



Competing Narratives and Identity Politics: The Sociopolitical Dynamics of an Emerging Ethnonationalism in Ethiopia

Mihret W. MENGSTU

Purpose of the Study

Research focus: examining the sociopolitical dynamics of Amhara ethnonationalism in Ethiopia

Objectives:

- Identify the triggering causes
- Explore its foundational narratives
- Examine its implications for Ethiopia's sociopolitical trajectory

Methodology

- **Research Paradigm:** Constructivism—realities and meaning are constructed and shaped by narratives and political processes.
- **Research Approach:** Qualitative
- **Data Collection:** semi-structured interview, content analysis, and document review.
- **Data Analysis:** Thematic and narrative analysis involving the identification of recurrent themes, patterns, and contradictions.
- **Scope:** Post-2018 political transition with a consideration of historical trajectories.
- **Ethical Considerations:** Informed consent, anonymity maintained, and researcher's positionality disclosed.

Conclusion

- The movement is a reactive, narrative-driven movement with potential to reshape Ethiopia's polity.
- It reflects Ethiopia's entrenched struggle over history and memory, a 'temporal paralysis' where the past dominates the present and constrains the future.
- The study offers insights into Ethiopia's complex identity politics, underscoring the need for a reevaluation of its institutional and political framework to achieve a cohesive future.

Background context & Analytical framework



Key Findings

Triggering Causes:

- Ethnic federalism as an enabling framework for ethnic mobilization.
- Structural discontents of ethnic federalism and perceived marginalization.
- Post-2018 political transition: intensified mobilization.

Embedded Narratives:

- Counter-Narrating 'Ethnic Oppression' thesis.
- Reclaiming ethnic identity: detaching Amhara identity from imperial connotations.
- Narratives of defending state unity

Implications for state structure

- Reshaping the political order: seeks constitutional reform, narrative shift, and territorial integrity, pairing ethnic assertion with national unity.
- Risks of security dilemmas with counter-mobilization
- Signals existential crises but also opportunities for reform.

CONTACT

Email:
mihretenawa@gmail.com