Prognosis on the Logic of the Tigrian Armed Struggle (1975—1991)

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1. Prelude

Under present circumstances in Ethiopia, I feel that we have to broaden the scope and extents of the discussion on the Tigrian armed struggle (1975-1991). Liked or not, this event has already become one integral part of our history as Ethiopians. We, Ethiopians, have never been in same situations before and after 1991. It is trite but true that the Tigrian armed struggle was never a picnic for either the Tigrian nation or the Ethiopian state. As a perfect civil war, it involved tens of thousands of causalities and bodily injuries on both sides of the counter (Mekalih Tigray, 2011). Since 1991, the war continued but with a different form—from bullets to words. Nowadays, with the noisy havoc of these emotional schisms receding faster and faster because of dialectical changes in agenda—from stability to structural peace, I feel that we get respite to discuss our issues with sober minds.

To begin with, any war has two interrelated dimensions---logic and grammar (Claussis, 1910). For Clauissis, the very cause that breeds the war and the very distant goal that the war is set to achieve fall within the category of its logic. This part of the war is the function of ideologues, top political leaders and decision makers. Whereas, that part of the war concerned with how one army could defeat the enemy is its grammar. The grammar is more of the function of military commanders and generals. The first dimension, logic of war is the focus of this paper with regard to the Tigray armed struggle. This enquiry is extremely important in Tigray's case for the following two major justifications.

 Firstly, the armed struggle by the Tigray nation escaped the epistemological concern and coverage of modern political science and political sociology. The modern social science fields of the western academic tradition are products of the special Euro-American socio-cultural and socio-economic structures. Social conflicts across the mainstream western society lost their ethno-linguistic foundations because of rapid urbanization and industrialization. The emergence of the Westphalia model of the modern state in 1648 in Europe coupled with the emergence of monetarist capital, wide national market, secular politics, individualism and the expansion of the impersonal state apparatus, all at the expenses of religion, ethno-nationalism and regionalism, became the established structure. As Karl Marx (F.H. Hensley, 1973) pointed out, class distinction grew to be the major form and source of social contradictions. This has remained to be the main essence of the western epistemology until recently. Thus, most of advanced knowledge about conflicts originating in the west was not adequate to explain such conflicts like the Tigrian armed struggle in the pre-capitalist society of Ethiopia.

Secondly, for the above reason, there appeared so far no squarely fitting social science theory that one could easily apply to the study of the Tigrian armed struggle. Some researchers, Aregawi Berhe (2008), one of the first organizers of TPLF, for example, used such an approach like 'instrumentalism'. Nonetheless, while this approach helps to explain the ontology in the grammar of the Tigrian armed struggle in large measure, it scarcely helps to study it in relation to the larger socio-cultural structures of the Ethiopian state-the logic.   Moreover, while instrumentalism discusses the cultural side of the armed struggle, it fails to cover the aspect of class conflicts—the Tigrian peasant revolution. On this score, Gebru Tarke (1991) went more ahead with his approach, class/economic antagonism. This helps him to explain the Tigray armed struggle from socio-economic angles.   Nevertheless, the approach, on the other hand, denied him a chance at establishing a casual plurality between class contradiction and nationality question—ethno-linguistic identity and social conflict.

 This theoretical limitation, in its turn, poses logical challenges, the very crux of the matter in this paper.

2. The Crux of the Matter

The logical challenge adversely affects researchers on three aspects of the Tigray armed struggle—the genesis, the progress, and its triumphant culmination. The genesis question raises the difficult enquiry into why the Tigray nation and Tigray nationalism became the origination spot of the anti-Derg armed struggle. It is a common problem to observe inconsistencies, confusions and logical fallacies in the search for the right methodology to meet this question. Aregawi Berhe, Solomon Enaquy (2010), etc, for example, search for the genesis of the armed struggle either from the national-class oppressions of the Tigray nation or the harshness and brutalities of central governments in Addis Ababa. Of course, this fits the arguments of what scholars call the 'grievance' theory of conflict but never the logic of the armed struggle--why in Tigray, first?

In more other precise quizzical terms, why did the Tigray nation become the first while there were several other nations/nationalities, who had equal demands, grievances, chances and legitimate grounds to take the initiative of armed struggle in Ethiopia against the central state? Could it mean that the Tigrai nation was oppressed and degraded worse than other nations and nationalities in Ethiopia, or was it because Tigray was exceptionally a warrior and a militant nation? Whatever the possible explanation might be, what were the ulterior motives, factors, experiences and appeals that convinced and galvanized the Tigray nation to wage an extremely costly war in terms of sacrifices from bottom up? Was not that Tigray nation part of the Amahra Ruling circle?

A dozen of scholars and researchers wrote on the Tigrai nation in relation to its political position and future trends against the central government in Addis Ababa before 1975

Wallelegn Mekonen (1969), an Amharic speaker himself, is one on the list from among these intellectuals. Wallellegn described Ethiopia of the 1950s and 60s as the 'prison cell

of its ethnic groups' under the ruthless oppressions of the Amahra Ruling Circle. Wallalegn described the ethnic map of the Ethiopian politics of his time in vivid terms

> A non-Amahara 'Ethiopian' has to speak Amharic, listen to Amharic music, accept the Amhara-Tigrawi religion, Orthodox Christianity and to wear the Amhara-Tigre Shamma in international conferences. In some cases to be an "Ethiopian", you will have to change your name. In short, to be an Ethiopian, you will have to wear an Amhara mask…According to the Constitution, you will need Amharic to go to school, to get a job. Pp. 4.

From Wallelegn's argument, one can understand the depth of the said paradox above. The Tigrai nation is the core of the historical Ethiopian state; its difference with the Amahra Ruling Circle is ethno-cultural and regional only in that Tigrians speak a recognizably different language from Amharic. Otherwise, the Tigrian nation had had its own class-based social strata where the Tigrian nobility allied with those of the Amhara in religion, politics, economy, war, and history and historical traditions (John Markakis, 1974).

Baratsensky (1989) underlines two opposite trends in the relations between Tigray and the central state from historical records. First, the Tigray nobility was equally or more predatory and brutal to its own people, Tigrians than the Amahra ruling circle. He reminds the mercilessness of taxation in western Tigray since the 18th century to late 19th century that caused a massive flight of many Tigrians to Eritrea. Second, he points out that the abundance of firearms in Tigray imported through the port of Massawa would one-day blast against the Tigrian nobility. Bratzesensky concludes finally that any possible Tigrian arousal appeared to go only as far as insuring power sharing from within and from without and no more.

Thus, how did such a cohabited nation, Tigray, with the Ruling Circle, the Amhara nation, in class solidarity rise up, convince itself and others in the motto of self-determination in a country of its own making for more than a millennium? How can authorities and leaders of the Tigrai armed struggle convince other nations/nationalities that their motives were not the continuations of the past Amhara-Tigray contention over political office?

3. Commonalities versus Distinct Features

The armed struggle by the Tigray nation is, without exaggeration, exceptionally unique and a solitary case as far as logic is concerned. While such a war for self-determination is common and frequent everywhere, comparative studies demonstrate that the Tigrain armed struggle is an unusual case of conflict for three major reasons:

Firstly, there were, of course, many cases of bottom up revolutionary guerrilla warfare conducted under the guidance of Marxist-Leninist principles. One can mention a number of successful armed struggles in the fashion of Tigrian armed struggle. The Russian Bolshevik-led violent revolution, the Maoist guerrilla war of China, the Vietnamese

Patriotic war against the United States and domestic collaborators, the Cuban Revolution and many others are on the list. The Tigray armed struggle has had many commonalities with these armed revolutionary struggles. Bottom-up origination of the movement with a small revolutionary core of vanguard leaders, class coalition building with the rural peasant population, army discipline and clearly stated political goals of mobilization are some of these. The Tigray armed struggle is, however, the only unique case in that it had picked a plurality of political agendas as organizing principle of the revolutionary movement—Nationality Question and Peasant-Working class partisanship all together. None of the above or other revolutions has had this quality at all in the world where the basic structure is an agrarian one.

Secondly, it is true that there were a long list of armed struggles by a particular ethno-linguistic group in Africa, Latin America and Asia. Fearon and Laitin (2003) identify, for instance, about 58 violent conflicts among ethno-cultural groups in between 1955 and 1999 across the globe. These constitute about 51 of all civil war fought. One can safely mention, the Tamil Tigers' resistance in Asia, the Biafra resistance in Nigeria, the Katanga revolt in Congo, the Arish guerilla war in the United Kingdom, the Bask arousal in Portugal, the Catalonia Separatism in Spain, the Eritrean war in Ethiopia and many more others. These arousals have had three types of strategic destinations as their ultimate political goals: separation, broader right to self-determination or irredental claim to join a culturally mother country.

The Tigraian armed struggle was quite exceptional in its strategic goal; it surpassed the immediate goal of insuring the Tigrian autonomy within the framework of the Ethiopian state. It went beyond this to have broken the entire Derg regime. Next, it progressed to have reformed the Ethiopian state altogether through the coalition of other similar political organizations. 'Reforming the Ethiopian state' is not a simplistic concept and an ordinary political action. It is complex and quite extraordinary.

I strongly ague no scholar can find a similar case anywhere in the world. I am happy to hear or read if any one could mention a single similar case of this event in modern history.

Thirdly, most revolutionary armed struggles in many countries were movements mostly by leaders and supporters from dominant ethno-linguistic communities. Tigrigna speakers in Eritrea, Mandarin speakers in Maoist China, Russians in Russia, the Buganda Nation in Uganda under Museveni, Arabs in Algeria, etc, are but a few examples. But when this was not the case like the movement led by the Rwandan Patriotic Front under Paul Kagame dominated by the minority Tutsi nation, the party and the struggle take the camouflage in the cover of the national civic caveat and state identity—the country. Moreover, most of these resistances originated in resource-rich regions, which could finance the costs of the armed struggle like the Savimbi revolt in diamond rich province of Angola. We can see that the pattern repeats itself in Sudan, Sera Loan, Liberia, Cote Devour, Congo and many others. This wrongly convinced some scholars of conflict to dwell on ecology and resources as the key causative agents of armed confrontations in Africa and elsewhere.

The Tigrian armed struggle is still unique for three major reasons but, of course, issues of grammar than the logic.

Firstly, the struggle started as a movement of the relatively minority Tigray nation and ended so in collaboration with other like-minded parties without diluting Tigrian identity. Applying the conceptualizations of Fearon and Laitin, 'interethnic solidarity' rather than 'interethnic amalgamation' was the whole mark of the Tigrian coalition principle[1] when it comes to other nations and nationalities. In short, an Oromo or a Somali had not to speak Tigrigna, or had a Tigrian name to coalesce with Tigrians in the armed struggle. An Oromo is free to join TPLF just as an Oromo and under Oromo organization unlike the case of the Workers Party of Ethiopia-Derg, or almost all multiparty systems across the world where members had to wear a cultural uniform-dress as a show of political loyalty;

Secondly, despite tactical and military advantages, by the same token, Tigray was also a next-door neighbor of Eritrea, which was one of the most heavily militarized zones in the world. It is a rare case to organize and operate growingly huge guerilla warfare in Tigray at the very tip of the nose of a considerably superior state army within a distance of hundreds of kilometers. So far, only one Derg general, Tariku Ayene, Mengistu Hailemariam's victim in 1989, was able to have read accurately the strategic danger that was arising from the Tigrian armed struggle to Derg's position as early as 1982. According to Colonel Amsalu G/Egziabher (2010), a former Derg Commander in Eritrea, General Tariku Ayne was the only one who boldly suggested to the tyrant to make Tigray the center of the Red Star Campaigns to end the war victoriously.

Thirdly, TPLF completed the struggle in Tigray before it crossed the borders of other nations with meager resource base and control. In stead, there were challenging incidences of famine, which nearly inhibited the growth of the armed struggle itself, Solomon Enquiy notes this happened in structurally diversified societies like that of Ethiopia along ethno-cultural, historical and psychological lines. According to Hobswam, the established rule is that one's ethnic group offers protection for its members. The Tigray armed struggle was, however, exceptional in that it offered this unusual service for other nations. The Tigray experience must be the first for an opposition and revolting army raised from a particular nation against the central government but fought bloody wars at the territories of other nations, despite an incipient coalition with other fronts. The TPLF militias who constituted the core of EPRDF's army had to travel longest distances from Tigray to Addis Ababa across extremely dangerous landscape controlled by hostile government regular armies and militias in neighboring Amhara and Oromo nations mainly.

It is undeniably true that emotions against TPLF fighters were high due to Derg's nationalist agitations particularly in Amhara areas. And, one should remember that the

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[1] Interethnic solidarity refers to a coalition in which every nation and nationality organizes itself as its own and standing on its own feet, whereas, 'interethnic amalgamation' implies to a situation where one ethnic group culturally dilutes the identities of other nations and absorbing their members into it like what observers say, Amhraization, Russianization, adnolcization and so on.

Fourthly, Tigray armed struggle openly advanced the goal of breaking the nationality domination by the Amahra ruling elite. Despite latent famers' class alliance, it is a puzzle of sociology how Tigrian fighters managed to overrun easily these unfamiliar territories without adequately engineered and politically agreed prior interethnic solidarity.

There was a proliferation of armed, secret and open political parties in Ethiopia at the time when the Tigray armed struggle fired the first bullet in Western Tgray in 1967. In Tigray only, there were TPLF, EDU, EPRP, Tigray Liberation Front—TLF, Ternafit, and the Eritrean Liberation Front-ELF. There were Oromo Liberation Front—OLF and the Western Somali Liberation Front—WSLN, in Oromia and Somali Region respectively. In Eritrea, there was the then Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front-EPLF. At the center, there were about five leftist organizations mercurially working with the Derg—All Ethiopia Socialist Movement-MESON, Ethiopian Oppressed People's Struggle-EOPS, and others (Andargachew Tsige, 1989)

One can broadly divide all these armed organizations from the political program of each party that systematized its key demands into two major blocks—centrifugal versus centripetal. Centrifugal fronts were those who had sectional, group, or regional demands on the Ethiopian state including TPLF, OLF, WSLF, TLF, and others. These organizations used to represent their respective ethno-linguistic and regional communities with bottom-up demands against the state in Addis Ababa. The rest had top-down demands specifically for political control and regime change. There was further division however among the centrifugally oriented organizations. While EPLF, ELF and OLF were struggling for complete separation from the Ethiopian state, WSLF had irredental claims, that is, to rejoin the mother state of Somalia Republic.

Only TPLF, however, survived the two decade armed struggle while other Ethiopian forces perished over time, far short of reaching their goals.

4. Rediscovering the Pre-1975 Tigray Nation

The Tigrian armed struggle, therefore, had to resolve a serious structural paradox, which conflict scholars call the 'defining essence' of the Tigray nation in the war against the Ethiopian state. Did the nation have a legitimate claim to raise and hold the above plurality of political agendas as compared to other oppressed nations and nationalities in Ethiopia? Here lies the basic logic shrouded in haze, so far. This fundamental question emanates from the structural paradox in the space, role and share of the Tigrian nation in the formation and survival of the Ethiopian state. That the armed struggle set a plurality of political goals—Nationality Question and Peasant-Working Class oppression is, in specific terms, the very seat of this paradox.

Richard Clapham, probably one of the first writers who studied the Ethiopian politics in the early 1960s, comes with a concrete statistical description. Clapham's study focused exclusively on the ethno-linguistic and social composition of Emperor Haile Slasse's I Government in 1962. He identified about 185 high-ranking government posts reserved for the emperor's discretion of political appointments. Clapham searched the ethno-

regional backgrounds of the appointees. He soon found out that 146 (85%) of them were Shoa-based Amharic speaking nobles. The next greater share, 24 posts, went to Tigrigna speakers among whom 19 were from Eritrea obviously for political reasons. The share of Tigrai was only 6, almost less than Oromia, Gondar-Gojjam and Southern Ethiopia by about 17. Clapham suspected that this share would sooner or latter agitate the Tigrain nobles, and through them the entire nation.

John Markakis (1970), on his part, argues that Tigarians as a community are the most conscious ethnic group in the Ethiopian empire. He defined 'ethnic consciousness' as the sense of Tigrian distinct identity and self-understanding. He picked history and historical memory to reason why this happened in Tigray: their heightened memory as the core state of Ethiopian civilization and the Ethiopian state, and the increased marginalization to periphery edges in all aspects. This became more acute and pronounced with the ever ignorance of the nation from the subsequent political center of the broadened state of Ethiopia. Markakis succinctly hints on the possibilities of the rise of Tigrian nationalism at the cost of the Ethiopian state.

Markakis reminds incidentally that the First Woyne Movement in its form was a Tigrian resistance to the politico-economic domination of the Shoan-Amhara ruling elite. Nonetheless, he tends to search for its cause from the patriotic zeal of anti-Italian Ethiopians in parallel with other oppositions to the emperor in Gojam and others. The immediate cause for him was the eroded legitimacy basis of Emperor Haile Selasse I due to his traditionally unacceptable practice of exile at the time of national war. By this, he appears to have loosened the nationalistic roots of the Second Woyane Movement, in the words of Solomon Enqay, to its 'rightful precursor', Kedmay Woyane. Solomon adds that that the organizers of the movement were not widely known shows it was a bottom-up nationalist arousal. For Aregawi, Kedmay Woyane was a perfect symbol of a Tigrian nationalist movement but under pre-mature leadership.

Solomon Enquay, his direct political tie with the armed struggle put aside, traces the roots of the Tigrian armed struggle even to pre-Kedmay Wayne times. He reminds that one of the western educated Ethiopian elites from Tigriy, Bitowded Gebrehiowt Baikedagn boldly challenged Emperor Minilk II: 'Your Majesty, do you really regard the people of Tigray as your own people?' For Solomon, this is an intellectual remark signifying the bitterness of the nationality oppression against the Tigray nation. Bratzenesjy (1989) agrees with this observation arguing that the Amharas greatly forgot and ignored their cultural brothers, Tigrians, since the southward expansion began by Minilik in the 1880s. Solomon justifies his position by reminding that the post-liberation Haile Selasse rule dissected formerly Tigraian parts of Wolkait Tsegede, Humera and Raya from Tigray and included them into other provinces in complete contempt of Tigrian sensibilities.

Alberto Sabbachi (1997) notes that these former Tigrian provinces particularly, Raya areas, south of Tigray, were the only battle fields put the brutal poison gas of the Italian air force in 1936 before a sporadic bombing around Harar. Tigrians for Sabbachi were the first to bleed and die at the frontline of the Italian attack where the war almost ended beyond Hashenge. The reward for this by Haile Selasse government, for Argawi, was that

his rule cut Tigrigna language out of the curriculum of primary and secondary education in the 1940s. The emperor was preoccupied more with Eritrea than Tigray for political reasons in its discriminatory distributive policy. For Solomon, Derg aggravated this suppressive rule by its naked extermination of critical Tigrians in Addis Ababa as early as its seizure of power.

The point still vague is however that all these brutalities equally affected other Ethiopian nations and nationalities. Why did Tigray pick the gun first?

4. Shedding Light on the Paradox

According to Walllelegn Mekonen, Bratzesensky and Clapham, what Amhara political and cultural elites under Emperor Minilk did in Ethiopia was exactly the formation of the Ethiopian state. This happened as a historical unfolding reality or as a matter of only historical accident. In other words, the Amahra elites came out of the Amahra nation and recreated Ethiopia under emperor Minilk not because they were inherently colonialist and imperialistic but history allowed them to do so. Walelegn argues that this occurred not because the Oromos and other southern communities were inherently weak and submissive. It was not either because nations in the South did not have the historical and psychological arm to defend themselves. They even could have proactively offended against the imperial power, and had had proven experiences of doing so.

It was only because the Amahra Ruling Circle had the intrinsic advantage in their established, what Levin terms, 'the advantages of regenerative socio-political hierarchy' solidified in the long Tigrian-Amhara-Agaw political traditions.

As Leven rightly pointed out, socio-political, cultural and socio-economic hierarchy is a repository of persistence, continuities and regenerations of the imperial state as a war making institution. This explains why the highland Christian Amhara-Tigray empires survived the deadly onslaughts of the legendry Yodit destruction, the historical annihilative campaigns by Ahmed Gran, the 19th century Egyptian and pre-Adwa Italian and many other invasions. This is what the nations in the South severely lacked, for Bahiru Zewude (1991), while this was a historical accident for Wallelign and Merera Gudina (2003). For Levin, this supplied the psychological and material incentive for the Christian kingdom to undertake its successful conquest of the South. On the other side, Southerners, including the massive and demographically advantageous Oromo nation, greatly tended to have fragmented for reasons of cultural dispersals and geo-topographic expanses respectively.

According to Dunald Dunham (1991), this geo-topographic expanse played a negative role for the Oromos to have maintained their nationalist integrity and cultural distinctiveness under one and single umbrella. The Oromos in east Wollo, Kemise, now, were far apart from their ethnic brothers, for example, in western Gojjam or Wollega. That the harsh central government seated themselves at the heart of the Oormo nation , Addis Ababa, and close to other southern communities adversely affected them by significantly reducing transaction costs of tight control. Cultural multiplicity in the rest

of southern nations and nationalities also served as an antidote for the formation of a united front against the northern conquest.

Worse than these factors, that the first Oromo Opposition Fronts picked and stuck to the goal of outright separation from the Ethiopian empire must have arguably sapped the vast Oromo potential to remain untapped, if not, unused. In addition, Oromo Liberation Front—OLF's refusal to start the struggle immediately at the post-Minilik point of Ethiopia, cost its potential to supply a state level coalition of purpose. It earned a deadly suspicion from within and without from its strategy miscalculations. Somali Liberation Fronts similarly diverted the popular potential by their separatist and irredental agenda from grassroots embrace away to interstate thugs of war. They risked prolonged paralysis by their preference to make Mogadishu the center of their fall back position instead of the Somali nation and other Ethiopian nations at large.

Let us apply this logic for the Tigraian armed struggle, 1975-1991 and its antecedents. It is true that the Tigrian nation shares many commonalities with those of the Amharas and other nations as described above. Physically alone, no one could identify Tigrians from Amharas, the Oromos and others. However, political and historical evolutions diverted the political course and trajectory of the Tigrian nation and the directions in the growth of Tigrian nationalism away from either the Amhara or Southern nations within the Ethiopian state in general.

Firstly, the Tigrian nation, as far as the state of Ethiopia is concerned, has a most pronounced historical advantage. Tigray unquestionably furnished the first core statehood and distinct foundation of Ethiopia. This constructed the Ethiopian taste and mentality into Tigrian inward identification as a cultural community, Aregawi notes.

Secondly, the Tigrian nation, as implied above, as the northern gateway to central Ethiopia had to face several invasions of foreign enemies until the center arrived. In between 1875 and 1935 only, the Tigrian nation had to engage more than international wars. The Tigrian vulnerability proved much disastrous as it experienced fresh and well-armed enemy before the Ethiopian state stroke a counter attack. This obviously hardened the Tigrian sense of having paid much sacrifices to the safety of the Ethiopian state;

Thirdly, despite all these historical advantages over the Ethiopian state, the Tigrian nation adequately realized that it was politically disadvantaged. The state reduced ethnic Tigrian position in the empire to a place of quite a peripheral onlooker. The Tigrian nation had to grapple with about 21 incidences of catastrophic famines solely on its own in between 1800 and 1975.

This produced the historically longest Tigrian dilemma swinging between its politico-social-historical commonalities, even solidarities with the Amharas and others, on the one hand, versus the humiliations its ethno-linguistic and ethno-regional distinctiveness brought from the ruling circle, on the other hand, had to take unusually equally longer time to get resolutions. According to Brazensky, a series of intermittent royal restorations in which the Crown found seats among Tigrian embraces by the person of emperor

Yohannes IV, the rise of centrally cohabited powerful Tigrain nobilities like Ras Alula and Mengesha Yohannes, etc, obviously delayed the actual period of political divorce. Added to the list are the said frequent foreign invasions from north.

In the mean time, Tigrians, through time, clearly saw that either the old Ethiopia before emperor Minilik or the new and enlarged Ethiopia after him was never ready to grant them back their varnished dignities of the past. This point rightly marked the growth beginning of a third path consciousness of how Ethiopia had to be organized and reorganized behind Tigrian mentality. Tigrians gradually made a retrenchment of position between the interruption of ethno-linguistic humiliation by the state, at one face, and the continued existence of the Ethiopian state, at the other face, which got a practical answer by the start of the TPLF-led armed struggle.

Donald Levin squarely matches with this argument in his analysis on the divergent growth of the elite socio-political psychology among Tigrian-Amhara-Oromo nations. Levin went farther than others trying to find out and systematize the underground balancing forces, which have operated to maintain what he calls the 'apparently fragile' multiethnic Ethiopian empire. He underlines the centripetal political calculus of the elites of Amhara nation as a 'thesis'[2]. Amahra elite-thesis is directly and headlong negated by what he calls the 'antithesis'[3] of the elites of the Oromo Nation. In concise terms, 'Amhara actions and views of naked unification and assimilation' produced its equivalent 'naked action and views of reactive negation of Oromos-Somalis, etc, separatism and irredentism respectively.

Levin identifies egalitarian democratic leadership based on rudimentary forms of popular election based on age-oriented merit, communitarian rather than hierarchical and top-down administration, surplus common property, sense of self-contained autonomy and existence constructed the antithesis of the Oromo nation.[4] For Levin, these conflicting traditions between the two powerful nations tends to be far-reaching and potentially volcanic in their consequences for the demographic justification that neither of the two is excessively a majority to take an effective control of the other. Levin comes up with yet another intervening force that he terms as the 'Tigrian Synthesis'. Tigrian Synthesis is explainable by the distinct ethnic position of the group with regard to the heavily polarized and mutually exclusive demands of the Amharas and the Oromos. Their very position disillusioned the Tigrian nation and its influential elites that they had to maintain their historical advantages but they had also to change the political statuesque in the favor of all regardless of statuses.

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[2] 'Thesis' here implies to an established system of distinct values, worldviews and traditions among members of a specific social group. In our case, top-down state building, Amaharaization, imperial military conquest, hierarchy and the Crown constituted the very theme of Amahara thesis.

[3] 'Antithesis' is a face to face negative reaction for another and hostile thesis with no room left for win-win conflict resolution engagements.

[4] Bahiru Zewde writes that the North-South does not simply represent a geographic and historical dichotomy but a deep and divergent system of societal values and norms of political rule.

Tigray is the only nation in Ethiopia, therefore, with the opportunity to invoke cultural domination as an agenda of solidarity with the South, and, class solidarity with the Amahra nation and with all others. Here lies the birthplace of Tigrian armed struggle, its success, the subsequent peace and tranquility in the country, and respite for development. Thus, Tigrian position behind the armed struggle inherently poses itself as a 'balancer' or 'mitigating' agent offsetting both the incorporative and assmilationist traditions of the elite Amharas vis-à-vis the separatist reactions of the elite Oromos. The Tigrian armed struggle was as unique as these strange social arrangements, the secret of its victory.

As a former MESON veteran, Deredje Gelan (1994) notes, the Tigraian armed struggle and TPLF-EPRDF started the reorganization of the Ethiopia state where emperor Minilk had stopped. For Deredje, the post-Minilk one full century up to 1991 was a wastage in which central governments failed to transform the 'Ethiopian state (empire) into the 'Ethiopian nation'. This argument reminds me of J. Hobswam (1984), an historian and sociologist, who cited an Italian Unionist politician in 1882, the time when the Garibaldi unification project, popularly known as, the *Regimento,* came to a successful end. The Italian politician remarked, henceforward: *we created Italy; now, let us begin creating Italians.* In tune with this logic, Emperor Minilk created Ethiopia; post-Minilik governments until 1991 left the project of creating Ethiopians undone, which finally gave way for TPLF to come into being to do the job.[5]

Why the Tigray nation assumed the first role brings such high profile scholars like Donald Rothschild (1986) and Eyeman, Ron and Jamison, Andrew (1991). For Ron and Andrew, if Europe and America have the working class versus the owners as the social basis of their political parties, the rural farmer community and ethnic groups are what developing states have for their political parties. For Rothschild, the traditional view of ethnic groups by the typical African state as potential or actual threats to the state has proven shaky and shallow. Ron and Andrew argue that if states fail to invoke ethnic demands and furnish relevant answers peacefully, ethnic groups will do the job violently. Thus, Rothschild concludes that ethnic groups are *utility maximizers* for the benefit of all rather than social dangers.

5. Resolving the Paradox—Concluding Remarks

There stands one practical question needing an answer for interpreting the logic of the armed struggle: where and by which nation and nationality of Ethiopia to start the revolution? Wallelign's answer met this question again with his realist approach arguing that the struggle for ending the oppressive regime might start from any part of Ethiopia or by the vanguard of any oppressed nation. However, Walelegn placed four strong obligations on the pioneer nation.

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[5] This position generates as many supporters as enemies because it rests at the center of the political continuum. The center for Aristotelian students symbolizes what he calls 'moderation', the systematized combination of the best one out of many. However, the center intrinsically provides no convincing venues for the gunpoint to attract a majority of supporters behind it.

First is that this nation should help other oppressed nations in their struggle to insure liberation from the Amhara Ruling Circle in the spirit of the international solidarity of all oppressed peoples. Second, peasant-working class alliance and demand should be the political and ideological basis of that starter nation should. The leadership of starter nation could never have its own views and programs other than those of these two oppressed classes and oppressed nations. Third, the goal of the struggle must come from concurrent demands of the oppressed nations, the peasantry and the working classes, where they freely and democratically establish a socially broad based government in which all nations and nationalities have equal representation and participation. Fourth, this struggle could never achieve its goals without a revolutionary war by these classes and oppressed nations.

Let us now here turn to the Tigrian armed struggle. Thus, in line with Wallelegn, cannot an independent researcher assuredly and objectively iron out the following conclusive remarks as resolution of the paradox?

Tigrians arose in revolutionary movement and achieved their goals not because they were inherently war-like, muscular or praetorian. They also paid all kinds of sacrifices not because they have had little regard for life. They fought not because other nations and nationalities were inherently incapable of fighting. All other Ethiopians including the Amhara nation shared the bloods as much as the tears with them as equal targets of the humiliations, at least, in the socio-economic sense of the term. Tigrians fought not for the short-run grammar of placing one of them at the helm of government in Addis Ababa in place of the other. Tigrians had no one to revenge by their war, nor did they have anyone else in particular to reward with booty of victory.

Tigrians fought the war for a new cause and a new system against an old cause and an old system. Tigrians fought the war to permanently end war itself as an alternative to solve problems. Tigrians fought the bitter war not because simply they saw others having done so. Tigrians ventured to do so mainly because their situations had to change from within selflessly and equally shared with all others. They took the initiative because historical convergences at the right time that led them into action. Immediately with these, ideology and principles, the making of an enlightened leadership, experiences from past generations, modern views and ways of combating adverse challenges, etc, the grammar came together.

For the Tigrian nation, while the year 1941 was a necessary condition, the year 1975 was a sufficient one. While 1991 was the end of the old and the bad, the second half of 2000s mark the eternity of the new and the better. Tigrian armed struggle is a showcase for the lasting truth that life in diversity is more of an asset than a liability only and only with 'moderation'. What is moderation? Practice has an answer. There was no sign of any disappointments, frustrations or worries in Tigray when the post-Meles premiership passed into the hands of Hailemariam Desalegn. There was equally no sign of excitement, festivity or dancing in Wolaita, Southern, Ethiopia, either.

In both cases, civility, modus Vivendi and self-confidence have proven to be the pillars of the new Ethiopian national consciousness prevailing from Erob in the north to Moyale in the south. This is exactly Ethiopia created out of the Tigray-initiated and coordinated armed struggle within a couple of decades, unlike the shameful and senseless hubbubs among ultras of mainly the escapee refugee camp.

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