

STATE-BUILDING/STATE-DESTROYING IN ETHIOPIA – A BACKDROP TO THE TIGRAY GENOCIDE

ALEMSEGED ABBAY

PROFESSOR, HISTORY DEPARTMENT, FROSTBURG STATE UNIVERSITY, FROSTBURG, MD

AABBAY@FROSTBURG.EDU



Abstract

Federalist Tigray and unitarian Amhara have been historical rivals in the daunting task of state-building in Ethiopia. To neutralize Tigray and its de facto federalism (1872–89), Amhara found a formidable ally in Italy, which colluded with Britain to have “a place in the sun.” Amhara rewarded Italy with half of Tigray, which was christened “Eritrea,” and imposed the unitarian system in the country. Worse still, in the middle of the 1950s, Amhara annexed the western and southern parts of Tigray. Tigray and Eritrea (which returned to Ethiopia in 1952) were suffocated by amharanization and political centralization, the twin pillars of the unitarian system. Military insurgencies brought the system to an end in 1991 and the Tigrayans who assumed the reins of power introduced de jure federalism, to the chagrin of the Amhara. The paper offers a critical historical analysis of state-building and state-destroying in Ethiopia, with particular attention given to the Amhara return to power in 2018 and humanity’s newest genocide in Tigray.

Keywords

Amhara, ethnicity, federalism, genocide, Tigray

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Introduction

Deciphering why man, the “rational animal”, annihilates members of his own species is a daunting task, especially when the victims are core people of a polity much like the Tigrayans in Ethiopia. Depending on primary and secondary sources such as travelers’ accounts, reports of official delegates, diplomatic correspondences, books by military and political officers, contemporary intellectuals and researchers, and media outlets, the paper delves into the state-building process in Ethiopia to determine if past intercommunal relations could shed light on the road to the Tigray tragedy—humanity’s most recent genocide.

Vilifying people as “parasites,” “bloodsuckers,” and “evil creatures” (Nazis to Jews), “traitors” (Ittihadists to Armenians), “stinking brute” and “detestable” (Khmer Rouge to urban dwellers, intellectuals as well as religious and ethnic minorities), “cockroaches” and “snakes” (Interahamwe to Tutsi), and “dogs” (Serbs to Bosniaks) are all dehumanizing terms historically applied in genocidal situations. Similarly, calling Tigrayans “daytime hyenas,” “cancer,” “tumor,” and “weeds” freed the Amhara perpetrators to banish their Tigrayan victims from the human family and annihilate them. They explicitly vowed to “wipe [them]out” and “destroy” them. To rob Tigrayans of their last vestige of human dignity, the perpetrators weaponized rape. They manufactured and weaponized famine. Encouraged by the willful silence of the international community, actively backed by the Amhara bystanders, and blessed by the powerful Orthodox Church, the perpetrators have hitherto killed more than a million Tigrayans. As this article goes to press, in Southern and Western Tigray as well as Northern and Eastern Tigray, which are still occupied by the Amhara and Eritrean perpetrators respectively, the Tigrayan youth continue to disappear. Further, famine, as a mechanism of genocide, continues to kill people relentlessly. The clearly articulated intent and the actions (some videotaped) of the Amhara and Eritrean perpetrators have been to annihilate the Tigrayans entirely or at least to make them inconsequential in the socio-political and economic landscape of the Horn of Africa. It is a textbook genocide.

Yet, the progression of events that occurred between the ascendancy of Abiy Ahmed to power in April 2018 and the declaration of a genocidal war by Ethiopia and its partners—United Arab Emirates, Somalia, and Eritrea, against Tigray on November 4, 2020, requires a proper context. Identifying the links and missing-links in the state-building process can illuminate why a genocide has occurred in the very cradle of Ethiopia’s 3000-year-old history/mythology.

The Gestation of the “Prison of Nations”

Regarding injustices in Ethiopia, the scholar of nationalism, Ernest Gellner, wrote that “The Amhara empire was a prison house of nations if ever there was one.” Prior to the formation of the “prison,” however, statehood in Ethiopia existed for two thousand years. Centered in today’s Eritrea and Tigray, with its Red Sea port of Adulis, the Axumite Empire dominated the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula across the Red Sea for most of the first millennium CE. With Muslim Arabia controlling the

Red Sea trade beginning in the 8th century, Axum began to decline and by the 10th century it was no more. The subsequent political system was decentralized. Its principal autonomous rival states were Tigray and Amhara. The former, with its *Medri Bahri* (Maritime region) under the *Baher Negasi* in Derbarwa, was the first region in the decentralized political landscape that one encountered when entering from the Red Sea.¹ Warlords vied against one another for primacy in what came to be known as the *Zemene Mesafint* (Era of the Princes). A weak monarchy in Gondar tried to snatch power from the nobility to no avail. Warlords such as *Ras* Mikael of Tigray were forces to be reckoned with,² until the ascendancy of Tewodros to power in 1855. However, without fully realizing his vision for unity Tewodros died in 1868. His Tigrayan successor Yohannes (1872-89) implemented his vision more effectively.

Eighteen seventy-two ushered in the Tigrayan administration which was determined to not let Ethiopia slide to the *Zemene Mesafint*. Further, at all cost, Yohannes IV would not cede Ethiopian territory to foreign invaders—Mahdist Jihadists, Egyptian expansionists, and Italian imperialists. Yohannes was more successful than his predecessor in effectively uniting the country. Apparently, realizing that the unitarian system was not going to work, he was interested in neither cultural homogenization nor political centralization. He did not impose his mother tongue, *Lisane Tigray*, as the official language of the country. Nor did he put pressure on Ethiopians to assimilate into the Tigrayan culture. Secondly, he devolved power to regional lords whom he crowned as *Negus* (king) under his overlordship as *Neguse Negast* (king of Kings). Under this federal system the various regions, such as Gojjam and Shoa, enjoyed autonomy. *De facto* federalism prevented Ethiopia from sliding back into the *Zemene Mesafint*.

The federal formula of devolving power helped regional leaders to consolidate power and conspire against Yohannes. Concurrently, the *Neguse Negast* had to deal with the external powers of Egypt, Mahdist Sudan, and Italy. Heavily relying upon his redoubtable general *Ras* Alula, Yohannes defeated them all. Resisting Queen Victoria's pressure to cede territories to Italy to avoid war, both Yohannes and Alula vehemently refused to cede an "inch" of their land, asserting that the natural border of their country was the Red Sea.³ In 1889, though, Yohannes was at bay in a triangular trap—the Mahdists from the north-west, the Italians from the Red Sea coast in the north, and the Shoan Amhara *Negus* Menelik from the south were all advancing on him.

For the Tigrayans, the trans-Mareb⁴ region was a homeland, a romantic subject, and an indivisible source of their identity for which they were ready to die. Alula vehemently rejected Queen Victoria's pressure to cede the Massawa hinterland of Saati to Italy, unless he became the governor of Rome.⁵ For the Tigrayans, land was not a mere physical object or a sort of merchandise that was disposable at whim. It was a homeland with emotional attachment. Thus, they had to pay a heavy price defending it and keeping Ethiopia's sovereignty by defeating the Egyptian expansionists at Gundet (1875) and Gura (1876), the Mahdist Islamists at Kufit (1885) and Metemma (1889), and the Italian colonialists at Dogali (1887). Victories did not come easily to the Tigrayans. The Egyptians were trained and led by former Con-

federate officers from Texas,⁶ Italians were well-equipped with industrial weapons, and the Mahdists were battle-hardened. All the while, the regional lords, particularly *Negus* Menelik, were abusing their autonomy to consolidate power, even by conspiring with the very foreign forces that Yohannes and Alula were fighting against.⁷ Indeed, Menelik had been on the Italian payroll for a long time. With Yohannes's death fighting the Mahdists in 1889, Menelik grabbed power and Italy readily "supported his candidature, and supplied him liberally with rifles, ammunition, money, and with European advisors."⁸

■ **Eighteen eighty-nine signaled the end of de facto federalism and the beginning of a unitarian system of state-building in Ethiopia.**

Sale of the Mareb Mellash

Eighteen eighty-nine signaled the end of *de facto* federalism and the beginning of a unitarian system of state-building in Ethiopia, preceded by the sale of the *Mareb Mellash* (north of the river Mareb). The Italian offer of European advisors, armaments, and money to Menelik was not an act of altruism; it was an un-stated debt that had to be dearly paid back from the Wutchale Treaty (1889), ceding the *Mareb Mellash* – dear to the heart of the Tigrayans but not to the Amhara power-wielders. And yet, equipped with forces of modernity, the advent of colonialism in the Horn of Africa helped Menelik to annex massive regions with diverse populations in the south. The Ivory Coasts, Gold Coasts, Algerias, Nigerias, Bechuanalands, and Nyasalands were all created by historical forces that both shrank and expanded. These same forces were also responsible for the emergence of modern Ethiopia, albeit in a different manner.⁹

Tigray's *Medri Bahri* (*Mereb Mellash*) which Menelik sold to the Italians, was where Yohannes and Alula had faced external challenges. When in 1890 Italy birthed Eritrea, the battlefields of Gundet, Gura, Kufit, and Dogali, where the Tigrayans defeated foreign forces in defense of Ethiopian sovereignty were now ceded and placed in Italian Eritrea. For the Amhara empire-builders, trans-Mareb Tigray was not a homeland. With no sentimental attachment, it was a mere physical object they could slice and sell on a whim.

Menelik signed the Wutchale Treaty with three objectives: enduring Italian friendship, payment in money and armaments, and weakening Tigray. The latter involved urging the Italians to advance from the Red Sea coast and occupy *Kebessa* (the highlands of *Mareb Mellash*) against the Tigrayan political establishment.¹⁰ The Amhara-Italian alliance was mutually beneficial. Wutchale provided the Italians with far more than what was requested in the 1887 Portal Mission of Queen Victoria, including the reassignment of *Ras* Alula from *Kebessa* to a different province. Hitherto formidable challenges to their colonial ambition, the Tigrayans alongside their renowned general, Alula, were neutralized. The Amhara ruling elite, too, needed

the elimination of Tigray as a power contender. With the *Mareb Mellash* gone, demographically and territorially diminished Tigray was no longer a threat. Gone was also *de facto* federalism which the Amhara rulers replaced with the unitarian formula of state-building so that an Ethiopia that mirrored their own ethnic identity could be created. And Wutchale accomplished this task thanks to Italian collusion.

But Eritrea was merely a stepping-stone to further advancement. By itself, Eritrea could not quench Italy's thirst for *posto al sole* (place in the sun) and *spazio vitale*, what the Germans called *der lebensraum* (living space), for its surplus population—unemployed, unemployable, and restless youth. Thus, in a matter of a few years after Wutchale, Italy started advancing south of the river Mareb only to be stopped at Adwa in 1896. Yet, despite a costly military victory at the battle of Adua, Menelik made no effort to clear Italy out of Eritrea and regain access to the Red Sea. That would have reunited his Tigrayan nemeses once again, undoing his major preoccupation of permanently weakening them. Consequently, Tigrayans on both sides of the river Mareb harbored deep grievances against the Amhara for converting their homeland into a salable and divisible merchandise. Not surprisingly, those under colonial rule felt betrayed by the very state that should have defended them: “we remained lost in the hands of the Italians.”¹¹

Tigray's misery continued. On top of the rinderpest that killed ninety percent of the region's cattle, the marauding Ethiopian soldiers ravaged it during the battle of Adua. In what came to be known in Tigray as *Zebene Shiye* (Shewan Era), diminished, emaciated, and depopulated Tigray could hardly serve Ras Alula as a base for a sovereign state.¹² Tigray's pathetic situation was decried by a contemporary intellectual:

During the reign of Menelik II, Tigray is completely devastated. Nowhere in that county is there fertile land ... The Tigrayan youths are not living at home. They are dispersed in all four corners. There are more ruins of its past greatness than residential huts... [Menelik] does not regard Tigrayans as his people. It would be a travesty for Ethiopia if an ethnic group as great as that of the Tigrayans is exterminated.¹³

Selling a portion to the Italians and keeping the rest under his thumb, Menelik kept the Tigray fate bleak: “At no time did the emperor show his consciousness of the need for a special care, wise conciliation for this turbulent province with its separate language and traditions, its viral independence...”¹⁴ As such, the Ethiopians did not belong to a nation that normally is a community of people with shared memory and consensually built¹⁵ and simply manifesting “the look of a God-given entity.”¹⁶ On the contrary, Ethiopia increasingly resembled an unlawful hodgepodge of ethnic groups. Crammed together, the system baselessly claimed that its people are God's chosen people living in a country that “stretches its hands unto God.” Deified, the polity asks God to serve it, conflating the altar of God with the altar of the state camouflaged for Amhara ethnic nationalism.

During a time of great power, those in politics aimed to make Ethiopia synonymous with the Amhara people, effectively erasing the presence of other ethnic groups in the country. This narrow-minded belief, exemplified by the saying “The Amhara is to rule, not to be ruled,” only served to fuel a counteractive sense of nationalism. Unlike in Northern Ireland, Wales, and Scotland where *anglicization* was not imposed but gradually transplanted,¹⁷ *amharanization* was superimposed upon Ethiopia, albeit as ineffective as *russification* in 19th century Russia or *Turkification* in early 20th century Ottoman Empire. In reaction, Tigray “... remained conscious of its separateness, and hostile—sometimes with bitter and active, sometimes with a dull smoldering, resentment...”¹⁸

Although the wherewithal to forge a unitarian state was not there, the gradual exposure of the country to forces of modernity was a game-changer. With no threat from Tigray in the north, Menelik focused on the center. He allowed the French to build the railroad connecting their colony of Djibouti with his capital, Addis Ababa—*le chemin de fer Franco-Ethiopien*. As in France where “*Les routes, les chemines de fer, ces grandes moteurs de la civilisation,*”¹⁹ the railroad served Ethiopia as a conduit for glimmers of modernity, helping the regime to consolidate power. Forces of modernity in the form of Western education and a rudimentary bureaucracy were trickling in, metamorphosing the feudal political system into an embryonic absolutism that was going to reach its apex in the post-1941 era.

The brief Fascist occupation (1936-41) was a contributing factor. Italy was home to the largest surplus population in industrialized Europe. As such, it intended to make Ethiopia *spazio vitale* which was, according to *Signor* Alessandro Lessona, Minister for Italian Africa, “one of the decisive ideas of the Ethiopian enterprise.”²⁰ For that reason, Italy invested in communication (transport, telephone, telegraph, postal services), money economy (Lire and Maria Theresa Thaler), etc. According to the British, Italy’s investment in Ethiopia in five years far exceeded their investment during their forty years stay in Kenya.²¹

When Ethiopia regained its independence in 1941, the Amhara elite reaped the benefits of the country’s limited exposure to modernity to consolidate their power by accelerating political centralization and cultural homogenization. The nascent printing press gave their language, Amharic, permanence and helped it to assume a more solid official status. As such, it ended up being an instrument of power for the absolutist monarchy.

The status of Amharic symbolized the cultural and socio-political supremacy of its speakers. Not knowing Amharic led to consequences, up to and including a bullet in the head. For a current example, in a video clip that circulated on the internet, Ethiopian soldiers rounded up and tortured a group of Tigrayans as they were readying their guns to shoot them in the Tigray genocide. Whereas the elderly victims mumbled in broken Amharic, to satisfy their tormentors, vainly hoping to save their lives, a teenager, who was being roughed up and slapped in the face for not speaking Amharic, told his tormentors in his native tongue and with frightened body language and a desperate voice: “I do not know Amharic. I am a peasant.”²² Indeed,

knowing and lacking the language can be a matter of life and death. An impeccable knowledge of the language saved the life of a Tigrayan in the genocide in Western Tigray. Now a refugee in Sudan, the young man told the *New York Times*: “I had to speak my fluent Amharic to survive.”²³ Making up only a quarter of the Ethiopian population, the Amhara are so touchy that they easily overreact to any form of challenge to their hegemony, including the status of their language when used as a deadly weapon of oppression and assimilation. Blessed are the people who were colonized for they do not have to worry which of their tongues will be the working language of their states. The former British multi-ethnic colonies such as Ghana and Nigeria have English, the former French colonies like Senegal and Congo have French, and the former Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique have Portuguese for their official languages.

Europe passed through the daunting task of state-building with significant success. Regardless of how language unity was achieved in France, there are some similarities between the Ethiopian and French state-building processes. Unlike France, which has significantly succeeded in presenting itself to most of its populous as the will of the French to be French,²⁴ Ethiopia has not succeeded in portraying itself as the will of the Ethiopians to be Ethiopians. Yet, there is a striking similarity in how the rulers consolidated power. Emperor Haile Selassie identified himself with the state in the same vein as the French king Louis XIV. Like the latter (*le roi soleil*), the Ethiopian monarch (ጸሃዮ ነገሥት) shared the exact same title of “sun-king.” Both enjoyed a divine stature. In the case of the Ethiopian absolutist monarch, even the Orthodox Church mass services included prayers of “bless the King, Haile Selassie.” As God’s anointed, it did not suffice to merely wish him a long life, public speeches and documents had to end with “Eternal Life for His Majesty Haile Selassie I.” Eternity, not mere longevity, was what the monarch wished for himself and the public consented.

And yet, unlike the significant success in France, Ethiopia did not transition into a nation-state. The first challenge to political centralization and cultural homogenization, the twin pillars of absolutism in a unitarian system, came from Tigray. Although weakened by Wutchale, Tigray remained a stern opponent of the system. In the post-Fascist era, like *Ras* Alula before him, *Ras* Seyoum Mengesha, the grandson of Emperor Yohannes, was mulling over Tigrayan independence.²⁵ That was why Emperor Haile Selassie decided to confine him to Addis Ababa, contrary to the 1941 British warning:

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It is certain that only civil war can result if the Emperor is encouraged by us to believe that we will allow him to crush ... all the principal nobles such as Ras Seyoum, in order to make himself an absolute and undisputed monarch and autocrat ... Nothing that we can do or omit can alter the fact that Ras Seyoum is by right of birth and descent king of Tigre.²⁶

At the same time, *Dejazmatch* Haile Selassie Gugsa, another descendent of Emperor Yohannes and former son-in-law of Emperor Haile Selassie, who had cooperated with Fascist Italy, was exiled to Seychelles. Compounded by the confinement of *Ras* Seyoum to Addis Ababa, his exile created a power vacuum in Tigray, nourishing a sense of insecurity among the public. Unsurprisingly, the absence of the two Tigrayan scions from the political platform revived the traditional Tigrayan resentment to Amhara rule,²⁷ leading to the 1943 *Woyane* insurgency. Unable to suppress it, Haile Selassie appealed to the US and the UK for help. While the US was mulling over giving him what he wanted-- armaments for 5000 soldiers, two fighter planes, as well as direct US bombardment of Tigray, the British agreed to suppress the insurgency.²⁸ They sent three Bisley aircraft from Aden to relentlessly bomb Tigray, until the insurgents surrendered²⁹ and the region was overrun by *Ras* Abebe Aregay's marauding Amhara forces. British technology prevailed over the people's just cause and *Woyane* remained ingrained in the Tigrayan psyche and safely stored in public memory, nurturing a distinct sense of Tigrayan identity. Grievances, far more than glories, enrich the collective sense of identity.³⁰

Not realizing that the absolutist and unitary Ethiopia was qualitatively different from the decentralized and *de facto* federalist Ethiopia they had left in 1889, Eritreans returned to Ethiopia in 1952. But no sooner did they rejoin Ethiopia than they were put off by the Amhara unitarian nationalism. Feeling evicted, they fired their first secessionist shots in 1961. Subsequently, the Eritrean struggle was emulated by the Tigrayans and the Oromo in the rest of the country. Amhara, unlike Piedmont and Prussia in the Italian and German contexts,³¹ did not come up with a nationalist doctrine to legitimize Ethiopian unity. Having failed to develop a pan-national identity, it has yet to be justified why the various ethnic groups should continue to live together. Ethiopian ethnic groups do not, for example, share the kind of values that keep Francophone and Anglophone Canada together, or a shared language as in the case of the Germans or the Italians.³² Short of "a daily plebiscite,"³³ the country's bitterly contested territory and history along with the absence of shared primordial elements, beg the question of why Ethiopia should remain united.

Tigrayan Reactive Nationalism

Nineteen ninety-one for Ethiopia was Year Zero. The unitarian state project of the Amhara power-wielders had encountered stiff resistance primarily from the Eritreans (1961-91), finally under the custodianship of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and the Tigrayans (1975-91), led by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the umbrella organization it led, the Ethiopian People's Revolu-

tionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). The former wanted to secede, and the latter to give unity a chance and remain within Ethiopia. When Asmara, the Eritrean capital, and Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian capital, fell to the insurgents, Eritrea broke away and the rest of the country was on the brink of dissolution. As in 1872 when the Tigrayans saved the country from backsliding into the *Zemene Mesafint*, again in 1991, they decided to pick up the pieces and start a new beginning for the country with three goals: sovereignty, unity, and prosperity. In the period between 1991-2018, threats from Eritrea in the north and al-Shabaab in the east were effectively dealt with, making Ethiopia the most orderly, stable, and peaceful country in an otherwise troubled Horn of Africa.

Moreover, Ethiopia's unity was retained using the federal formula. In ethnically beleaguered societies, accommodating diversity is the ideal conflict-management mechanism.³⁴ Accordingly, the TPLF/EPRDF had to reframe the ever-protean Ethiopian identity to address ethnic grievances by introducing federalism that divided the country into nine autonomous regions (*killils*). Unlike the failed unitarian system of the Amhara political actors, the TPLF/EPRDF came up with a political formula of nonmandatory unity of all the ethnic groups, like the Swiss system of voluntary union.³⁵ "A necessary evil,"³⁶ it was designed to satisfy the psychological needs of the non-core ethnic groups. Although the Amhara elite still enjoyed many privileges, including having their tongue as the official language and dominating the bureaucracy, it was too difficult for them to accept that "Amhara" did not equate with "Ethiopia" and the Ethiopians did not mean just the Amhara. They had to share Ethiopia with others and an inclusive pan-Ethiopian identity had yet to emerge. Accordingly, *amharanization* had to pursue a slower path the way *anglicization* did in Northern Ireland, Wales, and Scotland. That was why, regardless of how much the TPLF/EPRDF transformed Ethiopia (1991-2018), and they did profoundly change it for the better, the Amhara political actors continued to oppose them. No longer was the unitarian status quo tenable as Meles Zenawi stated in 1991 that ethnic federalism was the last-ditch effort to keep the country united: "A feudal monarchy and a repressive dictator could not hold Ethiopia together. Now we are trying another way. If Ethiopia breaks apart, then it was not meant to be."³⁷ Just as Yugoslavia's viability depended upon the political commitment to full equality of its constituent nationalities, so does Ethiopia's survival depend upon the full commitment to federalism of its constituent ethnic groups.

Finally, the TPLF/EPRDF was committed to shedding Ethiopia's image of being a perennial posterchild of famine and poverty. Determined to make it a middle-income country by 2025, the Tigrayan elite decided to crank up the economy. The new leaders vowed: "Development should be a matter of national survival . . . We can't have patriotism with an empty belly, and we can't have democracy with an empty belly either. . . Our national survival is not guaranteed unless we overcome poverty."³⁸

Fighting poverty required a multi-faceted transformation program in health, education, agriculture, export trade, and industrialization. Health stations were built in all communities, bringing about a substantial decline in child mortality and a

growth in life expectancy. Birth rates dropped more dramatically than anywhere else in Africa. Education expanded when primary, secondary, and tertiary schools multiplied. Student enrollment quadrupled. Since 1990, small farmers doubled their grain yields as agricultural productivity improved. Sales of cash crops such as coffee and sesame also multiplied significantly. Leather, textile, cement, and sugar manufacturing plants proliferated. The national airline, Ethiopian Airlines, grew quickly and became extremely successful at a time when many carriers worldwide failed. Sub-Saharan Africa's first modern light railway (tram) system was built in the capital city.³⁹ The Djibouti-Addis railway was updated ...⁴⁰

The economic dynamism reduced poverty by a third just between 2000 and 2015.⁴¹ By then, as President Barack Obama acknowledged, Ethiopia became "one of the fastest-growing economies in the world," and in 2017, double the African average, it became the fastest growing economy in the world. The brainchild of the TPLF, the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) by the Blue Nile symbolized the economic resurgence of Ethiopia. Expected to double Ethiopia's power generation, it was essential to give the country a middle-income status. An Israeli historian attested to the marvelous transformation of the country:

I have frequented the country since 1970, and it looks now moving forward like never before ... it would be proper to declare that 1991 was the first real revolution in Ethiopia's two millennia history... it is definitely marching in the right direction, and in an ever [-] quickening pace ... Consequently [...] it enjoys stability, continuity, and an amazing momentum of progress... A 2014 visitor, one who knows the country, cannot but marvel. Ethiopia is practically under construction. New buildings, roads, railways, factories, shopping malls, ... The middle class is growing fast in both the rural and urban areas... Ethiopia of today is not anymore that poor a place. Rather, it is a better place to be born into than most African and Middle Eastern neighboring countries... Ethiopia is now a land of real promise.⁴²

Obviously, Ethiopia's political, economic, and diplomatic ascendancy would have been unthinkable without good governance to ensure a lack of corruption and high security which was provided by "the extraordinary leadership in Meles Zenawi, perhaps the closest thing Africa has enjoyed to Lee Kuan Yew – super smart, pragmatic and with an authoritarian streak."⁴³ The stellar growth was set to make Ethiopia "a showcase country on the African continent and to prove that African lions can follow the Asian tigers."⁴⁴ Ultimately, however, the undeniable success of the Tigrayan mission was going to backfire. The economic growth did not quite match with the youth bulge. And youth unemployment grievances took ethnic dimension. All the sacrifices the Tigrayans made during the armed struggle to oust the brutal military junta (1975-91) and the stellar transformation of Ethiopia from a posterchild of war, poverty, and famine to one of the most peaceful, orderly, and fastest-growing economies in the world (1991-2018) ended up being a thankless mission.

Amhara Unitarian Nationalism

It is important to underline that the current leaders [of Ethiopia] may have playfully endangered the continued survival of the carefully knit country, but it will certainly be difficult to reconstitute it again (Tigray Government, October 2, 2020).⁴⁵

Two thousand eighteen ended “the first real revolution in Ethiopia’s two millennia history” heralding the return of the Amhara unitarians to the saddle of power with a vengeance against the Tigrayans. In 2018, in a redux of history, a catastrophe that was far worse than the one that had befallen them in 1889, was going to be unleashed by the Amhara unitarians. The mysterious death of Meles Zenawi in 2012 was followed by a power vacuum that lingered for six years until foreign forces who had stakes in the country decided to act. Indeed, the USA had been concerned with Chinese engagement in Ethiopia. And it decided not to miss the opportunity. In 2018, with the active involvement of the US Ambassador in Addis Ababa, Michael Raynor, and the US Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, Donald Yamamoto, Abiy Ahmed, a political novice and an unknown individual, was put in power.⁴⁶ The US was solely focused on its own interests of elbowing the Chinese out and dumping the “Developmental State” economic doctrine which was the bedrock of Ethiopia’s transformation from a land of despair to “a land of real promise” and replacing it with the Western neo-liberalism, irrespective of the long-term consequences of its actions on the country. It was without Plan B that the West had intervened in Cuba, Congo, and Ghana in the 1960s, Uganda and Chile in the 1970s, as well as Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya more recently, just to mention a few. Except in Cuba, where Plan A succeeded, the post-intervention situation that resulted has been nothing less than a disaster. The situation in Ethiopia is reminiscent of what happened in the Congo before. Like in the Congo, it was the lesser-known US officials such as Ambassadors Raynor and Yamamoto who had a significant impact on the future of Africa’s second most populous country, Ethiopia.

No sooner did Abiy come to power than he hurled Ethiopia into a self-destructive war. In a downward spiral, he is spearheading its slide “from being an exporter of stability and peace to exporting instability and fear.”⁴⁷ Abiy’s rise to power was sudden and unexpected, but he lacks the necessary skills and experience to lead effectively. His mentor Isaias Afwerki of Eritrea shares these shortcomings, in stark contrast to the capable leadership of Meles Zenawi. Abiy’s ability to learn on the job is also questionable. With no mass following of his own, in 2018 he was disoriented, desperately looking for a comfort zone.⁴⁸ Immediately after his ascent to the helm of power, he rushed to Mekelle to address the public in the Tigray Stadium, paying homage to the sacrifices that the Tigrayans made during the armed struggle against the *Derg* military junta (1975-91). He paid tribute to the martyrs for “democracy”, “justice”, and “development” in Ethiopia, “particularly Comrade Meles Zenawi”. Unable to foresee his genocidal mindset, Tigray welcomed him. So did the rest of the country, except for the chauvinistic spectrum of the Amhara political elite.

Capped by the award of the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize, the international community too lavishly showered him with praise,⁴⁹ including overplaying his relative youth, notwithstanding the fact that at 42, and was one of the oldest people to come to power in Ethiopia – Haile Selassie, Mengistu, and Meles being younger when they assumed power. At 36, Meles, for instance, was six years younger and much wiser than Abiy, but no one made a fuss about his youth. Simply put, people were taken in by Abiy-mania. In any case, at no time in history had an unknown figure come to power with so much political capital in an Ethiopia that was enjoying “stability, continuity, and an amazing momentum of progress.” Unearned, it was simply impossible for Abiy to appreciate the political capital that fell into his lap. He squandered it – easy come, easy go.

Since Abiy cannot understand the economic and political complexity of the country, he has no idea how to deal with it. Utopian, he makes wildly outlandish claims. In marked contrast to what Meles said in 1991 about his vision for Ethiopia that in ten years he would be satisfied if every Ethiopian would have three meals a day, Abiy declared that “By 2050, Ethiopia will be one of the two superpowers of the world.”⁵⁰ He did not even have a grasp of how deep the country’s ethnic fault lines were. A neophyte to politics, he could not come up with an all-embracing and inclusive political formula. Instead, he decided to pick and choose allies at the risk of alienating others. Consequently, it was expedient for him to reverse course and turn his back on Tigray and embrace its two formidable rivals: the Amhara political actors and Eritrea who were going to lead him on his suicidal path. Uncalled for and out of nowhere, he instantly adopted an overtly crude anti-Tigrayan rhetoric and policy. Stunned by his mercurial behavior and erratic vacillation, the Tigrayan youth who had warmly embraced him in the Tigray Stadium only months earlier gave him the apt moniker *Meshrefet*.⁵¹ They easily perceived his utopian “change” as the dystopian “turbulence.” Abiy-mania vanished in Tigray as quickly as it appeared.

With no vision whatsoever, his motto became all about a nebulous “change” which was accompanied by “love shall prevail” and, most notably, another nebulous term “synergy” which he dubbed his political “philosophy.” Surprisingly, his lofty-appearing and high-sounding empty terms helped him win, in a Machiavelian sense, a messianic illusion. Some such as the guru of Amhara chauvinism and avowed unitarian, Professor Mesfin Woldemariam, embraced him as an “elect of God”⁵² which was fitting with Abiy’s messianic delusion: “When I was seven years old, my mother told me I was going to be the seventh king of Ethiopia. Since then, it has been inculcated in my mind that I was going to be a king.”⁵³ In lavish admiration, the professor continued: “Abiy’s mind is advanced. He knows a lot. He has read a lot. Abiy has a special mind. He is wonderful... He reads. Twenty, thirty years ahead of his time.”⁵⁴

“Change” meant undoing the TPLF/EPRDF achievements during the previous 27 years. Anti-Tigrayan bigotry was officially sanctioned to serve Abiy as a “technology of power.”⁵⁵ As a mechanism of consolidating power, the Tigrayan-alienating policy disseminates factually wrong, misleading, and demeaning ideas concerning

them. In genocidal euphemism, the newly minted hate narrative refers to the Tigrayans as “strangers,” “daytime hyenas,” “weeds,” “cancer,” “junta,” etc. These hate terms spread like a wildfire among the Amhara who have what the Ethiopian social media icon Tewodros Tsegaye dubbed “narrative hegemony.” “Junta,” for instance, stuck among the Amhara as a derogatory term to belittle Tigrayans. Another signal of what Abiy had for Tigrayans was his courting of the US-based ultra-jingoistic media, Ethiopian Satellite Television (ESAT), which on August 6, 2016, aired an explicit call and a road map for annihilating Tigrayans.

Although the national identity of a people is sustained by the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, the Amhara identity of Ethiopia is webbed by outrightly assaulting and erasing the 27-year-long era of peace, stability, and awe-inspiring economic growth that made Ethiopia, as stated by Haggai Erlich, “a better place to be born into than most African and Middle Eastern neighboring countries.” Whilst Abiy Ahmed called it “an era of darkness”, his staunch apologists and supporters of his genocidal regime such as the historian Bahru Zewde dismiss it as a “dismal record.”⁵⁶ The fact that the Amhara intellectuals willfully overlook his buffoonery and liability, allow him to surrender Ethiopia’s sovereignty to foreign states like Eritrea, to take the country on a suicidal mission of internecine civil wars, and that they either feign ignorance or fully support the Tigray genocide, adequately reveals the depth of the ethnic fault lines in the country. Frequently stressing that “even if he is a dog, he is our dog,” akin to the jingoistic psyche of “My country, right or wrong,” they are firmly behind Abiy whom they extol as “Moses.”

Matter-of-factly, though, some of Abiy’s public discourses recall Slobodan Milošević’s speech to the Serbs and Theoneste Bagosora’s speech to the Hutu, relegating Tigrayans to a severe security dilemma. Since words of leaders in a deeply divided society have very serious consequences, Abiy’s coded messages and euphemistic name calling, as well as explicit hate speeches, have had deadly consequences. No mass violence starts with gas chambers, bullets, or machetes. Every mass violence begins with words. Greased by a wealth of grievances from their memory pool, such as the post-1889 period, Tigrayans have suffered from what a scholar of East Europe called “fear of the future, lived through the past.”⁵⁷

With no vision whatsoever, his motto became all about a nebulous “change” which was accompanied by “love shall prevail” and, most notably, another nebulous term “synergy” which he dubbed his political “philosophy.” Surprisingly, his lofty-appearing and high-sounding empty terms helped him win, in a Machiavellian sense, a messianic illusion.

Abiy went beyond rhetoric. Even GERD, one of the Tigrayan signature achievements, was targeted. After dismissing it as a mega project that was built for mere political consumption, a sort of a white elephant, he made a mysterious trip to Egypt on June 9-10, 2018, publicly swearing in the name of Allah (“*Welahi*”) not to hurt Egypt. The next month, and two days after he had said that GERD might not be finished in a decade, its chief engineer, Simegnew Bekele, was killed on July 26, 2018. Unexplained, three turbines of the dam were closed, reducing the intended capacity of power production from more than 6000 to less than 4000 kilowatts. It appears that the bullet that killed Engineer Simegnew also killed the dam and has stunted Ethiopia’s economic growth.

The first thing that Abiy did after assuming the helm of power was to “normalize” relations with Eritrea on Eritrean terms. Just like the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (1939) was not only a non-aggression pact but also a partitioning of Poland between the USSR and Germany and the Wutchale Italo-Amhara Treaty (1889) was not just about mutual friendship, but also about dismembering Tigray (Article III), the Abiy-Isaias Pact was not only about normalizing relations but about mutually devouring Tigray as well. Encircled by Amhara and Eritrea, Tigray’s security dilemma was so severe that it had no choice but to brace itself for a deadly struggle for sheer survival. For Abiy, as for Menelik, Tigray is not a homeland with emotional attachment and is therefore disposable. And just like Menelik did not regard Tigrayans as his people, Abiy vowed to destroy and wipe them out.

The Eritrean Dilemma: Damned if You Do, Damned if You Don’t

A political accident birthed by Wutchale, Italy wanted to use Eritrea as a launching pad to invade Ethiopia, its principal target for a *spazio vitale*. Lagging far behind in the scramble for colonies, Italy appeared to be suffering from a small man syndrome. Consequently, unparalleled by colonial standards, it lavishly invested capital in Eritrea to make it a lovely “white man’s country,”⁵⁸ giving the capital city, Asmara, the visage of a transplanted European town, aptly dubbed *piccola Roma*. Italian capital and skilled manpower were running the industrial economy while Italian and Arab merchant capital was responsible for the commercial economy. Normally, such socio-economic changes enable people to imagine their sense of collective identity. Indeed, it was similar material conditions at the turn of the 20th century that enriched the French political awareness to transform their sense of *mon viillage* into their sense of *mon pays*.⁵⁹ In the Eritrean context, however, natives were not integrated into the Italian economy, society, and culture. Not only was there a remarkable distance between urban and rural Eritrea, but the gap between urban natives and Italian settlers was also extreme. The indigenous people were “crowded into latrineless native quarters, which lacked enough water for even their unambitious needs.”⁶⁰ This apartheid-style segregation was eased after 1941 when Italy surrendered its colonies in World War II. Thereafter, natives claimed *piccola Roma*, proudly calling themselves “Asmarino,” and continued to identify with the colonial fabric of Eritrea

that had been exposed to forces of modernity. Yet, the Italian character of Eritrea lingered:

Without the Italian staff, the [British] Administration could not have functioned; without skilled Italian labour, the British and American war projects could never have been undertaken; without Italian industrial and agricultural enterprise, the Eritrean economy would have collapsed ... ⁶¹

In 1952, the UN decided to return significantly modernized Eritrea to predominantly agrarian Ethiopia; but the perception of being far more Westernized than the Ethiopians who had not been colonized, contributed to the desire to go it alone (1961-91). By 1991, when the liberators triumphantly entered Asmara, however, the Italian industrial capital and skilled manpower along with the Italian and Arab merchant capital had vanished. *Piccola Roma's* magnificent art deco buildings were miserably falling apart, and its beautiful boulevards were without traffic and aging. In 1991, far from being *piccola Roma*, Asmara was a somnolent town, a mere shadow of its bubbly past.

A century after its birth in 1890, Eritrea became independent in 1991. However, the liberators were clueless about leadership beyond sovereignty for the former Italian colony. Political independence was an end game, not a means to advancing the socio-economic wellbeing of the people. Neither Biafra nor Katanga, Eritrea is resource-poor, as the post-Italian British caretakers noticed. On July 15, 1949, the then British Administrator of the region, F.G. Drew, sent a message to the Foreign Office in London, verifying that "It is [a] debatable point as to whether Eritrea could ever be made economically viable. On balance, I think it must be accepted that in the absence of the discovery of considerable mineral wealth it could not." Understandably, after a three-decade-long devastating war for independence, Eritrea in 1991 was in a much worse shape than in 1949. As such, it had no economy to sustain its independence. And yet, the liberators vowed to make it Africa's Singapore.⁶² However, a yawning gap separated the dream from reality. At best *singaporizing* Eritrea could only be a "distant dream."⁶³

In practice, the liberators looked to Ethiopia for subsidy. And the Tigrayans in power were willing to subsidize Eritrea's independence (1991-97), allowing it to use the Ethiopian currency *birr*, giving it 2 billion *birr* (~ US \$500 million), thus allowing Eritreans significant access to the Ethiopian economy. But it was only a matter of time before the misplaced utopia of *singaporizing* Eritrea was going to clash with the reality of how far Ethiopia could subsidize Eritrea's independence. With no economy of its own to speak of, but inebriated with nationalism, in 1997 Eritrea issued its own currency, *naqfa*, and demanded its equal conversion with the *birr*. For Ethiopia, this was too much to take and the two parted ways. In 1998, using a border issue as a pretext, Eritrea invaded Ethiopia and in a two-year-long war that claimed 100,000 lives, Ethiopia prevailed. By then, Eritrea had fought with all its neighbors – Yemen, Sudan, Djibouti, and finally its benefactor TPLF/EPRDF's Ethiopia. Thereafter,

Eritrea has had the façade of a stillborn state which scapegoated Tigray for its economic malaise. A political accident, it could not live with Ethiopia, it could not live without Ethiopia.⁶⁴

Like Isaias Afwerki of Eritrea, Abiy Ahmed of Ethiopia has no idea how to lead a country in peacetime. With no political vision whatsoever, he chose to play the anti-Tigrayan ethnic card to earn himself a power base among the chauvinistic Amhara elite who had been dissatisfied with the dismantling of the unitarian system, which previously gave them a monopoly of power. Initially suspicious of Abiy, they have since become his unconditional supporters. Secondly, Abiy's intense desire for authoritarianism could not be fulfilled without subduing the Tigrayans who were the principal architects and the strongest defenders of the constitution.

Thus, crass anti-Tigrayanism led Abiy Ahmed to willfully surrender Ethiopia's sovereignty to Isaias Afwerki, the dictator of the pariah state of Eritrea, commonly known as the African North Korea.⁶⁵ Isaias, during his thirty-year reign, believed that leadership was defined by engaging in war. Unfortunately, under his leadership, Eritrea became known for its massive refugee crisis. Abiy's submission provided the perfect opportunity for the Eritrean autocrat to seek revenge against the TPLF/EPRDF, who defeated him in 2000 and denied him unrestricted access to Ethiopia's economy. In the process, they effectively downsized his wild ambition to make Eritrea the Singapore of Africa. In a shout-out to the return of the unitarian Amhara, he publicly cherished the departure of his Tigrayan nemeses from the political scene as "game over" and vowed to bring about a clean slate (አጽቦ) in Tigray. Politicide, at face value, "clean slate," was going to become a full-blown genocide. Thereafter, the bromance between Abiy and Isaias took off, leading to numerous trips between Asmara and Addis Ababa. Some of their overt and covert chummy meetings included the leaders of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Somalia. They started charting the master plan of annihilating Tigrayans. Whereas US-client UAE and US-NATO ally Turkey supplied and operated sophisticated drones to make sure that Tigrayans did not have any means of defending themselves against the Amhara and Eritrean *genocidaires*, China and Russia made sure that the Tigray genocide was not discussed at the UN Security Council. As such, the international community has been far beyond a mere bystander to the Tigray genocide. Outgunned and outnumbered, virtually against the rest of the world, the Tigrayans have struggled for sheer physical survival and for the basic human right to exercise the Wilsonian self-determination. And, at the end of 2021, as they marched towards Addis Ababa to apprehend the *genocidaires*, the US was "frankly alarmed" and mulled over military intervention from its base in Djibouti to save the genocidal regime of Abiy Ahmed.⁶⁶ The world and its drones turned the tide in favor of the regime which comfortably sits in the saddle of power with no fear of accountability for the genocide it committed.

The Intent

In 1872, the Tigrayans in power prevented Ethiopia from lapsing into fragmentation by introducing *de facto* federalism as a mechanism of state-building. In 1889, they

lost power to the Amhara, the second largest ethnic group in Ethiopia, who had a different vision for Ethiopia. Unlike the Tigrayans, they wanted to transform the empire-state into a nation-state. This unitarian path of the state-building process was halted in 1991 when the TPLF/EPRDF assumed power and introduced ethnic federalism to accommodate diversity, to the dismay of the Amhara unitarians. The ascent of the latter to power in 2018, turned the constitution into a battleground where the constituency of the architects and defenders of the federalist formula, the Tigrayans, have been explicitly targeted for annihilation.

For nearly three years following April 2018, no opportunity was missed to weaken Tigray so that when war broke out in November 2020, the people meekly accepted their fate of annihilation. More than 110,000 Tigrayans were cleansed from the Amhara region in northern Ethiopia and returned to Tigray in 2018. Far from trying to halt their plight, Abiy even denied them any federal assistance to be resettled in their native land. Further, Tigray was denied its share of the international food aid given to Ethiopia in the form of a “safety net.” When there was a locust outbreak in the country, the government planes spread pesticides in Amhara, but refused to spray any pesticides in Tigray, despite the pleas of the people. Worse still, when Tigrayan residents in Israel bought a drone to be used for spraying pesticides in Tigray, the regime refused to allow it to pass, keeping it grounded in Addis Ababa. The government sent face masks to prevent the spread of COVID-19 to all school children in the country except Tigray. The federal budget for the *killil* (US \$ 281 million) for the fiscal year was blocked.

Anti-Tigrayanism culminated when the region was put under siege. Even world class Tigrayan athletes in Addis Ababa had difficulty leaving the country to participate in world competition representing Ethiopia. When they did, they managed to win medals in Valentia, Spain (October 7,2020), and Eugene, Oregon, USA (2022). All the while, they did not know whether their loved ones in Tigray had been killed or were slowly dying from lack of food and medicine.

Moreover, explicit calls for exterminating Tigrayans have been made. The Amhara President, Agegnehu Teshagar, declared:

So long as the enemy [Tigrayans] is not wiped out, we cannot have peace. These people are the enemy of the entire Ethiopian people. These people are the enemy of the Oromo people. These people are the enemy of the Afar. These people are the enemy of Gambella. The enemy of the Somali. Thus, we must take the war we started against these people to its logical conclusion.⁶⁷

An advisor to Abiy, the Orthodox deacon, Daniel Kibret, called the Tigrayans a “tumor” that “must be removed. It is a bad tumor. Unless we do something about it, it will infect our vital organs—liver, lungs, intestine, heart ...”⁶⁸ Continuing his hate speech campaign, he said that not only should the Tigrayans be exterminated but they must also be “erased from memory and from historical records. If people in the future want to study about them, they will have to conduct [archeological] excavation.”⁶⁹

The goals of the *genocidaires* to “wipe out” and “destroy” the Tigrayans were also conveyed to the EU Special Envoy to Ethiopia and Finnish Foreign Minister, Pekka Haavisto, in no uncertain terms.⁷⁰ Avoiding the term genocide, even the US Secretary of State, Tony Blinken, told Congress on March 20, 2021, that ethnic cleansing had taken place in Western Tigray, in an apparent reference to the 1.2 million Tigrayan civilians from the sub-region who are unaccounted for. Needless-to-say, with Samantha Power and Susan Rice as cabinet members, the Biden Administration is too familiar with genocide.⁷¹ In June 2021, in sympathy with the suffering of the Tigrayans, EU High Representative, Josep Borell, said that “To the people of Tigray we say: you are not alone. To Ethiopia and Eritrea: you will be held accountable.” Without taking any badly and immediately needed action, the world is generous with its sympathetic words. According to the UN Humanitarian Chief, Martin Griffiths, what Tigray is going through is a “stain on our conscience.”

The clarity of the “*intent to destroy [Tigrayans] in whole or in part ... as such by killing or imposing conditions inimical to [their] survival*” is unambiguous. To bury ethnic federalism and give the unitarian state craft another lease on life, the Tigrayan architects and defenders of the accommodationist constitution must be either eliminated or substantially downsized. Only then could Tigray no longer be an impediment to the Amhara unitarian vision of building an Ethiopia that reflects their own mirror image – a centralized and homogeneous polity. And yet, regardless of whether Tigray survives or perishes, as the Tigray Government correctly had warned in 2020, taking the genie out of the bottle may have been far easier than putting it back in. Ethnicity is double-edged. In moderation, as in the case of the Tigrayan-led Ethiopia (1991-2018), it can play a positive role in producing a “carefully knit country.” In excess, as in the case of the current Ethiopia, it can play a negative role in disturbing the very ethnic coexistence that was meticulously constructed for nearly three decades and take the country in a downward spiral. Just as the Serbs not only killed the Bosniaks, Kosovars, and Croats, but also Yugoslavia, the Amhara did not just kill Tigrayans but also may have irretrievably killed Ethiopia and Ethiopia-ness. In effect, there is no longer an Ethiopia that stands on its own. It is only held together by the West. However, regardless of the wish and commitment of the West to keep it together as an anchor state of the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia, like Yugoslavia, may end up in the dustbin of history.

Conclusion

The failure of state-building to produce a cohesive pan-Ethiopian identity is the backdrop to the Tigray genocide. Having not been colonized, Ethiopia did not adopt a Lusophone, Francophone, or an Anglophone European identity. Instead, the Amhara elite, who took the helm of power at the end of the 19th century, decided to build the state as a mirror image of their ethnicity. However, their unitarian path of political centralization and cultural homogenization (*amharanization*) failed as the Eritrean and Tigrayan reactive nationalisms effectively challenged it and prevailed in 1991.

Whilst Eritrea broke away, the Tigrayans who took the helm of power resorted to the federal model of state-building to create a stable and orderly Ethiopia in the turbulent Horn of Africa. Their “developmental state” economic doctrine also transformed the country from a posterchild of poverty to an “African miracle.” Yet, the dramatic transformation was not without critics.

First, the US was unhappy with Ethiopia being used by China as a gateway to Africa. Second, Eritrea, which sought free access to the economy of a weak and servile Ethiopia, found the mammoth economy in an orderly society impenetrable. Finally, the Amhara elite, who lost social, cultural, and political hegemony, decried federalism, and allied with Eritrea to found ESAT in Washington, D.C. and launch their master plan of genocide against the Tigrayans which they aired in 2016. To the Amhara, ESAT ended up being what Milles Collins was to the Hutu in 1994, a shaper of the genocidal discourse.

In 2018, preoccupied with closing the gateway to Africa for the Chinese, the US shoved the Tigrayans out and prodded the Amhara into power. Right away, ESAT’s genocidal blueprint was put into action. Besieged by hostile Amhara and Eritrean forces, Tigray was subjected to a severe economic embargo. In November 2020, UAE was sending drones from its base in the Eritrean port of Assab to destroy Tigray’s defense capacity. Economically and militarily emaciated, Tigray became easy prey to the Amhara and Eritrean *genocidaires*. UAE, Turkey, China, Russia, and USA supported the state system in Ethiopia. As such, the Tigrayan existential struggle against the world was destined to be a losing battle. So far, more than a million have perished and as many have been displaced. Every genocide has its unique features. What gives the Tigray genocide its *sui generis* is that the international community has not been a passive bystander. In one form or another, directly or indirectly, it has been an active enabler of the genocide. ☀

The clarity of the “intent to destroy [Tigrayans] in whole or in part ... as such by killing or imposing conditions inimical to [their] survival” is unambiguous.

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- 52 See, for instance, his interview on ESAT, December 14, 2018. He was lavishly praising Abiy as an extraordinarily brilliant person who was sent from God. He commended him on his ability to convey his thoughts effectively in the three languages of Amharic, Oromiiffa, and Tigrigna. And yet, the professor could only speak and understand Amharic, not the other two.
- 53 Reyot.com, January 22, 2021.

- 54 Abbaymedia.com, September 7, 2020.
- 55 L. Kapteijns, *Clan Cleansing in Somalia: the Ruinous Legacy of 1991* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).
- 56 For more chilling misrepresentation of facts and issues in defense of the *genocidaires*, see Bahru Zewde, “The Era of Disinformation: ...” <https://www.ethiopiaobserver.com/2021/11/14/the-age-of-disinformation-what-exactly-is-happening-in-ethiopia/>
- 57 Cited in David Lake and Donald Rothchild, “Containing Fear: the Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict”, *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 1996, p. 43.
- 58 Longrigg, 1945, *op. cit.*, p.138.
- 59 Weber, 1976, *op. cit.*, p. 22.
- 60 K.C. Gandar Dower, “British Administration in Eritrea and Somalia 1941-1943”, 1943, p. 7.FO 371/41519.
- 61 *Ibid*, p. 76.
- 62 See Gebre Hiwet Tesfagiorgis ed. *Emergent Eritrea: Challenges of Economic Development*, Proceedings of a Conference, Asmara, Eritrea. July 22-24, 1991.
- 63 Marina Ottaway, *Africa's New Leaders: Democracy or State Reconstruction?* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999), 1999, p. 58.
- 64 Alemseged Abbay, “‘Not with them, not without them’: the Staggering of Eritrea to Nationhood,” *Africa Vol.*
- 65 On the situation in Eritrea, see, for instance, Gabriel Pogrud, “How the world forgot ‘Africa’s North Korea’ Eritrea ...”, *New Statesman*, September 9, 2016.
- 66 Edward Hung, “US Officials Move to Save Repressive Ethiopian Leader from Rebel Advance,” *The Progressive*, November 18, 2021.
- 67 Aigaforum.com July 25, 2021.
- 68 Omega TV. July 25, 2021.
- 69 Tigray Media House, September 21, 2021.
- 70 ABC News, June 18, 2021.
- 71 Samantha Power, formerly Harvard academic, is an authority in genocide and Susan Rice was in the Africa Desk in Bill Clinton’s State Department when the Rwanda Genocide took place.