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The Destiny of Pan-Ethiopian Nationalism in the Post-1991 Ethiopia: Is It Neither Died nor Persisted?

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ABSTRACT

The post-1991 political leadership of Ethiopia placed more emphasis on ethno-nationalism than on pan-Ethiopian nationalism, in contrast to the political regimes that preceded it. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to respond to the following query: Why did the Ethiopian government give preference to ethno-nationalism over pan-Ethiopian nationalism after 1991? What is the real fate of pan-Ethiopian nationalism in Ethiopia's politics following 1991? Using primary data collected from interviewees and a review of various literatures, the study revealed that the major reasons for the prioritization of ethno-nationalism over pan-Ethiopian nationalism in the post-1991 era were the TPLF's assumption of Ethiopian nation-building, the need this front's leaders had to divide and rule the country, the relatively peaceful regional context during the early 1990s, and the TPLF's mechanism to stay in power and loot Ethiopia for many years. The study further argued that despite the divisive debates surrounding the survival of pan-Ethiopian nationalism in post-1991-some contending that it has perished, while others maintain that it is still thriving-the finding indicates that pan-Ethiopian nationalism is becoming sporadic in nature and has neither persevered nor perished in post-1991 ethnic politics. Thus, the study contends that it is impossible to conclusively determine whether pan-Ethiopian nationalism survived or vanished since it lacks a distinct political and social framework. It does, however, obviously become periodic since it might appear right away at "threat" or "promise" moments, or it can stay frozen if it is not given fertile ground.

Key words: Ethiopia, Ethno-nationalism, Pan-Ethiopian nationalism, Perished, persevered, Post-1991

INTRODUCTION

There is a contradictory debate regarding the fate of pan-Ethiopian nationalism in the post-1991. While some argue that pan-Ethiopian nationalism is died, others arguing for the persevered nature of the issue. Thus, finding the golden medium between the two extremes-perished and persevered-is thought to be crucial in resolving the acrimonious debate about the issue. This is where this study has a contribution.

On the one hand, there are scholars who are arguing for the persisted nature of pan-Ethiopian nationalism, despite the ethno-federal politics, in the post-1991

(Chinigò, 2022); (Ishiyama & Basnet, 2022); (Keller & Omwami, 2007). Furthermore, there are scholars who argue that though the country is facing serious civil wars on different fronts, Ethiopia will not fall apart (Abraha, 2022) thus pan-Ethiopian nationalism be the same. Likewise, post-2018 politicians in power, notably the Prime Minister, argue for the never-dying nature of pan-Ethiopian nationalism, albeit it is for political authenticity. They believe the EPRDF was dissolved to form a prosperity party based on a pan-Ethiopian identity and maintain unity. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's 2018 inaugural speech exemplifies this, promoting the never-dying nature of Ethiopian

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nationalism (Chekol, 2019). However, the new leadership's attempt to transition from ethnic politics to nation-based politics is hindered by ethnic cleavages and identity politics dominating state politics.

On the other hand, other scholars like John Abbink argues for the non-existence of pan-Ethiopian nationalism in the post-1991 due to ethnic politics (Abbink, 2011). Furthermore, recent empirical research using Afro barometer data indicates a significant increase in ethnic nationalism, not pan-Ethiopian nationalism, especially since 2018 (Ishiyama & Basnet, 2022); (Ishiyama, 2023). Ethnic nationalism is increasing, even among the Amhara, which historically held the strongest sense of pan-Ethiopian nationalism. Post-1991, the country's ethnic arrangement led to racism over patriotism, changing political movements from "Ethiopia or death" to "my ethnic group or death," and resulting in inequality and injustice, ultimately eradicating pan-Ethiopian nationalism sentiment. Furthermore, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia's constitution and it's making process from top-down could not promote pan-Ethiopian nationalism but guarantee ethnic nationalism (Mengistu, 2015). The legal document acknowledges ethnic-based politics and self-determination up to secession, but this creates mistrust among Ethiopian ethnic groups, a model for fragmentation (Boni, 2020). A study using Afro barometer data to measure trust among Ethiopians has found that the majority of the population lacks trust (Logan & Torsu, 2022). The TPLF/EPRDF government replaced pan-Ethiopian nationalism with ethno-nationalism that brings a shift towards parochial thinking (Mengistu, 2015). The introduction of ethnic-based political arrangements in post-1991 Ethiopia has perished the pan-Ethiopian nationalism sentiment (Yusuf, 2019). However, the assertion that pan-Ethiopian nationalism has been died is not plausible, as there have been instances of such sentiments in the post-1991 period.

In a nutshell, two polarized debates existed regarding pan-Ethiopian nationalism in the post-1991: one believes it's never dying, while the other believes it's already dying due to ethnic politics. Thus, the study presents a counterargument, the golden mean, suggesting that pan-Ethiopian nationalism is occasional and not perished or preserved in the post-1991, but can manifest during times of threat or promise. Consequently, the study has argued that pan-Ethiopian nationalism has not such a clear expression, perished or persisted, but its fate is found to be occasional and is conditioned by circumstances. Thus,

the study intends to answer the following research questions:

- Why did the post-1991 TPLF/EPRDF government give priority to ethno-nationalism over pan-Ethiopian nationalism?
- What is the real fate of pan-Ethiopian nationalism in the post-1991 ethnic-based politics? Does the prioritization of ethno-nationalism in the post-1991 period really perished it?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE
The Concept of Nationalism
Nationalism can be seen positively as democracy, self-determination, political legitimacy, and social integration, while negatively it can be associated with militarism, war, irrationalism, chauvinism, intolerance, homogenization, forced assimilation, authoritarianism, parochialism, xenophobia, ethnocentrism, ethnic cleansing, and genocide (Bogishvili, Osepashvili, Gavashelishvili, & Gugushvili, 2016).

Civic Nationalism vs. Ethnic Nationalism
The above two-sided understandings of nationalism brought two ideal types of nationalism: "civic" or "political" nationalism as being the positive one and "ethnic" or "cultural" nationalism as being the negative one. These two types of nationalism have two different perceptions of "national identity". Civic nationalism views national identity as political membership, while ethnic nationalism views it based on cultural or ethnic criteria before political citizenship (Roshwald, 2015). Therefore, the civic perception of national identity is characterized as liberal, voluntary, Universalist, and inclusive, while ethnic perception is illiberal, particularistic, and exclusive.

Pan-Ethiopian Nationalism (Religious and Political/Historical Roots)
This sub-section delves into the origins of pan-Ethiopian nationalism, considering its religious and political root. Pan-Ethiopian nationalism is a diverse discourse with religious and political origins, encompassing ideology, social/political movements, cosmology, and subculture (Degu, 2021). Religiously, Pan-Ethiopian nationalism emerged in the late 19th century when white church priests denied black priests due to racism in South Africa (Erlikh, 2002). Furthermore, Pan-Ethiopian nationalism is deeply rooted in Christian biblical passages and prayer, often featuring Ethiopia, which instills a strong sense of nationalism among Christian followers (Wedenoja, 1978). In addition to the Christian church,

pan-
Ethiopian nationalism is associated with the Islam religion. For Muslims, Ethiopia is a country where they declared their freedom from persecution and emancipation from fear (Trimingham, 2013). Ethiopia is considered as the foundation for Islam as a worldwide religion for Muslims were welcomed and saved from persecution in Mecca (Østebø, 2022). The Islam followers chose Ethiopia as the land of peace, and the Christian followers hosted them which in turn helps them to live peacefully (Hassen, 2020). Therefore, the two biggest religions in Ethiopia, Christianity and Islam, can be mentioned as an asset for the development of the pan-Ethiopian nationalism sentiment in the country.

Politically, pan-Ethiopian nationalism sentiment is influenced by Ethiopian patriots and emperors, who often chose to sacrifice their lives for their country. Emperor Tewodros II, for example, chose to scarifies his life for a unified Ethiopia than giving his hand to the British Forces (Narasingha, 2015). Likewise, Emperor Yohannes IV, who succeeded Tewodros in 1872, gave his neck for his country while he was fighting with the Mahdists (Seri-Hersch, 2009). By far and better, Menelik II modernized and unified Ethiopia, defeating Italian forces in 1896, showcasing the global glory of black people and ensuring the present state of the country (Gemtessa, 2014). Haile Selassie I (1930-1974), despite the critical criticisms of his decision to seek refuge in England rather than staying in Ethiopia and fight alongside the patriots, he struggled against the second round of Italian occupation between 1936 and 1941 through his admired international diplomatic effort (Hailemariam, 2023). Therefore, invariably, in the pre-1991, Ethiopian emperors had a pan-Ethiopian nationalism, and died for one united Ethiopia, which can be cited as a political and historical roots for the pan-Ethiopian nationalism.

The Advent of Ethnic-Politics and Its Consequence in Ethiopia

The imperial politics' goal of unified Ethiopia led to internal dissatisfaction, resulting in the regime's downfall in the early 1970s, with the Armed Forces defection and popular movement collaboration (Karklins, 1994). In the 1960s student movement against imperial rule, Tigrigna speaker students, who are now leaders of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), viewed class struggle as an ethnic issue (Yalew, 2014). This was a time when TPLF started to erode the national unity and begun to misinterpret Ethiopian history and the birth of ethnicity as an identity of the people. Like its predecessors but contrary to TPLF's ethnic agenda, Mengistu Haile Mariam, a former Lieutenant Colonel, led a 1974 coup

that ousted Emperor Haile Selassie, serving as head of state until 1991, has developed a pan-Ethiopian nationalism with the slogan of Ethiopia *Tikdam* (Ethiopia first) (Halabo, 2016).

Therefore, pan-Ethiopian nationalism was strong during the Derg regime, as seen during the late 1970s Ethio-Somalia war. Despite internal socio-political challenges, Ethiopians united across the country to repulse the Somali invasion, showcasing the resilience of the nation during a time of significant internal socio-political challenges (Geshekter, 1985). This victory over Somalia is still used as a symbol for the current generation to promote pan-Ethiopian nationalism sentiment.

Later on, however, the military regime faces challenges from student movements like the "nation-building thesis" (defended by the Ethiopian Democratic Union), "colonial thesis" (defended by the Oromo Liberation Front and Eritrean People's Liberation Front), "multinational Marxist thesis" (defended by the EPRP), and "national operation thesis" (defended by Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF) (Kelecha, 2021).

The TPLF that was officially launched in 1975 seeking the greater republic of Tigray, and the OLF that came to its existence in 1976 seeking Oromo independence propagated secession and prioritization of ethno-nationalism over pan-Ethiopian nationalism (Workneh, 2014). Guerilla warfare by secessionist fronts spread throughout the country in the late 1970s. Particularly, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) launched a guerilla campaign against the military government, assassinating the military government leaders. In February 1977, the EPRP initiated terrorist attacks-known as the White Terror-against Derg regime members (Gilkes, 1982). It was at this time that the military regime did grand failure through considering all the opposition groups as anti-Ethiopian. Thus, the regime started a campaign of "Red Terror", in which thousands of the regime's opponents were brutally murdered on the streets (Halabo, 2016).

This act of the Derg regime has facilitated its collapse and the coming to power of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in 1991. EPRDF consisted of four political parties, namely Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF), Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM), Oromo Peoples Democratic Organization (OPDO), and Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (SEPDM) took power from the military regime in 1991 (Tronvoll, 2021). As an offspring of

the
1960's student movement, TPLF conceived the Ethiopian nation-building in terms of "national oppression thesis"(Kleppe, 2022). It accused the pan-Ethiopian slogan as a chauvinistic idea, made genocide over pan-Ethiopian symbols, and depicting the emperors of the country as "criminals" and "colonizers".

Then, TPLF created fake organizations for Amhara, Oromo, and other ethnic groups and creating EPRDF, allowing it to expand beyond Tigray province (Teshome, 2008). This helped TPLF to maintain political, economic, and military hegemony (Tadesse & Young, 2003). However, the TPLF hegemonic administration put the state under failed states in Africa (Iyob, 2000) and (Getachew, 2015).

The top-down constitutional process in Ethiopia renders it unsuitable for social contract due to lack of practical and institutional guarantees (Abbink, 2009). The legal document acknowledges ethnic-based politics and declares self-determination up to secession in Article 39/1, serving as a model for fragmentation (Boni, 2020).

In conclusion, the TPLF/EPRDF government in Ethiopia replaced pan-Ethiopian nationalism with ethno-nationalism. Thus, the aim of this study is to determine whether the fate of pan-Ethiopian nationalism is died or persisted in the post-1991 era.

Contradictions: Pan-Nationalism vs. Ethno-Nationalisms

Ethiopia's history combines ethnic and civic nationalism, making it a synthesis of ethno-nationalist thesis and pan-Ethiopianist anti-thesis (Bulgan, 2021). Pan-Ethiopianism is a civic nationalism that harnesses national cohesion (Bulgan, 2021). It promotes commonness (Philemon, 2020). Pan-Ethiopianists criticized ethnicity for it diminishes shared values (Bulgan, 2021). Pan-Ethiopianists believe Ethiopia comes first, all other issues like ethnic identity, religion and language are secondary (Vaughan, 2003). They consider the adoption of ethnic federalism in 1991 as a TPLF's strategy of divide and rule. On the other hand, ethno-nationalists suspect pan Ethiopianism recalling evil things like ethnic marginalization, suppression, cultural domination and assimilation of groups in the name of national unity (Bulgan, 2021).

Pan-Ethiopianists are also appreciative of the long history of the country and its imperial rulers. They consider Emperor Menelik II as the most important Ethiopian state builder and national hero. However,

ethno-nationalists consider Menelike II as a brutal and genocidal ruler (Bulgan, 2021). The ascendance of ethno-nationalism has been threatening the pan-Nationalism feeling in the country. Thus some scholars argued that the ethnic-based political arrangement in the post-1991 Ethiopia perished the pan-Ethiopian nationalism sentiment in the country (Bulgan, 2021; Rowe & Gebrewahd, 2021).
In a nutshell, as mentioned in the above, there are two contradicting perspectives regarding the fate of pan-Ethiopian nationalism in the post-1991 period. Thus, this study has the role of negotiating the polarized arguments developed by scholars and politicians about the issue.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
To conduct this study, the researcher has obtained a verbal informed consent of participation from the participants, before the actual data collection started. The study employed a qualitative research approach for making a detailed description, diagnosis, and explanation of the issue. The study employed both primary and secondary data sources. While semi-structured interviews were made to collect data from the interviewees, document reviews were employed to collect the needed data from various documents. Regarding the primary data, individuals who have a life experience of Ethiopian political dynamics from the Imperial regime to date were accessed through purposeful and chain referral sampling techniques. Taking the relatively autonomous regional states (Amhara, Oromia, SNNPRS, Tigrai, and Harar), as to the Federal arrangement of Ethiopia (Yimenu, 2021), in to account, five individuals (who were the imperial bodyguard), five persons (who were members of the 1960's student movement), and five individuals (who were working at different hierarchies of the military regime) were selected for interview through chain referral sampling technique. To balance the viewpoints of the aforesaid personalities, the researcher employed a purposeful sampling technique to select five scholars in the field of political science and history to review the dynamics of pan-Ethiopian sentiment in the past fifty-sixty years. On top of that, five top political leaders of the prosperity party, three individuals from the EPRDF, three opposition political party members, and two religious fathers were part of the interview for this study.

On the other hand, secondary sources such as journals, articles, and media reports were critically reviewed based on their relevance for the study to triangulate the data collected via interviews. Note-taking was employed during personal interviews and document reviews as a technique of data collection. After the data was collected, the researcher used a thematic data

analysis strategy by collecting similar ideas from interviews and document reviews into the same headings and developing emerging themes based on the objectives of the study. In doing so, the reasons for the prioritization of ethno-nationalism over pan-Ethiopian nationalism and the real fate of pan-Ethiopian nationalism in post-1991 ethnic-based politics are discussed, respectively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study investigates why the Ethiopian government favored ethno-nationalism over pan-Ethiopian nationalism in the post-1991 and what would happen to the sentiment of pan-Ethiopian nationalism in this pro-ethno-nationalism politics of the country.

Reasons for the Prioritization of Ethno-nationalism

In answering the question why the post-1991 leadership prioritizing ethno-nationalism over pan-Ethiopian nationalism, the study has identified the following four major reasons. The first reason is associated with *the assumption of TPLF towards the Ethiopian nation-building strategy*. The conception of TPLF towards the Ethiopian nation-building is the "national oppression thesis"(Kleppe, 2022). As to the interview of EPRDF member, TPLF conceived the 1960s struggle as an ethnic struggle and firmly believed that the historical questions of Ethiopians can only be answered via ethnic-based political arrangement. Missing the point. The ethnic-based solution proposed for Ethiopia's class based problem led the problem from bad to worse. TPLF sees pan-Ethiopian nationalism as the main source of all troubles in the country, so that its leaders need to have new myths and mythologies to build their power and legitimacy. An interview made with a former member of the Coalition for Democracy political party explained the issue in the following way:

> The post-1991 Ethiopian government exhibited a race-oriented and parochial hate politics, turning the country into tyranny. Specially, the TPLF/EPRDF leaders claimed that the Amhara ethnic group as oppressor, misguided a generation by preaching pan-Ethiopian nationalism to maintain Amhara dominance. This hatred of politics was documented in the TPLF's legal manifesto (KII12, 08 April 2021).

Understanding from the quote, the TPLF-dominated government prioritized ethno-nationalism over pan-Ethiopian nationalism in post-1991 Ethiopia, assuming it was a tool for suppressing and exploiting ethnic groups other than the Amhara. This led to the installation of ethnic federalism, a significant historical mistake in Ethiopian politics.

The second reason for the prioritization of ethnic politics in the post-1991 is connected with *the need TPLF/EPRDF's leaders had to divide and rule the country*. One of the former Coalition for Unity and Democracy party member argued in the following manner:

> During the struggle against the military regime, the TPLF recognized that defeating the Derg regime alone was impossible. They sought collaboration from other ethnically movements like EPLF and OLF, promising ethnic independence after overthrowing the military. This was not to satisfy allies but to divide and rule the country (KII 5, 06 April 2021).

The TPLF formed tactical alliances with ethno-nationalist forces to overthrow the military regime in Ethiopia. Despite advocating for self-determination rights for all ethnic groups, the minority TPLF used this as a divide-and-rule tactic, with some ethnic groups gaining independence while others were disallowed. This indicates that the TPLF's interest was not to 'satisfy' but to divide the country and people in a way that better protects its own interest.

Thirdly, *the relatively peaceful regional context during the early 1990s did not necessitate a broad pan-Ethiopian mobilization*. The absence of external threats during the early 1990s reduced the value of pan-Ethiopian nationalism. At that time, national "enemies" were those who opposed the divide and rule policy of the TPLF/EPRDF. An interview made with a political science scholar explained how the relatively peaceful regional context in the early 1990s reduced the value of pan-Ethiopia nationalism in the following way:

> People with external enemies often prefer internal strength and unity, despite their differences. This was evident in Adwa, Ethio-Somalia, and Ethio-Eritrean wars. However, in the early 1990s, Ethiopia was relatively peaceful with Somalia and Eritrea, and the TPLF/EPRDF government prioritized ethno-nationalism over pan-Ethiopian nationalism (KII6, 12 April 2021).

Thus, the peaceful regional context in the early 1990s helped TPLF to emphasize ethno-nationalism, shifting political focus from "Ethiopia or death" to "my ethnic group or death".

Fourthly, *TPLF realized that ethnic federalism as the only means for a minority group to survive ruling and looting Ethiopia for many years*. This approach was thought to help TPLF further pursue the false narration of the National Oppression thesis, and created smaller ethnic entities (allies) (Berhe, 2018). The TPLF utilized ethnic identities to divide and rule, fostering suspicion, confusion, and hate among different ethnic groups, enabling them to maintain power and loot Ethiopian resources for about 27 years.

In a very astonishing manner, the TPLF/EPRDF regime interpreted Ethiopian conflicts ethnically and adopted ethnic-based federalism to prevent future conflicts. However, this approach has not addressed Ethiopia's problems, and pan-Ethiopian nationalism has been rejected by TPLF/EPRDF leaders, as Prime Minister Meles Zenawi stating Ethiopianness is a right, not an obligation (Plaut, 2012). This speech of the prime minister clearly shows that pan-Ethiopian nationalism appeared as a "second class identity" next to ethnicity.

Despite the on and off existence of pan-Ethiopianism, TPLF/EPRDF leaders have been actively working to dismantle and deconstruct key figures, groups, and institutions, particularly the Amhara ethnic group and the Ethiopian Orthodox church that could have a good potential for pan-Ethiopian nationalism sentiment (Berhe, 2008).

Thus, the following theme aims to address polarized arguments about pan-Ethiopian nationalism, aiming to find its true fate through various evidences, ultimately contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the issue.

The Fate of Pan-Ethiopian Nationalism in the Post-1991 Era

This sub-section demonstrates that pan-Ethiopian nationalism has an occasional existence, contradicts with the belief that it has perished or persists, in the post-1991 period via presenting the following evidences.

Pan-Ethiopian Nationalism during the Ethio-Eritrea War (1998-2000)

The 1998 Ethio-Eritrea war justified pan-Ethiopian nationalism, mobilizing Ethiopian troops and spirits, symbolizing the battle of Adwa, and re-appropriating national symbols that were rejected by TPLF/EPRDF rulers (Bach, 2014b). The war against Eritrea has bolstered Ethiopian unity and solidarity, indicating a resurgence of pan-Ethiopian nationalism from imperial and military regimes, albeit for political purpose (Bach, 2014a). The war against Eritrea has

been argued to have reconciled the Ethiopian empire with the post-1991 revolutionary state, and their respective nationalisms (Dias, 2008). Similarly, data collected from interviews confirmed that "the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea reactivated pan-Ethiopian sentiment, reshaping nationalism discourses in the post-1991, though declined in later times". This reactivation of the sentiment during the war, which was deemed dead in the early 1990s, and it becomes frozen immediately after the war can justify the occasional nature of pan-nationalism in the post-1991 Ethiopia.

Pan-Ethiopian Nationalism during the 2005 National Election

The 2005 national election in Ethiopia rekindled pan-Ethiopian sentiment, which had vanished in the early 1990s due to ethnic-based federalism. Scholars condemn this arrangement, arguing it threatens national unity and denies pan-Ethiopian nationalism (Abbink, 2006). The All Amhara People's Organization (AAPO) strongly criticized the ethnic-based structure of the state in the early 1990s. Despite its ethnic base, the AAPO, created in 1992 and chaired by Prof. Asrat Woldeyes, firmly defended a unitary Ethiopia and condemned EPRDF's ethnic-based multinational project having a slogan of "One Nation, One Country". A member of the AAPO in an interview revealed that "One may surprise how an ethnic based political organization struggled for the unity and integrity of Ethiopia. However, since childhood, said the AAPO member, we have been told that we are Ethiopians. Being Ethiopian is the only thing we know". Furthermore, in Roha Abebe's book "Ye Amhara Guday," Prof. Asrat stated that he joined AAPO to defend the Ethiopian people's suffering, not because he is Amhara (Roha, n.d). This shows how the party had an Ethiopian cause.

Similarly, the Ethiopian Democratic Unity (EDU) argued that the state's ethnic-based federalism would eventually lead to the country's disintegration (Teshome & Záhořík, 2008). The Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) party in 2005 emphasized pan-Ethiopian nationalism, opposing ethnic-based state arrangements and promoting country unity, highlighting the risk of fragmentation. In short, while the Coalition for Unity and Democracy party's and most Ethiopians alignment to pan-Ethiopian nationalism during the 2005 Ethiopian national election reflect the non-perished nature of pan-Ethiopian nationalism, less attention given to it in the post-2005 indicates its occasional existence.

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD)

The construction of dam on the Blue Nile River promotes the pan-Ethiopiaism sentiment via creating a

shared society, despite the violent divisions caused by ethnic federalism. A key informant interview explains in the following way:

> Ethiopians have diverse ethnic identities, but they can develop a common national identity and symbol. The GERD serves as a superordinate identity, allowing for peaceful negotiation of differences. The dam has become a shared public identity, gaining allegiance, though it may raises concerns among ethnic groups about potential ownership and benefits in the future (KII 16, 14 April 2021).

It can be argued that the construction of the dam has fostering inter-communal trust and transcending ethnic differences. Above all, the dam becomes the not only a symbol but the sovereignty of Ethiopians. The former foreign minister of Ethiopia once argued that "Ethiopians should see GERD as a matter of life and death. It is a matter of existence. GERD is the manifestation of Adwa in which this generation blessed to have. The dam is the Adwa of the current generation that must be transferred to the next". Therefore, it is not only the right but also a matter of existence to construct the dam on the Blue Nile River.

Deeply ingrained sentiment among Ethiopians is especially fostered by the dam's construction, which was funded by Ethiopian public funds and Ethiopian expertise. A father of Islam religion argued that "the dam is being constructed by our own expertise and our finance in our territory from our river. So, from whom do we want consent? Who is to say we can't build the dam?" Consequently, Ethiopians were using various social media platforms to spread their pan-Ethiopian emotion by stating, "The dam is my dam."

However, while the fostering of pan-Ethiopian nationalism due to the construction of GERD shows the existence of the sentiment, the potential threats over the dam benefits due to ethnic politics and self-administration concerns, if not managed, would reveal the non-persistence nature of the pan-Ethiopian nationalism sentiment in the country.

Pan-Ethiopian Nationalism in the post-2015 Political Struggle

In the post-2015, Ethiopian youth protested against the TPLF-dominated government, demanding ethnic equality, democracy, and regional sovereignty under a federal structure, rekindling pan-Ethiopian nationalism (Kelecha, 2021). As a result, Abiy Ahmed come to power in April 2018 as Ethiopia's new Prime Minister, and pledged political reforms, unity promotion, and collaboration with Eritrean government which inspire hope and welcomed opposition parties.

The Prime Minister emphasized unity among Ethiopians, urging them to unite despite their differences. He pledged to use *Medemer's* (synergies) concept to build a thriving Ethiopia, inspiring the people across the country. Ethiopians staged supporting demonstrations after the Prime Minister's ambitious address, sparking pan-Ethiopian sentiment. However, the hope faded as the threat grew in latter times, making pan-Ethiopian nationalism less persistent.

Pan-Ethiopian Nationalism during the Struggling against COVID-19

Ethiopia's prime minister urged unity despite differences following the first COVID-19 case report, stating the virus does not discriminate based on race, color, economic status, ethnicity, or language (Kifle & Obsu, 2022). The virus, at least in its early stage, educates individuals to think and stick together despite its harmful effects. As a result, the Ethiopians engaged in various measures to combat the virus, putting aside their ethnic and political disputes.

Some individuals were participating in a financial campaign to combat illness, while others providing food and sanitizing supplies, focusing on humanity than ethnicity. The Ethiopian Ministry of Health highlighted the importance of being human in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic, highlighting the pan-Ethiopian sentiment during early response stages, as individuals recognized the need to save others' lives. Nevertheless, despite early pandemic collaboration and unity, post-pandemic discontinuity suggests that pan-Ethiopian nationalism has not a persistent presence in the country.

Pan-Ethiopian Nationalism and Olympic Games

Sports, particularly athletics, significantly contribute to the development of pan-nationalism (Záhořík & Godesso, 2022). In Ethiopian Nationalism: an Ideology to Transcend All Odds, Belachew Geberewold discusses the use of historical world records of Abebe Bikila and Haile Gebreselassie as sources for pan-Ethiopian nationalism (Gebrewold, 2009).

The Walias, Ethiopia's national football team, represents a diverse group of individuals with diverse religious beliefs, tribal affiliations, and geographical origins, fostering unity and patriotism. An ethnic-based political activist shared how the Ethiopian and Egyptian football games have shaped his nationalism feeling:

Though I am an ethnic-based political activist, I enjoy the success of the Walias, especially when they strike the Egyptian football team on June 9, 2022. This incident helped me develop pan-Ethiopian nationalism, despite being short-lived. The Walias' performance of Ethiopia's national anthem and commentators' praise of Ethiopia's victory gave me a positive sentiment about my country (KII18, 12 June 2022).

The interview data reveals that sports and athletes at international games can revive pan-Ethiopian nationalism sentiment. However, this sentiment often fades after a tournament, as seen in the case mentioned. Therefore, all the evidences discussed above connotes that pan-Ethiopian nationalism is a sentimental and occasional issue with varying characteristics in the post-1991 Ethiopia. The evidences presented show that the real fate of pan-Ethiopian nationalism is occasional, neither perished nor preserved.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION
Conclusion
The study associated the reasons why post-1991 politics prioritized ethnic nationalism over pan-Ethiopian nationalism with the TPLF's assumption of Ethiopian nation-building, the need these front leaders had to divide and rule the country, the relatively peaceful regional context during the early 1990s, and the TPLF's mechanism to stay in power and loot Ethiopia for many years. Furthermore, presenting various evidences, the study argues that the real fate of pan-Ethiopian nationalism in the post-1991 period is occasional, neither perished nor persevered. The study concludes that pan-Ethiopian nationalism has no such clear political and social structure to really argue that it survived or perished. Fairly, the fate of pan-Ethiopian nationalism in the post-1991 period has an occasional existence. In fact, this presence by itself is surprising, taking into account what the TPLF/EPRDF did in attacking and demonizing pan-Ethiopian nationalism (including national symbols, history, and national heritages).

Recommendation
Based on the findings, study recommends that Ethiopians (the government, politicians, scholars, and the people) should work together to recover the common national symbols, anthems, and heritages, etc., that were decided to be perished in the post-1991 period, to promote the shared feeling of pan-Ethiopian nationalism in the country.

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