

The Imperial Regimes as a Root of Current Ethnic Based Conflicts in Ethiopia

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Abstract: Current ethnic conflict in Ethiopia is not a simple byproduct of Multinational federalism and politicization of ethnicity since 1991. Regardless of the contradictions and debates over the core causes of ethnic conflict in Ethiopia, it is impossible to fully comprehend it without a thorough and honest examination of the pre-1991 country's history in terms of ethnicity and ethnic conflict. The article analyzed the historical root causes of ethnic conflict in Ethiopia by taking Minilik's II and HaileSelassie's I regimes into account. Hence, a Dialectical approach and historical method were employed to conduct a critical investigation of the core causes of ethnic conflict. The article found that the country's current ethnic politics and ethnic warfare sowed during the imperial regime. Minilik II and his successor conquered, confiscated, subjugated, enslaved, and dehumanized the southern nations, nationalities, and people in the consecration of Ethiopia's current territory. During imperial administrations, Ethiopia was seen as a prison-house of people. Ethnic identity has been taboo during the imperial regimes of Ethiopia. The article also found that the imperial regimes of Ethiopia were the precursor to both immediate and potential ethnic-based detestation, animosity, and violence that resulted in the country's lengthy and deadly civil wars. Based on a dialectical method, this article discovered that the process of Ethiopian state creation resulted in sustainable and predictable cyclical rotation of contradiction and contestation between thesis and antithesis, without creating strong syntheses. Moreover, the misappropriation of concepts of nationalism and nation-building has been common in the country's political history.

Keywords: ethnic conflict, Ethiopia, imperial regimes, ethnicity, dialectical method, vicious circle of conflict.

Ethnic politics and ethnic conflict have not been a simple byproduct of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia since 1991. This type of politics and conflict was a buried time bomb by the imperial regimes. The Derg regime uncovered this concern though failed to solve it. Later the bomb exploded with the advent of identity politics. Moreover, post-1990s identity politics resulted in increasing the political consciousness of numerous ethnic groups. Such political consciousness resulted in increasing quests for ethnic identity: this is why the time bomb exploded in Ethiopia in 1991. Hence, it is not just white and black or on and off like a bolt of light. But it is a very long dynamic process that causes continuous and sustainable contradiction, contestation, and ethnic conflict in Ethiopia.

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This article deals with the historical review of the country in identifying how imperial regimes contributed to the emergence and escalation of ethnic conflict in the country. Therefore, the rest of the article is organized as a brief account of ethnic conflict which provides a brief review of meanings and trends of ethnic conflict both in general and Ethiopian context, foundations and applicability of the dialectical approach in Ethiopian ethnic conflicts which present factors of contestation and application of dialectical triad in an analysis of ethnic contestation and conflict, a brief presentation of methodology, imperial regimes as an antecedent of ethnic conflict in Ethiopia which present the reason for selection of imperial regimes (Minilik II and Hailesilassea I), and contestation on the state formation projection: the contradiction between Pan-Ethiopianism and Pan-ethnic nationalism. The two extremes are the ideological base of the pre-1990s and post-1990s political history of Ethiopia respectively. Government decisions and policies are guided based on these two ideologies in which one is the thesis and the other is anti-thesis throughout the history of the country. Moreover, specific events that leads to sustainable ethnic conflict, list of summary of major findings and future research implication is also presented in the article.

The disagreements between the two nationalisms are the main (perhaps the dominant) source of ethnic conflict in history and contemporary politics of the country. The questions of how Ethiopia was created, who created it, and how it should be governed are the core question that has never been genuinely addressed. Hence, such contestation needs to be seen from a dialectical point of view. Numerous writers in Ethiopian politics such as Zerai (2017), Nardos (2018), Green (2018), Berhe and Gebresilassie (2020), Jalata (2020), and Yates (2020) attempted to show the contestation between the two forces (pan-Ethiopian and pan-ethnic nationalism). The contribution of political writing in Ethiopia provides no strong input for the dialectical analysis of the root causes for the sustained ethnic conflict in Ethiopia. Hence, this article attempted to synthesize the root causes of ethnic conflict in Ethiopia based on the dialectical method.

A Brief Concept of Ethnic Conflict: Meanings and Trend

Ethnicity and ethnic conflicts are highly contested and controversial concepts. Both are approached by practitioners and scholars in numerous conflicting ways. Numerous competing theories that have been developed indicated different connotations of ethnicity and ethnic conflicts (Tellis, Szayna and Winnefeld, 2000; Varshney, 2007). Different new insights have been developed in the definition of ethnicity and its linkage to conflict from time to time. Hence, ethnicity and ethnic conflict are contesting and evolving concepts. This resulted in the emergence of different competing theories of ethnicity and ethnic conflicts.

Some scholars generalize these competing approaches to ethnicity and ethnic conflict as Primordialism, instrumentalism, institutionalism, and constructivism approaches. According to the primordial approach, ethnicity is given at birth, stable throughout time and ethnic conflict arises because of ethnic and emotional differences rooted in an ancient hatred. Instrumentalism asserts that ethnicity is not naturally given but an instrument for political and economic gain or benefit and ethnic conflict arises as a result of the politicization of ethnicity, unequal distribution of resources, and manipulation of ethnicity for economic and political purposes. For constructivism, ethnicity is the product of modernization and ethnic conflict arises as a result of the insertion of events and rumors into a master narrative by master cleavage and political entrepreneurs. Under institutionalism, the concern is how the nature of political institutions precipitates or resolves ethnic violence particularly in a multiethnic society, and repressive and bad political institutions exacerbate ethnic conflict (Celik, n.d.; Basedau, 2011; Easterly, 2000;

Tellis, Szayna and Winnefeld, 2000; Varshney, 2007; Yeshiwas, 2018). Despite the prevalence of the elements of the four approaches to ethnic conflict in Ethiopia, the pre-1990s Ethiopian conflict in general and of the imperial regime's, in particular, can be explained by the contradiction between the primordial view and constructivist view of national identity (nationality question). For instance, the aim of the imperial regimes was the construction of identity (nation-building) by forging the multi-national character of the country under the united northern culture.

These competing theories of ethnicity and ethnic conflicts emanate from differing definitions and explanations that numerous scholars attach to the concept based on different specific empirical evidence. Each of the theories has its connotation and explanation of ethnicity and ethnic conflict and could be applied for specific cases in ethnicity and ethnic conflict studies. For this article, ethnic conflict, if not as such unique from the definition of others, is defined as a violent and non-violent conflict that arises when at least one ethnic group is in contradiction/conflict with other ethnic groups or/and with other institutions (government, laws, rules, policies, etc) as long as the first group at least perceive that its interest, goals, and culture is in collusion with and is adversely affected by others. According to this definition, the institutions may not be linked with ethnicity or have no ethnic character but might adversely affect the interest of certain ethnic group/s while at least perceived to be neutral to and in favor of other ethnic group/s. Government policies, for instance, might be considered as repressive policies for one or more ethnic groups in a given situation that precipitates ethnic hatred and conflict. Lastly, this definition best explains the nature of historical and contemporary ethnic conflict in Ethiopia.

Studies in ethnic conflict and ethnicity indicate that the trends of ethnic conflict are increasing from time to time particularly since WWII and the end of the Cold war. Moodie (2009) for instance clearly stated that the "end of the Cold War invited disorder and conflict" (p. 20). Ethnic conflict has become a dominant form of political violence worldwide and it has great challenges in international peace-building and security particularly since WWII (Che, 2016; Esteban, Mayoral and Ray, 2012; Horowitz, 1998; Kanbur, Rajaram and Varshney, 2011). Particularly in ethnically diverse countries- including developed and developing, democratic and authoritarian- an ethnic conflict most of the time is inevitable and typically expected particularly when the freedom of expression and political right is suppressed (Varshney, 2007). Ethnic conflict is also pervasive as majorities of worldwide civil wars take place in the line of ethnicity (Esteban, Mayoral and Ray, 2012). Caselli and Coleman (2013) also explain the pervasiveness of ethnic conflict by considering the frequency of news on discrimination, exploitation, and conflict that arises out of ethnicity. Easterly (2000) states that;

Ethnic conflict is a tragic constant of human history. Ethnic conflict is still very much in the news today, from the Balkans to Central Africa to Indonesia to Nigeria. Ethnic conflict has a peaceful political dimension as well as the more publicized violent dimension (p. 3).

The fluidity and contradiction on the concepts of ethnicity and ethnic conflicts are also evidenced both in political history and current Ethiopian political discourses. Particularly considering the historical roots of ethnic conflicts in line with state formation and consolidation of the country, the contestations are still unresolved and remained a critical political problem. Numerous scholarly contributions indicated that since the inception of so-called modern Ethiopia under Minilik the 2nd, the question of ethnicity and diversity was denied and suppressed until the 1990s (Zerai, 2017). During Minilik II and Haile Selassie I attempts was made to impose a unified northern culture upon the indigenous population of the central, southern, southeastern,

and southwestern nation, nationalities, and people. Multi-national notions of the country were attempted to be replaced by the notion of one nation, one culture, and one religion during the imperial governments of the country. The imperial notion of national identity was projected to be installed through the strategy of cultural and religious homogenization (Adamu, 2013; Belay, 2016; Berhe & Gebresilassie, 2020; Bulcha, 2005; Fentaw, 2011; Green, 2018; Keller, 2005; Keller & Omwami, 2007; Lubo, 2012; Markakis, 2011; Markakis & Ayele, 1986; Gudina, 2011; Van Der Beken, 2007).

At the same time, there are considerable scholarly contributions and elite narrations regarding the process of state formation in Ethiopia which claims a thousand years of mutual cultural assimilation rather than through conquest at the end of the 19th century. It is argued that the process of creating Ethiopia is a natural process of state unification and reunification. The argument is that the pre-1991 conflict in Ethiopia is best explained by socio-economic marginalization than in terms of ethnicity. Others also interpret the conflict during imperial regimes as central-peripheries and class struggle until 1974 – that means none of them was ethnic conflict. Moreover, according to these groups, there were no ethnic categorizations of the community until the 1990s (Mengie, 2015; Nardos, 2018; Taye, 2017; Tronvol, 2000; Záhorský, 2014). Paradoxically, however, some of the individuals in this group claim the restoration of the dominance of single culture which was the ethnic core during the imperial regimes (Amhara Midea Corporation, 2019; Good Evening Ghana, 2021; Green, 2018; Mizan TV Center, 2021).

But the reality of the country is not as straightforward as it is merely concluded. The ethnic-based contestation, contradiction, and conflict in contemporary Ethiopia emanated from its history and aggravated partly through contested political discourses, imbalanced government policy responses, and unfulfilled promises of successive governments. Hence, such contests need to be seen from a dialectical point of view which is the major aim of this paper. Dialectical perspective enables us to critically analyze data and facts in its contradictory aspects to find and reach truth (Brincat, 2014; Merriam-Webster, n.d.; Nathanael, Zarboutis and Marmaras, 2015; Seligman, 2013; Wogu, 2013). Thus, it is believed that analysis of the historical root causes of ethnic conflict and its implication of current conflicting discourses in Ethiopia from a dialectical approach provides new views and insight to the literature on ethnicity and ethnic conflict in the country.

In this respect, a historical analysis should be aimed not only at appraising and/or condemning historical events but also to ultimately learn from history to make a better life for the existing and future generations of the country. To do so, a sticking balance is needed in criticizing and appraising historical events. This article aims to present contending perspectives of the history of Ethiopia based on secondary sources of data and attempt to take a sticking balance between the contending historical perspectives of the country by critically reviewing the historical root of ethnic conflict. Generally, there are two major (perhaps the extremes) contending views regarding state formation of Ethiopia in general, and citizenship, ethnicity, and ethnic conflict in particular.

Therefore, a careful and wise analysis of such history helps search for a viable mechanism in minimizing actual and potential ethnic conflict. This article aims to articulate the contending political notions in a balanced manner as much as possible. It also aimed at discussing how the attempts that monarchical regimes made in the state formation and consolidation process led to current ethnic detestation, mistrust, and ethnic conflict which have been proliferated by the quest for ethnic identity and an attempt to repress such quest for identity. To some extent, the paper attempted to provide some light on the implication of the regimes on the current political discourse of the country.

To be concrete, this article emphasizes the two major imperial regimes (Minilik's II and Hailesilase's I) and the analysis of conflict instigation factors that were sowed during these regimes. It tries to elucidate the economic, social, and political aspects of the regimes which later brought ethnic-based detestation, hatred, and conflict. In doing this, it is necessary to highlight the approaches of the regimes regarding Ethnicity. How do regimes utilize the term ethnicity in their administrative operations? This is particularly relevant for the contemporary analysis of ethnicity and conflict in Ethiopia as the majority of conflict has a historical root (Gudina, 2011), and while some are aggravated throughout the political history of the country.

Foundation of Dialectical Approach in Ethiopian Ethnic Conflict

Ethnicity and ethnic conflict are at the stage of political discourse in Ethiopia. Currently, in the country, it is common to hear pejorative connotations and expressions of the term ethnic identity, ethnic politics, and ethnic conflict. Such derogation was planted, deepened its root, and aggravated in its intensity throughout the history of the country. This is why individual activists, politicians, groups, and writers in politics, history, anthropology, administration and law, and the community at large believe that the contemporary ethnic-based detestation, mistrust, and conflict of Ethiopia has a historical root in its majority. The saved memory of historical contestation resulted in contemporary ethnic conflict (Abbink, 2006; Adamu, 2013; Halabo, 2019; Loukeris, 2001; Gudina, 2011).

Therefore, one could not easily understand and take appropriate measures to alleviate such a conflict and the potentiality of its aggravation without clearly and honestly conceiving such historical roots. Hence, to understand the contemporary politics of Ethiopia and its development as a multi-ethnic state, it is important to conceptualize it from a historical context (Gudina, 2011) because a complete view of diversity issues and problems in Ethiopia rooted in its social and political history and need to be seen from a historical perspective (Adamu, 2013; Halabo, 2019; Loukeris, 2001). This is because "Political, communal and ethnic tensions are rampant as Ethiopia struggles to develop a post-imperial society that has to deal with diversity, deep-seated political conflict, and entrenched inequality inherited from the past" (Abbink, 2006, p. 389). Therefore, critical analysis of such history from a dialectical point of view might provide valuable input to the literature of current ethnic conflict studies of the country. Because different scholars in applying historical methods put that the current problem could only be understood based on history. History is important to understand today and designing the future (Berg, 2001 as cited in Jovita, 2015; Wyche, Sengers and Grinter, 2006).

Elitist construction of the ideas and generalization of Ethiopian history, politics, ethnicity and identity, and conflict is currently a major political discourse of the country. The elites (scholars and politicians) of urban parts of the country attempted to create and impose their political interest upon the rest of the population. Without having any legal mandates to represent the population, some urban and professional elites utilize the identity of the rest of the rural populations as their identity. These elites might not represent any nation, nationalities, and people of the country, but they are either part of or define their identity by linking themselves to specific ethnic groups (Amhara Medea Corporation, 2019; Berhe & Gebresilassie, 2020; Good Evening Ghana, 2021; Horst, 2020; Mizan TV Center, 2021). But this does not mean that the elites are helpless in influencing the country's politics in general and ethnic-based relationships as they have numerous supporters and followers both in the country and abroad. In this respect, Loukeris (2001, n.p.) put that;

All political ideologies currently promoted in Ethiopia share the commonality of political exclusion which is based on particular characteristics that force other Ethiopian citizens to either accept them, thus denying their ideological orientation or feel excluded from its political system. These processes create grievances and breed conflict.

One of such identity problems is the assimilated urban identity which was created through the ethnic melting pot (Pausewang, 2005) which is primarily resulted from the imperial regimes through its language and religious instruments. Pausewang (2005) further, stated that "The urban, educated, ethnically mixed Amharas understand themselves to be the progressive elites, the people destined to be the leaders in Ethiopia" (p. 274). In connection with this, the groups refer to ethnic federalism as a source of ethnic conflict and consider post-1991 politics as a major/the only contributor to the current ethnic-based contestation and conflict (Agegnehu & Dibu, 2016). Numerous scholarly contributions are stating that ethnic federalism and ethnic mobilization are responsible for the politicization of ethnicity and exacerbation of ethnic conflict and hatred (Loukeris, 2001; Gudina, 2011; Nardos, 2018; Tronvol, 2000). But at the same time, other scholars conclude that politicization of ethnicity was started during the imperial expansion southward through the conquest of numbers of nations, nationalities, and people (Horst, 2020; Vaughan & Tronvoll, 2003).

Generally, there are two major contending views regarding state formation of Ethiopia as a general, and citizenship, ethnicity, and ethnic conflict in particular. The contestation and contradiction are emanated from different sources which are based on, but not limited to the following factors (Alemayehu, 2004; Berhe & Gebresilassie, 2020; Birhane, 2017; Fiseha, 2007; Gebissa, 2014; Lavers, 2018; Meckelburg, 2016; Mengisteab, 2007; Gudina, 2011; Van Der Beken, 2007).

1. State formation projection and process: the contradiction between coercive and voluntary state formation. (extremely the contradiction b/n colonization thesis and expansion/reunification thesis whose argument is based on ethnic identification)
2. Questions of identities and government responses: historical failure to establish genuine citizenship which resulted in the current contradiction between Pan-Ethiopian nationalism and Pan-ethnic nationalism.
3. Quests for Self-determination and self-administration: the contradiction between the quest for ethnic-based self-administration and self-identification, and the responses to such quests by diverse actors.
4. Distributions and Ownership of resource: the contradiction between different groups on ownership of resources particularly land resources (ethnic-based claim of ownership).
5. Political Representation and Participation: the question of non-endogenous communities to take active political participation in every locality regardless of their ethnic origin.
6. Political polarization: the contradiction between political actors based on the political position they have which later diverted into ethnic-based detestation and conflict.

In Ethiopia, such contests and their origin is rooted in the process of state formation and consolidated throughout its history. It was particularly germinated during the regime of Minilik the II and has intensified since then. Moreover, these contradiction constitute an ethnic/identity dimension which makes the politics of the country easily volatile.

Currently, it is possible to say that such historical and political contradictions is the slogan of diverse individuals, politicians, common people, and journalists on both public and social media. But one failed to predict, either intentionally or unintentionally, where the contest would lead the country: Integration or disintegration of the country? Thus, this paper applied a dialectical approach to critically analyze these contestations.

Moreover, uneven government responses to such contests are full of doubt and mistrust among the contestants from different points of view. This has been evidenced in the political history of the country since imperial regimes and intensified since the 1960s. Successive governments since the inception of the country have been sandwiched between the two extreme poles of contestation which failed to entertain the contestation in a balanced way and the country lost so many alternatives to build a multi-national democratic state based on national consensus (Gudina, 2011). Moreover, the government responses lack consistency and are highly fragmented. Such highly fragmented government responses resulted in a bitter and vicious circle of ethnic conflicts (later changed to civil war) which further resulted in widespread poverty, political repression, imprisonment, migration, extreme famine, death, and large numbers of refugees, which became common in the 21st century. For instance, De Waal (1991) clearly stated that "the repeated famines that have struck Ethiopia, and in particular the great famine of 1983-1985, were in large part created by government policies, especially counter-insurgency strategies" (p. 2).

Responses to and mechanisms of managing ethnic conflict (particularly ethnic-based resistance to government) at a given time have greater impacts in either resolving or precipitating the conflict. More negative responses to ethnic conflict or at least ethnic-based claims or questions resulted in its exacerbation rather than resolving it. De Waal's writing on war and famine in Ethiopia, stated that the way the government responds to the insurgency has led to a wide range of abuse of human rights and widespread famine (De Waal, 1991). This in turn resulted in all-inclusive economic, political and cultural marginalization as well as a poverty trap. Thus, ethnic conflict could be seen as an "impediment to development and such conclusion is still appealing viewing the reduction of living standard and extreme poverty and famine in African countries such as Eritrean, Sudan, and Ethiopia and such conflict need a nuanced analysis and discussion" (Venkatasawmy, 2015, p. 26).

Application of Dialectical Approach in Ethiopian Ethnic Conflicts

As part of the qualitative research method, a dialectical approach was used in this paper. Most of the time dialectical inquiry (DI) is missed from much qualitative research as it is difficult to create theory from the case-based research and show the value of dialectical inquiry in the sense-making process as they emerged in the real-world phenomenon. Given the challenge, dialectical inquiry constitutes so many strengths that need to be applied in qualitative research as it enables the researcher to grasp the detail inside of the phenomenon under investigation (Seligman, 2013). Hence, in this article, a dialectical approach was applied.

The history of Ethiopia is characterized by the dialectical process in which at least two contending views are contradicting one another throughout its history and process of its formation. The two major contending views are based on the question of national identities between Pan-Ethiopian and Pan-ethnic identities/nationalism. Therefore, it can be best explained through a dialectical approach. This is because the dialectical approach is not only concerned with the unity of opposites and contradiction, interaction and relationalism but also concerned with fixing both sides of contradiction (negative and positive) to move through the stages of

thought and thus move beyond being and appearance to the actual (Brincat, 2014). Therefore, it is believed that it is important to consider the two facets of the quest for identities in Ethiopia based on a dialectical approach to provide insight into the contradiction of the quest for identities and reach viable conclusions on the current real and potential political volatility.

As a method of investigation, dialectics implies the analysis of objective reality through its contradictory aspects (Moretti, Martins and de Souza, 2016) because "as thesis and its antithesis can be developed to explain any set of facts and data and this is a strong epistemological assumption that forms conflicting models that can emerge from facts and data and models have valid claims to the truth" (Berniker & McNabb, 2006, p. 645).

This is why this article depends on a dialectical approach in critically analyzing facts and data contributed by various factors and sets of contradictions on Ethiopian ethnic-based conflict. Moreover, the application of a dialectical approach is particularly important because it is not advisable to use either conflict or consensus in Ethiopian history of state formation, ethnicity, identities, and conflict. Most of the time, writers in Ethiopian politics and history of ethnicity, ethnic conflict, and identities overemphasize or underrepresent either aspect of the contradiction without developing alternative models of explaining such issues (Brietzke, 1979). Hence, it is justifiable to use a dialectical approach as a model to clearly explain the contradiction in Ethiopia. In this article, Hegelian's dialectical triad that constitutes theses, antithesis, and synthesis was used.

These dialectical triad are applied by Levine (1974) in Greater Ethiopia. But his application of the triad is narrow and controversial. As Cited in Adegehe (2009) "Levine (1974), for example, 'claimed that 'Greater Ethiopia' emerged as a multi-ethnic society because of what he called the 'Amhara thesis,' the 'Oromo anti-thesis and the 'Ethiopian synthesis'" (p. 14). Levine's proposition, however, remains controversial. Not only controversial, but it is also too narrow to show the realities of the ethnic relations in Ethiopia by only referring to Oromo and Amhara in light of Ethiopian formation. Moreover, his application of the dialectical triad failed to indicate the dialectical rotation in modern Ethiopia. Additionally, the application of Levine failed to recognize the roles of brilliant Oromo warriors and leaders (Gudina, 2011) in creating what he called 'the greater Ethiopia'.

Other important sources in the study of political contestation and contradiction in Ethiopia are the three perspectives that Gudina (2011) identified as "Nation-Building Perspective, National Operation Perspective, and Colonial Thesis Perspective" (p. 42-58). These perspectives are raised to serve the interest of elites in interpreting the process of state formation in Ethiopia. Given the three perspectives, the author identifies the two poles of the contradiction considering the state formation and historical process of the country. The two poles constitute (re)unification and expansion on one hand and colonization on the other. But, the author does not make the distinction between which perspective is a thesis, which is anti-thesis, and which is synthesis. More importantly, the contribution of the author fails to indicate the cyclical rotation of the dialectical process (particularly thesis and antithesis) of the historical development of the country.

Therefore, in this Article, this dialectical triad was employed to indicate the historical contradictions that are unbreakably linked to the current ethnic-based detestation in light of the quests for identity in Ethiopian history (pan-Ethiopians with that of pan-ethnic nationalism). "Hegel's dialectics aims to explain the development of human history and that it passed through various moments, including the moment of error, error, and negativity are part of the development of truth" (Wogu, 2013, p. 19). That means a dialectical approach engaged in intellectual inquiry in which the contradiction and opposition are investigated to reach the truth. For instance in Merriam-Webster (n.d.), dialectic is defined as any systematic reasoning,

exposition, or argument that juxtaposes opposed or contradictory ideas and usually seeks to resolve their conflict: a method of examining and discussing opposing ideas to find the truth.

The dialectical method is particularly important in this article because it not only deals with the tension of the contradiction but also with the totality of the contradiction. In the Dialectical method, "contradiction is defined as a set of opposing tendencies inherently existing within one realm, one unified force or object; in other words, a contradiction is identified whenever two tendencies are interdependent –inherently united– yet mutually negating or undermining one another" (Nathanael, Zarboutis and Marmaras, 2015, p. 224). As a country, at least for now, Ethiopia is a unified realm but there are two extreme contradicting and conflicting tendencies emanating from identity and nationality questions in its existence as an entity throughout its history. Therefore, such contradicting tendencies could be best explained, analyzed, and interpreted in terms of a dialectical approach. Because, as a method of reasoning, a dialectical approach is concerned with the change and evolvement of things (history for instance) in its entirety by fully emphasizing both sides of contradiction: their unity and interaction. Thus, the dialectical approach is considered as an appropriate method of analyzing the historical root of ethnic conflict in Ethiopia.

Therefore, it is believed that the root of ethnic conflict in Ethiopia is important and best explained, analyzed, and interpreted in terms of a dialectical approach to provide new insight into the ethnicity and ethnic conflicts of the country.

Methodology

This article emphasizes on the historical root of ethnic conflict in Ethiopia. It is aimed at critical analysis and interpretation of historical data and reaching a viable generalization regarding the roots of ethnic-based conflicts in the political history of the country. Hence, the article applied a qualitative research approach, and descriptive and explanatory research design. The article presented and critically analyzed appropriate secondary data.

In the article, secondary sources of data were used. Accordingly, all the necessary data was collected from all relevant published and unpublished sources through document review. Secondary sources regarding ethnicity and ethnic conflict and Ethiopian History were collected from books, articles, conference papers, institutional reports, working papers, historical records, letters, eyewitness notes, different media, and reports made by different organizations and sorted out based on the themes it represents. These materials were purposefully selected and the issues raised in the material used were selectively picked and utilized to achieve the aim of the article. Hence, in this article, unit of analysis is more of ideas regarding the root causes of ethnic conflict in Ethiopia as discussed in the secondary sources of data. The article adhered to data saturation criteria to collect and check the sufficiency of the data for the successful completion of the article.

In this article, both dialectical and historical methods were used in analyzing and interpreting the collected data. First, the collected data were categorized depending on the thematic areas it represents based on their similarity. Then under each theme, the collected data was presented, organized, and critically interpreted based on dialectical and historical methods of data analysis. This is because the historical method of analysis is not limited to past events but it is also concerned with interpreting historical data to indicate or provide implications on how history shapes the present and helps to design the future (Berg, 2001 cited in Jovita, 2015; Bhatt & Bhatt, 1994). In addition, narrative analysis is used to analyze how the history of ethnicity and ethnic conflict in Ethiopia is differently narrated (Priest, Roberts and Woods, 2002), describe and interpret the results based on a dialectical point of view.

The Imperial Regimes

In this part, different contesting and contracting notions regarding the imperial regime are presented. It Presents the state-building thesis and premises of the imperial regimes built on the legend of Solomonic myth in manipulating the community, which is often seen as the subject of the king. The reason for selecting the two imperial regimes, the discourse of Amharan domination emanated from the politics, policy, and ideology of the imperial regimes on ethnicity, and the role of the church in the process of validating the legend of Solomonic myth was presented in detail as follows.

Why Imperial Regimes

In writing this part, the chronological order of historical events may not be considered. But the imperial regimes are covered based on the issues raised in the analysis of data. Furthermore, the paper emphasizes the conflict-generating factors of the imperial regimes. The two well-known and widely covered in scholarly writing are the imperial regimes of Ethiopia (Minilik II and Hailesillassie) are the central focus of this part. The reasons for selecting these two regimes are that the regimes are at least considered as a creator and consolidators of the current territory of the country. Despite the failed efforts of previous leaders of Abyssinian (Tewodros II and Yohannes IV for instance), the current multinational (Multi-ethnic) character of the country was created and consolidated during these two regimes (Zewde, 1991). Moreover, the majority of the current problem of ethnic identity, ethnic politics, and ethnic conflict was germinated during the imperial regimes. In this regard, Van der Beken (2007) stated that;

The territorial expansion at the end of the 19th century was an extremely important phase in Ethiopian history since there the germ was laid for the ethnic tensions and the rhetoric about Amhara dominance which would strongly come to the fore at the end of the imperial regime (p. 21).

Moreover, according to Keller (2005), the ethno-regional conflict that still plagued the county sowed its seed during the imperial regimes. Such ethno-regional conflict is still devastating the country with the cyclical rotation of conflicting factors and actors. Therefore, it is reasonable to emphasize the two regimes of the imperial government to analyze the root of ethnic-based detestation, hatred, and conflict in Ethiopia, and its implication for the current ethnic conflict of the country.

Until Minilik II, the country was divided into self-contained parts (some scholars consider them as countries) each had its rulers (kings) some ruled by relatively single ethnic groups (Kafa, Wolayta for instance), other by leaders of clans within an ethnic descendant (Oromo for instance) (Gudina, 2011). The general natures of the two regimes in terms of ethnicity and ethnic conflict and specific events that brought actual and potential conflict triggering conditions are presented by reviewing different scholarly works. In doing this, an attempt is made to take a striking balance between contending views regarding the issues under consideration. In short, attempts have been made to elucidate how the regimes laid down the bases for the contemporary ethnic political discourses and ethnic conflict in Ethiopia.

Antecedents of Ethnic Mistrust, Detestation, and Conflict

During imperial regimes, the ideology is highly dominated by the thesis of building a "nation-state" which is almost similar to the European colonial model. Such a nation-state building approach is known as the top-down approach to nation-state formation. This nation-state building from above is commonly known and was more successful in some European countries such as France. But this model is less successful for newly emerged and developing countries. It adversely resulted in widespread social, political, and economic problems. The approach was used as a strategy of oppression and suppression of ethnic identity which later turned into a bitter civil war particularly in Africa (Gebru, 2009). Van Der Beken (2007) in this regard put that;

Just like the leaders of the postcolonial African states, the Ethiopian power holders, for the largest part of the twentieth century, strived for the creation of one nation within the state, not by the recognition of its national or ethnic diversity, but by the forswearing of and the attempt to erase that diversity. The imperial government argued that this nation-building strategy offered the best guarantee for the stability and sustainability of the state (p. 106).

But in reality, it has failed and is still failing in creating stability of the state as per the claim of the regimes. This nation-state building thesis was dominated by the northern and central powers of the country. The central powers consider themselves as a ruling dynasty descending from the Solomonic line (Adamu, 2013; Mulugeta, 2005; Van Der Beken, 2007). "Until the 20th century, the Ethiopian monarchy appealed to a mythical descent, the so-called Solomonic tradition" (Van Der Beken, 2007, p. 15). While such reference to mythical descent lacks historical, archeological, and scientific evidence, they insisted on and formalized it and at the same time, linked themselves to specific ethnic groups. In reality, they had never represented a specific ethnic group while marginalized dozens of national/ethnic identities. This resulted in the imposition and domination of the northern culture over the others and for a long-lasting subjugation of community by the so-called Solomonic dynasty.

Multi-ethnicity during the regimes was ignored while single ethnic groups were used as coverage by the ruling elite in collaboration with religious institutions which controlled the political stage of the time. The inclination of the then politicians to religious leaders and Amhara ethnic groups resulted in the general perception and conclusion that all Amhara was an assimilationist ethnic group. The imperial projection of Amharization and Christianization of other ethnic groups of the country was its major strategies that aim to create a nation-state. In this view, the imperial regimes generally suppressed ethnic groups with other languages, cultures, and religious foundations. Not only was it ignored, but also resulted in extreme and all-inclusive subjugation of non-Amhara ethnic groups (Van Der Beken, 2007). The religious leaders and elites believed that being a selected ethnic group and religious group is a precondition to be a true Ethiopian and to be a ruler (to take part in political affairs of the country).

The church has also validated such a precondition because "the Solomonic legend finds its spiritual justification in the Ethiopian *Orthodox Church*" (Lenco, 2004; Mulugeta, 2005, p. 76). The ideology and the administrative operations under the imperial/monarchical regimes were based on the pseudo superiority of one ethnic group over another that was used as an instrument for cultural suppression. "The Solomonic myth, for instance, purportedly established the ruling line of Ethiopia into a blood relationship with the House of David and ultimately with Christ"

(Mulugeta, 2005, p. 76). Such a conclusion was also backed by several scholars including (Adamu, 2013; Leenco, 2004; Van Der Beken, 2007).

Therefore, a widespread subjugation, as well as extreme control of other ethnic groups through local leaders who are assigned by the rulers and/or by assigning warlord (Balabat or Aba Lafa) from the center at a different administrative level was evidenced during the regimes (Markakis, 2011; Markakis & Ayele, 1986; Gudina, 2011). Because of the confiscation of land by the crown to reward the soldiers, officials, and notables (particularly of Amharan and Shoan elites) and appropriation of a varying portion of the land for the original owner (conquered chief and people), the conquered people became tenants. Moreover, this resulted in the widespread/extreme subjugation of the tenant (Berhe & Gebresilassie, 2020; Markakis, 2011; Markakis & Ayele, 1986; Fentaw, 2011). Bekele (2015, p. 172) added that "a considerable proportion of arable land of conquered communities was confiscated and given to the Ethiopian soldiers and their commanders. Some of the peasants were turned into serfs and tenants of the conquerors. The obligations were onerous. All this had of course an ethnic dimension". In this respect, the regimes were culturally impositionist/assimilationist, and politically and economically exclusionist. For example, Keller (2005) stipulated that "under Minilik II no attempt was made to integrate the subject people effectively to the expanded political system except to impose forcefully the culture of the northern highlanders (the Amhara and Tigreans)" (p. 92) and Clapham (2009) precisely put that under Haile Selassie I the targets was "the suppression of any attempt to develop an alternative source of identity, such as Somali, Eritrean or indeed Oromo" (p. 15).

The myth of Amhara cultural hegemony (as created by the regimes) was also indicated by the administration of social, political, and economic activities of the imperial regimes. The administrative functioning of the regimes was conducted in the Amharic language and to be a government official, knowing the Amharic language was a mandatory criterion. For instance, "the Oromo and Gurage soldiers in the Emperor's army spoke Amharic and professed Orthodox Christianity, the key cultural label of being an Amhara. These traits made them "Amhara" in the eyes of the local population" (Berhe & Gebresilassie, 2020, p. 98). An integration attempt of Haile Selassie ensured that the provision of education and other government services were provided only in Amharic (Clapham, 2009). Regarding this, (Belay, 2016, p. 20) stated that,

Many critics have argued that the Amharic language has been assimilationist and dominated other languages in the country for a very long time. In addition, it has favored its native speakers from the northern and central parts of the country and provided them with access to social, political, and economic opportunities. People who did not have the linguistic capital encountered difficulties in accessing employment opportunities in government sectors.

In reality, this resulted in the diffusion of the language throughout the country. This invariably created sense of hatred toward the Amhara ethnic group by others. These being the perception among the elites of oppressed and exploited ethnic groups, but in reality majority of the Amharan community were overexploited in one way or another. Vaughan and Tronvoll (2003, p. 82) indicated that,

The distribution of power in the imperial government was based on an ethnic calculus that gave a near monopoly to the Amhara, or Amharicised, ruling class. The class dimension needs to be emphasized,

because the Amhara peasantry belonged to the dominant group in cultural and psychological terms only, having no share of power or economic privilege.

The reality is that the Amhara ethnic group (particularly peasant Amhara) faced more economic exploitation, at least less in terms of socio-political aspects because they were not expected and/or forced to change their culture, language, and religion (Markakis, 2011; Markakis & Ayele, 1986; Gudina, 2011). For example, the "*modernization*²" attempt and process during the reign of Haile Selassie were inclined toward the Abyssinian elite (the elite of Amhara and Tigray). These ethnic groups were selectively given a chance of education (Keller, 2005). This indicates that the two ethnic groups were slightly subjugated socially and politically by the imperial regime as their ethnic identity was a cover for the regime. Regarding this, (Fentaw, 2011, p. 7) clearly stated that;

To bring about national integration, emperors Menelik and Haile Selassie embarked upon cultural and religious homogenization by way of Amharization and Orthodox Christianization. First, Menelik's conquest of the southern areas resulted in the suppression of local customary law by Abyssinian (Amhara-Tigre) traditional laws and practices. The southern conquest had the same effects on the indigenous laws as colonialism in most third-world countries.

Still, some other writers indicate differently that the social structure of Abyssinian was characterized by social inequality. For example, (Markakis, 2011) cited³ in (Van Veen, 2016), stated that "the societies of Tigrayan/Amharan polities were stratified and hierarchical, featuring both social inequality and opportunities for social mobility through successful military performance" (p. 13). Therefore, it is unfair, unethical, and not scientific to conclude that the imperial regimes generally represent the northern people particularly the Amharan. For example, one could clearly understand the role of proficient Oromo warriors (*Ras Gobena, Fitawrari Gebeyehu, Ras Mekonnen, Dejach Balcha, and Aba Mela*) in assisting Minilik II in controlling the elites of Tigrayans, Gojjam, Gonder, and wollo (Gudina, 2011), and conquering some prosperous areas of Oromo and southern nations. This indicated the possibility of penetration by non-Amharan and non-Christian to the circle of imperial elites, but they represented neither multi-nationalism nor the interest of the indigenous population.

The majority of northern and central Ethiopia were rather mystified with the mythological legend of the Solomonic dynasty (God-elected dynasty to rule Ethiopia) created by the elite from northern and central parts of Ethiopia which also supported by the religious faith of the then. In reality, the common people of Amhara were also bending in front of the ruling elite as it was also apparent in the conquered ethnic groups. But the degree of subjugation and oppression were not even comparable (Markakis, 2011; Markakis & Ayele, 1986).

Moreover, there was a generally perceived thought of subject mentality among the community. Important saying regarding this is 'impossible to accuse the king as impossible to plow the sky' (ሰማይ አይታረስ ንጉስ አይከሰስ) [community] which indicated unchallenged power of

² Some writers and in my view Ethiopia is not yet modernized even in this era. Many scholars refer to the consolidated territory of Ethiopia under Minilik II as modernized Ethiopia

³ The Original source is also checked

King and his nobility, and the subject mentality of the community in general. In this view "the landlords, government officials and the Orthodox Church owned the bulk of the land and controlled the lives of millions of the peasantry" (Mulugeta, 2005, p. 78). But such subject mentality never last long with the rise of some groups with increasing political consciousness of the subject community of the reality of their overexploitation and oppression which resulted in the overthrow of the monarchy and replaced by the dictatorship of the Derg regime which further resulted in another form of suppression and civil war in the country.

From the analysis of different literature regarding Ethiopian State building (nation-state building thesis), it could be generalized that the imperial regimes were totally against the reality of multiethnic/multinational character of the country and tried to assimilate other ethnic groups under a unified northern culture of Abyssinian. The nation-state building process of the monarchy which used the politics of divine power and Orthodox Christian as state religion was against the interests of the different ethnic groups (Lubo, 2012). Added to this, Monenus (2017) stated that "the pre-1991 Ethiopian state-building showed plausible centralist-unitary through cultural assimilation pursued by successive regimes" (p. 3).

To overcome such assimilation and overexploitation of resources of the local community, different ethnic-based groups were formed as freedom fighters and liberation fronts. These groups, most of the time, were directly opposing the ruling regimes based on ethnic line for identity recognition, equality, self-determination and representation, protection of a basic human right, and cultural freedom, and to the extreme decolonization of their nation from the oppressive ruler. Moreover, different farmers' revolutions/rebellions (including some Amhara farmers) were evidenced because of overexploitation by landlords and national and class domination (Horst, 2020; Markakis, 2011; Gudina, 2011). In this respect, De Waal (1991) asserted that "Haile Selassie faced insurrections in the northern provinces" (p. 10).

In the 1960s one such revolt was in Gojjam, due to discontent over taxation and land measurement. Vaughan and Tronvoll (2003, p. 82) and Gudina (2011, p. 23) for instance put that "The third quarter of the twentieth century was marked by a series of violent conflicts in which subordinate groups challenged the imperial regimes." This indicated that northern Ethiopia also experienced historical oppression under the monarchical regimes. But, comparatively, the southern experienced far more extreme oppression: bloodshed conquest, loss of their land, loss of their dignity, enslavement, and all suppression that African people faced under European colonization (Horst, 2020; Markakis, 2011; Markakis & Ayele, 1986; Gudina, 2011). In this regard, Mengisteab (2007), expressed that "with the empire's expansionist conquests, ethnic relations evolved into a political, economic, and cultural subordination of the newly incorporated identities, who in many cases were reduced to landless tenants, while many of the occupying troops and administrators emerged as landlords" (p. 71).

The military was used against ethnic and regional rebellions in Tigray, Eritrea, Ogaden, Bale, Sidamo, and Gojjam provinces until the army itself rebelled and overthrew the Emperor in 1974." From a dialectical point of view, the resistance from different groups and farmers/peasants rebellion is the starting point for the unending political contradiction/opposition throughout its history since the inception of the monarchical regime and after it was overthrown by the Derg regime. Therefore, conflicts in the imperial regimes were not limited to conflict only for a power struggle between central and regional forces as it is generalized by some authors. For instance, one could take the 1960s incidents and decision made in Eritrea by Haile Selassie I and its latter impact which resulted in the secession of Eritrea from Ethiopia as the best example of the source of ethnic conflict (Horst, 2020; Gudina, 2011).

The indication for this is that all people of Ethiopia faced exploitation and subjugation in one way or another by the force of the imperial regimes but the subjugation was irregular in respect of their ethnic identity. Given the irregularity of the subjugation in terms of its scope, intensity, and nature, all people of the country faced and tested the stick of the monarchical regimes while at the same time prevented from gaining any carrot from the regime, they rather lost substantial parts of their carrot to the regime. Some scholars in this respect put that the imperial regimes applied the carrot and stick approach in controlling the population, economy, and politics of the country. For instance, Gudina (2011) clearly stated that mostly Minilik II of the Shewa strongly applied this carrot and stick approach. Contrarily conceived, the application of force during Minilik II's regime and its aftermath in Ethiopia's political history was more than that of a carrot and stick approach. This is to say that the regimes applied sticks as a primary tool to confiscate the carrots of numerous nations, ethnic groups, and indigenous people of both north and south principalities. This means that either fearing the stick or being bitten by the stick, the conquered communities lost substantial or major parts of their carrot to the conqueror.

Therefore, seen from a dialectical point of view, ethnicity and ethnic conflict during imperial regimes of the country are rooted in contradiction of the constructivism and primordial approach to ethnicity. The imperial projection/seek of Ethiopian unification and modernization rooted in a master narrative in which the then governments divided its population into two cleavages: Christianity and pagan (Minilik II) and the ruling and the subjects (Hailessilassie I). These social cleavages faced resistances from diverse actors, students prominently, which called upon avoidance of the imperial master cleavages and the formation of Ethiopia based on identity recognition and equality between and among nations, nationality, and people of Ethiopia which rooted in a primordial approach to ethnicity (Horst, 2020). This made the imperial regime unstable, whose immediate result is a contradiction between the aspirants of multi-ethnic/national Ethiopia and the proponents of Ethiopia as a nation-state. Seen from the dialectical movement/process, Ethiopia is still at the stage of the contradiction between these two forces: thesis and antithesis. An important question here is: could one escape from this contradiction? The above question is highly valuable considering how the two extremes contradict one another in the current Ethiopian political situation.

Therefore, it is undeniable that the ruling aristocracy of the northern and central power of the imperial regimes remains an antecedent for the immediate as well as eventual ethnic-based detestation (sometimes reflected by a bitter conflict and hatred) between and among ethnic groups. This is because of the self-identification of imperial regimes with Amharan ethnic identity and the imposition of the Amharan culture (the assumed dominant culture) and religion upon the non-Amhara ethnic group (those with assumed inferior culture) which resulted in ethnic-based contestation and conflict on one hand and contradiction on the process of state formation in Ethiopia which still on the stage of the political discourse of the country. The detail of such political contests is addressed in the following headings.

Contestations on State Building in Ethiopia

The attempt that the monarchies made to form a unitary state through powerful subjugation (Keller, 2005) and sometimes the so-called peaceful submission of other ethnic groups, and domination and overexploitation of these groups by the then rulers, resulted in hatred and mistrust between and among ethnic groups in Ethiopia. This is why there are always contending views regarding ethnicity, ethnic conflict, and state-building in Ethiopian current political discourse. Different scholars consider and interpret the process of state formation in

Ethiopia from two major contending views. These contests could be presented by a dialectical triad of thesis and antithesis with the rotation of the triad in different historical epochs of the country. These two views emanated from the perception and conception of different groups (particularly ethnic groups) regarding the process and intensified with scholarly contributions of historians, legal, political and administrative writers. In this view, Monenus (2017) put that "Given the different interpretations and narratives of the history of its existence as a polity, it is difficult to have an authentic and comprehensive understanding of the trajectory of Ethiopia's politics" (p. 3). As a result, the process and mechanism of Ethiopian state formation and consolidation have been contested for different political interests and motives (Gebissa, 2014).

Its formation caused contending/confusing views regarding Ethiopian history and the process of state formation. Different scholars in Ethiopian history identify several perspectives on its history and the process of state formation. For instance, the well-known scholar in Ethiopian history and politics, Gudina (2011) identified three perspectives in this regard: the nation (*nation-state*) building projection, National oppression thesis, and colonial perspectives. However, in this paper, these contending perspectives are categorically divided into two major perspectives with their respective extremes based on their perspectives and perception they have on the state formation process of Ethiopia and the question of national identities. These two contending views constitute Pan-Ethiopian Nationalism and Pan-Ethnic Nationalism. These are far-reaching contests that emphasize opposing/contradicting identities: citizenship and ethnicity/nationhood.

The extreme of these contestations is between groups those who view that Ethiopia is a country of 3000 years built through natural/mutual cultural integration of various ethnic groups in one hand and those with the view that Ethiopia is a colonial state which is formed through powerful conquer of other ethnic groups by northern power of Abyssinian at the end of 19th century in the other hand (Habtu, 2003; Jalata, 2020; Yates, 2020). The contradiction is between those which hold the voluntary theory and coercive theories of the origin of state (Carneiro, 1977) concerning Ethiopian state-building. Despite plenty of scholarly work regarding this, the contradiction is persisting and seems to be continuing as long as an all-inclusive and balanced view is created. The dialectic here is between opposing/contesting ideas of coercive and voluntary state formation process in Ethiopia which is an unending dialectical process in the country till now. The dialectical process in Ethiopia, however, is characterized by an incomplete dialectical process with two extreme contradictions and with state formation with no solid foundation.

Pan-Ethiopian Nationalism (Thesis of the Imperial Regimes & until the 1990s)

The first view constitutes the view of the proponents of Ethiopianness (Ethiopianists or pan-Ethiopianist), those who propagate the process of empire-building as natural state-formation and believe that Ethiopians should be the only national identity. Moreover, they resist and discourage alternative identities such as ethnic-based identity or ethnic nationalism. Bach (2014) states that "Parties defending the Ethiopian state's and nation's unity, and criticizing multinational federalism have not disappeared. Quite logically, they just reappeared and increased after 2000" (p. 120). In this manner, this group insists that there was mutual and peaceful interaction among different ethnic groups until the 1990s, and Ethiopians are viewed as culturally homogeneous people mutually interacting for thousands of years (Alemayehu, 2004). In this respect, Nardos (2018) clearly stated that "preceding the legal guarantee regarding regional ownership, the communities have had the custom of tolerance, hospitality and shared social heritage. Ethiopia,

with massive ethnic diversity, provokes the democratic and basic human right on legal ground" (p. 329).

This group disregards the conflicting history of the country in general and that of the Abyssinian Empire in particular. They even sometimes present contradicting aspects regarding the process of state formation and the historical root of the country. Some equate the Axumite Empire and Da'amat state with Ethiopia (Fentaw, 2011). But at the same time, referring Minilik II as the first ruler that makes the contemporary Ethiopian geography (territory) by incorporating the surrounding independent areas through forceful subjugation and submission (in either case Minilik II and his warrior use force: force to peacefully submit or open fire on those unwilling⁴). Thus there is still a contradiction whether the history of Ethiopia referred to the different ancient discrete empires or the period of Minilik II. Another implication for this is the books (*Medemer and erkab ena Member*) that were written by Dr. Abiy Ahmed (Prime minister of Ethiopia). In these books, Abiyi firmly insists that Ethiopia has thousands of glorious and great history whose truck was broken at any time in its history while at the same time he concluded that the current problems of the country are emanated from the historically deep-rooted sea of problems of the country and such historical problems are revolved around crisis cycle until today (Abiy, 2019 & 2017).

In the perspective of this group, some attempted to create an imaginary Ethiopian which has never been built. Some other inspired by an imaginary past (glorious past) which has its root in principles of the ideology of fascism-a myth of ethnic or national renewal-which emphasize revising conventional history to create an idealized past particularly to resolve the problems of Nation in Crisis (Heywood, 2021, 2003; Wilford, 2003) considering that Ethiopia is currently in the state of the nation in crisis. In such a stance greater importance is placed on history in creating the so-called national greatness emanating from the imaginary past (glorious past). This stance is evidenced by the expression of some media and individuals in Ethiopia. For example, FM 97.1 in its program has a motto that states "we were great and we will be great" which attempts to indicate the former national greatness compared to the current and seeks to create a state rooted in this imaginary past. In the current political discourse, there are a lot of individuals and groups that praise the expansion war of Minilik the II as holy war (Gudina, 2011) and they call upon the restoration of the past regime with the notion of nation-state formation. In short, most of these writers equate Ethiopia with the culture of the northern parts of the current Ethiopia which constitute Abyssinian culture (Tronvol, 2000). In reality, these northerners by themselves were divided into different independent entities at least until the reign of Yohannes IV.

Different writers call this group differently. Some call them State Nationalists (Liberal state nationalist and Marxist state nationalists) (Loukeris, 2005) and Ethiopianess or Pan-Ethiopian Nationalism (Bach, 2014). Added to this, Loukeris (2005) states that "the liberal state-nationalists are mostly of Amhara and Orthodox Christian background and they more or less adhere to a vision of Ethiopia's "glorious past" (p. 6), a past filled with 'success stories such as a literary past (Ge'ez), an indigenous Christian Church dating from the fourth century A.D., and the victory against colonial Italy (battle of Adwa, 1896) with the subsequent continuation as an independent polity." Such discourse is embedded in fascism ideology. Important questions that need to be addressed here are: what did this glorious past do for justice, equality, quality of life

⁴ For further, read Bulatovick (1897/1900) as trans. & ed by R. Seltzer (1993, Published 2000) with the title 'The Armies Of Minilik 2nd And the South-Western Ethiopia Kingdom published in the journal of an expedition & From Ethiopia to Lake Rudolf, an eye-witness account of the end of an era which is also covered in Ethiopia Through Russian Eyes, Country In Transition 1896-1898

for the common citizens of the past and contemporary Ethiopia? Did it benefit its people? Given the so-called glorious past, the country is still in the vicious circle of poverty and a cycle of ethnic and political crisis and conflict. In this regard, Taye (2017, p. 45) put that;

Ethiopia is an ancient country with several peculiarities; some of which is independence (free from colonialism), drought, poverty, and indigenous scripts. Despite being Africa's oldest independent country, Ethiopia is one of Africa's poorest states, better known for its periodic droughts, famines, and intermittent civil conflicts.

This is because of rejecting and ignorance of the inescapable reality of ethnic/national diversity of the country by successive government and political elite and attempting to replace this diversity with one nation, one identity, and one culture and to the extreme with one religion. The danger here is the oversimplification of diversified ethnic/national identity and its complexity. Hence, during the imperial regimes, aggressive nationalism was evidenced in nation-building (nation-state formation) without creating genuine citizenship. Paradoxically, the regimes and the proponents of pan-Ethiopian nationalism have not been free from politics of ethnic identity. This group calls upon the dominance of specific ethnic groups (see Amhara Midea Corporation, 2019; Mizan TV Center, 2021; Terara Network, 2021). Ethiopian national identity has been narrowly defined national identity of the imperial regimes. "Ethiopian identity (citizenship) was equated with the identity of one particular group" (Van der Beken, 2007, p. 106) because Ethiopia has been traditionally viewed as the mirror-image of a particularistic group, namely the Amhara ruling class (Zerai, 2019) which failed to represent and reflect the reality of diversity (Legide, 2019). Hence the approach of the imperial regimes regarding ethnicity was the constructive approach.

Pan-Ethnic Nationalism and Colonization (antithesis until the 1990s):

In the second extreme, some scholars believe that Ethiopia is a home of ethnic war and conflict. For instance, (Alemayehu, 2004, p. 2) stated that;

By all measures, Ethiopia qualifies as a conflict-prone country. It won't be an exaggeration if one says that the history of Ethiopia is the history of wars and conflicts. These conflicts are instigated and perpetuated in various ideological contexts: religion, region, ethnolinguistic and choice of socio-political paradigm.

The historical trends in power transfer between different regimes in the country (both before and after the creation of the state with the current territory) tell us nothing but Ethiopian history is primarily characterized by civil wars and ethnic conflicts. Woldegiorgis (2010, p. 15) put that "the political history of Ethiopia is characterized by recurrent civil war and internal armed conflict." Loukeris (2001) also added that "Ethiopian political formations since antiquity can be regarded as a constant battle between centripetal and centrifugal forces" Therefore, it is only mystification to conclude that Ethiopian Empire is living in an isolated, peace, unity and civilization because it lacks scientific justification. In short, the reality shows that the history of Ethiopia remarkably indicates a high level of internal as well as external tensions, conflicts, and instability (Záhořík, 2014).

These groups also constitute those who resist the conception of pan-Ethiopian nationalism as the only identity that needs to be built. This group considers the process of empire-building as the process of colonization (also consider the empire as a colonial empire) (Geleta, 2014; Jalata, 2020; Pankhurst, 1985). Some of this group, still, fiercely expresses their strong grievance regarding the process of nation-building.

To its extreme, the territorial expansion of the imperial regimes was equated with and viewed in light of the European scramble for Africa. These groups consider that Minilik II took part in the process of this scramble for Africa and even competed with European colonial power in conquering the adjacent independent political entities. Regarding this (Záhořík, 2014, p. 152) clearly stated that;

For many recent authors, Ethiopia is a colonial state colonized dozens of ethnic groups as Oromos or Somalis in what is now known as Ethiopia but before 1855 these were independent territories. Such a statement is partly true but needs to be examined in a broader perspective.

But how to examine this partly true statement in a broader perspective is the question that still needs clarification. If we need to build a state based on a consensus of all ethnic groups, in which all are equally benefited and in which all ethnic identity is strictly preserved without imposition, we had better answer this question in a balanced manner. Added to this (Pausewang, 2009, p. 3) states that;

When European powers engaged in competition for partitioning Africa among themselves as colonies, a strengthened Ethiopian State could as the only African nation claim a stake in this "scramble for Africa". European weapons allowed the Empire to subdue the different small kingdoms and communities of many ethnic groups; Ethiopia more than tripled its territory southward. This expansion allowed it to amass resources for a strengthened and centralized state structure and gave the strength in terms of military, manpower, and economic clout to resist European attempts at colonizing it.

In support of this instance, (Marcus, 1994, p. 58) clearly stated that "in March 1897, Ras Wolde Giorgis (1851-1918), one of Menilek's cousins and a leading general, invaded Kefa. Although he deployed twenty thousand modern rifles against their three hundred muskets, the Kefa defended their country fiercely." This indicates that Kafa was an independent country until the arrival of Minilik II. More precisely, the Russian eyewitness notes of Bulatovich (1897/1900/2000) as translated by Seltzer (1993) stated that Kaffa was an independent country with its king before the arrival of Minilik the II and he expresses how Kaffa was conquered as follow;

To control a fabulous wealth of Kaffa and incalculable treasures of its kind, starting from 1881, the predecessors of Menelik and he tried seven times to conquer Kaffa, which were unsuccessful. But, the victory of Ethiopia over Italy enabled him to have excellent weapons with which Minilik conquered and annexed Kaffa to Ethiopia, naming its conqueror, Wolde Georgis, as its ruler. The country was almost completely

devastated. Thousands of warriors fell in battle, defending their native land. In Europe these events went completely unnoticed. Very few geographers, ethnographers, and specialists even knew of the existence of Kaffa (Bulatovich, 1897/1900/2000 n.p⁵).

Considerable scholars also justify such a colonial perspective. For example, (Keller, 2005, p. 87) stated that "the formation of the modern state contemporaneously coincided with European scramble for Africa". This internal consolidation and expansion took place in parallel with European expansion in the region (Tilahun, 2016, p. 11). While European powers were preoccupied with partitioning Africa, "Abyssinia took part in such partitioning by colonizing non-Abyssinian nations and nationalities" (Gemtessa, 2014, p. 1). Added to this, Vestal (2007, p. 71) put that "Ethiopia remained independent and partook in its scramble for Africa by conquering and annexing neighboring territories including abutting lands."

Another justification for this could be the relationship and agreement reached by Minilik II with the adjacent European colonial powers to consecrate the current shape (boundary) of Ethiopian (Abdirahman & Mohamed, 2017; Horst, 2020; Matshanda, 2019; Zewde, 1991) which is common among the rest of European colonial power in the scrambling process. Some of the agreements signed between Ethiopia and other colonial powers show the demarcation of the boundary of the colonial power. Such agreements were made until 1954 until Britain withdrew from Ethiopia.

Table 1

Agreements between Ethiopia and Colonial Powers

| S. No. | Treaty/Agreement | Year | Agreement Between |
|--------|--------------------------|------|--------------------------------------------------|
| 1. | Wuchale treaty | 1889 | Ethiopia and Italy |
| 2. | Addis Ababa peace treaty | 1896 | Ethiopia and Italy |
| 3. | Ethio-Djibuti boundary | 1897 | Ethiopian and France |
| 4. | Anglo-Ethiopian treaty | 1897 | |
| 5. | Ethio-Sudanese boundary | 1902 | |
| 6. | Ethio-Kenyan boundary | 1907 | Ethiopia and Britain |
| 7. | Ethio-British Somaliland | 1908 | |
| 8. | Ethio-Eritrean boundary | 1908 | Ethiopia and Italy |
| 9. | Anglo-Ethiopian treaty | 1944 | Ethiopia and Britain (realized in 1948 and 1955) |

Note. Sources: Abdirahman and Mohamed, 2017; Matshanda, 2019; Zewde, 1991

Moreover, the circular letter that Minilik the II sent to the European colonial power that took part in partitioning Africa (particularly after the Berlin Conference of 1884/5) is another justification for some writers that consider the Minilik's conquest as colonial expansion (Gemtessa, 2014; Menelik II, 1891 quoted in Teachers Pay Teachers, n.d). In his letter, Minilik named the conquered and the rest of the African population as pagan and used this instance as justification for brutally conquering non-Abyssinians by Minilik II. In the letter, as Christian Empire, "Menelik II thought Ethiopia had a right to take part in African scramble along with the

⁵ Taken from Bulatovich's two books as translated by Seltzer (1993 published in 2000) which constitute "Armies of Menelik II (1900)" and "From Entotto to the River Baro (1897)"

European powers as bringing Christianity to the pagans was one of the major moral justifications of African expansionism” (Quote.org, n.d, n.p).

Additionally, the situations that the conquered people faced were almost similar and sometimes even worse than those people who were under European colonizers. For example, upon the annexing Eritrea as one of the Ethiopian provinces, the appointment of officials from Amhara and the ending of the federation in Eritrea resulted in frustration of the Eritrean elites and made the situation worse than the situation under Italian and British colonies (Adejumobi, 2007; Brietzke, 1979; Tilahune, 2016; Horst, 2020; Kumsa, 2019; Gudina, 2011). Moreover, Fentaw (2011, p. 7) stated that "The southern conquest had the same effects on the indigenous laws as colonialism in most third world countries." Moreover, Ahmed (2010, p. 198) put that;

Emperor Menilek (r.1889-1913) and his commanders and provincial governors acquired several thousand war captives in the aftermath of the numerous campaigns of conquest that they launched from Shäwa against the indigenous hereditary rulers of southern, southwestern, and eastern Ethiopia between the 1870s and 1890s.

Added to this, Ahmed attempted to indicate the slave trade and ownership of the monarchy and his nobilities and governors as of the early 20th century as indicated in the following table.

Table 2
Slave Ownership of Minilik and His Nobilities

| S.No | Slave Owner | No. of Slave | | Total |
|------|----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|----------|
| 1. | Minilik & Taytu | 20,000 in Addis Ababa | 50,000 elsewhere | 70,000 |
| 2. | Ras Waldagiyorgis | 20,000 in Kaffa | - | 20,000 |
| 3. | Ras Teassamma | 6,000 in Illubabur | - | 6,000 |
| 4. | Ras Mikael | 3,000 in Wallo | - | 3,000 |
| 5. | Ras Wale | Large Number (NA) | - | NA |
| 6. | Ras Tafari (later emperor) | 7,000 | - | 7,000 |
| 7. | Total | | | >106,000 |

Note. compiled from Ahmed (2010, p. 198-199)

Thus, the empire that Minilik II created is viewed as a colonial empire (Jalata, 2020). According to (Kumsa, 2014, p. 1121) "the Ethiopian imperial state was established by Minilik II of Abyssinia as other colonial states in Africa at the end of 19th century, from 1872- 1900, with highest human lives lost in the African colonization history". In this respect, some commentators at the current time conclude that the imperial regimes of Ethiopia were the worst colonizer in Africa and named Minilik the II as the cruelest invader in the colonial history of Africa (Kumsa, 2014). This is because of the life that has been lost during the conquest of Minilik II of the southern previously independent nations, nationalities, and people.

At its most extreme such a colonial perspective is widely explained by Kumsa in the conflict between the Ethiopian state and the Oromo people presented in the 5th European Conference on African Studies: African Dynamics in a Multi-polar World. He elucidated what

happened to the southern nation and nationalities during the Minilik the 2nd conquests based on the prominent two eyewitnesses: de Salviac and Bulatovich. According to these eyewitnesses, Minilik's southward military campaign was equal and even worse than that of European colonizers. The conduct of Minilik the 2nd armies on the southern nations as general were barbaric (Bulatovich, 1897/1900/2000⁶; Bulcha, 2005; de Salviac, 1901/2005 quoted in Kumsa, 2014; Jalata, 2010; Markakis, 2011; Markakis & Ayele, 1986) which include mass killing, enslavement, torture, confiscation of land and property (Jalata, 2020). "To the conquered peoples, including the Oromo, Menelik II was a colonizer who led a mass massacre, mutilating the hands and breasts of hundreds and thousands of Oromos, Keffa, and Wolayita" (Geleta, 2014, p. 31). The firearms obtained from European imperialists and colonizers (such as France, English, and Italy) enabled Minilik II to launch a war that leads to mass destruction on numerous previously independent nations (suppressing their human dignity, custom, culture, religion, and language) such as Oromo, Kaffa, Sidama, Wolaita, Gimira and Maji to list some. The following table indicates the life lost during Minilik II's southward expansion and conquest.

Table 3

Life Lost During Minilik II Military Campaign

| S.No | Conquered Nation | Human life lost (%) |
|------|------------------|---------------------|
| 1. | Oromo | 50% |
| 2. | Kaffa | 67% |
| 3. | Gimira | 80% |
| 4. | Maji | 90% |

Note. de Salviac, 1901/2005 quoted in Kumsa, 2014

Another implication that relates the monarchical regimes of Ethiopia with that of European colonial power was the nation-building theses and creation of internal administrative structure which emphasizing dominance of particular ethnic groups which later resulted in ethnic politics and ethnic conflict. To build their legitimacy on bedrock, the monarchical regimes claim and identify themselves with the Solomonic dynasty descended from the house of David the so-called "*the chosen people to rule the world*". At the same time, they link themselves with Amhara ethnic identity and impose this identity on other ethnic groups considering it as a true Ethiopian identity. In this regard, Berhe and Gebresilassie (2020, p. 98) said that the "southward expansion and conquest by Minilik II had an ethnic dimension as the large proportion of conqueror constituted Amhara and the non-Amhara were compelled to speak Amharic and professed Orthodox Christianity, the key cultural labels of being an Amhara."

Accompanied with this, the language policy of the imperial regimes is even more repressive than that of the fascist occupation of Italy. During the Italian occupation, multiple languages were used as a medium of instruction which indicated the recognition for the multi-nationalism than the imperial regimes. Whatever the reason behind the application of multiple languages by Italy, it has a far-reaching implication for the conquered and extremely oppressed communities. Worku (2018) indicated the language composition used as a medium of instruction during the Italian occupation as indicated in the following table.

⁶ Translated & edited by Seltzer (1993) and published in 2000.

Table 4

Languages of Instruction during the Italian Occupation (1935–1941).

| No. | Region Named by Italian | Language Proclaimed to be media of instruction |
|-----|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| 1. | Eritrea and Tigray | Tigrinya and Arabic |
| 2. | Amhara | Amharic |
| 3. | Addis Ababa | Amharic and Oromifa (<i>Afan Oromo</i>) |
| 4. | Harar | Harari and Oromifa (<i>Afan Oromo</i>) |
| 5. | Oromia and Sidama | Oromifa (<i>Afan Oromo</i>) and Kaficho |
| 6. | Somalia | Somali |

Note. Worku (2018, p. 67)

In this respect, the monarchical regimes of Ethiopia qualify the characteristics of the European colonial project as Wimmer stated. In the word of Wimmer (2002, p. 5), some imperial powers of Europe, by shifting their colonial project, sought to foster a process of "nation-building" in which the colonial masters saw one particular ethnic group, usually the most Christianized, most literate, politically most reliable, and so forth, as representing the core group of the nation-to-be built and systematically supported them by recruiting members of this group into the army, bureaucracy, and university system of the embryonic state apparatus, thus laying the ground for many of the post-independence ethnic conflicts.

Likewise, Ethiopian imperial regimes projection of nation-building resembled such characteristics because the regimes systematically linked themselves to and imposed the culture of the Amhara ethnic groups and orthodox Christianity, and consider the Amhara as true Ethiopians. Vaughan and Tronvoll (2003, p. 82) for instance stated that "the imperial regimes of Ethiopia practiced a crude form of cultural suppression that sought to deny, if not erase, the identity of all subordinate ethnic groups in its domain." The only difference in this aspect is that the European colonial power was externally imposed while in Ethiopian colony was internally imposed (Native colonialism) but has similarities with European colonizer (Woldeyes, 2017). In this respect, Brietzke (1979, p. 22) indicated that "the conqueror displayed attitudes surprisingly similar to those of European colonialists." Moreover, Woldeyes (2017) expresses the native colonial nature of Ethiopia and how the government of Ethiopia imitated foreign ideas to build an internal system that resembles European colonialism. He further put that;

The Ethiopian state has imitated foreign ideas and created internal processes that resemble colonialism. Therefore, the term colonialism is important to show the epistemic and structural dependence of the state on foreign powers. Unlike in other countries where colonial violence is well known from the history of colonial rule under Europeans, in Ethiopia colonial violence is hidden in the history of independence that is used by elites to mask their own imitated ideas and practices as initiatives inspired by "native" factors (Woldeyes, 2017, p. 10).

This is quite logical particularly as the rulers of the imperial regimes linked themselves to the line of Israelites which was said to be descended from King Solomon of Israel. The

Solomonic myth was used to legitimize the power of the imperial regimes. In this respect, Adamu (2009, p. 480) concluded that;

The claims of the legend of Queen Sheba do not help us to concretely understand the foundation of the Ethiopian ruling house because it cannot be proven historically. The legend seemed to have been used to legitimize the claims by the ruling house to be descendants of Abraham, the chosen people, to remain in power in perpetuity.

If this is proven true, the colonial thesis is proven true as well because the imperial regimes were not viewed themselves among the indigenous people of either Tigre or Amhara as they link themselves to the Israelite: the house of David. Therefore, the contestations during the imperial regimes were the conflict between the proponents of the constructivism approach to ethnicity and the proponents of primordialism approach to ethnicity. The regimes attempted to create a mono-national state but failed to efficiently integrate multicultural characteristics of peripheral society. State formation projection and ideology of the regime were aimed at the deconstruction of existing multi-national identity and reconstruction of identity through the imposition of unified northern culture (Adamu, 2013; Belay, 2016; Berhe & Gebresilassie 2020; Clapham, 2009; Fentaw, 2011; Green, 2018; Horst, 2020; Lubo, 2012; Markakis, 2011; Mengisteab, 2007; Gudina, 2011).

Specific Events That Leads To Unending Ethnic Conflicts

The preceding explanation is the general issues that characterize the imperial regimes, their consequences, and current political frictions among and between politicians, scholars, and political activists. But there are also some specific events of the imperial regimes which sawed the root and resulted in an unending ethnolinguistic hatred and conflict.

This has been particularly critical since the 1940s with the restoration of the imperial throne. Considering the Tigrains as tainted with collaborators of the enemy during the Italian occupation, the emperor Put Tigray under Shoa governors with strong military control of the central government soldiers. This resulted in resistance/rebellion of the Tigrain peasants and nobility, which was crushed down by government forces. Regarding this, Markakis (2011, p. 115) put that;

The result was a spontaneous rebellion that brought Tigray nobles and peasants together in fierce battles against government troops lasting several months in 1943. The rebellion was finally put down with great force and heavy rebel casualties, adding fresh fuel to the store of Tigray resentment against the Amhara regime.

Another specific event that leads to enduring ethnic mistrust and conflict between Somali (Issa) with other Somali clans and other ethnic groups surrounding them such as Oromo and Afar. Imperial regimes used their armed forces in inbreeding such enduring conflict. For example, (Richards & Bekele, 2011, p.18) stated that,

During 1970-74 Commander of armed forces in eastern Ethiopia encouraged Oromo and Afar to attack the Issa; gains from livestock raids

were distributed to raiders. Some Issa youth left the country. Both Issa and Afar were very badly affected by drought and famine, without much assistance from the government. Issa wells were reported to be deliberately poisoned by the army, with livestock and human deaths; led to Issa and Oromo becoming enemies.

The above stance is also supported by an De Waal which stated that "the government's military response, in suppressing the Oromo movement, included indiscriminate violence against civilians and war against the economic base -- killing animals, poisoning wells, cutting food supplies, and restricting movement. These military strategies were instrumental in creating the famines which struck the area in 1973-4" (De Waal, 1991, p. 10). In the same token, the measure that the government of Haile Selassie took in Northern provinces resulted in some localized inter-ethnic conflict. For instance, De Waal (1991, p. 10-11) reported that;

In Wollo, inter-ethnic fighting in the lowlands, coupled with government-promoted or sanctioned processes of land alienation and enforcement of crippling tenancy agreements in times of drought all contributed to the creation of famine in 1972-4, a famine made worse by the government's concealment of it and refusal to consider assistance.

Moreover, government responses to the student's demonstration and multiple questions were brutal and barbaric. Such government response later resulted in the formation of both national and international student revolutionary groups. For instance, with the assassination of Tilahun Gizaw in 1969, student mournful gathered turned into a militant political demonstration of more than 30,000 students. To quote the word of one eyewitness as quoted in Horst (2020, p. 37);

There was another mass slaughter, massacre, and savagery by the feudo-fascists. By no coincidence, the scene of the massacre was the place where Graziani undertook the massacre of young Ethiopian patriots in 1935.... Students from all over Addis Ababa marched to the University campus singing revolutionary songs and mourning the death of the hero of the Ethiopian people. More than thirty thousand students and the sympathetic public gathered...., the fascist police force began blocking the traffic from and to the university campus. The policemen were equipped with automatic rifles supplied by the Neo-Nazi American Military advisors and the Israeli Zionists. At 1:00 p.m., 7 trucks full of Imperial bodyguard soldiers arrived at the campus. They were equipped with modern automatic weapons: tripod machine guns, bayonets, and what-not. They closed all the gates.... Suddenly, the colonel ordered his men to open fire. Suddenly thousands of grieved mourners came under rattling machine gunfire. Professors, students, and girls, too, ran right and left in a desperate frenzy.... The mercenary-minded fascist brutes bayoneted and bulleted defenseless students savagely. They brutally bayoneted girls on their breasts and backsides⁷. They barbarously murder

⁷ Original word is replaced.

6th and 8th-grade elementary school boys.... It took them three days to remove the blood from the ground after the massacre. Over thirty students were killed and hundreds were heavily injured....

From this and other government denials, the students felt hopeless to bring equality, justice, democracy, and to resolve nationality (identity) questions with the way the student attempted so far (peaceful demonstration). Therefore, the need for the formation of revolutionary groups and later numerous liberation fronts which change the style and form of struggle for equality and liberation of nations, nationalities, and people of Ethiopia from all-inclusive suppression of brutal feudo-fascist and later socialist dictator governments (Horst, 2020). Lastly, different student associations (prominently Ethiopian Students' Union in North America (ESUNA) and Ethiopian Students Union in Europe) realized that the nationality questions could only be addressed through violent revolutionary struggle (ibid).

Moreover, the response of the imperial authority to its opposition since the 1940s was also one of the antecedents for the increasing awareness of the community on how the regime was oppressive and exploitative. Founded during the five-year Italian occupation, the anti-imperial protest was led by the patriot. In this respect, Aweke (2021, p. 8) states that;

Most of those who engaged in personal defiance were leaders of the patriotic resistance. They were praised for their bravery against enemy forces. However, due to the traditional assumption of “the King cannot be accused as the sky cannot be plowed” those who reportedly found challenging the legitimacy of the Emperor were sentenced to the death penalty and their actions subjected to heresy.

Such government denial and violent response to both peaceful protests and rebellion appraisal further resulted in nationwide opposition to the regime. The trajectory of the opposition was changed because of such a violent government response to the opposition. Different rebellion groups were formed, high rank military opposition, Ethiopian Students movement has changed the opposition to the imperial regime to most radical and revolutionary opposition (Aweke, 2021; Horst, 2020) which eventually resulted in military coup d'état and the end of the monarchical regime of Ethiopia.

Summary of Major Findings

- The imperial regimes of Ethiopia attempted to create a monolithic society (building a nation-state as opposed to a multi-national state/society) with the culture of the northern (Amharization and Christianization) based on the constructivist approach to ethnic identity.
- The issues of ethnicity were not an issue of discussion (totally ignored) and even considered taboo during the imperial regimes. It was during these regimes that ethnic politics sowed its root in Ethiopia.
- During the imperial regimes, multiple actors have raised nationality questions since the inception of the modern territory of Ethiopia. Farmer's oppositions, opposition from ethnic-based groups, and the Ethiopian student movement were some of the oppositions to the imperial regimes.

- Violent government responses to the opposition accompanied with nationality questions later radicalized and changed the trajectory and nature of the anti-imperial resistance. Such question of nationality was rooted in the primordial approach to identity and ethnicity.
- The majority of the Ethiopian conflict possess a mythically created historical discourse of cultural dominance, still claimed by elites of the ethnic core of imperial regimes.
- Ethnolinguistic conflict in Ethiopia implies a vicious circle of conflicts with the rotation of thesis and antithesis and is unable to create a stable synthesis (multi-national democratic state)
- According to the Hegelian dialectical model, Ethiopian political history characterizes an incomplete Dialectical process.
- The root cause of ethnic conflict of the country, both historical and contemporary, is the history of the country itself. The politics of the imperial regimes have been the root causes of both immediate and potential ethnic conflicts of the country. The post-1990s identity politics is only an intervening factor for the escalation of ethnic conflict.

Concluding Remarks

Generally, Ethiopian during the imperial regimes was an assimilationist and attempted to create a monolithic society (building a nation-state in opposition to multi-ethnic state/society) with the culture of the northern (i.e Amharization and Christianization). The issues of ethnicity were not an issue of discussion (totally ignored) and even "considered as taboo" (Yeshiwas, 2018, p. 68). Meanwhile, with the advent of modern education and the rise of political consciousness of Ethiopian students and intelligentsia (with the major motto of "land to the tiller"), the rising dissatisfaction of the political descent, formation of some ethnic/religious-based forces based on the question of nationalities and identity, crisis from CELU's (Confederation of Ethiopian Labor Union) striking, Eritrean opposition and severe military response for all opposition (particularly during Hailesilasse regime), strong political opposition and revolution were exploded which resulted at the end of the imperial regimes in Ethiopia (Adejumobi, 2007; Fentaw, 2011; Marcus, 1994; Van Der Beken, 2007). In these aspects, it is more than enough to conclude that the imperial regimes of Ethiopia were against multi-ethnicity, and a widespread subjugation and overexploitation of the people were common in the regimes. These later resulted in unending antagonism between ethnic groups in Ethiopia. Therefore, Ethiopia during the imperial period qualified what Russian revolutionaries called Tsarist Russia, the "prison-house of people" and a curse of ethnic identity (Horst, 2020, p. 45).

In short, the major part of the Ethiopian conflict possesses a mythically created historical discourse of cultural dominance which is still claimed by elites of the ethnic core of imperial regimes. Resolving such problems with deep-rooted political discourse through a win-win approach could be the primary solution for contemporary ethnic conflict in Ethiopia. But, still, the government seems failed to set a common denominator for each of the conflicting groups and the solution sought could not bring optimum benefit for each while failing to alleviate unnecessary costs for all and/or any of conflicting groups.

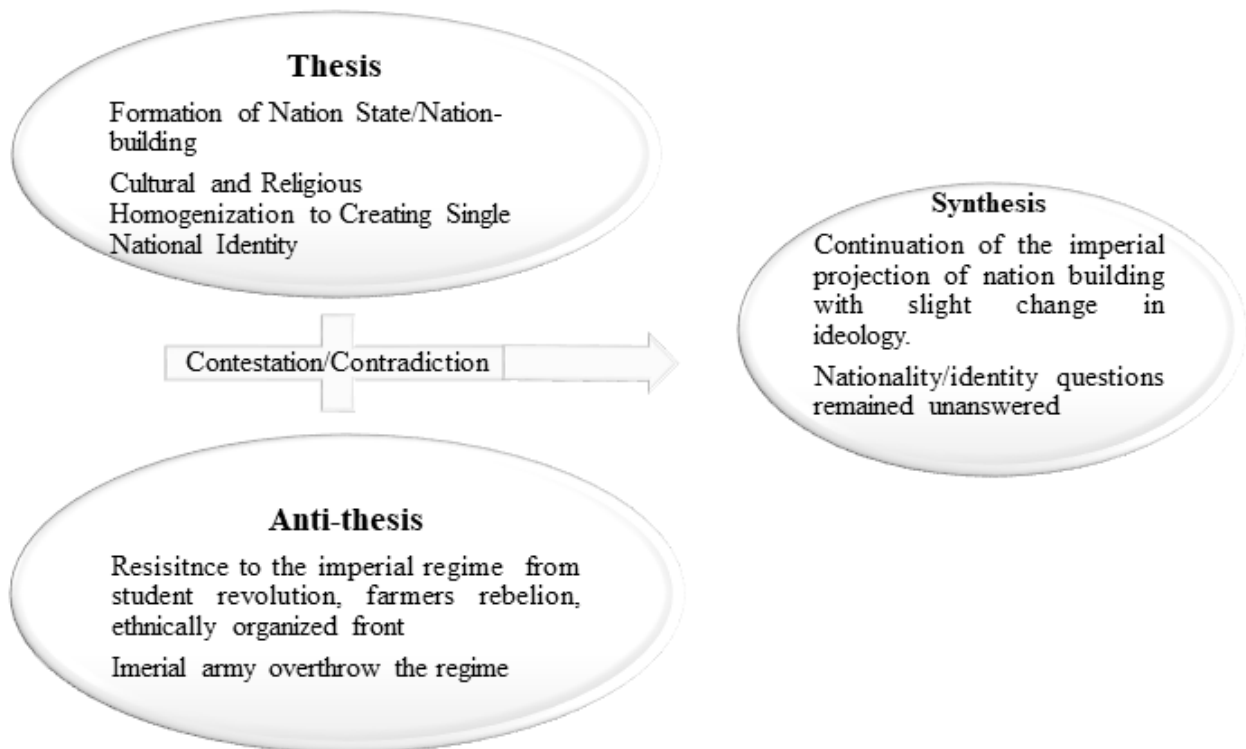
This is because most political discourse at the current time mostly indicates and connotes negative stances that aggravate the contradiction rather than resolving the root cause of ethnolinguistic conflict. Such negative political expressions always in-breed negative energy for the conflicting group which further creates potential and sustainable conflicting situations. This creates and sustains a **vicious circle of conflict** which is the characteristic of historical and

contemporary Ethiopian politics. This is why there is a widespread perception that the state-building process in Ethiopia is always incomplete like other African countries (Monenus, 2017).

In the perspective of the dialectical method, the process of Ethiopian state formation there have been sustainable and even predictable ethnic-based contradiction between thesis and antithesis but left without creating strong and desirable syntheses. Therefore, taking the Hegelian dialectical process, Ethiopian political history is characterized by an incomplete dialectical process of contestation between thesis and antithesis but lacks a desirable synthesis. It is characterized by the rotation between thesis and antithesis (Pan-Ethiopian and Pan-Ethnic identities) as one regime fell and the other came into power. A thesis of one regime is sustained as a thesis on its own or becomes antithesis in the next regime while antithesis becomes a thesis. Taking the imperial regimes and Derg regime, for instance, such incomplete dialectical process (see Figure 1) further resulted in sustained resistance from diverse forces such as the aggrieved dispossessed imperial army and the existing and newly established organized ethnic-based fronts. Thus, it resulted in the continuation of imperial projection of nation-state building with the motto of **Ethiopia First (እትዮጵያ ንቅደም)** and with a change in ideology from market-oriented imperialism to socialism. But the contradiction between thesis and antithesis has never resulted in next or further historical development as per the claim of dialectical process. But it resulted in sustainable ethnic-based resistance to the Derg regime. Thus, the contradiction failed to result in new and higher historical development.

Figure 1

Dialectical Model for the Imperial Regime, Its Contradiction, and Result



Note. Designed based on literature (2021)

Lastly, the argument that multinational federalism (commonly conceived as ethnic federalism in Ethiopia) is the sole cause for the current ethnic conflict in Ethiopia is not viable. It is an undeniable reality that multinational identity has been utilized as a political instrument/sheepskin for political repression since the 1990s politics of the country. The majority of scholarly contributions on Ethiopian ethnic conflict overemphasize post-1990s politics as the major and sole source of ethnic conflict. Hence, the historical aspects and sources of contemporary ethnic conflict are almost missed from the literature on Ethiopian federalism and ethnic conflict. This article, however, found that the root cause of ethnic conflict in the country, both in the past and currently, is the history of the country itself. The post-1990s identity politics is only an intervening factor for the escalation of ethnic conflict. Moreover, misappropriation of identity politics and government failure to implement genuine federalism as provided in the constitution of the country is another confounding variable for contemporary ethnic conflict in Ethiopia. The imperial regimes have attempted the nation-building projection which was also practiced during the socialist regime. But this nation-building projection brought complex historical, social, political, administrative, and economic problems which have never been resolved by the successive government. Therefore, the contemporary ethnic conflict in Ethiopia was sowed its root during the imperial regimes of the country (Adamu, 2013; Belay, 2016; Berhe & Gebresilassie 2020; Clapham, 2009; Fentaw, 2011; Green, 2018; Horst, 2020; Lubo, 2012; Markakis, 2011; Mengisteab, 2007; Gudina, 2011).

Hence, this article found that the conflict in the country mostly constitutes the conflict between the proponents of constructivism and the primordial approach to ethnicity. While the institutional and instrumental approaches to ethnicity are the intervening variable for the escalation of ethnic conflict (specially post-1990 conflict), the majority of ethnic conflicts of the country are emanated from constructivism and the primordial approach to ethnicity and identity. During the imperial regimes, the terms nationalism and nation-building were wrongly conceptualized to construct a single national identity by rejecting the multi-national nature and cultural diversity of the country.

Future Research Implication

The contestation between Pan-Ethiopian and Pan-ethnic nationalism is still underpinning political views and political discourses between different groups in contemporary politics of the country. Accompanied by the increasing quest for self-administration and identity recognition, such contests now become critical political problems of the country. This further resulted in armed conflicts costing human life and distraction of resources of the country (Aljazeera, 2020, 2021; Channel 4 news, 2021; CNN, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c; France 24, 2021a, 2021b; Human Rights Watch, 2021; International Rescue Committee, 2021; OCHA, 2021; UN, 2021; UNICEF, 2021; USAID, 2021). Moreover, it is the primary source of conflict between those who believe in Ethiopianess (Pan-Ethiopianism) and those who are said to be ethnocentric or pan-ethnic nationalism. Different political discourses on social and public media regarding such contending views resulted in widespread and escalating actual and potential ethnic conflict between and among the ethnic groups of the country. Therefore, it is deemed rational to ask the questions what are the problems of these two contending views? Who and what do the proponents of the two views attempt to defend/protect? Is that possible and how to balance these contending views? Can we simply bypass both or/and either of these views silently? This and other related questions need scientific, unbiased, and genuine investigations. Therefore, any interested researcher could conduct research and investigation on these questions.

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