

Integrated-Blame Game Theory of Ethnicity and its Significance: Empirical Analysis of the Evolution of Major Inter-ethnic Conflicts of the Modern History

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Abstract

Inter-ethnic conflicts and violence, war and genocide are expressions frequently used to describe human social interactions. Due to political monopoly considered equivalent to socio-cultural and economic monopoly, the historical evolution of some countries is marked by the struggle for political power through violence between their different ethnic groups. This leads to cycles of violence since once one group seizes power; it exercises hegemony to maintain it. This is done through attempts to re-write the history of the nation in favor of the dominant group and attempts to manipulate national and international opinion to legitimize its political monopoly. Due to misinterpretation, intentional twisting or misappropriation of historical facts or myths, the conflicting versions of one history create latent causes of further outbreaks of violence. In the seemingly peaceful period mainly due to repressive measures, the social arena is full of hate speeches through arguments and counter-arguments; this is the blame game over contested but common national history or myths. Conflicting parties accuse each other of wrongdoings and the felt victimhood leads to the politicization of history and disguised or open ethnic mobilization by political elites on both sides. In modern era of internet and social media, conflicting parties engage in what can be termed cyber-war. While other theories of ethnicity were formulated to understand the nature and evolution of ethnicity, considering the fact that intrinsically ethnicity or belonging to a given ethnic group is not problematic, they fail to account for causes and interventional guidelines in inter-ethnic conflicts remediation. The aim of this paper is to present the merits of integrated-blame game theory of ethnicity in understanding the causes and guide interventions in contemporary conflicts remediation by reviewing the historical evolution of conflicts in Ethiopia and Rwanda.

Keywords: Integrated-blame game theory, ethnicity, inter-ethnic conflict, Rwanda, Ethiopia

Introduction

The integrated-blame game theory of ethnicity was formulated based on five propositions including four propositions from the Yang (2000)'s integrated approach (theory) to ethnicity: ethnicity is partly ascribed because it is partly based on ancestry or presumed ancestry that normally carries certain physical or cultural characteristics and national or territorial origins; ethnicity is largely constructed by the society; costs and benefits associated with ethnic group memberships partly determine ethnic affiliation or identification; ethnic boundaries are relatively stable but they can change from time to time especially when existing ethnic categories are challenged; and the fifth point is based on the facts that inter-ethnic conflicts results from: instrumentalization and politicization of biased history with supremacist tendency; narrated mainly exaggerated felt victimhood by the dominant group; and the perceived rightfulness of being born leaders. These are done as rationale of their pursuit of own socio-economic-political interests and in their attempt to nationalize and legitimize their version of history through hegemonic style of socialization, the counter-elites interventions induce the blame-game between conflicting parties and this is the latent cause of subsequent inter-ethnic violences.

Each territory has a history where in most cases the struggles for power between ethnic groups lead to the repressive political stability (Hintjens, 2008). The contemporary democratic endeavors are badly threatened by those political elites and systems whose dream is eternal domination. After electoral frauds, innovations are tailored and destined to hide prevailing repression and ethnicity including practices such as ethnic denial and amnesia (Vandeginste, 2014; Reyntjens, 2021); gender washing (Bjarnegård & Zetterberg, 2022); sports washing and politicized humanitarian actions with self-promotion as a main agenda (Knutsen & Rasmussen, 2018); narrowing press freedom and closing private media houses; and targeting, death threatening, and even abduction torture and extra-judicial killings of political opponent figures. In some instances the move goes beyond individual politicians, journalists or activists and harassment, abduction, torture and extra-judicial killings affect other family members. Character assassination practices are undertaken to counter opposition figures using mainstream media and sometimes using close relatives after intimidations or bribes.

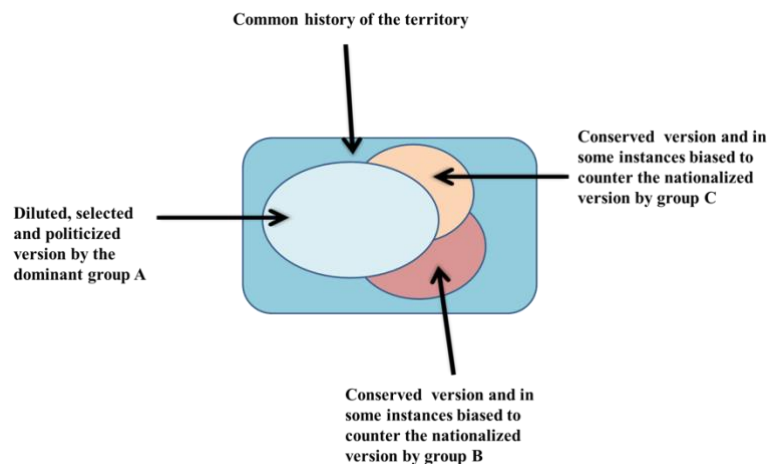
The political space is sufficiently constricted and pseudo-pluralism is adopted where multi-party political system is disguised under the single powerful ruling party and these satellite parties never attempt to challenge it. The acceptance of new opposition political parties as required by laws is almost impossible and laws limiting the freedom of expression are promulgated including the requirement of written permission to conduct gatherings and protestations which is impossible to get. Imposing restrictions on internet use as a new tool for freedom of speech are undertaken ranging from monitoring and some websites restriction to total shutdown of internet (Stremlau & Dobson, 2022). In some cases like Rwanda where

genocide, mass murder with hidden genocide intent; coercive remembrance of selected events in favor of the dominant group is undertaken (Buckley-Zistel, 2009b; Buckley-Zistel, 2006).

It is a common knowledge that shared troubles create strong bonds between the beholders and if all of these repressive measures are disguisedly or openly directed against an ethnic group, ethnicity and the feeling of attachment and belongingness is strengthened (Uwaifo, 2016). These create loopholes for political mobilizations based on ethnic identities and for political elites to manipulate the consciousness of mass peasants through exaggerating, twisting, and even inventing facts to explain their misery and further instigate them for civil war in the name of liberation. When this happens, the dominant group refusing to change the status quo and share power with their fellow countrymen mobilizes state resources in the protection of own interests hence the beginning of endless cycles of violences that only strengthen social divides instead of solving disputes.

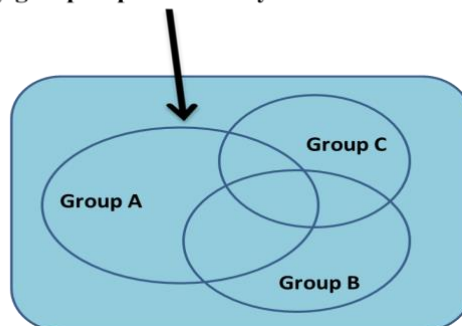
The below diagram represent a country or a territory with three groups that may be ethno-racial, ethno-cultural, ethno- religious, ethno-linguistic or any other form of diversity where the common history of the territory had different effect, consequences and significance among them. For example, group A has always been the ruling class while group B and C the peasant groups. Over time, for group A to maintain the power, monopolize history in such a way that it is filtered and only events in their favor are remaining and promoted and new history books written to secure their narratives (re-written and revised history) and new methods are introduced for socialization such as re-education camps, changes in school history curriculum and ruling class heroism narratives. However, it is important to note that the failure of this approach due to opposition challenges lead repressive and authoritarian leadership.

The repression strengthens the collective feelings of being undervalued and the solidarity of the repressed that may pave the way for an easy future mobilization during future violence. Besides the officialized biased version of the history, each repressed group has its divergent version that may be also biased or dramatized in some instances as a result of the recall of traumatizing or unpleasant lived past to counter the officialized version.



The integrated-blame game theory recognizes that even though there may be a political stability, this may be taken as equivalent to the lapsed time for an active volcano from the current eruption to the next. During this temporary political stability regardless of the time span, the climate evolves in such a way that these misunderstandings considered being latent causes of interethnic or social violence intensify and end up in the outbreak. As represented in the below diagram, the theory recognizes that an everlasting solution is the acceptance of common history that incorporate its different effects on different groups, recognition of wrongdoings by all parties, remembrance of all victims of past violences and survivors treated equally. This is done and achieved through open and inclusive dialogue and henceforth democratic endeavors undertaken. According to this theory, there have to be no winner or loser in social violence or interethnic violence as long as disputes are not solved and the instrumentalization of the judiciary by the so called winner was and never will be a long-lasting solution. Social and political solutions seems to be promising than politicizing the judiciary in favor of the winner that deepen the hatred on the side of the losers and these are surely destined to triggering future cycles of violences.

**Shared common history of the territory
and acceptance and nationalization of
every group's special history**



Research Methodology

In this paper, an analytical literature review will be undertaken to demonstrate the provisions of the Integrated-blame game theory of ethnicity with respect to the evolution and status quo of inter-ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia and Rwanda. In both cases, we will trace the roots of conflicts in the evolution of struggle for power and the failure of mutual understanding and recourse to repression instead of dialogue as driving force for the continuing cycles of violences. We aim at proving that historical misunderstandings due to misinterpretation or intentional twisting of historical events, felt rightfulness of being born leaders and perceived victimhood during the course of past struggles

for socio-economic and political gain by political elites form a basis of cyclical inter-ethnic violence, but also that some practices such as ethnocentrism with an ethnic amnesia cover do not yield long lasting solutions instead dialogues destined at writing a common history of the territory with chapters covering different communities and the creation of consensual, inclusive, and democratic political systems reflecting this reality may create atmosphere of interethnic tolerance and peaceful cohabitation.

Result and Discussion

1. Historical background for Ethiopian and Rwandan inter-ethnic conflicts

1.1. Ethiopia: Tigray and Amhara conflict

Ethiopia is a country located in the horn of Africa bordered with Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya, South Sudan, and the Republic of Sudan with a surface area of 1,104,300 km² with a population density of 111.73 per km² according an estimated population of 124.5 million as of 2022; it is one of the countries with diverse ethnic identities that count over 80 ethnic groups, 80 languages with 200 dialects (Habtamu Nigussie, n.d.; World Population Review, 2022); the dominant ethnicities include Oromo at 34.4% of the country's population and the Amhara, who account for 27% of the population. Other major ethnic groups include the Somali (6.2%), Tigray (6.1%), Sidama (4%), Gurage (2.5%), Welayta (2.3%), Afar (1.7%), Hadiya (1.7%), and Gamo (1.5%) (Mohamed, 2021; Wondimu Chemere, 2022; World Population Review, 2022).

Antecedents of modern Ethiopia are traced back in about three thousand years, mythology trace it to the times of King Solomon of Israel and Queen of Saba or Sheba also called Makeda by Ethiopians, the Kingdom whose true location is still disputed and placed by historians in present day Yemen or Ethiopia by others. The Queen having heard of the wisdom of Solomon visited him and ended up being impregnated and the son born to be Ebna Hakim and later Emperor Menilek I that was made king by his father and considered the founder of the Solomonic dynasty of Ethiopia, which ruled it until the deposition of Haile Selassie in 1974 (Del Rio Sanchez, 2021; Encyclopedia Britannica, 2022; Mark, 2018; Musa, 2009). Being mythologically linked to the Holy Scriptures is of prime importance since it became an influential source of legitimization and gave the Solomonic dynasty the supernatural and divine attributes to implement the oppressive political system. While the transition is not clear, the ancient Sheba Kingdom is argued to have been replaced by the Ethiopia Empire also called Abyssinia that is considered to be the trade hub and destination of people of different origins (Sertse et. al, 2020), that later in the 20th century became a country known as Ethiopia (Habtamu Nigussie, n.d.). The Solomonic dynasty that emerged among Amhara in the 13th Century AD was preceded by the Axum Kingdom or Aksum Kingdom that emerged in the first millennium AD and had as its heart-land the present regions of the Tigrean and Eritrean plateau and the adjoining coastal area of the Red Sea. It was collapsed in

the 12th Century and replaced by the so called Zague dynasty that underwent a period of significant military expansion, pushing the borders of the state southwards into the Shoan plateau and this is the area around modern day Addis Ababa, and the 13th century gave place to the medieval kingdoms of Ethiopia that emerged in the Agaw and Amhara regions of the central highlands with the religious ideology and script of Axum and they included the flourished Solomonic dynasty (Tiruneh, 1990). The Ethiopian dynasty is considered to have lasted for a period close to a thousand years and making it to be one of the longest and oldest monarchies anywhere in the world (Musa, 2009).

As with other aristocracies practices of subjects overexploitation; social structure and economic inequality in the late Solomonic imperial era ended in the 1974 social revolution that overthrew the monarchy (Abbink, 2015). Towards the end of the Solomonic dynasty, according to Prunier and Ficquet (2015: 183-197), due to mental disability and the eventual death of Emperor Menelik in 1913, he was succeeded by his grandson Iyasu who reigned for a short period before a coup d'état that elevated Menelik's daughter to the throne in 1916 and Ras Tafari, a governor of Harar who were not in direct line of succession, waited for the rebellion of Empress' husband and governor of Gondar that ended with the death of both of them, to take over the empire and became the new Emperor Haile Selassie, an Amhara, that literally means Power of the Trinity and believed and made people believe that his authority derived directly from God.

They argue that even though the opening years of Haile Selassie's reign can plausibly be regarded as a period of rapid and fairly effective state-building, he consolidated his powers in the palace under the close supervision and selected courtier-politicians through the court and complex networks that linked Ethiopian aristocracy and the imperial family (Amhara). Through this some regions such as Tigray were underrepresented while others such as Amhara were almost entirely unrepresented. While the government was committed to the universal principles of modernization and development with special emphasis given to education, achievements were concentrated in Addis Ababa for both economic and educational development and mainly for elites who are closely linked to the regime and this intensified class divisions between landowners and the indigenous peasantry.

According to Tiruneh (1990), peasants of the north and the south were reduced to tenants and had to pay tribute and rents and eventually they were subject to the corvée and to presenting gifts to their master gentry on special occasions. The same benefits were also entitled to the nobility who were primarily a class of warriors. However, at multiple accounts, Ethiopian regional nobles who were in charge of military and administrative functions tended to assert independence against the monarch. He argues that as the graduates from schools increased the request for social, economic, and political reforms started to emerge and important to recall is that the official language was the Amharic, a prerequisite for any public function position, and this was considered a way of destroying other languages and culture.

According to him, as the working class increased, the amount paid to members of the new elite by way of salary was much more than the income of the direct producers of wealth i.e. the peasants and workers and this marked the beginning of economic crisis and by the end of the 1960s school graduates begin to be unemployed and the fear was that this was soon to be the case for university graduates. Important to note is that the Selassie's administrative reforms of the 1908 divided the country into 34 ethnic based administrative regions that underwent reforms until the 1942 country's 12 provinces. The top administrative positions were given to the gentry and nobility and this form of aristocracy changed course after the Italian occupation where traditional nobility was weakened by gradual take over by the nobility drawn from the central province of Shoa henceforth the north as well as the south are under the tutelage of the Shoan aristocracy (Menelik's courtiers, his warrior lords of the south and their descendants).

While the Shoan aristocracy including Haile Selassie was descendants various ethnic groups like the Oromo and Amhara, the Amhara of the north do not accept Shoans as belonging to the same ethnic group as themselves, and believe that the Shoans took over the throne which rightly belonged to them and found it insulting that the Shoan aristocracy were preferred to their own nobility to rule them as provincial governors. On the other side besides sharing sentiments with Amhara of the north, Tigrians were burdened by the need to speak Amharic in order to be able to go to school and to be employed by the state (Tiruneh, 1990).

According to Prunier and Ficquet (2015: 210-215), the Selassie's imperial Jacobinism created a powerful centralization of power that was accompanied by a heavy expansion of the imperial bureaucracy and of the army whose costs were very high and in the 1970s the so called modernization of Ethiopia did not solve ever increasing socio-economic problems such as creation of employments for young graduates and the deteriorating lives of the working class. The so called "urban uprising" started in 1974 following episodes of food shortages and famines, increased price of food products, shortage of oil products and the rise of petrol price combined with the luxurious living conditions of the courtiers and their indifference towards common people created disastrous effect. These conditions created chaos due to strikes and demonstrations from students, teachers, workers' syndicates, trade unions to the military and police requesting reforms, denouncing bad leadership and requesting dismissal of certain elites, increase in salary among others. Any attempt to mitigate these problems on the side of the ruling class with Emperor Haile Selassie on the top did not yield any long lasting stabilization of the empire.

Dissatisfied with the status quo, according to Tiruneh (1990), as a result of months of preparations, low ranked military officers and men (majors, NCOs and privates) created what they called the Coordinating Committee of the Armed Forces, the Police and the Territorial Army and later termed variously as the Armed Forces Committee, the Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC), the

Provisional Military Government, or simply as the Derg (the committee). They excluded senior officers that they considered royals of the ancient regime.

The Derg decided to end and destroy the long lasting dynasty and started by destroying the image of the old monarch by accusing the emperor himself of being a thief and indifferent to people's misery including the recent famine. A large number of current nobility was arrested and businesses belonging to the imperial family were nationalized. The emperor refusing to flee abroad was arrested and put into custody and in 1975 declared dead. This is the beginning of Ethiopia under the Derg and all strikes became illegal, a curfew was instated and hundreds of former government dignitaries were arrested (Prunier & Ficquet, 2015: 216-217).

Ethiopia moving from an authoritarian aristocracy was seeing another authoritarian government materialize. According to Prunier and Ficquet (2015: 217-221), after realizing that the army has no intention to share power with them, regardless of the prohibited strikes and demonstration, the students and the Confederation of Ethiopian Labour Unions (CELU) prepared strikes demanding the establishment of new civilian government and the army dispersed them and arrested all the trade union leaders. Day after day the Derg became bloodier and bloodier in such a way that even a number of its founding members were murdered and finally, Mengistu Haile Mariam emerged as the undisputed master of the bloody junta. Two anti-Derg movements emerged: Meï'son also called the All Ethiopian Socialist Movement (AESM) which was close to orthodox Communist Parties and the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) whose memberships were considered direct descendant of the Ethiopian Student Association in the US and tended to be more Amhara. While the Meï'son tended to work with the army towards a gradual change, the EPRP was more radical and soon entered armed struggle with the Derg that declared it enemy of the revolution and this is what was termed "Red terror" against "White terror" of youth. Indiscriminate massacres were exchanged by both parties with the Derg going further eliminating entire classrooms of school children as a response to the children recruitment by the EPRP. With the same cause (the fight against the imperial centre) other anti-Derg groups were formed, the case of the EDU and TPLF in Tigray, the OLF in Oromo areas, the SALF in Bale and the ALF among the Afar.

Tiruneh (1990) asserts that the self-proclamation of the Derg as a provisional military government, its main concentration on power, institutionalization of the abolition of democratic rights, the fact that it was able to assert its will against any opponent including its own creators and members, the exclusion of civilian population from participating in government affairs and from the right to express its wishes; the Derg became a dictatorial regime. In addition the disbanding of the rebellious military units and the Unit Co-ordination Committees sent a clear message that the Derg's accountability to the armed forces and the police, which had created it in the first place, was put to an end and the way of disposal of helpless officials of the ancient régime made it crystal clear that the

Derg had become a law unto itself, a dictatorship that was to rule Ethiopia for years to come by decree or rather by considerations of expediency.

While he argues that instead of undergoing a series of reforms, the Derg pursued a series of nationalization measures and contrary to the request of immediate establishment of a provisional people's government by the opponents, the request was postponed indefinitely. For its fundamental political and economic programme, the then criticized “Ethiopian Socialism” was declared and its twelve pages whitepaper could be subsumed under five basic principles: sovereignty, the absoluteness of Ethiopia's unity, self-reliance, the dignity of labour and the precedence of the public good. Prunier and Ficquet (2015: 222-224) note that with an attempt at institutionalizing a communist regime, the Derg had created a Committee for Organizing the Party of the Workers of Ethiopia (COPWE) which was supposed to prepare the birth of the great single Marxist-Leninist party and it took eight long years for COPWE to phase itself out and become the Workers Party of Ethiopia (WPE), we are here in 1984 and its enthronement happened when Ethiopia was in the same situation as the times that triggered revolution ten years earlier, the famine.

They argue that while the Derg did not care, the millions of dollars spent on expenses of the day were considered both in Ethiopia itself and abroad as an insult to the dying peasantry however, the message was clear, it was first and foremost a solemn declaration of power and the new regime was trying to set itself up as a new dynasty. Soon disastrous policies implementation was going to follow mainly the population transfers and villageization. Since the most starving people were from Wollo and Tigray, the simple answer was to transport and resettle them around Gambella or in Gamo Gofa however, this created humanitarian crisis. The transportation of people was carried out in extremely brutal ways, killing more than 50,000 settlers; there was nothing prepared at the destination sites to help the re-accommodation of the incoming people; the northern peasants were suddenly transported from a malaria-free environment to a different one in the lowlands where malaria killed them in large numbers; and the local populations at the new sites had no sympathy for these so called “humanitarian invaders” who were seen as coming to take over their lands and the programme was put to a halt in January 1986 after 591,000 people had been deported.

The villageization was also assessed to be not a good idea since as the same was tried and failed in other countries such as Tanzania. These villages were traps for the peasants who had been obliged to join them; they were too far from the outer ring of fields and this led to the abandonment of some of the cultivated areas; some markets had become too distant; crop theft became frequent; too many small livestock around the villages themselves led to overgrazing on too small area and this lead in turn to massive killing of animals and later to a dearth of animal production both milk and meat; and a lot of time was wasted in walking to the fields and back. All benefits were for the government in terms of better fiscal returns and a higher degree of security control making it harder for the guerrillas to obtain

support from the harassed peasantry. The collectivization of farming land and huge investment in terms of money was destined to failure and loss of invested money as commentators said that even “men in charge of carrying out these policies did not really understand what they were doing and seem to believe in fallacies” (Prunier & Ficquet, 2015: 224-225).

When the famine ended, it seemed that the government is succeeding however a number of threats were still alive including the attacks from a number of guerrilla groups including the TPLF which wanted to go all the way to Addis Ababa. The Derg needed a huge amount of weaponry in which soon the Soviets and the USA were going to halt their aid in the matter due to their other inside priorities and change in policies. Inside Ethiopia, the oppressed peasantry learned adaptation methods and even though they still obeyed superficially but dissented in practice, cheating on their taxes, not carrying out the instructions of the regime and trying to hide their young men from military conscription. After the defeat at Af Abet, TPLF turned into a conventional army that could get re-supplied while its opponents could not and the regime now abandoned by the collapsing Soviet Empire was considered to be on its last legs. In earlier 1991 it went on the offensive and approached Addis Ababa while in Eritrea the EPLF gained control of the whole province and on 21 May 1991, while his army was making a desperate last stand at Dekemhare, Mengistu Haile-Mariam, the leader of Derg disgracefully fled to take refuge in Zimbabwe (Prunier & Ficquet, 2015: 226-227).

According to them the TPLF has roots to the Ethiopian Student Movement (ESM) and was founded in 1975 by a group of Tigrayan university students. Its predecessors were students groups such as Tigray University Students Union (TUSU), Tigray Nationalist Organization (TNO) and later the Tigray Nation Progressive Union (TNPU) with aim to promote Tigrayan culture and historical pride, to identify the problems of Tigray and to deal with them. In its armed struggle towards power in Addis Ababa it defeated a large number of armed groups before crushing the Derg. While the primordial target was the creation of an Independent Democratic Republic of Tigray, it was abandoned in favour of the establishment of a democratic Ethiopia based on voluntary and democratic principles. They believed that Ethiopia has been dominated by the Amhara over the country’s oppressed nations including Tigray. With its intent to create a democratic Ethiopia, the TPLF reasoned that that this may be achieved by allowing Nations, Nationalities and Peoples (ethnic groups) to exercise all their democratic and human rights, including the principle of self-determination. In its way to Addis Ababa the TPLF managed to put different ethnic armed groups under its control and established the EPRDF as a federation of various sub-organizations and seized capital in May 1991 and established a Provisional Administration on the 1st of June 1991 and this is the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) with Meles Zenawi as the head. The EPRDF was an umbrella for TPLF to advance its political ideologies and making sure its victory will prevail. Unsuccessful insurrections against the EPRDF army happened in the Oromiya and Ethio-Somali National Regional States and after

winning the 1995 elections, the TPLF and allies proclaimed the country to be named Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) made of ten regions and the authority was transferred to ethnicity based regional administrations (Prunier & Ficquet, 2015: 257-274).

The authors also argue that the TPLF era's security depended on the capacity of the EPRDF to employ the instruments of violence at its disposal and its hegemonic leadership to freely implement its revolutionary political ideology. Things evolved to concentrate power in the hands of Meles Zenawi and the greater significance given to the Amhara component of the EPRDF at the expense of the TPLF. It is argued that this choice was made while trying to satisfy his primary Tigrayan clientele while trying at the same time to build a trans-ethnic alliance with Amhara who dreamed of eliminating the Tigrayans to regain their old dominant position, with Oromo who would have liked to eliminate both the Tigrayans and the Amhara and with a multiplicity of minor ethnic groups who saw democracy mostly in terms of regional and local autonomy and often failed to see any further. After marginalizing the TPLF, mainly due to the failed coup against him, now Meles control all aspect of the country with the help of his small entourage (Prunier & Ficquet, 2015: 275-281).

Even though the EPRDF is criticized of introducing ethnicity into politics of Ethiopia through its ethnic federalism, they argue that this ethnicization predates its organization and its coming to power. The balance of power from Axum and Abyssinian dynasty which were more Tigrayan towards the creation of Ethiopian empire, put heterogeneous groups under Amhara and their imperial ruling class monopolized economic privilege and social status, controlling land, exploiting production, and excluding the majority of the population from government. The ruling elite practiced a crude form of cultural suppression and integration and establish the Amharic language and culture, and Orthodox Christianity as passports to power. Ethnicity became irreversibly politicized, with the further expansion under the Derg of an imperial school system which had educated, and rendered conscious the elites of many of Ethiopia's ethnic groups. Tigrigna-speaking areas had been at the centre of the Abyssinian power hence the memory of this lost political status, and the reimagining of historical precedents of resistance fuelled support for the TPLF. The Tigrayan nationalists in their struggle used language and historico-cultural symbols to mark their local commitments; but they also delivered relief and rehabilitation assistance throughout the 1980s, and promised a rehabilitated and reinvigorated Tigray under autonomous government within a democratized Ethiopia. Hence, ethnicity was not introduced into Ethiopian politics in 1991, but had been thoroughly politicized for several decades (Prunier & Ficquet, 2015: 286-288).

Meles Zenawi died on 20 August 2012 at the age of 57 and was replaced by his Deputy Prime Minister Haile Mariam Desalegn who continued in the footprints of his master and resigned in 2018 after years of protests and now Ethiopia in the hands of Dr Abiy Ahmed as the new PM hence Oromo at the head

of the State and control of the EPRDF (GROWUP, n.d.). Accordingly, Abiy Ahmed decided to merge the EPRDF into a single unity party called the Prosperity Party (PP) however, the formerly dominant Tigrayan Peoples' Liberation Front (TPLF) refused to join the new party and very important is that the Tigray continued to dominate the security and military forces. The attempt to dismantle the old system by Abiy toward more open politics, it is argued that this weakened the country by resurfacing ethno-nationalism. Since his merging endeavor, Tigrayan officials felt that federal authorities were out to punish their ruling party, the TPLF, as a result of refusing to join his course since then Abiy gradually ousted all federal ministers belonging to the TPLF and since then the struggle between the federal government and Tigrayan elites intensified since 2020. Things worsened when the Tigray region held elections in defiance of the federal government's directive in September 2020 hence the outbreak of military confrontation with the federal government. It is argued that the army's actions were accompanied by discriminating measures such as phone and internet communication blackouts and atrocities committed against Tigray people in their region and elsewhere in the country.

Asgele Siyum (2021) argues that Ethiopia is a country of wars and conflicts. This is a result of the chosen federalism governance based ideology called ethnic federalism. In the context of Ethiopia, ethnic federalism was chosen to accommodate ethnic diversity and consisted of creating self-governed territories based on ethnicity that will come together to form a single country. Ethiopia was created by merging small self-governed kingdoms mainly under Emperor Tewodros and Emperor Menelik in the process of territorial expansion. According to Atnafu Taye (2017), under the reign of Menelik even though there existed disputes between regional lords and princes and central king, this changed from a struggle for territorial expansion into a class struggle that led to the revolution where for example the Ethiopian Student's Movement was a national class struggle and not an ethnic struggle. He argues that besides ethnicity awareness among Tigrinya speakers that led to the creation of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), scholars teaching at the then Haile Selassie I University (HSIU) asserted that the reaction to the massive oppression and exploitation of the people of Ethiopia appeared to be a class struggle where the peasants rebelled against the state not particularly because it was controlled and dominated by the Shoan Amhara, but primarily because it was oppressive. He argues that Tigrinya are to blame for the spread of ethnic xenophobia who asserted the crisis to be a result of Amhara domination since Tigray did not suffer disproportionately comparing with other parts. Here I argue with neutrality with respect to the accountability of Tigray regarding Ethiopian ethnic xenophobia, but by presenting my stand to the proposition that where there is social inequality and discrimination, the question of identity arise (who is oppressing who?) hence Tigrinya could not be blamed for being big eyed.

Asgele Siyum (2021) reflected on the causes of conflicts in Ethiopia and found three main causes that include historical memories where according to him

throughout history the power was disproportionately shared among Ethiopians. From Aksumite kingdom to the Zagwe dynasty that was replaced by the Solomonic dynasty and the followed *Zemene Mesafint* or “Era of the Princes”, Tigray and Amhara elites were interchangeably controlling the politics of the north and in constant power struggle. It is argued that conflicts between the Tigray and Amhara lords were accompanied by horrific human rights violations, atrocities, and mass killings. Besides power, there are also religious disputes between Amhara and Tigrinya. Ewostatiwos who was born in Tigray is the founder of Ewostatiwos religious philosophy and after his death his followers mainly Tegararu faced a challenge when Emperor Zara Yaqob (Amhara) reigned in 1434 and forced them to stop preaching their beliefs. Refusing to obey, they were tortured and faced inhuman punishments and their hagiography of survivor indicated that monks were stoned to death, thrown to lions to be eaten, thrown to bluff to death, nuns were raped, hot irons were inserted to their genital and nose, their breast was cut.

He argues that elites from the Tigray argue that there is still not only political but also the religious difference with Amhara hence Tegararu and Amharas remained antagonists politically and economically. Tegararu believed that Emperor Menelik deliberately divided the Tigrinya speakers (Tigray and current Eritrea) to strengthen his power and believes that Menelik killed men, rape women, slaughter cattle, set fire to homes and grains to bow Tigreans head, and humiliated the people. Tegararu believes that there has always been political conspiracy of Minilik to weaken Tigreans and their anger towards Amhara is that administrators were using all means to humiliate as well as vanish the people of Tigray. On the other side, Amhara accused Tigray administrators especially, TPLF who led EPRDF in ethnic cleansing against them.

He retains also that the southern part of the country has also historical complaints on the north since they believe that the country is dominated by the political and social principles of the north, that their cultures were assimilated for one nation and one culture. The Oromo believed that Emperor Menilik had committed barbaric punishment against them, that he snatches their land, destroys their wealth, killed their men, and cuts the breast of their women to the point that a statue of a hand holding a breast symbolizes the suffering of women called Aanoolee memorial monument was erected as a tribute in Arsi, Oromia. This historic political and cultural antagonism of the north and the south part of the country, as with Amhara and Tigray, is also a source of recurrent conflicts in the country hence these historical differences and narrations, Amhara and Oromia, Amhara and Tigray do not reach on political consensus.

The second cause of conflicts in Ethiopia according to Asgele Siyum (2021) is what he calls “political entrepreneurs” where elites rely on groups motivated by ideologies of religion, region, nationality or a combination of them with aim at gaining power and controlling resources. He argues that the recurrent conflicts in the country are ethnic conflicts but whose causes are not ethnic diversification rather it is the hidden interest of political entrepreneur individuals

hence political instability is caused by the politicization of ethnic identity by self-serving political leaders. He notes that all political leaders interpreted and implemented the political interest of their groups when they get power to administer the country. According to him the political issue of Ethiopia is twisted by the Tigray, Amhara, and Oromo elites who don't have common historical ground, political ideology, and social structure and their disagreement results in political instability and conflict in the country. Accordingly, political entrepreneurs, including the Prime Minister, manipulate the government media to incite ethnic hatred against specific ethnic groups and this is done through the accusation of a specific ethnic group for crimes that were not investigated, using offensive terms, belittle, giving taboo nicknames, and flattering against a specific ethnic group. These political entrepreneurs go further in excluding even their ethnic members who do not follow their way or ideology, the case of moderate politicians who do not follow their extremist way.

The third cause of conflict identified is the institutional and political system themselves where for example in the name of multiparty system, there is always a hegemonic party on the top and institutions supposed to be independent become government partisan and could not carry out their responsibility impartially and they are not trusted at all by the people.

In summary, Ethiopia is a multiethnic country that evolved through the merger of self-governed small kingdoms and through this alone some groups of people felt losing power and autonomy. The Solomonic dynasty was an oppressive dynasty that was considered Amharic by the once powerful Tigrinya through their Aksum kingdom. The nationalization of Amhara as an official language was considered an insult by other groups who felt losing power through assimilation and acceptance of other's language and culture. The fall of the Solomonic dynasty was followed by another bloody oppressive military regime called the Derg that was also replaced by the ethno-centric Tigray led EPRDF through TPLF and the current Abiy government is considered also an ethno-centric Amharic repressive regime mainly by Tigrinya. Through the loss of autonomy during wars of expansion to the power struggle in modern Ethiopia, ethnic groups are militarily and politically struggling of power where respective elites twist history or exaggerate historical events, manipulate the memory of partisans and blame other sides for betrayal and other forms of mistreatment and injustice suffered in their hands under their rule.

1.2. Rwanda: Hutu and Tutsi conflict

Rwanda is inhabited by three ethnic groups: Hutu, Twa, and Tutsi and Rwanda as a name and as a kingdom is traced to the creation of an oppressive and authoritarian Tutsi Nyiginya dynasty from the 16th century CE mainly by conquests of self-governed Hutu chiefdoms and kingdoms through expansion wars. However, the case of Rwanda is slightly different from that of Ethiopia due to the contribution of foreign hand (colonizers) in the strengthening of the Rwandan ethnic divide.

Events that destroyed the Rwandan social fabric may be classified according to the seven different era: the oppression and overexploitation of Hutu by Tutsi that was strengthened by white colonialists in what is called by some as double colonialism, troubled years surrounding the 1959 social revolution, the *Inyenzi* (Tutsi) incursions and reprisal against *ibytso* (Tutsi considered allied of Inyenzi inside the country) after the 1962 independence, the disputed 1994 genocide (Rwandan genocide that recognize victims of all ethnicities for some and genocide against the Tutsi for others), the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA)'s massacre of Hutu during the so called liberation war that started in 1990 to the end of genocide in July 1994, RPA's massacre of Hutu in Rwanda after genocide, and the RPA's massacres of Hutu refugees in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. According to (Lemarchand, 1998) when Hutu and Tutsi are asked on these events, answers they give point to radically different interpretations of the same ghastly events while Jannie Burnet conclusion after months of ethnographic research in Rwanda was that the RPF-regime has disguised the ethnism embedded in institutional and structural violence (Ingelaere, 2010).

According to Mayersen (2014) and Carney (2014), the socio-economic and political space in Rwanda under feudalism evolved to worsen when the population growth and cattle required more arable land and for grazing respectively and in addition the growth of aristocrats required more taxes on the expenses of the peasants. Mayersen (2014) argue that while previously Tutsi had dominated indigenous positions of leadership, under Belgian colonial rule such leadership became almost exclusively Tutsi and that this denied potential Hutu leaders experiences of leadership that might have prepared them for the postcolonial period. Hutu's collective memory is haunted by terrifying narratives of the horror of the expansion wars where men were killed, belongings looted, women and children reduced to slaves, and more importantly the emasculation of *Abahinza* (Hutu kings) and their genitals put to *Kalinga* (the dynasty symbol of authority). She also retain the fact that he traditional *uburetwa* form of clientship was massively expanded into a system of *corvée*, or forced labour, that only the Hutu were required to provide. She argues that whereas Hutu were obligated to provide their labour (without recompense) one or more days each week, Tutsi were free to pursue their usual occupations. The military, education and public service were mainly reserved for Tutsi elites.

According to Buckley-Zistel (2009); Carney (2014); Magnarella (2005); Shaw (2012); and Vansina (2004); the terms Hutu Twa and Tutsi that initially were used to design one's socio-economic positions, however, they were instrumentalized and politicized and became distinct rigid identities hence, they evolved to be distinct ethnic groups. Following years of scatted revolts around the country, the Hutu uprising resulted in the 1959 social revolution. Tutsi's refusal of brotherhood with Hutu as found in a letter to the king by "12 *abagaragu b'ibwami bakuru*" (12 Great Servants of the Royal Court) on the 17 May 1958 recalling the myth of Kigwa considered the father of the founder of Rwanda and recall the public

that "...the relations between us (Batutsi) and them (Bahutu) have always been until now based on serfdom; therefore between them and us there is no basis of fraternity . . . Kigwa found the Bahutu in Rwanda . . . History says that [our] kings killed the Bahinza [Bahutu kinglets] and have conquered the Bahutu lands of which the Bahinza were kings. . . . Since our kings conquered the countries of the Bahutu and killed their kinglets, how can they now claim to be our brothers" (Eltringham, 2006), added oil to the fire and since then the politicization of ethnicity led to the creation of ethnic based political parties equally by Hutu and Tutsi.

The bloody social revolution took Hutu to power while Tutsi mainly aristocrats were driven out of the country and their UNAR party later became the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) and its armed wing the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA). However, even though some narratives argue that during the revolution only Tutsi were killed, Mayersen (2010) argue that their reaction to the uprising was swift and yet far more organised than the largely spontaneous Hutu attacks and UNAR leaders, working from the King's palace organised commando units and dispatched them to arrest or kill specific Hutu leaders. The attempts of Tutsi to return to power through armed force, started with attacks of *Inyenzi* (literally *inyenzi* means cockroach and this is the retained meaning in the current genocide narrative with intent to prove a dehumanization stage of genocide preparation and execution, however this is not true since they called themselves Inyenzi as an acronym from a sentence *INgangurarugo yiYEmeje kuba ingeNZI* which may be translated as "The family's valorous determined for excellence"). Almost every attack of Inyenzi were followed some executions of Tutsi considered their allied (*ibyitso*) and the death of the Hutu president in a plane crash that was considered a terrorist attack by the RPF (Corbin, 2014; Reyntjens, 2020; and Ruyenzi, 2004) put an end to the then undergoing peace accords and triggered a genocide that happened during 100 days and claimed lived to 800,000 Tutsi and some Hutu.

Besides disputes around numbers of victims where for example (McDoom, 2020) through his rigorous statistical treatment of data concluded the number of Tutsi victims to be between 491,000 and 522,000 and in the documentary film called "Rwanda's Untold Story Documentary" by Corbin Jane of the BBC, Professors Allan Stam and Christian Davenport claimed the use of the most accurate statistical figures available and concluded that there is no way that the majority of the victims could be Tutsi (Corbin, 2014), on the other side there has been a problem with semantics where the names of the 1994 massacres changed from *Itsembabwoko n'itsembatsemba* that may be translated as "genocide and systematic killings", that was followed by *Itsembabwoko* or *Jenoside* that was considered to mean the Rwandan genocide and include all Rwandan victims irrespective of ethnic affiliation, and finally in 2007 the new terminology was *Jenoside yakorewe abatutsi* meaning "genocide against the Tutsi" and henceforth all victims of the carnage were considered exclusively Tutsi.

During the civil war, the RPA is alleged to have killed civilians mainly Hutu and according to Verpoorten (2010), even in the areas where the RPF said to

have liberated the population from the genocidal regime, the RPF allegedly engaged in reprisal killings of Hutu. The systematic Hutu killings by RPA heightened after the end of genocide and the most known incidents include the Kibeho refugees camp massacres where an estimated number of Hutu died lies between 4,000 and 5,000 while the government through the voice of the president of the republic Pasteur Bizimungu the death toll was reduced to a mere 300 Hutu refugees died (Jordan, 2021; Vidal, 2004). According to the Amnesty International (1997), the RPA massacred more than 8,000 Hutu civilians in Nyakinama cave in the northern province of Rwanda; this is the commonly called Nyakinama cave bombings. To the apex of Hutu killings, the RPA invaded Congo in 1996 and subsequent years in the name of pursuing “genocidaires” (*interahamwe* militia, civilians and ex-*Forces Armées Rwandaises*, FAR) after a number of their incursions from Congo into Rwanda, a calvary for Hutu refugees claimed lives to 200,000 - 350,000 due to hunger, disease, and sheer exhaustion as they fled the avenging arm of the Rwanda Patriotic Army (RPA) while others consisting mainly of women, children, and the elderly were massacred by the same army (Lemarchand, 2011; Reyntjens, 2009). In addition, the post genocide Rwandan justice including the famous Gacaca courts and the UN’s International Criminal Court for Rwanda, an irrefutable number of evidences point to fabricated crimes accompanied by false testimonies by witnesses that led to the imprisonment of a number of innocent Hutu (Bernet, 2008; Combs, 2017; Human Rights Watch, 2011; McKnight, 2014; Shanahan, 2012; Waldorf, 2009).

We are now in 2022, more than three decades from the RPA attack of Rwanda from Uganda, what is the current social climate? Ingelaere (2010) argues that regardless of the ban of ethnicity based identification of people, Rwanda continues to be ethnically bi-polar with Hutu and Tutsi as the main ethnic groups and that the perception of political representation fell for Hutu while increased for Tutsi. He argues that his informants confirm the uncertainty of what awaits them ahead since the current regime is unchallengeable and since they confirm to be passive in decision making process (they are *ba nyamujya iyo bigiye* meaning they follow the current of things). According to Buckley-Zistel (2009), at the local level, many Rwandans are pretending peace but antagonisms based on ethnic identities of Hutu or Tutsi persist between the parties to the conflict and that this reveals the continuity of ethnic cleavages and the absence of social transformation. Baldwin (2019) go on saying that the RPF’s successful transition from insurgency to authoritarian regime has subsequently allowed it control over Rwanda’s national identity in such a way that much of the nationalist discourse surrounding Rwanda’s current political situation has centred on the genocide and emphasise on the contradictory nature of ethnic non-recognition policy and the selective ethnic recognition that takes place during *Kwibuka*. He argues that in contemporary Rwanda, the prosperity for survivors became a primary indicator of prosperity for the entire nation and that the survivors’ future is equated to Rwanda’s future. He sees the survivor’s identity inheritance from parents to next generations and the lack

of non-survivors voices in commemoration as privileging one group while socially and politically erasing another under the guise of supposedly erasing all distinction. Accordingly, he argues that the government's culpability for actions taken during a civil war are undermined and the broader spectrum of violence forgotten and this results in non-Tutsi being held responsible for survivors' trauma without having their own war-related trauma positioned within the new Rwanda rhetoric. According to him generally Hutu are no longer positioned in new Rwanda as an ethnic identity, but instead as a genocide identity: perpetrators while survivors actually become a metaphor for the Rwandan nation, those who were violently victimized but committed to resilience and a prosperous future.

In his article entitled "Social Exclusion in Rwanda Under Different Leadership Regimes", Uwizeyimana (2017), reproduced and updated the 1991 Nduwayezu's synthesis of Hutu and Tutsi's mutual complaints into law suits. In the first case the claimant is Tutsi and a defendant is Hutu and the lists of charges against the Hutu include: murder of Tutsi; Tutsi beating; Killing of Tutsi cows; destruction of banana and coffee belonging to Tutsi; Burning the houses of Tutsi; opposition to the repatriation of Tutsi refugees; exclusion of Tutsis in economic matters and schools; Treating Tutsi as foreigners in their country; complicity with whites to murder King Rudahigwa; use of intimidation during the 1960 elections; collaboration with Colonel Logiest (a Belgian colonial administrator) to hunt Tutsis and distort the 1961 referendum; killing of Tutsi in 1973 in the absence of the Inyenzi attacks; inciting disorder in schools and in services in 1973; exclusion of Tutsi in positions of responsibility in the country; impoverishing Tutsi by means of discriminatory economic policies; jealousy against the Tutsi; and that Hutu carried out the genocide against the Tutsi.

In the second case the claimant is Hutu and the defendant is Tutsi and the lists of charges include: the fact that Tutsi have expropriated all Hutu's and their children's property, and then enslaving them in their own country; forcing Hutu children to become slaves of Tutsis; enslaving the Hutu girls/females; raping Hutu girls and women; degrading the Hutu and relegating them to humiliating tasks in society; imposition of agricultural tax (*amakoro*) on land taken by force from Hutu; despising Hutu without reason; putting them in shackles; imposing Hutu to carry chores; collaboration with white colonizers to whip the Hutu; collaboration with whites to impose Hutu forced labour; imposing the carrying of heavy loads; making Hutu the night guards of homes of Tutsi chiefs; promoting Tutsi children in schools at the expense of Hutu children; Reserving business and public administration schools for Tutsi children; relegating Hutu children to schools teaching manual labour/occupations only; attacking the Hutu-led regime over four times since 1959; attacking Hutu in 1990 after refusing to return peacefully; employing foreign mercenaries to massacre many Hutu; refusing to be ruled by Hutu; thinking that it is degrading to marry Hutu girls; restoring the monarchy system which was abolished in 1961; Fomenting accusations of collective guilt in which the RPF accuses all Hutu of having been directly or indirectly involved in the killing of Tutsi

in 1994; Fomenting the crime of “genocide ideology” and targeting Hutu with the laws of genocide ideologies in order to silence them; Tricking and forcing some Hutu to admit to genocide crimes they have not committed; Imprisoning Hutu and subjecting them to forced labour such as TIG (*Travaux d’ Intérêts Général*) under the pretext of national reconciliation; Excluding Hutu survivors, especially orphans and widows, from all social assistance provided by government and foreign agencies, while making it available to all the Tutsi; Forcing Hutus into villages (*imidugudu*) and confiscating their land; Pursuing Hutu (and some Tutsi) into exile and murdering them; Denying Hutu the right to officially and openly remember the Hutu victims who perished during the 1994 Rwandan genocide and the killings of Hutu refugees in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC); Denying Hutu justice by refusing to prosecute Tutsi, especially RPF members, despite evidence; Using Gacaca courts to prosecute Hutu only, while protecting Tutsis who also committed similar war crimes and crimes against humanity; and replacing French with English as the dominant official language in order to force French-speaking Hutu intelligentsia into unemployment.

In short in this section present the evolution of interethnic conflict and violence in Rwanda. The conflict started with Tutsi’s repressive aristocracy and their refusal to share socio-economic and political power with their comrades that led to Hutu uprisings culminating to the 1959 social revolution. Tutsi that lost power found it unacceptable and decided to start an armed struggle, the Hutu memory of the past found this as an eminent threat to counter at all cost hence the Inyenzi incursions and reprisal killings of Tutsi (*ibytso*) culminated to the 1994 genocide that took lives to thousands of Tutsi and Hutu. The RPA carried out reprisal systematic killings of Hutu civilians both in Rwanda and in refugee camps in Congo. The partial judicial systems were established in favor of the victors where only Hutu suspects were tried and a significant number of fabricated cases and false testimonies were recorded in all those judicial systems. Until now the authoritarian ethnocracy was once again established. A number of politicians were imprisoned, torture cases and extrajudicial killings documented laws promulgated that limit the freedom expression and above all there are disputes over the course of the horror that Rwandans passed through and this create a blame game between conflicting parties.

2. Discussion of the findings and final remarks

According to (Uwaifo, 2016), different groups of people may peacefully cohabitate and ethnicity evolves as there is the perceived difference in treatment of supposedly equal people, hence involves demands by one group on the other competing group. Feeling threatened and in the context of maintaining power, the dominant group engages in human rights violations including torture, mass arrests, the outlawing of political organizations, extrajudicial killings among others. Instead of appeasing the tensions all measures taken strengthen group identity and collective consciousness of a common enemy, ethno-centric ideologies are

developed on both sides of conflicting parties and these later escalate into open armed conflicts.

Once the oppressed take power, undoubtedly repeat the same mistakes: creates and consolidate ethnocentric political system and discriminate against their old rival. Dissatisfied of the status quo, the former powerful group starts and engage in maneuver to topple their former slaves to restore their lost dignity and hence the struggle for power become routinized. One group builds and prospers waiting for the other to destroy and rebuild on its own and so on. What is interesting is that even outside of the elites cycle among ordinary people of the dominant group, there is a kind of psychological satisfaction for their group to be in power even though their ethnic aristocracy brought them very little beyond the sense of superiority (Ingelaere, 2010) and this is the basis of their manipulation and engagement in further violences.

From their respective kingdoms or aristocracies to the creation of unified kingdoms through expansion wars and later modern countries; Amhara and Tigrinya, Hutu and Tutsi have been struggling for power as they were once in their sovereign territories. First of all the subjugated groups were not satisfied by their reduced status that led some to the loss of autonomy and being discriminated against and enslaved. The error repeated by all of dominant group is the supremacistic tendency of condemning the other groups as if they were destined to be their eternal servants, this trigger the nationalistic ideology that they have been once free and that they were inhumanely treated by their fellow hence the creation of militia to engage in what they call liberation struggles.

Some elites mistakenly believe they have the rights to fight for their rights and try their bests in preventing others from exercising their rights too. This is the origin of endless cycle of armed struggles for power. In modern days due to globalization and inter-state cooperation some groups fighting for them to be heard are condemned to being terrorist groups and labeled “enemy” of their own country, the same country they are fighting for them to have their voice heard like others, without looking and carefully analysing the roots of the cause of their struggle. When brothers fight brothers and have their shared country destroyed, there is nothing to be proud of even on the side of the victors; it is a failure on both parties even in the first day of war engagement.

The integrated-blame game theory of ethnicity recognizes that both parties have the right for grievance. Since throughout the history there is no single group condemned to be angel and the other to be demon due to the fact that through their protection of socio-economic interests they committed wrongdoings in terms of human rights violations on the opponents, the only sustainable solution is the acceptance of the past as it happened, wrongdoings accepted by both parties, equitable justice established for all perpetrators or universal pardon adopted, all victims recognized, all survivors taken care of equally and commitment to all inclusive democratic or consensual democratic political endeavors undertaken.***

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