Post-2018 Political Transition and Polarization in Ethiopia: The Case of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray Political Elites

Debela Fituma Mamo *

Journal Volume & Issue:

Vol. 7, No. 2

pp. 3-35

DOI: https://doi.org/10.46404/panjogov.v7i2.7193

Copyright: ©2026 by Jimma University, Ethiopia. Under Open Access Journal, *the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0)* permits any interested person to copy, redistribute, remix, transmit, and adapt the work provided that the original work and source are appropriately cited.

Abstract

In Ethiopia, political discord and violent power struggles among political elites are the main obstacles to achieving stable political consensus. Since 2018, Ethiopia's political transition has been hampered by polarization among the political elite, both within and between ethnic groups. This article explores the intra-ethnic political polarization in Ethiopia, with an emphasis on political elites of the Amhara, Oromia, and Tigray regions. Qualitative case study research was used, with primary data collected through key informant interviews and focus group discussions based on purposeful sampling, and secondary data that were analyzed using thematic and content analysis techniques. The findings indicate that since 2018, elite rivalry has persisted as both a change and a continuity in the nation's political history, undermining democratic transition processes and generating webs of violent conflict. Following the political transition, interconnected and complementary layers of elite polarization emerged, on the path to understanding of political reform measures and the state's identity. The Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray elites were shown to be in simultaneous, horizontal competition with one another at the inner circle (intra-ethnic level). This intra-triadic antagonism among these elites forced Ethiopia to avoid a politically negotiated, agreement-based transition, thereby delaying the likelihood of a democratic transition. Political-ideological-economic rivalry among elites remained a source and tool of conflict, leading to complex insecurities at the local and national levels and overshadowing the benefits of political reforms. A consensus to maintain the political transition and consolidate democracy requires developing a comprehensive political settlement and dialogue mechanisms that effectively reconcile the divides among Ethiopia's political elites.

Keywords: *Democratization, Elites, Ethiopia, Polarizations, and Political Transition*

*Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia. Email: defima24@gmail.com

Introduction

Dr. Abiy Ahmed took office as Prime Minister in April 2018, promising to lead Ethiopia through democratic transition, enacting a raft of reforms that have been praised both nationally and internationally. Meanwhile, Ethiopia finds itself at a crossroads: one route extends the necropolitical system that might eventually rip the country apart, while the other path leads to a genuinely new politics based on dialogue and pluralism (Mebratu, 2025). The transition, centered on clashing ideological narratives stemming from elite polarization, has yet to achieve a negotiated political agreement. The new political order has yet to be created based on agreement over the new government's ideology and structures.

Ethiopia remained unstable due to competing state imaginaries, with the distributive crisis and elite fragmentation leading to a broader state crisis, thereby concentrating once again on the role of ethnicity in politics (Yonas, 2024; Lavers, 2024). Since the political transition, ethnic conflicts have escalated for many reasons, but they also stem from conflicting narratives vigorously propagated by competing nationalisms. This is obstructing the democratic transition and contraction from which the country cannot break free, as contradictions and division in national politics continue to dominate Ethiopia's political discursive debates (Mebratu, 2023). Ethiopia's elite division persisted, creating a paradoxical experience that formed a vicious circle between maintaining the *status quo* and making progress before and after 2018. These have posed political discourse that is a barrier to transformational politics, undermining the transition to peace and stability.

Historically, the Ethiopian state took its modern shape under Menelik II at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. However, its politics have been closely linked to violent deliberations about the nature and path of the state. Numerous discursive, ideological, and structural interpretations of the Ethiopian state have emerged because of unresolved violent conflicts. The two main perspectives that are currently prevalent are that it is an ancient, longest-surviving independent African state and that it was established as a colonial empire in the late nineteenth century through territorial expansion and conquest (Margazora, 2017; Mebratu, 2023). These interpretations led to ideological positions within a Hegelian dialectical triad of readings of the Ethiopian state and society. Donald Levine (1974) employed the dialectical triad, arguing that Greater Ethiopia emerged as a multi-ethnic society due to what he termed the Amhara thesis, the Oromo antithesis, and the Ethiopian synthesis. Merera Gudina (2003) employed another dialectical

triad, which corresponds to the three opposing views of Ethiopian history: the nation-building thesis, the national oppression thesis, and the colonial thesis. John Markakis (2011) argued for the third dialectical triad through a geo-structural understanding of the Ethiopian state, interpreted through the lens of center-periphery relations: the highland core, the highland periphery, and the lowland periphery.

These interpretations center on how to understand Ethiopia's past and present, an opposing dyadic ideology: debates on the continuum between competing epistemological variations, the Great Tradition Thesis (GTT) *versus* the Counter Hegemonic Thesis (CHT). The GTT promotes unitarist pan-Ethiopianism and its glorious past of the imperial regimes, whereas the CHT aspires to pan-ethnic nationalism, advocating for identity accommodation in Ethiopia's political system since the 1960s (Gebreluel, 2023; Dereje, 2023). While the GTT follows a revivalist perspective and promotes pan-Ethiopianism, traditionalists extol Ethiopia's past and appear to restructure Ethiopia following the unifying ideals. For GTT, politics aimed at uplifting ethnic identity is tantamount to destroying a perceived sense of unity; thus, it follows a restorationist perspective to restructure Ethiopia following the unifying ideals of the great heritage. The CHT follows a rejectionist approach, promoting stronger ethnonationalist counter-hegemonic reaction politics, advocating that ethnic emancipation is the only way to save the country from disintegration (Tegbaru, 2023). CHT focuses on a national history that ignores or erases roots, reality, and continuing disparities, whereas GTT focuses on a history of disagreement to recreate historical realities (Mebratu, 2023). Although these epistemic perspectives are profoundly involved in and partially derived from political conflicts, they are mutually constitutive. They reinforce each other in opposing ways: an account of one group becomes a prescription for another to generate counter-narratives, which frequently leads to violence (Mebratu, 2023; Dereje, 2023).

The persisting opposition between these ideological polarizations reveals three main issues in contemporary Ethiopian politics. First, the more the GTT honored Ethiopia's past, the more the CHT reacted. In the search for Ethiopia's governing ideological structure, the GTT (centripetal forces) desires national unity, and the CHT (centrifugal forces) demands regional ethic autonomy. Second, between these political ideological polarizations, Ethiopia remained a divided nation founded on contradictions and characterized by a struggle to forge a shared national identity, with the main contention of the thesis and anti-thesis emerging from state-building processes. Thirdly, due to a lack of political negotiation and compromise, Ethiopia failed to create ideal conditions for

the country's democratic transition. This reflects Ethiopia's intrinsic reality, which led to an enduring ideological conflict between the centripetal and centrifugal forces over how Ethiopia's past is conceived, stored, presented, transferred, and remembered (Tegbaru, 2023). These ideological conflicts led to political contradictions and the fragmentation of national politics that remained at the forefront of Ethiopia's political discursive debates (Mebratu, 2023; Gebreluel, 2023). These cycles of historically polarized political ideologies threatened national cohesion, creating tensions that impacted the subsequent state-making and remaking process. With this, Ethiopia remained an unstable state.

The post-2018 political developments, deeply connected to these violent conversations on the nature and future direction of the Ethiopian state, undermined the transition to a durable peace and state (Medhane *et al.*, 2021). Ethiopia's elite political polarization, conflicting state imagination visions, and the confusion of state and regime security remained prevalent in its political discourse (Yonas, 2024). Offering a challenge to transformative politics, this elite disintegration led to a broader crisis of the Ethiopian state, impeding the democratic transition (Lavers, 2024). These cycles of polarization continued to be at the forefront of Ethiopia's politics, inextricably linked to discursive violent debate over the essence and destiny of the state, threatening national cohesion (Mebratu, 2023).

In terms of change and continuity, the elite polarization since 2018 (re)revealed the lack of a politically negotiated roadmap to facilitate the transition. Political ideology, fraught with charges and claims of the political elite's polarization, made it difficult for the democratization processes that followed the reform measures to proceed. Conflicting ideological narratives and a lack of pragmatic political bargaining hindered the 2018 political transition, leading to tragic struggles and rifts along its political elite's ideological fault lines and opposing experiences. Due to the political elite's division, the transition has yet to achieve a negotiated political settlement; the new political order has not yet been created through consultation and negotiation. This made the changeover process difficult to complete, resulting in intense rivalry among the political elite. The reform initiatives were undermined by rekindled old rivalries and the emergence of new ones. Ethiopia's ongoing process of making, remaking, and unmaking has been fraught with elite polarization, resulting in multi-layered contestations over territory, economic resources, political power, state identity, and narratives rooted in its history.

This article explains how the problems that have split the country into opposing factions since 2018 are caused by the lack of a negotiated political agreement-based method of political transition to establish a stable state-society relationship. The 2018 political transition revealed interconnected and complementary layers of elite polarization where Ethiopia's ethnic political elites compete with one another at the macro, meso, and micro levels. At the macro level, elite political polarization is divided into two primary factions, with each supporting the GTT or the CHT in discussions concerning political reform proposals and state identity. At the meso level, elite political division in the outer circle (inter-ethnic level) is common among Amhara and Oromo or Amhara and Tigray political elites. At the micro level, inside the inner circle (intra-ethnic level), Ethiopia's elites are also competitive in their comprehension of political reform initiatives and the political transition. This article attempts to identify political polarizations at horizontal levels, with an emphasis on ethnic elite polarizations among Oromo, Amhara, and Tigray, as there are currently few studies on this intra-elite divide in Ethiopia.

The article is classified into four sections. The first section deals with the introduction. The second section highlights the research methods and methodology. The third section explains the overview of political polarization in Ethiopia. The fourth section also explores interpreting elite polarization in Ethiopia among Oromo, Amhara, and Tigray political elites since the 2018 political transition. Similarly, the last section provides the concluding remarks of the article.

Methods and Materials

From a methodological perspective, a qualitative case study approach was employed to comprehend how Ethiopia's political transition since 2018 was impacted by the agency of political elites. For this purpose, both primary and secondary sources were used. Key informant interviews (KII) and focus group discussions (FGD) were utilized to collect primary data. During the data-gathering process, informants whose names were coded, including political party leaders, government officials, researchers, academicians, and influencers, were chosen based on their knowledge of the topic under investigation and notified of their voluntary participation and anonymity. Employing a purposive sampling method, the sample size was determined using theoretical saturation for primary data collection. Secondary sources from available grey literature have also been utilized and triangulated with the primary data. Thematic and content approaches were used to present and analyze the gathered data. As a methodological delimitation, the direct and indirect consequences of regional and global politics, as well as the role of social media in

Ethiopia's internal tensions and political polarization since 2018, were intentionally excluded to focus on the agency of elites.

Overview of Political Polarization in Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, political polarization does not appear to be straightforward. In this process, the role of the elite is critical in synthesizing the political ideology, setting the agenda, organizing the nationalist movements, and providing the necessary leadership to achieve the set goals (Merera, 2011). These political elites vary with no substantial common ground, where Ethiopian identity remained a source of debate and conflicting conceptions. The historical and political narratives of Ethiopia's state foundation and the subsequent ideological competitions signify the prevailing contestations regarding the original foundation of Ethiopia as the state. The historical and contemporary dynamics of the narrations regarding the origin and nature of the Ethiopian state are marked by complicated identity that stems from a lack of elite consensus on several key issues.

In terms of age, the historical basis and birth of Ethiopia as a state signify complex perspectives. For example, while seeking to build a historical framework, one should start by asking "Which Ethiopia?" because the periodization varied from 3000 to 200 years (*See* Teshale, 1995). This suggests whether Ethiopia is an ancient polity with a lengthy autonomous history or a contemporary historical occurrence. For some, Ethiopia's state formation resulted in the rise and fall of various empires, with the ongoing history of a single political society (Margazora, 2017; Gebreluel, 2023). This viewpoint is held by those who regard Ethiopia as an old and autonomous country with over 3000 years of statehood. For others, the Ethiopian state was established in the late nineteenth century (Mebratu, 2023). These framings of Ethiopian statehood as an ancient or contemporary polity were based on historical narrations and elite political competition that has persisted for decades.

The second paradox in Ethiopia's state character concerns its natural resource abundance and the prevailing human insecurity. Ethiopia is renowned as the "motherland of drought and famine," despite having abundant natural, material, human, and animal resources as well as flora and wildlife (Abebe *et al*., 2006, p. 08). On the other hand, Ethiopia is also among the continent's poorest nations, characterized by protracted and severe political unrest, making it vulnerable to political instability and regional insecurity, and infamous for its sporadic civil wars, famines, and droughts (Assefa, 2022). These contradictions capture the words of Petros B. Ogbazghi (2022,

p.40), who clearly stated, "Far from proving to be the personification of Cornucopia—the mythical quintessence of plenitude and abundance, nor tranquillitas—the epitome of peace and tranquillity, Ethiopia has long remained in the doldrums."

The third paradox is whether Ethiopia is free of colonialism or whether it is an empire formed through colonial subjugation by force is another source of controversy. Some regard Ethiopia as free of colonialism, where Menelik was credited with creating the modern Ethiopian state and considered one of the greatest leaders in Ethiopian history, presiding over Ethiopia's reunification (Loukeris, 2004). Others saw Ethiopia's formation as one of internal colonialism and subordination, regarding Menelik as a black colonizer who participated in the European scramble for Africa, conquering the southern independent territories and peoples by brute force (Mebratu, 2023; Assefa, 2022).

Within these impasses, Ethiopia is portrayed as a colonial empire and a contemporary nation-state, as a resourceful and impoverished state, and as something in between, holding the features and elements of both systems. The country's historical narratives make it difficult to define the state identity centered on the political polarization that employs restrictive ideologies and frameworks. This stems from elite disagreements about how to narrate Ethiopian history and imagine its future. These intricacies represent the analytical stalemate that inhibits the elites' political imaginations buried in Ethiopia's state creation. Resulting in political conflicts and fragmentation of national politics, the legacies of the making of the Ethiopian state created a paradoxical experience that forms a vicious circle. The analytic complexity in the narration of the Ethiopian state's foundation, driven by elites competing political ideologies, has blocked the path to more transformative politics. This has led to ideological political polarization, where the dynamics of Ethiopia's complicated identity and political polarization emanate from ideological divergence and competing nationalism since its foundation. Over time, the country has been stuck between the historical quandaries of two mutually constituting epistemic traditions: the GTT and CHT. This political split is based on opposing readings of history by Ethiopian political elites, leading to ideological polarization and political fragmentation, as explained below.

First, the GTT, which promotes the glorious past of Ethiopia**,** is a dominant form of liberal state nationalism that propagated the idea of Pan-Ethiopian nationalism. Its epistemological approach presents Ethiopia as the birthplace of ancient civilization originating in the northern part. It presents that Ethiopia's state formation resulted in the rise and fall of various empires, with a

longstanding sense of nationhood derived from sacred narratives (Dereje, 2023; Assefa, 2022). In this thesis, Menelik is credited with creating the modern Ethiopian state by controlling the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC), declaring Christianity as the state religion, and adopting Amharic as the nation's official language (Loukeris, 2004). Ethiopia's "glorious past" was narrated as full of achievements, including a literary history (Ge'ez), an Orthodox Christian religion and church that dates to the fourth century A.D., and the victory over colonial Italy in the Battle of Adwa in 1896 (Mebratu, 2023). GTT claims Ethiopia as one nation with a common history and centuries of cohabitation with the ongoing history of a single political society. Empire-building is conceived as a natural state formation with established territorial control, where Ethiopians have a sole national identity with effectively centralized political and narrative power.

A critical examination of Ethiopian historiography, however, at least shows that the GTT praises the Semitic northern populations based on the supremacy of the Amhara-Tigrayan stock, making them subjects of history, over the Cushitic in the south as simply objects of history (Asebe, 2022; Gebreluel, 2023). These Semitic groups are considered "genuine and pure Ethiopians wearing Amhara masks" (*see* Valfort, 2006). Consideration of these Semitic communities' language, culture, and religion as cornerstones of the Ethiopian state has remained exclusive and unrepresentative. This hierarchical ordering of society ignores Ethiopians who lived outside of the northern highlands and depicts them as people without history, excluding them from fair political representation and advantages (Asebe, 2022; Dereje, 2023). Specifically, the contradiction originated with the conquest of the south, creating a narrative of struggle that recognizes the histories, memories, and truths of one group but elides or erases the rest of their memories, truths, and histories (Mebratu, 2023). This discouragement of alternative identities underestimates the prevalence of diversity and pluralism that has a long history in Ethiopian sociopolitical history. This overlooks Ethiopia's historical dynamics and diversity, referred to as a "museum of peoples," resulting in an oversimplification of diversity and its complexity, which is an unavoidable reality. Moreover, paradoxically, proponents of GTT have not been immune to the politics of ethnic identity that shaped the narrowly defined Ethiopian national identity of imperial regimes. Framing Ethiopian identity as equated with the identity of small groups, Ethiopia is viewed as the mirror image of these particularistic groups.

Second, CHT promotes the nationality questions of ethno-nationalism. The source of CHT is the ideological thesis of GTT discussed above, which resulted in the rise of "nationality questions" as

a mobilizing issue, which wavered between colonialism and the national oppression thesis (Merera, 2011). CHT advocates that GTT's political dominance resulted in economic subjugation, making comprehensive freedom a cause worth fighting for. CHT views Menelik as a colonizer and Ethiopia as essentially the empire of unequal nations. Its central argument defines the historical formation of the Ethiopian empire through brutal wars of conquest that made the country a prison house of nations, resulting in an unequal power dynamic and institutionalized exclusion (Asebe, 2022; Mebratu, 2023). They eventually emerged among radical ethno-nationalists, who rejected the thesis of Ethiopia's glorious past as exclusionary and saw it as a symbol of oppression and "passports" to what Keller (1988, 160) referred to as "cultural suicide" (*see* Loukeris, 2004). For them, Ethiopia is not a single nation but rather a collection of nationalities, each with its own identities and territorial entity. These Marxist state-nationalists are, by and large, the progeny of the left-wing student movement of the 1960s at the then Haile Selassie I University, where their ideological orientation was influenced by the seminal short essay "On the Question of Nationalities in Ethiopia" by Walleligne Mekonnen in 1969. This infamous essay claimed that Ethiopia was a collection of nationalities ruled by the Northern elites [Amhara-Tigre ethnic group] that superimposed its culture and language. This was the focus of the Ethiopian Student Movement (ESM), which asserted the right of Ethiopian nations and nationalities to self-determination, which subsequently necessitated a decolonial movement to address questions of self-rule and administration (Gebreluel, 2023).

In the political processes, the significance of hoisting ethnic banners in the fight for freedom from the [actual or perceived] colonial experience or national oppression was justified by the political, historical, and social conditions (Asebe, 2022). As a result, a militant ethnic nationalism revolution emerged, fueled by the ideology of the ESM. This gave rise to resistance movements led by Marxist-Leninist nationalists, which significantly contributed to the overthrow of Haile Selassie's government in February 1974 and the formation of ethno-nationalist opposition groups such as the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), which continued to use armed resistance against the *Derg* until 1991. Within the CHT, the nationality question moved to ethnically orientated political groups that saw Ethiopia's formation as one of internal colonialism at worst and subordination at best, and that the solution was self-determination up to secession (Merera, 2011). Although Ethiopia's adoption of ethnolinguistic identity made ethnicity a defining feature of national and local politics as the

prescribed basis of politics in 1991, it resulted in suspicion and unhealthy ethnic competition (Yonas, 2024). Under the guise of ethnicity, Ethiopia remained largely defined by civil wars and ethnic conflicts, as evidenced by the historical patterns of power transfers between the nation's various regimes (Assefa, 2022).

Put together, driven by elites competing political ideologies, these two perspectives and narrations of the Ethiopian state's foundation are mutually constitutive and reinforce each other in opposing ways. But they are also profoundly involved in and partially derived from political conflicts which frequently lead to violence (Dereje, 2023; Mebratu, 2023). At the center of these GTT and CHT ideological frameworks, ethnicity emerged as a decisive element and the primary political currency of Ethiopian politics, bringing with it an epidemic of ethnic hostilities. In these conflicting ideological orientations, ethnicity becomes a political norm in Ethiopia. Both political groups refine their narratives and become more sophisticated, without bringing negotiated political settlements or a cohesive and stable society. Ethiopia's political elite discourse and narratives make ethnicity a defining feature of national and local politics, resulting in suspicion and rivalry. From both GTT and CHT, it is undeniable that Ethiopia's ideological elite polarization is largely found on the continuum that lies in ideas about the genesis and formation of states. In this continuum, Ethiopia's political elites continue to utilize the ethnic card as a negotiating chip.

Ethiopia's political landscape has, thus, remained a battleground for collective memory and ideological wars. This has led to violent conversations over the identity of the state and the status of various groups, eventually leading to an exclusionary, victory-based political settlement. Ethiopia's complicated identity, political polarization, and political fragmentation between pan-Ethiopianism and ethno-nationalism fail to produce a plausible middle-ground theory that rejects both theses and seeks a solution that is the middle of the two. Between these dyadic ideologies, national politics remained a zero-sum game. Ethiopia remained split, based on tensions and the effort to build a shared national identity, and its democratic transition was hampered.

Elite Political Polarizations in Post-2018 Ethiopia

Dr. Abiy Ahmed took office, vowing to lead Ethiopia through the democratic transition, and began enacting a raft of reforms that garnered praise initially. The reform attempts aimed at transforming the state from a conflict-prone, authoritarian regime to a democratic, peaceful one remained mired, but the political transition's honeymoon ended amid emerging and longstanding security and political flaws.

First, the triggering factor for elite political polarization in post-2018 Ethiopia was differing expectations among diverse factions that have affected the process of the political transition. In the post-2018 political transition, expectations and frustrations of different actors regarding the reform initiatives, along with the lack of a negotiated political transition plan, have contributed to and continued to be sources of recurrent violent political conflicts (Cochrane & Asnake, 2019). For instance, the debate over the nature of Ethiopia's state re-intensified following the political transition in 2018, resulting in another layer of political polarization between Pan-Ethiopianism and Ethno-nationalism. For many in the Pan-Ethiopianist camp, the transition was seen as a potential solution to the ethnicity problem within the pan-Ethiopian vision of national identity: *Ethiopiawinnet* (Assefa, 2023; Tegbaru, 2021). For this camp, the transition would resolve the eroded national unity and the intensified ethnic hostilities that the federal system has caused, augmenting the lack of trust among ethnic groups and unleashing minority-majority tensions (Cochrane & Asnake, 2019). Conversely, for the ethnonationalist camp, which interprets the state's political history as one of domination, both culturally and politically, the transition marks the beginning of genuine federalism, which was not practiced during the EPRDF regime, and hopes that the transition will address their demands (KII#05, 2023). However, not everyone agrees on both the first and second premises. Both the Pan-Ethiopianist and ethnonationalist camps seek to understand and interpret the ideological and discursive narratives of the new regime, portraying the formation of the Prosperity Party (PP) as neither a response to the long-standing nationality question of the ethnonational nor a return to imperial aspirations and the resurrection of Pan-Ethiopianism.

Secondly, the immediate factor for elite political polarization in post-2018 Ethiopia was the breakdown of the TPLF's ruling coalition, the EPRDF, and the formation of the Prosperity Party (PP) on December 1, 2019. Originally, the EPRDF coalition was dominated by the TPLF, with allied parties such as the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO) and the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM) of the time functioning as junior partners. However, the cooperation within the coalition was maintained through the promise of ethnic self-rule, yet centralization persisted under the guise of party discipline (Workineh, 2025). Following the transition, three former coalition parties (OPDO, ANDM, and SEPDM), combined with five other associated regional parties, established the PP. This decision that disintegrated the EPRDF did not sit well with TPLF's hardliners. They refused to join and decided to be excluded from the PP,

denouncing it as illegitimate. For the TPLF, the EPRDF has been prematurely dissolved, and the member coalitions are being turned into branches as a move toward new political power centralization by the PP (Tegbaru, 2021). For the TPLF, the formation of the PP was intended to collapse the EPRDF, which was formerly under its hegemonic control. For the TPLF, the EPRDF's hegemonic core, the formation of the PP signaled that the new regime wanted to destroy the economic, political, and security infrastructures they had controlled for 27 years (Blanchard, 2024). This is evident in the PP-fostered occupation of strategic political and economic sectors previously controlled by the TPLF (Wedekind, 2024). The formation of the PP caused the end of the TPLF's domination over the EPRDF, reopening struggles over the control of political power at the center and extractive resources in the peripheries, making it remain the regional ruling party in Tigray (Ogbazghi, 2026). Furthermore, when the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) recognized the PP, it sparked political power competition and ideological divides that have been manifested before.

Spurring new political frictions, TPLF's outrage heightened tensions between Addis Ababa and Mekelle. The federal government continued to accuse the TPLF of human rights crimes, while the TPLF depicted the PP as a unified centrist regime (Assefa, 2023). Besides, the decision to postpone the 2020 election by the federal government, citing COVID-19, sparked controversy. The timing of the decision to disband the EPRDF to form the PP was exacerbated by the fact that it came just months before the election, which had been postponed. The TPLF declared the decision to postpone the election unconstitutional and proceeded with state elections in September 2020, elevating tensions. The TPLF held a regional election in defiance of the federal government decision. This complicated the deep division and mistrust among political forces, including within the diluted EPRDF, the newly emerged PP, the sidelined TPLF, and other political forces operating in Ethiopia. In the process, with federal and state authorities challenging each other's legitimacy, a federal decision to change the leadership of troops stationed in Tigray became a flashpoint leading to the beginning of the Tigray war (Blanchard, 2024). This, for the federal government, was considered unprovoked and treasonous against national integrity and unity, while Tigray regional authorities claimed the right to exercise regional autonomy and self-defense against the federal government assault.

Thirdly, the structural factor of elite political polarization in post-2018 Ethiopia was Ethiopia's introduction of the federalism system. Ethiopia's ethnic-based federalism presents a complex

scenario, marked by both achievements and challenges. A significant challenge identified within this framework is the emergence of contestations among ethnic-based political elites (Workineh, 2025). This federal structure has served as a buffer against ethnic warfare due to past and continuing grievances led to ethnic polarization, political fragmentation, and competing nationalist ideologies (Ogbazghi, 2026). The federal model has failed to mitigate conflict and has acted as a structural driver of both direct and symbolic violence, exacerbating state fragility. Capitalization, politicization, and institutionalization of ethnolinguistic identity markers, compounded by the complexity of numerous layers of issues, actors, and dynamics, remained the root causes of these conflicts and instability in Ethiopia's multiethnic and highly polarized state (Yonas & Fana, 2025). Conflicts and violence related to resource extraction in peripheral regions remain common, encompassing various forms of local resistance that interact with increasingly ethnicized borderland and territorial conflicts, ethno-national insurgencies, and counterinsurgencies (Wedekind, 2024).

Specifically, since 2018, increasing violence and rising civil unrest have caused significant portions of Ethiopia to remain inaccessible. Ethiopia has been on a path of violent disintegration reminiscent of the Balkans, with armed insurgency destabilizing particularly the Tigray, Amhara, and Oromia regions (Østebø, 2025; Ogbazghi, 2026). This confronted the new regime and posed a significant threat to the state's stability, as the new regime's actual authority could not extend to the peripheries, putting Ethiopia on the verge of state collapse. This generated an "insecurity dilemma," where the presence of illegitimate and/or incapable authority, where both the regime and its contenders are interlocked in a sense of insecurity, and each party's effort to maximize its own security generates more insecurity (Yonas & Fana, 2025).

Together, the long-suppressed problems resurfaced and became uncontrolled, and the country continues to face multiple crises related to ethnic tensions and the distribution of power among political elites that resulted in instability in many parts of it. In general, among others, the 2018 political shift, the EPRDF's dissolution in 2019, the formation of PP, and the onset of violent conflicts in Amhara, Oromia, and Tigray regions are all complicated outcomes of elite power struggles complicating the political polarization in Ethiopia. These conflicts also led to a broader crisis of the Ethiopian state, indicating how the role of ethnicity and the agency of elites in politics could challenge reform measures by reigniting old and new rivalries.

Post-2018 intra-ethnic political polarizations in Ethiopia

The post-2018 political transition exposed layers of elite polarization at the macro, meso, and micro levels. At the macro level, elites are divided into two groups, with each supporting either GTT or CHT in defining political reform measures and the state's identity. At the meso level, inter-ethnic polarizations existed between Amhara and Oromo, as well as between Amhara and Tigray political elites. At the micro level, exacerbated elite polarizations are characterized as intra-ethnic polarizations among intra-Oromo, intra-Amhara, and intra-Tigray political elites, as stated below.

Intra-Oromo political elites' polarization

Intra-Oromo elites' discords are clashes between hardliners and soft-liners within both the ruling and opposition groups. The Oromo drive for political influence over the Ethiopian state has become more complicated since 2018, with earlier internal differences resurfacing.

The first reason is competing views among the Oromo elites on the contribution and ownership of the transition. The soft-liner Oromo ruling elite and certain opposition elites considered that the Oromo's historically categorized periphery status had changed as Oromos assumed the reins of state power. For these elites, the transition was the outcome of internal reforms prompted by political struggles within the former ruling coalition, the EPRDF, with little help from the opposition (Debela & Urgessa, 2025). However, for the hardliner opposition, the transition marked the end of their cumulative long-running struggle, followed by the widespread mobilization during the 2014–2018 protests, asserting that the reform measures disregarded contributions and recognition of their role, leading to disproportionate power-sharing and political representation at the regional and federal levels (FGD#02, 2023).

The second reason for the intra-Oromo political divide is differing viewpoints on reform proposals and their implementation. Diverging perspectives on reform measures stemming from the competing ideology of the elite have further contributed to the evolving narratives of the transition among Oromo elites. The ruling elites favor the reform measures as a new beginning toward change and optimism to establish a multinational federalism and multiparty democracy that address long-standing political conflicts and fulfill Oromo political aspirations in Ethiopia (FGD#04, 2023). In contrast, hardliner oppositions saw the transition as hijacked and mismanaged. The narratives of the reform measures have shifted toward reinstating an imperial system rather than establishing a multinational federalism, advancing toward a centralized imperial state (FGD#06, 2023). Some hardline oppositions like the OLF and the Oromo Federalist Congress

(OFC) argue that the formation of the PP is a move toward returning to pan-Ethiopianist unitarist rhetoric, and contend that the reform initiatives threaten the existing federal system and shatter rights enshrined within the prevailing federal system since 1991. Influential political activists, such as Jawar Mohammed, a former engine of the Qeerroo movement who later joined OFC, described the PP's formation as a shift from multinational federalism to a centralized state, accusing the leadership of steering the country back toward authoritarian rule (KII#11, 2023). For the opposition, the ruling elite are promoting unitary ideology, implying that the formation of PP could delegitimize the Oromo people's long-time quest for the right to self-determination. They saw it as an attempt to centralize state power to undermine principles of regional autonomy and ethnic self-governance; the renovation and monumentalization of the Imperial Palace is an indication of imperial nostalgia by the Oromo ruling elites (Asebe *et al*., 2022).

Besides the controversy over whether there was an election in 2019, the occurrence of COVID-19 also caused another display of the diverse positions among the Oromo elites. Although the 2020 parliamentary and regional elections in Oromia were expected to be competitive between the Oromia Prosperity Party (OPP), OLF, and OFC, the latter two parties boycotted the rescheduled election, citing widespread arrests and the closure of party offices as barriers to effective campaigning. They claimed that the ruling elites used the election process to consolidate power rather than to exercise democracy (KII#09, 2024). Although the OPP secured a Council of State at *Chaffee* Oromia and House of Peoples' Representatives seats in the parliament, the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) conflict escalated as it utilized the chance to operate as an insurgency, gaining considerable support when the opposition boycotted the election. Transition management and reform measures under the new regime caused Oromo elites to remain mistrustful of conflicting ideologies that were divided into two categories: civic resistance and military struggle. The opposition, like the OLF and OFC, opted for nonviolent measures against the ruling elite, such as boycotting reform initiatives like elections and national dialogue. Meanwhile, the OLA remains an armed group fighting for Oromo political aspirations in Ethiopia.

The third point of contention is related to mediation and negotiation efforts**.** In 2018, the OLF negotiated with Ethiopia's government in Eritrea, returned to the country, was delisted as a terrorist group proclaimed by the EPRDF parliament in 2011, and registered as an opposition political party to pursue its goals peacefully in 2019. In the process, the Oromo OLA, an armed group that split from the OLF and refused to give up arms, continues to operate in Oromia. OLA continues armed

struggle and claims that the much-expected political reform was quickly overturned when the government wanted to disarm them (Debela & Urgessa, 2025). Although OLA has repeatedly quested a third party-based peace negotiations with the Ethiopian government, the efforts to mediate peace have failed and led to a resurgence of violence. These failures stem from inconsistencies in the peace initiatives and disagreements among Oromo elites. First, there is a lack of procedural formalities and trust in negotiations among Oromo political actors regarding the Asmara peace deal. The absence of a publicly agreed-upon, signed peace agreement between the OLF and the Ethiopian government in Eritrea has fueled discord among Oromo elites (KII#02, 2023). The OLF/OLA accuses the government of using the process to centralize and consolidate power at all levels, whereas the ruling elite claims that, as part of its reform efforts, it allowed the OLF to return to Ethiopia after years of exile, on the condition that the OLF pursue its political objectives through peaceful means. Second, the internal divisions within the OLF, which resulted in a split, slowed the peace process, causing further disruption. Some OLF members like Kajela Mardasa and Ararso Bikila accepted the reform measures, were delisted from the terrorist list, and joined the government, while others remained steadfast in their opposition and armed struggle. This internal division has not only impaired the OLF, but it has also left the relationship between the OLF and its armed branch, the OLA, uncertain. Although the OLF registered as a formal political party, the OLA refused to disarm, citing mistrust and mistreatment of its combatants who had responded to government calls to encamp. This was complicated by fragmentation within the OLF, causing issues of multiple warring parties and their relationships following the contention in the peace efforts, which is the presence of rival factions within the OLA (FGD#04, 2023). This resulted in complexity among Oromo elites, exposing tensions in the peace process and political demands caused by deep-seated mutual antagonism. The third source of disagreement is the involvement of outside actors in the peace process. The Oromo ruling elite supports a national process, whilst the OLA advocates for neutral third-party mediation. Later in April 2023, the ruling elite agreed to hold peace discussions with the OLA outside of Ethiopia, with external mediators in attendance. Unfortunately, two rounds of talks in Tanzania (April/May and October/November) failed to reach an agreement, with both sides blaming each other (Debela & Urgessa, 2025). The OLA intended to expand its political influence in Oromia, proposing a power-sharing arrangement through a transitional administration until the next election. The government rejected this, insisting on the OLA's disarmament and reintegration into peaceful politics (KII#05, 2023). The peace talks ultimately failed because of disputes on important political matters, such as power-sharing, and

strong mistrust between the parties, as both the OLA and the ruling Oromo elites had a vested interest in retaining their political influence in the region. Together, Oromo elites' divergent expectations from the transition and suspicion of reform measures increased the gap between them. The ruling elites strove to maintain the status quo, opposing fundamental change, but attempted to work with moderate opposition parties to advocate for democratic change. This dynamic was further compounded by internal disagreements within the opposition. While some moderate opposition forces wanted to collaborate with government reformers, hardliners refused to compromise, regarding the entire political system as fundamentally illegitimate. The Oromo elites' lack of political dialogue and negotiated transition arrangements exacerbates Oromia's insecurity and political crises, compounding the Oromo political demand in Ethiopia.

Intra-Amhara political elite's polarizations

The intra-Amhara elite discords since 2018 emanate from understanding the ideology of Amhara nationalism, ownership, and expectations from the transition, fallout from the 2020-2022 Tigray war, and the rising status of belligerent nationalism.

First, in terms of ideology, intra-Amhara elite disagreements stem from viewing Amhara nationalism as both an ethnic identity and a supra-ethnic category. Some believe that the political developments since the 1970s in Ethiopia have galvanized an Amhara ethnic consciousness, while others believe that Amhara nationalism is a type of supra-ethnic nationalism that fits into pan-Ethiopian nationalism (KII#04, 2023). For the pan-Ethiopianist Amhara elites, the formation of the Amhara region in 1991 has threatened the Amhara identity. The implementation of ethnically restructured federalism "leaving out their ancestral lands from their control dispersed Amharas in different regions exposing them to a lack of appropriate political participation and representation" (KII#11, 2023). The rallying point for the emergence of Amhara nationalism, with widespread dissatisfaction with Ethiopia's post-1970s political system, however, created an interrelated divergence among the Amhara elites. The pan-Ethiopian Amhara mobilization that aspires to unify them at national level became more popular than Amhara ethnic nationalism that is largely confined to regional self-identification and administrations, as evidenced by the All-Amhara People's Organization (AAPO) and Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM) failure to successfully organize the Amhara (Yared & Tezera, 2025). This has led to a growing sense of defensive Amhara nationalism that emerged later from a "security dilemma" that the Amhara faced

because of the EPRDF regime's continuation of the "Oppressor/Oppressed" narrative (Bantanyehu & Ishiyama, 2021).

These divergences in the growth of Amhara nationalism revealed two key points. First, the Amhara ethnic identity was long submerged into broader Ethiopian nationalism, making it impossible to discern between the two, resulting in a lack of clarity in the Amhara definition, which slowed the rise of ethnic nationalism based on that identification (Semir, 2021). Second, through the political process, the concept of Amharaness has undergone a significant transformation from a toponym, religion, or soldier to an ethnonym, with the growing recognition of the structural constraints of pan-Ethiopian mobilization also playing a significant role in instigating the Amharaness sentiment (Yared & Tezera, 2025). This was followed by two major fronts of Amhara elites fighting for the cause of Amhara nationalism. First, the reformists, the ANDM, began to support the youth protest movements since 2016, infusing them with strong Amhara nationalist rhetoric and changing its name to the Amhara Democratic Party (ADP) in 2018, vowing to genuinely represent and work for the Amhara. Second, Amhara ethnic nationalism became a stronghold of Ethiopian nationalism, and competition with it gave rise to Amhara ethnic consciousness. Organized agents pushed the ethno-nationalist cause forward, exemplified by the National Movement of Amhara (NAMA), which claims to defend the Amhara national interest and was founded in 2018 (Semir, 2021). This was evidenced by the Amhara elites who started to produce works on the origins and values of Amhara identity, as Yared and Tezera (2025) attempted to compile them. These works were crucial in evoking Amhara ethnic solidarity, including "*Neftegna Sinignoch*" (Neftegna Verses), "Gionawinet: Ye Amara Menasha ena Medaresha" (Gihonism: Manifesto of the New Age Amhara), "Amhara: Yemaninetachin Amd" (Glory of the Amhara: Pillars of Our Identity), "The Amhara Holocaust," and "The Amhara Genocide".

However, the contradictions of the Amhara nationalist movement were further highlighted by NAMA's leaders' Amharaness. This was viewed as a strategic act of essentialism in which Amhara identity is constructed discursively rather than on a primordial basis. The organization brought a paradigm shift in Amhara ethnic consciousness and nationalism, drawing criticism for its radical political narratives from Ethiopianist and other ethno-nationalist camps (KII#09, 2023). Thus, with the rise of NAMA, the Amhara ethnic nationalism movement experienced a crisis, with an underlying conflict engulfed in rivalry between elites who support Amhara ethnonationalism and those who support pan-Ethiopian nationalism. While NAMA leadership has faced criticism and

growing internal conflict as its top members occupy positions in the federal and regional administrations, the Amhara Prosperity Party's (APP) popular support has also declined (Atrsaw, 2023). This further impacted both the opposition NAMA and the incumbent APP's political bases. In contrast to certain ADP officials who, at the very least, agree with the NAMA political goal, other NAMA elites and their affiliates have utilized close collaboration with the regional ruling party to increase their power ever since.

The second factor influencing intra-Amhara elites is ownership and expectation of the political transition. For reformists, ANDM, and Amhara opposition, the Amhara protest movement since 2016 has played an important part in the 2018 regime change (Tadesse, 2023). The Amhara protests provided a condensed time and space for the articulation of Amhara political demands that contributed to regime change. Thus, these Amhara elites backed the new regime on promises of democracy, political representation for Amharas living outside of the region, constitutional revision, and addressing identity and regional border issues (Agenang, 2024; Karr, 2025). They united behind the transition measures under the umbrella of pan-Ethiopian rhetoric, siding with it against other ethnonationalists with whom they had long-standing political and territorial disputes (ARC, 2024). This, however, did not continue as predicted, exposing internal disagreements among them about ownership and expectations for the 2018 political transition.

The pan-Amhara ethno-nationalist claim of victimhood and anti-Amhara narrative, which portrays Amharas as historical oppressors bent on dominating, persisted and even increased since 2018 (Kassie, 2024). For them, the new regime consolidating power ignored the interests and demands of Amhara protest movements, undermined Amhara's regional autonomy, and persistent political dissatisfaction (Atrsaw & Yared, 2024). This has resulted in the continuation of youth-led protests in the region, with the belief that the new regime has mishandled the political transition and broken promises, and that the age of political repression has persisted at its expense. For instance, "the protection of Amharas residing outside of the region has not been addressed, since they continue to be targeted" (KII#02, 2023). The region was engulfed in rivalry between supporters of Amhara nationalism, those who support Ethiopian nationalism, and the Fano militias. APP's public support has dwindled, while NAMA leadership has come under criticism and increasing internal strife.

The third factor influencing intra-Amhara elites is the response to the political transition. The political developments after 2018, including a failure to address Amhara demands, a sense of isolation from the Pretoria agreement, and the decision to disband the Amhara Special Forces

(ASF), were the main points of dissatisfaction. In response to this, soft-liners from the NAMA and APP members chose a nonviolent strategy and continued to cooperate with the government. Hardliners continued to challenge the government using armed struggle, supported by civil resistance, which contributed to the emergence of Amhara's belligerent nationalism, driven by a mix of triggering circumstances and long-standing grievances. The Amhara resistance gave rise to the Fano struggle, which began as a protest movement in 2016 and adopted a more violent and ethno-nationalist stance after 2018 (Atrsaw & Yared, 2024; Karr, 2025). The violent side of Amhara nationalism began to show when Lieutenant General Asaminew Tsige, the then Head of the Regional Security Bureau, and Tefera Mamo, the then Commander of the ASF, began to increase the size and capacity of the ASF by training Fano. These commanders started enlisting ethno-nationalist combatants into Fano groups to defend and further Amhara demands, including resolving land disputes and protecting their people who live both within and outside the region (Karr, 2025). Although they took on the responsibility of protecting Amhara interests, their fervent and aggressive nationalist rhetoric outpaced that of the regional ruling elites, resulting in a schism between the two (Semir, 2021). This schism resulted in the deaths of the then Amhara region president, Dr. Ambachew Mekonnen, Lieutenant General Asaminew Tsige, and Girma Yeshitla, the leader of the APP. While softliner APP elites blamed Asaminew for organizing Ambachew's death in a regional coup attempt, hardliner Amhara political elites claimed that the ruling elites engineered the entire incident to rein in a more assertive Amhara region (ARC, 2024). This clearly indicates how intra-ethnic political elites' rivalry could result in trust minimization, reducing the possibility of intra- elite bargaining, and making members of identical groups to each other with growing suspicion and hostile.

The Amhara elite's internal split over how to manage the transition and the expanded militarism of Amhara nationalism remained a source of intra-Amhara elite strife that also resulted in division among the Fano groups. The rise of belligerent nationalism created internal discord among the Fano groups, who remained disunited and had varying goals due to their political, religious, and birthplace differences (Karr, 2025). For instance, the Fano are organized by birthplace, such as Gondar, Gojjam, Shewa, Wollo, and others. This distinction between them appears to be that Amhara elites avoid identifying themselves with a strong sense of belonging to the united Amhara, preferring to identify themselves on a provincial basis. The death of the region's president at the time, Dr. Ambachew Mekonnen, exemplified Amhara intra-elite competition, triggering age-old

regionalism and pitting the *Gondarite* against the *Gojjame* identity (ARC, 2024). The conflict between Fano groups and their diaspora followers stems from each group's desire to govern depending on their birthplace, resulting in a fragmented insurgency and a decentralized command system linked to the power struggle between the Amhara region's many provincial identities (Atrsaw, 2023; EPO, 2024). This has kept the Fano movement fragmented, divided, and constructed from the ground up, with no official organizational structure to unite organizations across the Amhara region. Besides, Fano lacks a common political standpoint associated with a particular ideology, yet all of them rose to prominence by pushing for the interests of the Amhara. Some Fano assert that "መነሻችን አማራ፣ መድረሻችን ኢትዮጵያ" [Our starting point is Amhara, and our destination is Ethiopia], and other Fano groups claim that "መነሻችን፣ አማራ መድረሻችን አማራ" [Our starting point is Amhara, and our destination is Amhara] (KII#14, 2024; Yared and Tezera, 2025). Fano's more radical members gain support campaigning for territorial issues and Amhara ethno-nationalism in its most extreme forms. On the spectrum, some advocate for pan-Ethiopianism, positioning Fano as the force capable of preserving Ethiopia to protect the interests of Amhara under the shadow of Ethiopia (EPO, 2024). Their political ambitions also vary, with some preferring to dismantle the new regime or to hold political peace negotiations with it (Atrsaw & Yared, 2024). The lack of a common ideology and internal friction hindered them from functioning as one group. This suggests that the Amhara elites diverge in their ideological framework, implying that the Fano are separated not only by political cause but also by provincialism and power struggles. This exacerbated the strong conflict between advocates of minimalistic Amhara ethnic nationalism, which is limited to provincial concerns, and those who promote a maximalist pan-Ethiopian nationalism to protect Amhara interests at the national level, such as the NAMA, the APP, Fano organizations, and others. These differences among Amhara elites demonstrate a deep commitment to personal destinies that differ from the group's, a product of the ideological, regional, and religious components of Amhara nationalism and the Fano movement. The divergence among them is not just that they claim both identities, but that they also prefer one over the other, failing to find the proper balance between them. Lack of unification among the intra-Amhara elite, combined with Fano's decentralized structure, has made it difficult for the unified Amhara movement to leverage its strength into political power.

The fourth element contributing to the rising intra-Amhara elite dispute is the impact of the Tigray war, the government's decision to disband the ASF, and the response to the announced state of

emergency. When the Tigray war ended, disagreements among Amhara elites re-erupted due to a struggle over representation in the peace pact, uncertainty about the fate of disputed territories (mentioned below), unmet war expectations, and political insecurity.

In terms of *representation,* the opposition and the ruling elites are divided into two separate groups to take part in the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA), peace negotiations between the TPLF and the federal government. For the hardline Amharas, authentic Amhara representatives are excluded from the Pretoria agreement, though under the auspices of the Amhara Association of America (AAA), members of opposition political parties, civil societies, and political activists formed the Amhara People's Negotiations Delegation (APND) to stand for Amhara interests in the peace talks (KII#11, 2023). On the other side, the Amhara ruling elites initially appointed members of the APP, namely Demeke Mekonnen, Temesgen Tiruneh, and Getachew Jember, as members of the negotiating team. This has led to the disintegration of the coalition of Amhara elites. Hardliners questioned the CoHA's legitimacy and were dubious of the cease-fire deal, stating that it excluded Amhara delegates or that they were not properly represented in the process (KII#14, 2023). Furthermore, when the final negotiating team was narrowed down to Getachew Jember from the APP, along with Gideon Timotheos and Redwan Hussien, this deepened the sense of marginalization in Amhara elites, who believe that the Amhara constituencies were sidelined by denying them representation in the talks. The exclusion of Amhara voices from the Pretoria peace talks increased their uncertainties (Tadesse, 2023). The CoHA was seen as a new pact against the Amhara, framed along with other structural factors as a pact of war between the TPLF and OPP against the APP, where the sentiment of betrayal was fueled by the unresolved identity questions and the security threats posed by the existence of a well-armed TDF (Agenang, 2024).

In terms of *unfulfilled expectations* during the Tigray war, the CoHA caused fear among the Amhara elites. The Amhara forces, including regional police, ASF, and Fano militias, joined with the federal government to advance their own political agendas, claiming that they had unfulfilled expectations of the pre-2018 regime and to rectify the Amhara domination discourse (Ayalew, 2025). This was the first to topple the TPLF, whom they believed was responsible for the 1991 federal system that fueled anti-Amhara narratives. Second, to control the disputed territory along the Amhara and Tigray regional borders, which includes the entire Western Tigray zone (Welkait, Tsegede, and Humera), the Northwestern Tigray zone (Tselemt), and the Southern Tigray zone (Raya-Azebo and Alamata) (EPO, 2024). Although the Tigray conflict provided a short

opportunity for Fano to take authority over some of the contested territories, the intra-Amhara coalition crumbled after that, despite being wartime allies. When the war ended, Amhara hardliners argued that they were not well represented in the Pretoria peace accord. They claimed that the signed CoHA hasn't recognized and resolved their territorial claims, citing Article 10 of the agreement, which commits the parties to "resolving issues of contested areas in accordance with the [FDRE] Constitution." They expected more political clout and long-term control over contested areas after collaborating with federal forces during the Tigray war. The purpose was to resolve uncertainties about the fate of the disputed territories, asserting a historic claim to these areas as fertile ground with gold deposits and a lucrative cash crop (KII#11, 2023). This has strained Amhara elites relations due to uncertainties surrounding the disputed territories, adding to the security conundrum that they are dealing with. For the hardliners, CoHA is a political betrayal that turned Fano from a crucial ally into a direct enemy.

Fano's distrust of the governing Amhara elites, thus, furthered fears that they would force them to give up key territories they claim and had gained during the Tigray conflict because of the withdrawal of federal soldiers, which could expose Amhara forces to TPLF counterattacks (KII#02, 2023). Besides, the way the CoHA deal was pursued and the delayed pace of its implementation, including the failure to achieve accountability and justice for abuses against Amhara civilians during the war, heightened Amhara concerns (ARC, 2024; Karr, 2025). This was coupled with what they believe is the Amhara lack of freedom of movement, which is escalating, and the overall security situation for Amhara people in various parts of Ethiopia is deteriorating (Atrsaw & Yared, 2024). They also accuse the APP of disregarding ethnic Amhara deaths and displacement while promoting a pro-Oromo agenda, claiming that the federal government is advancing Oromo interests at the expense of their political demands (ARC, 2024; ICG, 2023). Conversely, the Oromo hardliners and OLA also accuse the federal government of siding with the Amhara political interests. Both cases are indicative of how intra-ethnic and extra-ethnic elite polarizations in Ethiopia reinforce each other, complicating the level societal and political polarizations at horizontal and vertical levels.

In terms of *political insecurity*, tensions between Amhara political elites resurfaced after the CoHA, when the federal government attempted to disarm Fano and disband the ASF. Following the peace pact, the federal government announced plans to disband the ASF, disarm Fano, and integrate them into federal forces. For the Amhara political elites, including a significant portion

of the regional ruling party and regional security forces, this was considered a severe danger and sparked opposition in the region (ARC, 2024). Although Amhara elites had previously backed the disbandment of regional special forces, the decision was coupled with growing Amhara suspicion of the federal government. Hence, the decision to dissolve and/or demobilize the ASF sparked violent resistance, creating suspicion among Amhara nationalists. For the hardline Amhara elites, the decision to integrate Amhara forces into conventional security agencies was a premature and untimely measure, and a scheme to weaken their forces that would leave them defenseless against potential attacks by the TPLF and/or others (Tadesse, 2023; Karr, 2025). The decision was against sympathy for the Fano insurgency, which rose to prominence which it gained during the Tigray conflict, meaning that the conflict assisted Fano in mobilizing young people, equipping them with adequate weaponry, and allowing them to reappear as a powerful Amhara force (Atrsaw & Yared, 2024).

Though the Amhara ruling elites demanded that the Fano disarm, offering them jobs, plots of land for small-scale investments and farming, and loans, it worsened other Amhara elites' discontent, which erupted into a crisis. When the ruling elites sided with the order to fold regional forces and disarm the Fano, opposition and Fano groups rejected it, viewing it as an attempt by the ruling elites to weaken the Amhara political quest. This contributed to the renewal of popular support for the Fano insurgency and resulted in the breakdown of the regional government's political and security infrastructure, causing the federal government to establish a state of emergency (SoE), which was first imposed in August 2023 and extended in February. The declared SoE, intended to reduce tensions, has contributed to the exacerbation of the security situation, which placed Amhara elites in a security quandary. Softliner Amhara elites, without opposing the SoE declaration, argued that the government should use peaceful dialogue with Amhara dissidents to resolve the crisis in the region by considering legitimate Amhara demands, rather than attempting to resolve a political problem through force (ICG, 2023). Hardliners do not welcome the SoE, citing their feud with the TPLF over the contested territories, the violence during the Tigray war, and the fact that the TDF has not been totally disarmed (Agenang, 2024). Along with this, the ruling APP's basic administrative institutions crumbled, leaving the elites weak and divided, putting them in an increasingly difficult position, with Amhara hardliners accusing them of ignoring Amhara demands. Although the Amhara regional council then organized a new government, hardliners remained skeptical of it.

Intra-Tigray political elites' polarizations

The resurfaced intra-Tigray political rivalry from post-2018 can be classified into two ranges of time ranges: *from 2018-2020 and post-2022.*

First, Abiy's bid for PM was not unanimously accepted by the then TPLF politburo members. For instance, Getachew Assefa, the former national intelligence chief, opposed Abiy's bid and attempted to block his nomination, suspecting that it could weaken the TPLF's influence in Ethiopia's politics (Appiah *et al.*, 2023). But other TPLF central committees and the public in Tigray welcomed the PM, as vows of support for the new government were everywhere. Getachew Reda and Debretsion Gebremichael, major players in the TPLF politburo, complemented the PM's approach to governance and reform efforts as remarkable accomplishments (Awet, 2025). However, the Tigray elites started to show divergence on the reform measures taken by the new government, referring to the rapprochement with Eritrea. When Abiy and Isaias reached a reunion between their two nations, it sparked intra-Tigray political divisions. Getachew and Debretsion applauded Abiy's approach to Eritrea, acknowledging his leadership in breaking the standoff with Eritrea, which Meles was unable to do until his death (*see* Awet, 2025). However, other Tigray elites saw the rapprochement as a primarily anti-TPLF alliance based on Isaias' earlier antipathy (Appiah *et al.*, 2023). The rapprochement, once again, highlighted the continuation of intra-TPLF conflict that had existed between the soft-liner and hardliner TPLF elites throughout the Ethio-Eritrean war from 1998 to 2000.

Secondly, the Tigray elites started to show divergence on the reform measures taken by the new regime in the national security sectors. Initially, TPLF's hegemonic control and domination over the EPRDF started in 1991 when the TPLF dominated its armed forces by providing two-thirds of the soldiers**.** Then the TPLF, the EPRDF's hegemonic core, was able to control economic, political, and security infrastructures for 27 years (Blanchard, 2024; Ogbazghi, 2026). For instance, pre-2018, 60% of Full Generals, 50% of Lieutenant Generals, 45% of Major Generals, 58% of Colonels, 66% of Lieutenant Colonels, and all commanders of each command were Tigrayan (Awet, 2025). However, following the transition, the federal government's attempt to reform the security sectors to balance the ethnic composition, which the Tigrayan military chiefs and intelligence officials controlled before 2018, caused the TPLF elites to divide. Tigrayan hardliners like Getachew Assefa tried to block the federal government's decision to reform political and security sectors and to change the leadership of national military troops stationed in Tigray

(Appiah *et al.,* 2023; Blanchard, 2024). However, General Samora Yunis, the then military chief of staff, was among the Tigray elites who justified the necessity of the security sector reforms (Sew, 2025). In addition to the disputes over the necessity of the security sector reforms, key TPLF security officials were split up when the ENDF Chief of Staff and Head of Security were replaced, and a republican guard was installed as part of the reform measures. This has become a flashpoint, leading to more suspicion and rivalry among TPLF security and military elites.

Thirdly, the political rivalry among the Tigray elite is due to the distribution of power between the federal government and regional administrations. The new regime disbanded the EPRDF and founded the PP, which the TPLF refused to join. This has led to divisions among Tigray elites in terms of economic and political power rivalry, as well as ideological differences. For hardliners, the reconfiguration of the EPRDF to terminate three decades of TPLF domination is more than a political rebranding; it is a fundamental shift of economic power, followed by the TPLF's systematic economic disinheritance (Ethiopian Tribune, 2025). The strategic political and economic sectors previously owned by the TPLF started to be controlled by the new ruling elites of the PP (Wedekind, 2024). Hence, the TPLF's established hegemonic control over economic, political, and security affairs of Ethiopia faced a challenge that could replace its dominance, reopening struggles over the control of economic and political power. The collapse of the EPRDF and the creation of the PP resulted in divergent views, with the hardline TPLF believing that the new regime is attempting to centralize and impose military authority to restore a centralized Ethiopia (Assefa, 2023). For hardliners, the new regime is pursuing a counter-hegemonic praxis aimed at undoing and deconstructing everything inherited from the past to stymie the TPLF and promote alternative ideologies and a new consciousness, whereas for soft-liners, the post-2018 reforms are a process of nation-building, pushing for a new social compact that allows for a more inclusive center and self-rule in Ethiopia (KII#04, 2024).

The postponement of the 2020 national elections also added fuel to the fire. The decision to postpone the election set the stage for another crisis between the TPLF elites. The TPLF hardliners unilaterally held regional elections after the federal government halted funding transfers to the region in defiance of the federal government and without the involvement of the NEBE (Mullaw, 2024). However, by late October 2020, mobilizing military forces in anticipation of conflict began, and these confrontations escalated dramatically, developing into a full-scale war on November 4, 2020, dividing the TPLF elites into two distinct positions. When the war started, soft-line TPLF

members viewed the hardliners' actions as a rebellion against the government. Conversely, hardline elites framed their struggle as a fight for self-government, arguing that the new administration was operating a federation without Tigray and excluding Tigrayan representation from federal institutions. Although the House of Peoples' Representatives and the House of Federation lacked representation from Tigray, several Tigrayan officials continued to hold senior positions at the federal level. During this time, intra-TPLF political frictions became even more evident when key soft-liners, such as Dr. Abreham Belay, were appointed to high-level positions, like Minister of Defense. Meanwhile, several prominent hardliners such as Asmelash Woldesellassie, a former Member of Parliament; Abay Tsehaye, a founding member and former Minister of Federal Affairs; and Seyoum Mesfin, a founding member of the TPLF and former Minister of Foreign Affairs, were found dead under unclear circumstances (KII#07, 2023).

The second round of intra-Tigray elite polarization emerged in November 2022 following the signing of the CoHA between the Ethiopian government and the TPLF. This agreement triggered a fresh division within the TPLF leadership, splitting it into two hostile factions: one led by party chairman Dr. Debretsion Gebremichael, and the other by Getachew Reda, the party's vice chairman and head of the Tigray Interim Regional Administration (TIRA) (Hailemariam, 2024). The main reason behind this division is the controversy regarding the implementation of the CoHA and the subsequent power struggle and political mistrust among them. Getachew Reda, who had been the lead negotiator in Pretoria, became the leader of the newly established TIRA that is expected to execute the implementation of the CoHA, along with the federal government. He won the position by a single vote, competing with Debretsion, who was the chairman of the TPLF during the Tigray war. The relationship between the chairman of the TPLF and the interim president of TIRA soon changed into accusations and competition for political power. Debretsion started accusing Getachew's administration of being loyal to the federal government, betraying the interests of the Tigray people, and defaming the reputation of the TPLF. In return, Getachew accuses Debretsion of using Tigrayan issues to legitimize a brazen power grab (ICG, 2025). The effectiveness of TIRA to safeguard against the risks of plunging the region into further upheaval remained limited by factional disputes, political tensions, and mistrust that re-erupted between Tigray elites. This heightened rivalry among them caused the TIRA to be less functional. TIRA failed to function effectively at the grassroots level, was limited to the cabinet level, and was rejected by most zonal and district administrations, worsened by ongoing intra-party rivalry and disagreements among the

TPLF leadership (Hailemariam, 2024). TIRA's inability to penetrate the TPLF's established political structure, along with its lack of legitimacy, rendered it ineffective, as it was almost hijacked by existing networks, compromising its governance capabilities.

The rupture deepened in August 2024, when party chair Debretsion unilaterally convened the 14th TPLF Congress without broad consensus or recognition from the NEBE (Yassin, 2025). This once again complicates the implementation of CoHA on the one hand and the relationship between TPLF and the federal government on the other side. As a result, tensions heightened, and the TPLF, led by Debretsion, strengthened its hold on Mekelle, and the TIRA was forced to change its leader when Getachew Reda flew to Addis Ababa and later assumed the position of the PM's advisor on Horn of Africa Affairs. Then the TPLF divided into two political groups in June 2025, when the Getachew team established a new regional party called Tigray Democratic Solidarity, or Simeret. This indicates that the relationship between the TPLF and the federal government has been re-intensified. TPLF started to lose recognition from the NEBE, whereas Simeret has received provisional election board registration from its inception.

This renewed split of TPLF is the result of its long history of internal disagreement. As Teklebrhan (2024) summarized it, the TPLF's internal rivalry stems from its use of democratic centralism as a weapon of control, stifling debate and labeling dissenters as factionalists "ኣንጃ/ዝተሸኽሉ/ፅግዕተኛ ምብስባስ". This cycle of crisis and suppression has been represented in the countless internal political crises throughout the history of the TPLF, notably the crisis of "Hinfishfish"/Spoilers in 1976, "Stagnation" in 1985, "Bonaparte" in 2000, and the more current "Parasitic Decay" in 2024, all of which followed a similar trend (*Ibid*).

Specifically, the post-2018 Tigray elites' rivalry has yet to be resolved or handled through negotiation, as the strategic stalemate and power struggles among them have intensified. In Tigray, the TPLF continued to experience internal divisions and a decline at the top. The opposition has also struggled to earn public confidence due to a lack of strategic leadership and political maturity that emphasizes power acquisition above programmatic substance (Sew, 2025). Tigray elites continued to be plagued by networking, deceit, intrigue, and conspiracies, lacking the ability to resolve internal conflicts (Hailemariam, 2024). All factions compete, stretched by internal crises for political power and the quest for legitimacy to rule, focusing on power conflicts and economic gains in the region's precarious political climate.

Conclusion

Ethiopia's political elites remain deeply divided, a persistent reality that continued through the 2018 political transition, underscoring that elite division remains the most significant impediment to political reform. This post-2018 political landscape is characterized by two major features: initial enthusiasm for peace and democracy, followed by disillusionment as reform measures oscillated between authoritarianism and civil conflict. The new regime, which combines authoritarian characteristics with a willingness to embrace liberal democratic rhetoric, has been mired in political transition. The initial liberalizing policies created some political space, inspiring hope for democratization. However, divergent expectations among political elites coupled with the absence of a negotiated political transition roadmap contributed to renewed political divisions at macro, meso, and micro levels.

Centered on conflicting ideological narratives, the lack of pragmatic political negotiation weakened the post-2018 political transition. The reform measures were weakened by the power struggle between political elites, the re-emergence of identity-based conflicts and tensions, historical discords, and political discourses. Reignited old rivalries and the invention of new ones by the political elites contributed to the protracted conflicts in various parts of Ethiopia. Specifically, since 2018, Ethiopia's democratization process has been hampered by intra-elite competition within the country's most powerful regions: Tigray, Oromia, and Amhara, resulting in complex contestations across all levels. These elites have competed within their respective inner circles (intra-ethnic, i.e., intra-Oromo, intra-Amhara, and intra-Tigray) while interpreting and negotiating political reform measures and redefining state identity.

Resulting from this political elite's polarization, the transition has yet to reach a negotiated political settlement, resulting in the disintegration and instability of the political elite. The instrumentalization of this turbulent transition process has generated unprecedented political challenges, with conflicts across the three regions threatening to derail Ethiopia's progress. In Ethiopia's political polarization since 2018, the agency of elites has remained a main source of conflict, leading to complex insecurities that have overshadowed the political reforms. Persistent elite polarization continues to threaten the state's political and security sustainability, fueling the violence at the root of Ethiopia's unrest. In the process, political, ideological, and economic rivalries among elites have served as both drivers and instruments of conflict, demonstrating the elites failure to foster an inclusive national identity or achieve sustainable political settlements.

This article concludes that the nature of Ethiopia's post-2018 regime, the dynamics of elite polarization, and the barriers to democratic deepening necessitate a deeper analysis of the regime's structural problems. A broad consensus to maintain democracy as "the only game in town" is lacking, making the post-2018 regime inherently fragile and unpredictable. Unless a comprehensive political settlement and inclusive dialogue are developed to reconcile the divides among Ethiopia's political elites, political stability will remain elusive, ultimately undermining any potential benefits of political reforms. Therefore, a consensus to maintain the political transition requires developing an institutionalized theory of change that enables managing the divides among Ethiopia's political elites.

References

Abbink, J. (2010). Political Culture in Ethiopia: A balance sheet of post-1991 ethnically based federalism. Leiden University: African Studies Centre. ASC Info sheet 8/2010.

Abbink, J. (2011). Ethnic-based federalism and ethnicity in Ethiopia: reassessing the experiment after 20 years. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 5(4), 596–618. https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2011.642516.

Abebe, D. (2021). Conflict Trend Analysis: Western Oromia. Rift Valley Institute. Ethiopia Peace Research Facility (PRF), https://riftvalley.net/publication/conflict-trend-analysis-western-oromia/.

Afriyie, F. A., Ayangbah, S., & Effah, K. O. (2023). Diagnosing Ethiopia's Tigray War: Reverberations in the Horn of Africa. *Insight on Africa*. https://doi.org/10.1177/09750878231170177.

Agenang, K. (2024). Analyzing conflict in the Amhara region: Insights from frustration-aggression Theory. *London School of Economics.* https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2024/04/17/analysing-conflict-in-the-amhara-region-insights-from-frustration-aggression-theory/

Alene, K., & Veneranda, M. (2024). TPLF's annexation of Wolkait, Ethiopia: motivations, strategies, and interests. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 10(1). https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2024.2376859.

Asebe, R. (2021). Self-Determination, Multinational Federalism and an Emerging Threat in Ethiopia: A Decolonial Approach. *Northeast African Studies, 21(2), 57–82.* https://www.jstor.org/stable/48697614.

Assefa, F. (2023). Federalism, devolution, and territorially based cleavages in Africa: Does institutional design matter? In A. F. Charles Manga Fombad, *Contemporary Governance Challenges in the Horn of Africa*. Routledge, 83-131.

Asylum Research Centre (ARC). (2024). Ethiopia Query Response: Situation in the Amhara Region (January 2022-February 2024).

https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2108104/ARC_Query_response_Amhara_2024_FINAL.pdf.

Atrsaw, N. (2023). Amhara Region. Rift Valley Institute, Ethiopia Peace Research Facility (PRF). PRF-Conflict-Trend-Report_-Amhara-Region_FINAL-reduced-3.pdf

Atrsaw, N. and Yared, D. (2024). Understanding the Fano insurgency in Ethiopia's Amhara Region. Rift Valley Institute, Ethiopia Peace Research Facility (PRF). https://riftvalley.net/publication/understanding-the-fano-insurgency-in-ethiopias-amhara-region/

Awet, H. (2025). Tigray's Dilemma: Historical Roots and Contemporary Dynamics, in Tariku, Y., & Gebresenbet, F. (Eds.). *Ethiopia's Insecurity Complex: Protest, Transition, and War* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003584971.

Ayalew, Y. (2025). Can Domestic Initiatives End the Conflict in Ethiopia's Amhara? *Social Science Research Council.* https://kujenga-amani.ssrc.org/2025/04/17/can-domestic-initiatives-end-the-conflict-in-ethiopias-amhara-region/.

Bach, J.-N. (2014). EPRDF's Nation-Building: Tinkering with convictions and pragmatism. *Cadernos de Estudos Africanos,* Volume 27, 103-126. http://cea.revues.org/1501.

Bantanyehu, S. and Ishiyama, J. (2021). Political Transition and the Rise of Amhara Nationalism in Ethiopia. *Journal of Asian and African Studies, 56(5), 1036-1050.* https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/00219096211015322?journalCode=jasa.

Belay, A., and Kefelegn, T. (2025). Targeting the unarmed: Why Tigrayan armed groups committed violence against civilian Amharas during the war in northern Ethiopia? *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, Volume 11.

Berhanu, G. (2022). Fano: A Living Savior of the Amhara People and the Ethiopian. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal.*

Cochrane, L., & Asnake, K. (2019). Discussing the 2018/19 Changes in Ethiopia: Asnake Kefale. *NokokoPod,* Institute of African Studies, Carleton University, 1-16.

Debela, F. and Urgessa, D. (2025). From Protest Movements to Armed Insurgency: The Dynamics of Conflict and Insecurity in Oromia, Ethiopia, in Tariku, Y., & Gebresenbet, F. (Eds.). *Ethiopia's Insecurity Complex: Protest, Transition, and War* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003584971.

Dereje, F. (2023). Epistemological debates and ideological fault lines in Ethiopia. Rift Valley Institute, Ethiopia Peace Research Facility. https://riftvalley.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Epistemological-Debates_Final-1.pdf.

Ethiopian Peace Observatory. (2024). The pursuit of peace in the Amhara region - June 2024. ACLED. https://acleddata.com/update/pursuit-peace-amhara-region-june-2024.

Ethiopian Tribune. (2025). TPLF's Fall from Grace – The Economics of Power Redistribution in Post-EPRDF Ethiopia. *Ethiopian Tribune.*

Gebreluel, G. (2023). Ideology, grand strategy, and the rise and decline of Ethiopia's regional status. *International Affairs*, Volume 99, Issue 3, 1127-1147.

Hailemariam, G. (2024). TPLF's Intra-Party Crisis: Possibility of Survival or Demise?

International Crisis Group (ICG). (2023). Ethiopia's Ominous New War in Amhara. *International Crisis Group*. Document #2100864. https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2100864/b194-ethiopia-new-war-amhara_0.pdf.

International Crisis Group (ICG). (2025). Ethiopia and Eritrea Slide Closer to War amid Tigray Upheaval. Report Document #2124585. https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/ethiopiaeritrea/ethiopia-and-eritrea-slide-closer-war-amid-tigray-upheaval.

Karr, L. (2025). Africa File, September 26, 2024: Fano Offensive in Ethiopia's Amhara; Egypt Arms Somalia; Rebel Drones in Mali; Burkina Thwarts Another Coup. *The Critical Threats Project.*https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/africa-file-september-26-2024-fano-offensive-in-ethiopias-amhara-egypt-arms-somalia-rebel-drones-in-mali-burkina-thwarts-another-coup.

Kassie, A. (2024). Ethiopia's Amhara Conflict Could Spark Civil War. *Foreign Policy.* https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/03/06/ethiopia-amhara-conflict-civil-war/.

Lanchard, L. P. (2024). *Ethiopia: In Brief.* Report, Congressional Research Service (CRS). https://www.congress.gov/crs_external_products/R/PDF/R47898/R47898.3.pdf.

Lavers, T. (2024). *Ethiopia's 'Developmental State': Political Order and Distributive Crisis.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Levine, D. (1974). *Greater Ethiopia: The Evolution of a Multi-ethnic Society*. London: University of Chicago Press.

Loukeris, K. (2004). Contending political ideologies in Ethiopia after 1991: The role of intellectuals. *Polis, Revue Camerounaise de science politique,* Vol. 12.

Markakis. J. (2011). Ethiopia: The last two frontiers. Eastern Africa Series, Vol. 10. *Boydell & Brewer Ltd.* https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7722/j.ctt81fnz

Marzagora. S. (2017). History in twentieth-century Ethiopia: The 'Great Tradition' and the counter histories of national failure. *The Journal of African History, Vol. 58, No. 3, 425-444.*

Mebratu, K. (2023). Political and Ideological Legacy of Ethiopia's Contested Nation-Building: A Focus on Contemporary Oromo Politics. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 60(1), 51-74.

Mebratu, K. (2025). Ethiopia's Necropolitical Turn. *Curate Oromia.* https://curateoromia.com/ethiopias-necropolitical-turn/.

Medhane T. Alagaw, A. and Dade, D. (2021). Evolving state building conversations and political settlement in Ethiopia. *Conflict, Security & Development*, 21(4), 455–474. https://doi.org/10.1080/14678802.2021.1974698.

Merera. G. (2011). Elections and democratization in Ethiopia, 1991–2010. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 5(4), 664–680. https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2011.642524.

Mullaw, A. (2024). Analyzing the Root Causes of Armed Conflicts in Northern Ethiopia. Conflict Trend 2023/4, ACCORD. https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/analysing-the-root-causes-of-armed-conflicts-in-northern-ethiopia/

Ogbazghi, P. (2026). Federal tensions, Balkanising currents: navigating the dilemmas of post-ethnic statehood in Ethiopia. *Third World Quarterly*, 47(12), 2456–2475. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2026.2629595.

Semir, Y. (2021). Drivers of Ethnic Conflict in Contemporary Ethiopia. *Institute for Security Studies.* https://issafrica.org/research/monographs/drivers-of-ethnic-conflict-in-contemporary-ethiopia.

Sew, M. (2025). TPLF Insider Blows Lid Off Party's Long Road to Collapse. *Ethiopia Insight.* https://www.ethiopia-insight.com/2025/05/26/exclusive-tplf-insider-blows-lid-off-partys-long-road-to-collapse/

Tadesse, A. (2023). A Reflection on the Conflict in the Amhara Region of Ethiopia. *Africa Up Close.* https://ethiopanorama.com/?p=206680

Tegbaru, Y. (2021). Ethiopia's national dialogue: Reconciling competing approaches. *Institute for Security Studies*. https://issafrica.org/research/east-africa-report/ethiopias-national-dialogue-reconciling-competing-approaches

Teklebrhan, W. (2024). TPLF's Internal Power Struggles: A Crisis of "Democratic Centralism".

Teshale, T. (1995). *The Making of Modern Ethiopia: 1896-1974.* The Red Sea Press.

Valfort, M. (2006). Ethical altruistic voting in a multi-ethnic developing country. Evidence from Ethiopia.

Wedekind, J. (2024). *Prosperity in the periphery? The politics of resource extraction in Ethiopia, Post-2018.* Rift Valley Institute. Ethiopia Peace Research Facility (PRF), https://riftvalley.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Prosperity-to-the-Periphery_final.pdf.

Workineh, G. (2025). The dynamics of the Amhara and Oromo ethno-nationalist elite contestations in Ethiopia. *African Identities*, 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/14725843.2025.2598258.

Yared, D. and Tezera, T. (2025). Amhara: Emerging Ethnic Nationalism and Insurgency, in Tariku, Y., & Gebresenbet, F. (Eds.). *Ethiopia's Insecurity Complex: Protest, Transition, and War* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003584971.

Yonas, T. (2024). The politics of national liberation in Ethiopia: origins of and responses to state weakness, insecurity, and insurgency, 1991–2018. *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 1–28. https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2024.2434998.

Yonas T., & Fana, G. (Eds.). (2025). *Ethiopia's Insecurity Complex: Protest, Transition, and War* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003584971