economic and human development (Mandefro, 2023). This means all infrastructure, institutions, constructions, and developments in the past 30 years have been completely demolished. Movable properties worth more than $622 billion were burnt down or looted by TPLF (Getachew, 2023). Amhara administrators have told local press that just after the cessation of hostilities agreement, the estimated cost to rebuild the war-ravaged Kombolcha industrial park alone was half a trillion birr[14]. Kombolcha used to contribute more than 20% of the national GDP of the Industry sector in the preceding years. Now, the industrial facility of the city has been looted, destroyed, or turned into ashes. Demolition of industrial zones, educational facilities such as universities, and health service facilities all over the embattled territories of the Amhara Region devastated the region's socio-economy.

Following the Pretoria Pact, the war against TPLF ceased but escalated in the Amhara Region anew. The federal government decreed a state of emergency all over the Amhara region and attempted to grip and silence all voices that revealed the atrocities on civilians and the crimes against humanity. Tens of thousands of Amhara activists, journalists, elites, writers, and public figures were jailed en masse[15]. Internet and electricity had been completely shut down for an extended period[16]. Banks, health facilities,

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[11]Dera Woreda was ceded to the Oromia Region by the anti-Amhara EPRDF coalition, despite the great majority of the population being Amhara, and it was contiguous with the Amhara Region.

[12]https://www.ethioembassy.org.uk/the-mai-kadra-genocide-perpetrators-acting-as-victims-ethiopia-mfa-feb2021/

[13]https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/11/ethiopia-investigation-reveals-evidence-that-scores-of-civilians-were-killed-in-massacre-in-tigray-state/

[14]https://www.semafor.com/article/08/23/2023/ethiopia-abiy-amhara-economic-challenge

[15]https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/may/30/more-than-4000-arrested-in-amhara-as-ethiopia-cracks-down-on-militia

[16]https://www.accessnow.org/press-release/amhara-internet-shutdown/

government offices, markets, religious rituals, and every social service had been closed during the genocide operations[17]. Amhara development associations, different social organizations, private companies owned by ethnic Amharas, Amhara business-persons, and so forth, their bank accounts have been still frozen[18], and the individuals were jailed. The region's administration was overhauled; leaders were fully substituted.

Then, the regime deployed an allied army of the Oromo Special Force, Federal Police Commando, and the National Defense reserved forces throughout the Amhara region. The deployed forces destroyed and/or burnt down schools, health centers and hospitals, rural villages, crops and cattle, residential neighborhoods of towns, Orthodox Christian Monasteries, heritage sites, and monuments, and everything that is associated with the Amhara people; and killed civilians including physicians, students, professionals, and the unemployed, infants, and the elderly, men and women. There have been also reports of drone strikes targeting public transport buses and goods almost daily, besides the lives of civilians. Alemu (2024) reports the total massacre of nuns and monks, orphan children, and the faithful at Debre-Elias monastery, estimated to be more than 600. The drone strike at Dembecha and Finote-Selam towns and the door-to-door massacre of civilians at Merawi[19], Achefer, Masero Denb, Weldya, Ambassel, and more recently, Dega Damot – in Gojam attested to the Amhara holocaust by the regime. Amhara people have been "killed like chickens"[20]. The genocide has continued at a greater intensity day and night under the watch of the world.

3.7. The Resurgence of Fano

The existential threat that the Amhara people faced gave rise to the Fano movement and armed struggle. Historically, Fano are understood to be armed groups from the Amhara region which see themselves as defending the interests of their population. The origin of the term goes back centuries, and in Amharic refers to 'someone who travels of their own volition' or a 'band of leaderless soldiers who were not accountable to anybody' (Necho and Debebe, 2024). Fano is a youth group that emerged, first within the Amhara ethnic group, for struggles against injustice and foreign invaders during the 1936 - 1941 Ethio-Italian war; and during the 1960s student movement against the monarchy or the Derg. According to Berhanu (2022), it has features reminiscent of classical political, religious, or even social movements that drive youthful frustrations into acts of agitation until they achieve a measure of reform.

The contemporary Fano movement started with the 2016 demonstrations that condemned identity-based attacks against the Amhara. The peaceful demonstrations were shortly transformed into fierce protests across the region, with the intensified aggression of TPLF to silence them. The persistent Fano protest reduced the TPLF regime from the position of central power in the federal government to a regional power in Tigray. When TPLF assaulted the Northern Command of the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF), intending to coup de tat its successor OPDO, an all-out war broke out. Fano participated in the war for the following reasons.

First, Fano, as a community defense force, had conflicted with the TPLF Regime since the Summer of 1979, following its intransigence into Welkait, and TPLF had continued its threats. Second, the contemporary battlefield was the very place where Fano gave protection, and the TPLF-led Tigray Forces committed

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[17]https://ethionegari.com/2024/06/20/government-suspends-banking-services-in-amhara-region. The banking services in these,District's Rasa Town remain closed.

[18]https://borkena.com/2023/04/26/ethiopian-government-freezes-bank-accounts-of-investors/#google_vignette

[19]https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/04/ethiopia-merawi-killings-should-be-independently-investigated/

[20]https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/19/ethiopia-more-than-200-amhara-people-killed-in-attack-blamed-on-rebels

numerous atrocities against the Amhara People around the border that they demarcated single-handedly; hence, staying passive was not an option for the Amhara youth. Third, Fano sided with the federal government in the war against TPLF because the latter was the aggressor, where ethnic Amhara soldiers were selectively massacred at the Northern Command attack by TPLF. Fourth, under the Prime Minister's command, federal and regional governments called for support for ENDF in the war effort in which the Amhara Special Force was part of the alliance. Hence, it was a matter of solidarity. It is worth mentioning here that Fano fought all its battles against TPLF inside the Amhara Region and never participated in the wars inside the Tigray land.

On the other hand, the ethnic cleansing of Amharas in the Wollega-Oromia and Addis Ababa areas was parallelly going on. Fano was informed that the Federal Government was complicit in the ethnic cleansing and even supported the perpetrators - Oromo Shené, with vehicles, arms, and food. Hence, the cause of Fano's protest had yet to be addressed.

Thus, whilst the Federal Government was at war with TPLF, Fano used the opportunity to build camps, recruit and train fighters, and utilize the logistics, security, and administrative networks of the government. This, in turn, enabled them to widen their societal networks, attract new members, and strengthen their military capacity. Necho and Debebe (2024) reported the growing stature of the Fano, and their defense of Amhara interests has alarmed the federal and regional governments, which saw their existence outside of the official security architecture as a threat. Consequently, the government declared an opaque plan to demobilize, disband, and reintegrate Fanos and, later, the Amhara Special Forces into the community (The Washington Post, 2023). This was strongly opposed by the Fano. At this stage, Fano also had credible evidence of federal government officials' involvement in identity-targeted attacks on Amharas; hence could not trust the government's demobilizing plan. After the cessation of hostilities (COHA) agreement in Pretoria between TPLF and the federal government, the true intent of the government regarding the Amhara people was explicitly stated. The ENDF chief of staff gave a press release to national television about their plan to eradicate the Amhara groups within two weeks (Borkena Editorial, 2024). For this operation to succeed, a state of emergency was proposed, and the Federal Parliament automatically approved it. Amhara peoples' representatives in the federal parliament were already apprehended, and there was no significant opposition from the remaining parliamentarians regarding the proclamation.

'The two-week operation' plan lasted at least until the compilation of this report, which is nearly two years, and the then few hundred Fano force has now become a few hundred thousand army, organized under four commands. Perhaps to help the reader estimate the Fano might, the Gojjam command alone has 13 divisions and 54 brigades.

4. Theoretical Discussion: A Foucauldian Perspective

The analysis of the rise of Amhara nationalism, the ongoing genocide against the Amhara people, and the resurgence of Fano can be richly understood through the lens of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA). This theoretical approach provides a framework for examining how power structures shape, reinforce, and challenge group identities and social hierarchies, particularly through the construction and dissemination of discourses that marginalize or demonize certain ethnic groups.

Foucault's concepts of power and discourse are pivotal for understanding how language and political rhetoric have been employed by political elites to not only govern but also create divisions between groups, particularly in the context of Ethiopia's shifting political landscape. The ethnic federalism implemented after 1991 under the EPRDF regime, which institutionalized ethnic identity as the basis for political organization and governance, plays a crucial role in the formation of the organized, systemic attack on Amhara identity and the resultant tensions within Ethiopian society. Foucault's framework allows us to

understand how this federal arrangement and the discourses surrounding it have constructed narratives that define the Amhara people as either the oppressor or the oppressed, thereby influencing their collective identity and political mobilization.

4.1. Power, Discourse, and the Construction of Amhara Identity

The Amhara genocide, which began covertly in the 1970s and has escalated since 2018, cannot be understood without examining the historical construction of the Amhara identity as one linked to the Ethiopian state's political power. The demonization of Amharas as an oppressor class, as seen in the works of Workneh (2023) and Mihiret (2025), is a discursive practice that has been institutionalized over decades. Through a Foucauldian lens, we can argue that the construction of such a narrative serves to justify and perpetuate the violence and disenfranchisement of the Amhara population. The state's portrayal of the Amhara as "oppressors" creates a power imbalance that enables further violence, targeting, and dispossession of this group. This narrative has served as a rationalization for the state's policies of ethnic cleansing and militarized repression in Amhara-majority regions such as Welkait and Metekel, where civilians are deliberately targeted, and their identity is erased through massacres and forced displacement.

According to Foucault (1972), power is not only concentrated in formal institutions (like the state or government) but also operates through discourses, which shape social reality. In Ethiopia, ethnic federalism is a prime example of how discourse has been mobilized to create ethnic groups with distinct identities, each vying for recognition, protection, and rights within a highly competitive and fragmented political space. Ethnic groups, such as the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray, are not merely social groups but have become political entities defined through discursive practices that often define them in opposition to each other. The construction of the Amhara identity within this political context has been largely negative, positioning them as the legacy of imperial Ethiopianism and agents of oppression, while promoting the idea of other ethnic groups as victims of such imperialist oppression. This discourse creates a binary opposition between the "oppressor" (Amhara) and the "oppressed" (Oromo, Tigray), thus framing the Amhara genocide as a natural and justified response to this historical inequity.

4.2. Fano and the Reclamation of Identity

In the resurgence of Fano and the formation of a more profound Amhara nationalism, we can also observe the role of discourse in reshaping the identity of the Amhara people. As discussed in the sections above, Fano has emerged not only as a military force but as a symbolic reassertion of Amhara autonomy and self-defense. This reassertion can be interpreted through the lens of Foucault's concept of resistance. Foucault argues that resistance is always present within systems of power, and even in the face of institutionalized oppression, marginalized groups can create alternative discourses that challenge dominant narratives (Foucault, 1977). Fano, in this sense, represents a reclamation of agency—a response to the historical demonization and victimization of the Amhara people.

Through Foucauldian discourse analysis, we can see that Fano's narrative is one of self-defense and survival in the face of systemic violence. Fano resists not only physical destruction but also the erasure of Amhara identity within the larger Ethiopian political framework. This movement challenges the dominant discourse that portrays the Amhara as a dominant group and instead frames them as victims of state-sponsored violence, particularly in light of the ethnic cleansing they face in regions like Oromia, Benishangul-Gumuz, and Southern Ethiopia. This shift in discourse represents a new form of resistance against the political oppression of Amharas and challenges the hegemonic narratives imposed by ethnic federalism and the political elite in Addis Ababa.

Fano's resistance is also an act of unity, as exemplified in the endorsement of NAMA's motto, "One Amhara to all Amhara; all Amhara to one Amhara." This slogan encapsulates a desire to transcend internal

divisions within the Amhara people and reclaim a collective identity that is not defined solely by their historical association with the Ethiopian state. In this regard, Fano becomes not just a military movement but also a cultural and political force that seeks to redefine Amhara identity on its own terms.

4.3. Systemic Violence and the Reproduction of Inequality

Foucault offers a valuable perspective on how systemic violence against the Amhara people has been perpetuated by the state. The government's complicity in ethnic targeting and its role in the genocide are framed within a discourse that legitimizes violence against specific groups. In this case, the state's rhetoric surrounding the Amhara as "oppressors" becomes the basis for justifying their mass murder, displacement, and destruction of their cultural and political institutions. This discourse operates within a broader power dynamic where state-sponsored violence becomes normalized through the repetition of this historical narrative.

The targeted killings, mass incarcerations, and the displacement of Amhara civilians across the Oromia, Benishangul-Gumuz, Southern, and Southwestern Ethiopian regions are not only physical acts of violence but also symbolic violence aimed at stripping the Amhara people of their historical identity and their place in the Ethiopian nation-state. This forms part of the biopolitical control that Foucault describes, where the state exerts control over life through the management of populations, using violence and discourse to define who can live, who can die, and under what conditions (Foucault, 1978). The genocide of the Amhara is a culmination of these dynamics—where exclusionary discourses are used to justify the marginalization and systematic destruction of an entire people.

In sum, the Amhara genocide, the rise of Amhara nationalism, and the resurgence of Fano are all deeply intertwined with the discourse of power in Ethiopia. Through Foucauldian Discourse Analysis, we can see how language and political rhetoric are wielded by the state and other political actors to perpetuate the marginalization of the Amhara people, shaping their identity and justifying their victimization. The resistance of the Amhara people, through movements like Fano, challenges these dominant narratives, seeking to reclaim a sense of collective identity and autonomy in the face of systemic oppression. The power-knowledge dynamics in Ethiopia continue to shape the experiences of the Amhara people, and the way discourses of power continue, will influence their survival, political mobilization, and identity construction in the contemporary context.

5. The Prospect of the Existential Struggle

The historical narratives portraying the Amhara as oppressors have significantly contributed to the rise of ethnic politics in Ethiopia. Structural policy changes, including legal frameworks and administrative boundaries, were implemented based on ethnic definitions and principles. This ethnic consciousness, though rooted in fabricated narratives of historical suppression, grew influential enough to demand power sharing in the federal government and create regional states based on ethnic identity.

On the other hand, the Amhara people largely trusted the state rather than envisioning an ethnic Amhara-based sociopolitical arrangement. The Amhara elite lacked both the courage to maintain the Federal Government's unifying power and the interest to establish their own ethnic-based organization. This disengagement from both political fronts left the Amhara people unrepresented in power dynamics, dispersed, and vulnerable to targeted attacks.

False narratives accusing the Amhara escalated to the extent that hate speech, categorical labeling, and derogatory terms became official discourse. Government officials used hate speech against the Amhara to mobilize community support and political participation. The language they employed was translated into practice by extremist ethno-nationalist groups, leading to orchestrated attacks. In contrast, the Amhara

and Ethiopianist elites — most of whom were Amhara anyway, were unresponsive to both the fabricated narratives and systemic identity-based attacks. There was no substantial effort from the Amhara elite to counterbalance the rhetoric or challenge the verbal genocide normalized by extremists throughout the five decades[21] of political interactions.

While the Amhara elites aimed to eliminate ethnic politics, they failed to devise a viable strategy to save their own community. Even the Amhara Nationalism movement lacked structural awareness of the existing political landscape. It attempted to mobilize the Amhara people, using the ethnic cleansing of Amharas in Oromia as an immediate cause, to oppose ethnic federalism. Professor Asrat's mobilization primarily targeted ethnic federalism but failed fundamentally because the movement was not structurally Amhara nationalist. Achieving an independently aspired goal through the movement and establishing it as a sociopolitical organization would have yielded different results.

5.1. The Dialectic View on Amhara Nationalism

Using Amhara Nationalism as a means of organizing support until seizing power or as a strategic sociopolitical organization—will likely have a lasting impact beyond the current existential struggle. Since 2022, the Fano struggle has made enormous efforts to form a unified army structure. However, diverging opinions between those who view Amhara nationalism as a "means" and those who see it as a "strategic objective" have led to internal threats. Both groups rushed to elect a leader, resulting in Eskinder Nega's victory over Zemene Kassie on July 17, 2024. Following the election, Zemene Kassie publicly rejected the election of Eskinder Nega, highlighting his unwillingness to work together.

The diaspora support community expressed concern over the divisions among Fano leaders and proposed a potential solution to mitigate the rift. They suggested appointing Zemene as the commander overseeing Fano operations on the ground while assigning Eskinder the role of general responsible for international diplomacy and cooperation. The suggestion was basically to let the two leaders work together. This approach could have prevented the fragmentation of Fano along the lines of the individual ambitions or agendas of the two leaders.

In the context where the two leaders cannot work together, their dichotomous view on Amhara nationalism can be mitigated with a mutual agreement to use the difference as a foundation for two salient political parties independent of Fano. The two political parties – one slightly conservative Amhara Nationalist and the other with an Ethiopianist frame – can compete for power, and a democratic election will decide the outcome. Envisaging this consensus gives Fano a chance to take political neutrality, preserving its historical genesis and upholding its virtues as a common heritage of all Amhara people.

5.2. The Role and Preservation of Fano

Amidst this contradiction, Fano is vulnerable to subterfuge. As a cultural heritage symbolizing the Amhara people's struggle for freedom and justice, Fano is not owned by any single political party. It facilitates political exercises but is not a political party per se. Currently, political leaders claim to be Fano, and conversely, Fano leaders claim to be politicians, confusing their roles and leveraging Fano for influence. Historically, Fano is a shared heritage of all Amhara people, irrespective of political or religious affiliations. This belief is reflected in social media reactions, and comments where emphasis is placed on maintaining the virtues of Fano as a common pride and heritage for all Amhara people. Given that

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[21]It started with the assassination of 60 top officials on 23 November 1974 (https://www.memoryofthemartyrs.com/), where, under the guise of Dergue, organized Oromo ethno-nationalists identified and targeted only ethnic Amharas with the intent to cleanse Amhara from government offices. The operation has continued to date, including the assassination of Amhara officials by the ruling regime on 23 June 2019.

factions have already emerged within the armed resistance, one key Foucauldian insight is that division often arises from competing discourses within movements. The community must generate a unifying discourse that aligns the struggle not only against the oppressive regime but also around a shared vision of governance, justice, and identity. This means developing institutions of knowledge production—media, education, cultural expressions—that reinforce solidarity rather than fragmentation.

5.3. Internationalizing the Struggle

A Foucauldian approach would also recognize the importance of external discourses—how international media, human rights organizations, and global powers frame the conflict. The resistance must strategically engage with global narratives, ensuring that its struggle is seen as legitimate and just. This could mean engaging with transnational activist networks, producing media that counters state propaganda, and leveraging international legal and human rights frameworks.

5.4. Preparing for Power

Foucault argues that power is not centralized in a single institution (e.g., the state) but is diffused throughout social relations. Resistance, therefore, does not come only from military struggle but also through discursive, cultural, and social practices that challenge dominant power structures. This means the community must not only fight militarily but also work to reshape narratives, create alternative institutions, and produce knowledge that legitimizes its cause.

Foucault's concept of biopower—the management of populations—suggests that even before coming to power, the resistance must develop structures that care for and organize the people. If the armed struggle is solely focused on military victory without addressing governance, public health, education, and economic sustainability, then the movement risks falling into the same oppressive patterns it resists. Establishing grassroots systems of governance even during the struggle (e.g., local councils, health networks, and economic cooperatives) ensures that power is not merely seized but exercised in a way that empowers the population.

5.5. Avoiding the Trap of Authoritarianism

Foucault warns that revolutions often replace one form of domination with another if they fail to critically examine their own power structures. The community must ensure that its own emerging government does not reproduce the oppressive mechanisms of the previous regime. This requires mechanisms of accountability, decentralization of power, and constant critique of internal hierarchies. The current Fano structure lacks a clear distinction between its political wing and military wing. This situation has resulted in individuals with limited military leadership experience, and soldiers competing for leadership roles in the struggle. Neither group is ideally suited to lead given the existing structural issues. First, the military wing ought to be organized and led by professional military staff, adhering to a strict chain of command based solely on military rank rather than elections. Second, the political wing ought to form a council, perhaps an executive committee, comprising representatives from all Fano commands, relevant political parties, and concerned organizations. This council would provide a platform for debates and discussions, from which effective policies can emerge. While the military and political wings can engage in mutual discussions and evaluations at the policy level, they must remain independent entities. Military leaders should be appointed based on their rank and experience, while political leaders should be elected. Disregarding this implicit dual structure and allowing any individual to seize power over both the military and political spheres could lead to disastrous consequences, as it would grant them absolute authority. Such a fused structure paves the way for dictatorship and authoritarianism. The Amhara people, who have

already endured significant suffering and are now engaged in an existential struggle, deserve a leadership structure that prevents the concentration of power (potential authoritarianism) and promotes democratic governance.

5.6. Determining Factors for Current Struggle

The success of the current existential struggle, speaking of internal factors, depends on two issues: 1) the preservation of Fano's virtues as a public identity, protecting it from parties that seek to own it as their exclusive property, and 2) the strategic decision regarding the utilization of Amhara nationalism, either as a tactical tool or strategic direction requires mutual understanding and consensus. Further divisions can be prevented through thorough debates and discussions. Given the heightened ethnic consciousness and identity solidification of the Amhara people, especially after witnessing brutal massacres of innocent citizens due to their Amhara identity, Amhara nationalism can serve as a strategic guideline. The para-Ethiopianist wing's elements can be incorporated into Amhara nationalism. For example, inclusiveness is a debated issue between the two blocs. However, Amhara nationalism can be defined as embracing all positive aspects of the "Ethiopia-destination" approach, including redefining who Amhara is.

Amhara is an ethnic identity anyone can naturally claim based on association and a sense of membership. It can be as inclusive as Ethiopianism. In the current reality, other ethno-nationalists view Ethiopianists as obsolete, and individuals born to parents from two different ethnic groups are unwelcome on both sides. Culturally, these individuals often practice and psychologically feel close to Amhara (Borago, 2018). Amhara nationalism should be open to embracing them. Regardless of blood purity, anyone who speaks Amharic as their first language or identifies as Amhara should be considered Amhara. Thus, Amhara nationalism is not that much narrower than Ethiopianism.

5.7. The Horizon of Peace and Its Strategic Alternative

The Amhara people have been enduring systematic attacks orchestrated by both foreign and domestic forces. National and international humanitarian and justice institutions have largely failed to respond to these atrocities and, in some cases, appear complicit in the suffering inflicted upon the Amhara community. Consequently, the attacks on the Amhara people are likely to persist as long as individuals identified or labeled as Amhara exist, as the ruling regime has culturally embedded ambitions of territorial expansion through recurrent invasions, forceful assimilation, and ethnic cleansing. It has been a revered traditional practice for the Oromos to invade neighboring communities and annex their lands. Their traditional social organization is based on this philosophy of expansion. Thus, so long as their interest in invading others persists and others fight back to survive as an organized entity, there won't be 'peace' in the foreseeable future. This might sound pessimistic, but it gives a logical prediction based on the aforesaid antagonistic interaction. This antagonism is constitutionalized as Abera (2024) aptly elucidated. For this reason, Amhara shall envisage a policy horizon that sustains it unruffled through the turmoil.

The socio-political interaction between the Amhara and ethnonationalist extremists, driven by hatred towards the Amhara, necessitates a critical reassessment of the prevailing assumptions. Historically, the Amhara elite has mistakenly regarded peace as the default socio-political order, whilst it demanded deliberate effort. The massacre of 60, almost all Amhara, officials on *"the Black Saturday"* - 23 November 1974, by secretly organized Oromo ethnonationalists is a stark reminder that peace can no longer be assumed. Among those executed was Prime Minister Aklilu Habteweld, who, in his final words, said, "If it is for the peace of our beloved country, I accept my death sentence." Tragically, the aftermath of this massacre brought neither peace nor reconciliation to Ethiopia. Instead, it signaled the beginning of systematic ethnic cleansing aimed at rendering the Amhara community leaderless and vulnerable.

This massacre was not an isolated event but a calculated step in a broader plan to marginalize and annihilate the Amhara people. It underscores that peace is not the default order for the Amhara community under such a genocidal framework. Chaos has become the prevailing socio-political reality. The current regime unashamedly declared *gambling* [convince and confuse] as a strategy of leadership.

In response to this grim reality, the Amhara elite ought to abandon the flawed assumption of peace as a given. Instead, it necessitates devising alternative mechanisms and strategies to ensure the survival and resilience of their community amid ongoing wars. This preparedness must be the default socio-political approach for the Amhara moving forward.

6. Conclusion

This research, employing Foucauldian discourse analysis and historical methods, has revealed the deep and multifaceted roots of the Amhara community's existential struggle in Ethiopia. Drawing from a rich array of primary and secondary data—including media content, books, articles, interviews, and observations—this study demonstrates how historical narratives, current political practices, and deeply entrenched ideological agendas have converged to threaten the survival of the Amhara people.

At the heart of this issue lies a historically constructed narrative that falsely portrays the Amhara as oppressors and colonizers within Ethiopia. This narrative, originally devised by failed colonial powers to dismantle Ethiopia, has been perpetuated over decades. Ethnonationalist elites, indoctrinated by these narratives, have weaponized this falsehood to justify political arrangements and practices that actively marginalize and endanger the Amhara community. The hateful rhetoric and policies against Amhara have thus become the foundation for the ongoing atrocities targeting them.

Compounding this historical grievance is the Oromummaa regime's aspiration to dismantle the Amhara community entirely in pursuit of establishing a Cushitic nation-state. Guided by a vision of linguistic, religious, and ethnic uniformity, the regime seeks to make all citizens adopt *Oromifa* as their language, *Waqeffanna* as their religion, and Oromo as their ethnic identity. These assimilationist efforts, deeply rooted in the *Gadaa system's* philosophy of raids and territorial expansion, employ coercion to eliminate non-Oromo identities and those who resist assimilation. This assimilationist agenda has historically facilitated the Oromo's territorial expansion since the 16th century, even as its proponents falsely accuse the Amhara of expansionism.

The confluence of these factors—colonial conspiracy, ethnonationalist vengeance, and Oromummaa's assimilationist agenda—presents an existential threat to the Amhara people. The Oromummaa regime uses historical narratives and ethnonationalist grievances as tools to justify its broader aim of oromizing Ethiopia by force. This agenda has culminated in the ethnic cleansing of Amharas, particularly in western Ethiopia, through displacement, persecution, and violence. Despite repeated attacks, the Amhara community's historical resilience and refusal to accept Oromization underscore their profound connection to their culture, heritage, and identity.

A critical impediment to resolving this crisis is the lack of shared historical understanding between Amhara elites and those of other ethnic groups, notably Oromo and Tigray elites. These groups fundamentally oppose Amhara perspectives, not out of reasoned debate but as a reflexive rejection of anything associated with Amhara identity. This entrenched division leaves no room for democratic dialogue or mutual problem-solving. Instead, the suffering of the Amhara is perversely celebrated by Oromo and Tigray nationalists, further eroding the possibility of reconciliation or peace.

Despite these challenges, the rise of Fano marks a critical grassroots response to the Amhara community's existential plight. Fano's emergence highlights the urgent need to resist the regime's covert war on the Amhara people and calls for unified action among all Ethiopians. The Oromummaa regime's coercive

and assimilationist tactics threaten not just the Amhara but all ethnic groups in Ethiopia, who face the same ultimatum: Oromize or perish. Ethiopians must recognize the shared threat posed by the current regime and work together to foster a new discourse rooted in mutual respect, inclusivity, and democracy. Only by dismantling the divisive and destructive narratives perpetuated by ethnonationalist and assimilationist agendas can Ethiopia move toward sustainable peace and equitable political engagement. This shared commitment is essential not only for the survival of the Amhara community but also for the preservation of Ethiopia's diverse heritage and collective future.

This research concludes with a call to further sociopolitical research for theorizing the intersection of the pursuit of national integration and security under diverging political discourses and segregatively demonizing narratives where peace is not on the horizon.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

The study strictly adhered to ethical standards by using publicly available data, properly citing all sources, and ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, and cultural sensitivity in interviews and data handling. It maintained transparency and academic integrity throughout the analysis, respectfully representing diverse perspectives without perpetuating harmful stereotypes or exploiting vulnerable groups.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

There are no conflicts of interest associated with this research. The researcher confirmed that there were no financial, personal, or professional relationships that could have influenced the design, execution, or findings of this study.

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