

# Ethiopia in an Existential Crisis Without a Leader, But This, Too, Shall Pass

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## I. Executive Summary

When it comes to facing a problem head-on, there is the proverbial ostrich that buries its head in the sand and there is PM Abiy Ahmed who turns attention to something else. True to his character, when the Orthodox Church conflict reached a point of national crisis, the PM ran out of town and released a picture with TPLF leaders to show he is in control and to give the media talking points away from the real crisis.

The PM is being tossed around by the waves of turbulence caused by Oromo extremist forces, including high-level officials in his own party. The crisis can be summarized in one line: በትረ መንግስት በአጁ ይዞ እና በመንበረ-ሥልጣን ዙፋን ላይ ተቀምጦ በራሱ ላይ መሸፈት የሚያምረው የኦሮሞ ሃይል ተነስቷል.

My command of the English language will not allow me to translate the line in a way that does justice to it. In a nutshell it means “The Oromo elite that sits at the apex of the political power structure and controls the levers of power is rebelling against itself.” Sadly, a mind that has been stuck in 50 years of grievance politics cannot unlearn its reflexive behavior that is primed to rebel.

The question that imposes itself on us is: Why did the Orthodox splinter group took a bold action at this juncture? Since the Church conflict has been ongoing for some time, the timing of the splinter group’s action is a marker of trigger events. Understanding this dynamic is critical to understand how we got where we are and how to get out of it.

One thing is for certain. By the time, the Tigrayan Liberation People’s Front (TPLF) came to power, the Tigrayan tribal politics had a well-developed and articulated goal that was strategically implemented. In contrast, the Oromo tribal politics has many heads and souls. It lacks strategy and what happens is determined by accident and chance.

As I have noted in an earlier article titled [“The Accidental Rise and the Foreseeable Fall of Abiy Ahmed in the Land of Two Shenes”](#), two conflict centers have emerged after the fall of TPLF. The first is between Amhara and Oromo extremist groups – I call them Amhara-Shene and Oromo-Shene. The second is within Oromo political forces.

The conflict between the two Shenes has been raging in full earnest for nearly three years. Both see the PM as their primary enemy and channel their wrath against each other through him. Using him as a transmission line and converter station has allowed them to weaponize their animosity to each other as a national conflict. This has increasingly weakened the PM, and tilted the balance of power within the Oromo tribal forces in favor of his adversaries, without strengthening the Amhara power base.

The conflict within the Oromo landscape involves three different groups: Pan-Ethiopianist Oromos led by the PM, secessionist forces, champions of hegemonic Oromia within Ethiopia. The third group includes a shadow government within the Oromo wing of the Prosperity Party (PP-Oromo).

The dynamics of these two conflict centers have all but stripped the PM of the levers of power. His recent engagement with the TPLF that has refused to fully disarm and relinquish power as per the Pretoria agreement has signaled two things. The first signal is that he is powerless. The second is that he is not governed by principle, and he would do anything to stay in power. When seen from this perspective, the timing of the splinter Orthodox group's bold action is both strategic and political. They acted because they believed the Oromo tribal land is his only lifeline and he will not act against them.

By forces of circumstances, Shene-Oromo that was a small group of ragtag Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) has progressively grown to a force of national significance as more Oromo tribalist forces threw their support behind it. With the PM all but incapacitated, the contention has been between Oromo-Shene and the PP-Oromo shadow government.

The bold assault against the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has given Shene-Oromo strategic advantage against both the PM and the PP-Oromo shadow government. The PP-Oromo shadow government that has been supporting Shene-Oromo as an insurance policy against the PM's reform agenda has found itself dwarfed by it.

Ethiopia is left naked without a leader and credible opposition against emboldened Oromo tribal groups that are increasingly morphing into the body and spirit of Shene-Oromo politics.

On the bright side, there is a silver lining in the gathering dark clouds. The fact that the PM is hiding in some distant land and the Oromo tribal government is aligning itself with the splinter Orthodox group has created a completely new dynamic that will unravel the Oromo tribal politics. The crisis will break the political apathy of the silent majority both inside and outside of the Oromo tribal land. Grownups will rise to take charge as Oromo elders have done to disassociate the Oromo youth from Jawar Mohammed toward the end of 2019 and the beginning of 2020.

My confidence that was expressed last week is further inspired by the Orthodox Church that has shown its centuries old tradition of wisdom and judgment. Its leaders have displayed mastery of strategic thinking and leadership in framing the agenda and managing the narrative. Their response to the PM's speech has schooled the young PM the art and science of public relations.

A clarion call must be made by the Patriarch of the Orthodox Church to prohibit extremist forces from leveraging the crisis as a tool for political ends. The Church's followers and supporters must stand guard to push back against political forces who wish to hijack the protest process. The Church must provide a list of slogans and protest banners for national and international rallies. Every speech that is delivered at rallies at home and abroad must be consistent and approved by the Church.

The purpose of this article is to show that the current crisis should not surprise us. It did not happen by accident. It happened by a slow-motion process. We will not exit from it until we understand the process that brought us here. This requires understanding the sources of the spiraling conflict and a sober discussion to build consensus. Let us start with the man at the helm of the political power structure.

## II. Abiy-Ahmed: An Ordinary Man Drowning in an Extraordinary Turbulence

Before we judge the PM's performance, we need to understand that governing an ungovernable society is no small feat. From the get-go, Amhara and Oromo extremists started pulling him to their extreme positions, denying him a space to govern from the center of the political spectrum.

On the one end, the likes of Shaleka Dawit want the PM to [“abolish the constitution, dissolve parliament, abandon the ethnic agenda, and lead a transitional government by decree.”](#) On the other end, Team Jawar Mohammed warned him [“Ethnic federalism engrained in the current constitution is here to stay. It's not up for discussion, let alone negotiation.”](#)

These are Ivy League educated souls whose understanding of democratic governance is either ruling by decree or outlawing political discussions and negotiation. The story of the PM is one of reconciling such diametrically opposing, irreconcilably positioned, and deeply entrenched political culture of helplessly hermitized (Dawit) and permanently tribalized (Jawar) political activists. Illiterate peasants who stayed in line for hours to vote for their leaders appreciate democracy more than their Ivy-League educated counterparts.

Soon after he took office, the PM became a target of Oromo extremists for praising Emperor Menilik. [“አዲህ ምኒልክ ኢትዮጵያን ከወረራ በመከላከልና ቴክኖሎጂ በማስገባት ኢትዮጵያን ያስረከቡን ታላቅ መሪ ናቸው።”](#) He was declared the enemy of Oromo when he affirmed that Ethiopia's geographic proper and sovereign status are [“not up for negotiation.”](#)

Speaking of the PM's betrayal of the Oromo, Milkessa M. Gemechu, a former member of the Central Committee of the Oromo Democratic Party (who is now in exile) wrote in Foreign Policy Magazine: [“Not even one year into his premiership, he was openly regarded as a traitor in Oromia.”](#)

Milkessa accused the PM of: (1) purging “hardcore Oromo nationalists from any role in his government at federal, regional, and local government levels”; (2) demonizing the Qeerroo as an “ungovernable pestilence that must be dealt with as soon as possible”; and (3) shifting the Oromo Democratic Party (ODP) “dramatically toward the public dominance of Ethiopian nationalists who are organized around Amharic language and culture, the Ethiopian Coptic Orthodox Church, and those who support a return to an overtly centralized unitarist government.”

On the other hand, Amhara extremists see him as the “enemy of Ethiopia and genocider of Amhara.” One thing common between extremist Oromo and Amhara forces is that they see only through the prism of a devout friend or a biblical foe. Both see the Prime Minister as a biblical foe. They both use him as a transmission line to wage a war against each other.

Whether the PM is an Ethiopianist, a softer version of Oromized Ethiopia, or an opportunist who would go with what he believed will keep him in power longer is debatable among rational observers. But what has dominated the political discourse is whether he is part of the Oromo-Shene anti-Ethiopia strategy bent on weakening Ethiopia to build Greater Oromia or a protégée of emperor Menilik doing the Amhara’s bidding. This has weakened the PM and strengthened Oromo extremists.

No doubt that the PM is stuck between ungovernable political forces. However, his own mismanagement has contributed and even exacerbated the crisis. As I have noted in several articles, he has two characteristic flaws. First is his belief in himself as a prophesized redeemer of Ethiopia. This has denied him the humility to learn from his mistakes and seek advice and counsel from people of experience. Second, his narcissistic leadership style and I-know-it-all attitude have led him to surround himself with “yes-men” subordinates. This has denied the nation a competent leadership team. What we are witnessing is in part a product of this.

### **III. The Degenerative Nature of Oromo Tribalism**

It is hard to imagine a more emphatic curse to a nation than tribalism. No society or institution (religious or otherwise) can escape its poisonous fangs. The President of Oromo (Shimeles Abdissa) made this clear, declaring that Arabic [Islamic] and Hebrew [Christian] [names are undermining the Oromummaa doctrine](#). Oromos who are named after Prophet Mohammed or the Blessed Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus, are considered as offense against the Oromo liberation theology. This has led many Oromos to abandon such names as Yohannes and Musa and take tribal names.

In January 2019, a political case was made to break the Ethiopian Orthodox Church at the Oromo Federation Congress (OFC) political campaign rally. Present at the speech were Professor Merera Gudina and Jawar Mohammed. Jawar is the man who popularized “[Oromia out of Ethiopia](#)” as a political strategy. In his speech Professor Merera promised if his party wins the 2020 election, its first task would be destroying non-Oromo statutes in Addis Ababa and erecting Oromo statutes in their place.

Another prominent speaker at the rally was the current spokesperson for the splinter Oromo Orthodox Christian group - Deacon H/Michael Tadesse. His speech was delivered in the spirit of Jawar’s “[Oromia out of Ethiopia](#)” political strategy. The Deacon’s speech was entirely devoted to get the Ethiopian Orthodox Church out of Oromia. He used his oratorical skill to defame the Ethiopian Orthodox Church with the following accusations, as Jawar uncontrollably giggled throughout the speech [as shown in the video](#).

- ዶክተር ብርሃኑ ነጋን መስቀል አሳልማ ፕሮፌሰር መረራ ጉዲናን የምታገል ቤተ ክርስቲያን አንፈልግም
- Oromo does not want a Church that divides Oromos across religious lines.
- Oromo does not want a Church that divides Oromos across ethnic lines.
- Oromo does not want a Church that restricts Orthodox Christians from living with their Muslim and Protestant Brethren
- Oromo does not want a church that treats Oromos as foreigners and bandits

These were all blatant and virulent lies. The political agenda behind such a venomous speech was underlined in his concluding remarks: “From now on Oromo Orthodox Christians will be led only by native Oromos not by መጤ (outsiders).” The መጤ may be fluent in Oromigna and a gifted preacher. But he need not apply. The overriding litmus test for priesthood in the Oromo tribal land is pure Oromo blood.

The fact is that current conflict in the Orthodox Church is triggered by the splinter group’s violation of the Church’s canonical dogma. This is not to say the Church does not have shortcomings. The Church itself has acknowledged areas that need to be addressed and that corrective actions are in progress. One thing is plenty clear. What is driving and fueling the current crisis is politics not religious differences. Whom the faction picked as its spokesperson flashes a blinking red flag.

The current problem exposes a fault line between two factions of Oromo. Historically, both factions were followers of the Oromo liberation theology. Until 2018, they collectively built false narrative about Ethiopia to give credence to their tribal narrative. After the ascent of PM Abiy, they splintered into two broad groups.

Ambassador Lencho Bati [put this succinctly](#) in a public speech, stating: “During our struggle as an Oromo liberation front, we systematically deconstructed Ethiopia in order to construct Oromo. Now we are in power, Oromo needs to play a different role of uniting different regions of the country.” He continued to say “Emperor Haile Selassie was a great leader who put Ethiopia on the global stage as a proud nation. This is our time to build on his legacy and modernize Ethiopia by brining all Ethiopians under one tent.” He appealed to Oromos far and near to “support the PM who is devoted to build a united Ethiopia.”

Sadly, the other faction led by the likes of Jawar, Merera and H. Michael, want to continue their tribal liberation narrative, focusing on Oromo v. Amhara divisive conflict. The current Church assault is a byproduct of this political culture.

How did Ethiopia degenerate into such a state where divisive tribal doctrines precede unifying religious tenets? It is to this topic that the remainder of this article turns to.

#### **IV. The Rise of Two Shenese**

There are well over 80 officially registered parties in Ethiopia. But two groups who are not registered as political parties are the ones who are dominating the on-air, print, and social media bandwidth, namely Oromo-Shene and Amhara-Shene.

Obviously the two have substantial differences in their end goals. No doubt that the fundamental tenets of their political ethos and ideological creeds are also different. Nonetheless, they are also alike in that they are the polar epicenters of the nation's entropic conflicts that are spiraling into a deepening crisis.

Their symbiotic existence allows them to cross-feed combustible fuel to each other and fire up the flames of tribal conflict. One can exist without the other, but neither can dominate the political scene without the existence of the other as its existential antagonist. This is particularly true after TPLF self-destructed itself in a spectacular fashion. TPLF was the party that distracted Amhara and Oromo tribalists from going at each other's throats. With TPLF out of the game, the danger for Ethiopia's existence is heightened as the two largest tribal groups battle for tribal supremacy.

##### *IV.1. Oromo Shene*

Oromo-Shene is an organized political group. It uses violence as the primary instrument to advance its political agenda in a quest to establish Greater Oromia within or outside of Ethiopian geographic proper. Its epicenter is Wellega - the porch and altar of the Oromo liberation theology. Although it is rejected by the Oromo masses both inside and outside of Wellega, it has become the most dominant player in the Oromo tribal land.

Its rapid ascension is attributable to the tension between different factions of the Oromo wing of the Prosperity Party (PP). A tribalist faction within the Oromo-PP that is not fully on board with the PM's reform agenda has become a bed fellow with Oromo-Shene. This faction finances, arms, and informs Oromo-Shene about the movements of federal defense forces to plan its offense and defense operations.

Oromo-Shene's ability to punch above its weight also depends on the powerbases of various Oromo tribalist forces (including OLF and OFC) whose political survival depends on its existence. They all understand Oromo-Shene's strength will weaken the PM and thwart his Ethiopianist agenda.

In a sort of a subversive way, Oromo-Shene has become the armed wing of all Oromo tribalist groups who harbor different end goals, running the gamut from imposing the Gadaa tradition throughout Ethiopia to seceding from Ethiopia. The Oromo splinter group's assault of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has elevated Oromo-Shene to the top of the Oromo tribal totem pole.

## IV.2. Amhara Shene

Amhara-Shene, on the other hand, is more of an off-grid and high-bandwidth network of activists who aim to dial back the time to when the Amhara played a dominant role in state politics. The network's ideological doctrine coalesces around Amhara nationalism at its nucleus from whence a unitary mindset radiates outward and expresses itself as a national identity. The network has neither a written manifesto nor an organizational platform. Instead, it pushes a passive-aggressive strategy to take the Ethiopian political center stage, using grievance politics both as the power cylinder and transmission belt of its political machinery.

Its grievance politics has undercut the Amhara historical political wisdom that relies on the art of diplomatic flexibility to transcend differences and build consensus. Gone are the days of Amhara subtle and strategic powerplay and coalition forming. The network's mantra-like response to legitimate criticisms about its lack of strategy in coalition building and organizing a political powerbase is: "Why are we maligned for protesting against Amhara genocide."

Crying "genocide" as a daily staple of a political campaign has done nothing for the defenseless Amhara in the Oromo tribal land. Nor has it dispelled Oromo-Shene's existential threat that hangs over the Ethiopian skies like a dark cloud.

Even worse, Amhara-Shene's trademark is radicalizing the Amhara political agenda and normalizing hostilities within the Amhara forces. Three examples drive this point home.

- Achamyeleh Tariku (09/12/2022) called for the eradication of PP-Amhara as a matter of first priority. "[በቅድሚያ ብአዴንን ማጥፋት አለማው የማይደርግ የአማራ ተጋድሎ የውሽት ትግል ነው።](#)"
- Meskerem Aberra (April 13, 2022) accused Amhara-PP of playing an active role in the slaughter of the Amhara people "[ፒፒ አማራ በአሸከርነቱ ተጠናክሮ ህዝባችንን በማሳረዱ እንዲቀጥል።](#)"
- Girma Berhanu (December 30, 2022) "[Amhara prosperity is serving the Oromo Prosperity's interest, rather than standing up for the Amharas.](#)"

Amhara-PP has not been able to defend Amhara not because it wants to serve Oromo-PP but because it has been targeted, vilified, and weakened by Amhara extremists. It was the same anti Amhara party call for action that led to the [murder of Dr. Ambachew Mekonnen on June 22, 2019, by an Amhara extremist – General Asaminew Tsige](#). General Asaminew is regarded as a hero by the likes of Ambachew, Meskerem, and Girma.

Amhara extremists have proven destructive both on the regional and national level. First and foremost, they have denied a culture of rational discourse and consensus building from flourishing in the Amhara tribal land. Second, whereas Oromo-Shene leverages on other Oromo forces, Amhara-Shene seek the

extinction of Amhara forces who do not subscribe to its extremist politics. Third, every tribal homeland is as much worried about Amhara-based national identity as they are about Oromummaa.

The three factors noted above have tilted the power balance in the Oromo-Amhara tribal conflicts in favor of Oromo tribalists. This has emboldened them and set them off onto a path of destruction, creating seismic waves of turbulence across the nation's political, social, and religious landscapes.

## **V. The Oromo Tribal Political Culture: Schoolyard Whining *Writ Large***

There is no doubt that the primary danger for Ethiopia's survival is Oromo tribalism whose demands cannot be met because it will never cease until the entire precept of the nation-state system submits to the concept of Oromummaa.

Remember this is the home of Mogassa military doctrine whose historical, ideological, and political DNA is soaked with blood in a quest to impose Oromo traditions on other tribes by the power of the sword. The sword was inspired by "political, military and economic considerations" as [documented in a book authored by an Oromo historian](#) (Mohammed Hassan) and published by the Oxford University Press.

Mohammed notes: Historically, the Oromo has "assimilated more than they were assimilated by others." This included forcefully absorbing "Cushitic and Semitic-speaking tribes as clients or serfs (gabbaro) into their tribal structure." The conquered and assimilated tribes were forced to abandon, their names, languages, and traditions, and politically and militarily baptized to become Oromo in every facet of their existence.

To top it off, Mohammed's book reveals that new fictitious Oromo genealogies were created for the forcefully assimilated tribes [so they can count "their ancestors several generations back" to a "hypothetical" Oromo lineage](#). It was a complete dissolution of culture, tradition, name, and even genealogy.

Mohammed further informs us that the assimilation process culminated with an oath taking ceremony led by Aba Gada, repeating: "I hate what you hate, I like what you like, I fight whom you fight, I go where you go, I chase whom you chase." Those who refused to Oromize their body, spirit, soul, and genealogy were wiped out of existence in a bloodshed.

The UN defines cultural genocide as "any deliberate act committed with the intention of destroying the language, religion or culture of a group." Yet, the Oromo elite's *ad infinitum* complaint as victims of "an Amhara forced assimilation" is the staple of their political culture. They lament, for example, cities such as Adama and Bishoftu were given Amhara names - Nazriet and Debre Ziet, respectively.



Shamelessly, they say nothing about hundreds of originally non-Oromo cities large and small that have been changed to Oromo names during the era of Oromo expansion. What is today Kemisse and its surrounding in Wello was called Gagn (ገኝ). Western Wollo including Worehimenu, Woreillu, and Borena used to be Bete Amhara (ቤተ ኣማራ).

The question is why has the Oromo political culture that is nothing more than a schoolyard whining gained traction both locally and internationally? The answer is there is no concerted effort to debunk and discredit it.

The Ethiopian contemporary politics is dominated by contentions of regional conflicts. For example, the Amhara see Emperor Menilik's excursions southward as part of Ethiopia's nation building. In the meantime, they view Imam Gragn Ahmad's northward military excursion as an invasion of Ethiopia by an Islamic nomad supported by foreign Islamic forces. In contrast, Emperor Menilik's requests for support from a Christian British Queen is praised as international diplomatic expeditions and a cornerstone of Ethiopia's state building theater.

The Ethiopianist elites find themselves in a tight spot. They cannot refute and reject the Oromo twisted narrative without first untangling themselves from their own twisted story line. Their inability to do so has left them helpless in stopping the Oromo static fiction from becoming a dynamic historical account.

## **VI. The Oromo Effort to Resurrect Mogassa in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

The current President of the Oromo tribal land (Shemelis Abdisa) did not mince words when describing his government's plan for "[the Future of Ethiopia](#)". In March 2022, he tweeted: The future of Ethiopia is a "Gadaa system [that] is a holistic and deep philosophy with thousands of years practice in human life and strong institutions. We are working to use this rich social capital and philosophy to transform our society in all aspects."

In another speech he revealed that as part of this grand strategy the "[Prosperity Party is built in such a way to advance the interest of Oromo. The head of the Party will always be an Oromo or an Oromo plant.](#)" This was upped in a different speech. To rejuvenate and spread the Gadaa system, the Oromo government is "[spending billions and erecting Oromummaa markers in Addis Ababa.](#)"

It is not only the Oromo government that is aspiring to make Ethiopia under the Gadaa system. One of the leading Oromo elites [envisions that Ethiopia](#) will be "slowly, but surely, transformed to Gadaa democratic Ethiopia, i.e. de facto Great Oromia."

Neither the Oromo government nor its tribal intellectual coteries are able to come to terms that Gadaa is a 16<sup>th</sup> century tradition whose time has long expired. Historians have documented that

[“After the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was reduced to a ritual system.”](#) It belongs to anthropological books because it is incompatible with the 21<sup>st</sup> century complex social, political, and economic developments.

Rather than spending billions to teach the Oromo youth math and science and prepare it for the future, the Oromo government is resurrecting the ghosts of Mogassa to help it overcome the scientific challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century with 16<sup>th</sup> century tools. The people of Oromo are already suffering the consequences.

In the most recent college entrance national exams, the Oromo tribal homeland lagged behind the national average. For example, the average scores for all subjects by regions were, Addis Ababa (38.46%), Harari (32.88), Dire Dawa (31.42%), Amhara (30.37%), Sidama (28.34), Southern People (28.17), and Oromo (27.96). Oromo performed below Amhara in almost all areas. Of the top 5 best performing high schools in the nation, three were in Amhara and one in Oromo. Further, Amhara performed better than the national average by 9 percentage points. Oromo was under by 41 percentage points.

Japan and China had a far more developed and sophisticated traditional institutions and governance infrastructures than Gadaa. However, Japan under the Meiji Restoration Period and China under Deng Xiaoping figured out one cannot go forward in a reverse gear. They adopted western practices, just like the founding fathers of the US in the 18<sup>th</sup> century modeled their democracy after Greece’s system of self-government. It is sad to see Oromo tribalists embracing an expired village ritual when modern societies are exploring best practices from around the world.

It is hard to blame the Oromo alone. The sense of “we have the best tradition” is a chronic problem throughout Ethiopia. We need to remember “Tigrayan exceptionalism” is what led to a spectacularly exceptional self-destruction of the TPLF. It is the same mindset that has chained hermitized Amhara intellectuals to distant centuries.

We, the people of Ethiopia are cursed with imagined greatness with stories of glorious past that are not relevant to the present or future challenges of Ethiopia. I cannot think of anything of significance that we have contributed to the World, outside of two plant-based medicines, including ደንተኛ. Our people still use ደንተኛ because they do not have access to, or they cannot afford, amoxicillin. The Oromo fictional greatness of Gadaa is the equivalence of ደንተኛ in a world where health science is advancing at a dizzying speed in gene therapy, telemedicine, artificial intelligence, and neurotechnology.

## **VII. The Grand Oromo Tribal Plan**

Tribalist Oromos believe they must overcome four obstacles that are standing in their way reviving Mogassa and imposing the Gadaa system on the rest of Ethiopia. The perceived obstacles are: (1) the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, (2) Addis Ababa, (3) Shewa Oromo, and (4) economic control.

### *VII.1. Assault on the Orthodox Church*

The belief that baptizing the Ethiopian Orthodox Church with the Oromummaa doctrine will Oromize the national political landscape is manifested in the ongoing assault on the Church. The Oromo tribal government's interference to help the rebel Oromo Orthodox leaders has poured gasoline on fire lit by tribalist forces. Even worse, the Prime Minister's speech that failed to condemn the Oromo tribal government's illegal action has damaged him as the national leader.

### *VII.2. An Oromo Tribal Campaign on Addis Ababa*

Declaring victory on the defeat of Amhara, [on September 7, 2019, Jawar tweeted](#): "Amharizing the Amhara has been the most useful accomplishment of this change. The 'Ethiopian' mask used by Amhara elites to camouflage their ethnocentric interest has been barrier to real dialogue. Now the mask has been removed, real negotiation and discussion is possible." This is the story of Shene-Amhara put brilliantly. If they did not exist on their own, Jawar would have invented them.

Addis Ababa with its [5.5 million people](#) has refused to be pigeonholed into tribal groups. Its people consider themselves Addis-Ababans without any tribal allegiance. The repeated effort to impose Oromo flags and Anthems in Addis Ababa are part of the futile de-Ethiopianization plan.

### *VII.3. The Shewa Oromo on the Tribalist Fireline*

Shewa Oromo upholds a nationalist rather than a tribalist identity. This has made it a target of the Oromo tribal government. The new Sheger city surrounding Addis is designed to weaken certain segments of Shewa Oromo.

### *VII.4. An Oromo Economic Supremacy*

Controlling the economy to build tribal power was a strategy TPLF advanced in its 27-year reign. Corruption under TPLF was centrally controlled, more like a well-managed mafia structure. Currently, corruption is unmanaged. Every Oromo official is using his/her power to take whatever his/her fancy dictates.

## **VIII. In Conclusion**

The TPLF was a well-oiled machine that operated capably through effective coordination both at home and abroad. The Oromo-PP has neither a strategic blueprint nor a functional administration.

What makes Oromo tribalism dangerous is that it is not controlled and managed. The government both at the federal and regional level are ran by default on auto pilot. Autopilot does not work when

there is turbulence, and the system is unstable. That is why we see the PM meltdown every time there is a problem. We saw his reaction when Eskinder took Addis Ababa by storm, when Fanno Amhara threatened his administration, when Oromo tribalists tried to Oromize Addis Ababa, and now when a rebel Oromo group piked a fight with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. He comes across as arrogant and threatening.

There is a possibility for the PM to declare a state of emergency to make himself relevant in the new political environment. This is difficult because he is sandwiched between neither and nor. He cannot take on the rebel Church group because the last lifeline he has is the Oromo card. Nonetheless, he cannot come out and throw his weight behind them because that will be the end of his political life.

For all practical purposes, Ethiopia is in a crisis without a national leader. This can be a blessing in disguise for several reasons. First, the Oromo tribal politics is in a disarray at a time when it is seen as a threat to the very survival of the country. Second, at a time of its weakness, it picked up a fight with the most powerful institution in the country that has unlimited number of followers who are ready to die defending it.

Ethiopia's political problem was apathy that is reflected by the size of the silent majority. አይጥ ጥፋት? ስትሻ ስታበዛ ሩጫ ሄዳ ታሸታለች የድመት አፍገጫ or so say Ethiopians, the ድመት being the silent majority. Ethiopia needed to break the apathy to defeat Oromo tribalism. Oromo tribalists did the job for them.

Ethiopians of all creeds, beliefs, and persuasions must rise to crash the dangerous Oromo tribalism that has breached the final frontier that serves as a constraining line of faith and religion. Even worse, tribal forces of evil are killing peaceful believers for protecting their house of worship. Today, it is the Orthodox Church. Tomorrow it can be Muslims, Catholics, Protestants, or any other house of belief.

All religious institutions must rise to support the Orthodox Church. All political parties must add their voices to the chorus of protest without piling their agenda on the Churches struggle for survival. The role of the diaspora is critical in exposing the mass murder of Christians in their Church grounds. What is needed is a trigger point to coalesce forces of peace and unity.

The Church's followers and supporters must stand guard to push back against political forces who may wish to hijack the protest process. All slogans and banners used at support rallies at home or abroad must be approved by the Church ahead of time. Every speech that is delivered at rallies must be reviewed and approved by the Church ahead of time.

May God protect the Ethiopian Orthodox Church from the evils of tribal forces.