

# A Shift of Political Discourse: Critical Discourse Analysis of Ethiopian Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed's Inaugural Speech

Muluken Asegidew Chekol

Department of Journalism & Communication, Bahir Dar University, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia

**Email address:**

Fulday02@gmail.com, fulday10@gmail.com

**To cite this article:**

Muluken Asegidew Chekol. A Shift of Political Discourse: Critical Discourse Analysis of Ethiopian Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed's Inaugural Speech. *Advances in Sciences and Humanities*. Vol. 5, No. 5, 2019, pp. 128-137. doi: 10.11648/j.ash.20190505.13

**Received:** July 29, 2019; **Accepted:** October 12, 2019; **Published:** October 31, 2019

---

**Abstracts:** This paper explains the political discourse shifts made by Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's April 2, 2018 inaugural speech. P.M. Abiy's inaugural speech is the text for this study analysis to extract the political and ideological discourse shifts observed in his speech. Mainly the analysis is done qualitatively through explaining a few excerpts of the inaugural speech. To substantiate the qualitative analysis, key word quantitative analysis is also applied. The analysis results show that Prime Minister Abiy made significant shifts of political discourse from his predecessors and Tigray People Liberation Front lead Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (TPLF/EPRDF). The discourse shifts are observed in representing Ethiopian history, defining identity, and interpretation of pluralism in Ethiopia. For instance, P.M. Abiy portrays Ethiopia as a country of citizens whose identity is inseparable where as TPLF/EPRDF portrays Ethiopia as a country of nation nationalities whose identity is the sum total of different identities; the P.M claims for "Ethiopia first" rhetoric where as TPLF/EPRDF claims for "my ethnic first" rhetoric; P.M. Abiy aspires for a country of ideas but, TPLF/EPRDF has worked for a country of identities.

**Keywords:** Discourse Shifts, TPLF/EPRDF, Pluralism, Ideology, Identity

---

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background of the Study

The practices of politics and political discourse in Ethiopia are one of the most unsettled issues. Starting from the over through of the Solomon Dynasty in 1974, political civil war is endemic in the country. The Derg military regime devastated the long built tradition of political economy of Ethiopia to place socialism ideology which is unfamiliar to Ethiopian psychology, moral, thinking and religious doctrines. In this regard, Abbink mentioned that the 1970s revolution had been class-based "anti-feudalist, anti-capitalist revolution of the masses" against the imperial elites [1]. Following that the Tigray People Liberation Front led Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (TPLF/EPRDF) took power in 1991 after nearly two decades

civil war with the Derg regime<sup>1</sup>. This regime has imposed ethnic federalism and divided Ethiopians in their ethnic lines. Through divide and rule mechanism, TPLF/EPRDF ruled the country for almost three decades. Proceeding to a wide range of Ethiopian youth political opposition movement, the last prime minster<sup>2</sup>, Hailemariam Desalegn, who was serving under the hegemonic TPLF/EPRDF resigned in March 2018. This remarkable period gives an opportunity to start a new political reform in the country. In the same token, Abiy Ahmed, who is considered to be the reform champion, came to power and vowed as the prime minster of the country on April 2, 2018. This day and onwards, a different political discourse has been presented in Ethiopia. From the very day of his inaugural speech, the primer spoke differently, away from the traditional rhetoric the TPLF/EPRDF regime has

---

<sup>1</sup> The Derg military regime over through Ethiopian long lasting Solomon Dynasty last Emperor, HaileSelassie and ruled Ethiopian from 1974 – 1991.

<sup>2</sup> Haile Mariam Dessalegn serve as Ethiopian P.M (2011 - 2018), after the sudden death of Meles Zenawi, under TPLF/EPRDF regime

been identified itself for the last three decays.

At this juncture, Ethiopians from all walks of life inspired by the new Prime Minister's inaugural speech. Accordingly some miracles have been exhibited. For example, opposing political parties which were under armed struggle ceased fire and return home from exile. Accountability has begun from officials; critical views against the government have got coverage in the media. The new P.M. has given pardons to political prisoners, relief state of emergency, reform state institutions such as the militarily, police and national security organs. Most remarkably, he had declared accepting the Algiers agreement and Border Commission decision, between Ethiopia and Eritrea, without any precondition; following it Ethiopia and Eritrea reach to peace agreement and officially declare the end of the 20 years war. Things look different, unusual and new hope and bright future starts to shine in Ethiopia. P.M. Abiy extends the reform based on what he outlines in his inaugural speech, in which, this study prefers to analyse aiming to indicate the political discourses shifts showed in the reform visa vise with TPLF/EPRDF's political discourses.

### 1.2. Research Objectives

The main aim of this study is to analyze the political discourses of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's inaugural speech visa vise TPLF/EPRDF political discourse in line with Fairclough and Van Dijk assumptions of critical discourse analysis [2-3]. Very specifically, the study has tried to:

1. Uncovers the P.M. Abiy's ideology from his inaugural speech
2. Identifies the political discourses shifts seen, from TPLF/EPRDF to M.P. Abiy, in the inaugural speech
3. Shows P.M. Abiy's representation of Ethiopian history, identity, moral values and pluralism from the inaugural speech
4. Points out patterns of a few keywords of the speech to substantiate the qualitative discourse analysis with quantitative indicators.

### 1.3. Research Methods

Basically, this study employs qualitative text analysis. In doing so, the analysis is done based on Fairclough's and Van Dijk's assumptions of discourse analysis. Fairclough asserts that "text analysis is an essential part of discourse analysis" [2]. In this regard, the P.M. Abiy's inaugural speech is the text in focus. Van Dijk in his part argues "political and ideological discourse analysis is usually based on individual discourses" [3]. From the genre of discourses, political discourse helps to understand ideology better. P.M. Abiy's inaugural speech is a political discourse which enables to extract his ideology out of it. To substantiate the qualitative analysis, patterns of a few keywords of the inaugural speech are analyzed quantitatively.

P.M. Abiy Ahmed's, April 2, 2018, inaugural speech was conducted in Ethiopia federal government working language,

Amharic. The Amharic text<sup>3</sup> is available online. It was Hassen Hussein translated the speech into English text in the lone translation version. He is an author and teacher at the Saint Mary's University of Minnesota, USA. The English translation text<sup>4</sup> can be accessed from the site in December, 11/2018. The speech full video is also up loaded on YouTube<sup>5</sup> I have checked and rechecked that all the three formats of the speech (Amharic, English (trans), video) have the same content, so I preferred to use the English text to this study.

As a politician and a new leader, M.P. Abiy obviously used his inaugural speech as an opportunity to highlight his style of leadership, reform plan, challenges and solutions. The inaugural speech consists of 4975 words and 56 short and medium paragraphs. The paragraphs have been given numbers from one (1) to (56) with respective of the English translated structure of the speech text. The speech analysis process starts from highlighting the outlines of its content. The main analysis has been conducted based on selected excerpts of the speech text which help to show a shift of political discourse from TPLF/EPRDF to the new political reformist leader.

## 2. Conceptual Basis

### 2.1. Critical Discourse Analysis

The word discourse is used in varying ways. Gee and Handford explained that discourse is used abstractly to mean statements in general or to refer to a particular group or type of statements as in a discourse [4]. Fiske explains discourse as "a language or system of representation that has developed socially in order to make and circulate a coherent set of meanings, which serve the interests of a section of society" [5]. According to Van Dijk and Fairclough, discourse is associated to power and social interests [6-7]. This concept is consistent to Fiske's argument that power and social interests are revealed by language and its meaning [5]. Meaning is extracted from statements made by who hold power. Fairclough also states that "the relationship between discourse, power and ideology is at the centre of the social practice of discourse" [7].

Critical discourse analysis concerned with continuity and changes at durable structuring and networking of social practices. The structure and networking of social practices resigned in texts where discourse analysis can be employed. Text analysis is just one part of discourse analysis. Fairclough identifies that "text, interaction, and social context as three elements of a discourse" [8]. Correspondingly he recognizes three stages of critical discourse analysis - "description of text, interpretation of the relationship between text and interaction, and explanation of the relationship between interaction and social context" [8]. A thorough understanding of a text, at the initial stage, is therefore,

<sup>3</sup><http://www.allthingsethiopia.com/ethiopia-breaking-news/2753/>.

<sup>4</sup><https://www.opride.com/2018/04/03/english-partial-transcript-of-ethiopian-prime-minister-abiy-ahmeds-inaugural-address/>

<sup>5</sup><https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6nVYrcWTm70>

inevitable to comprehend the discursive practices. The social context gives the lens how we should approach the text for analysis.

According to Fairclough the struggle over language of a text can evident itself as a struggle between ideologically varied discourses types [7]. Discourse types are ideologically specific and ideologically variable; and ideologies become ideological common sense to the extent that the discourse types, which embody them, become adopted by the social system [7]. For instance, religious institutions, and political parties struggle each other to win the society mind. In doing so, they have tried to establish a different ideology using different discourse; they underline their difference with the others through contrasting rather than comparing, because, their aim is filling the social environment with their ideological discourse. As Fairclough points out it is also a power struggle based on the social force to determine “whose ideologies and whose discourse types are at issue” [9]. Through time, the dominant discourse becomes the common sense of the society and to the institutions which effects power and ideology.

## 2.2. *TPLF/EPRDF Ideology: Revolutionary Democracy*

The origin of revolutionary democracy goes to Russia class struggles period from the mid of 18<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Lawrence and Wishart claim that Radishchev (1749 – 1802), an outstanding ecumenist, was the initiator of the revolutionary–democratic trend in Russian social thought [10]. As like that of the communist, the revolutionary democracy was intended to change the class relationship between the peasants and the bourgeois, land lords. The peasants were taken as revolutionary force to change the status quo. Then, the bourgeois added the word democracy on the then revolution and tried to overshadow the peasants and laborers’ emancipation movements [10]. The bourgeoisie tired to present the class struggle in the guise of something above classes issue, existing for the benefit of the whole people, as a state of “pure democracy”. Where the fact is their “freedom” is freedom for capital to exploit others; their “equality” is a superficial show hiding the inequality which exists in fact between the exploiter and the exploited [10]. The bourgeois pseudo democracy confused with the class struggle revolution which gives birth to the revolutionary democracy as ideology.

Coming to Ethiopia, the fall of the military regime, Derg, in May 1991 has forced Ethiopia to be driven in the hands of (TPLF) led (EPRDF)<sup>6</sup>. This happening was not only a move from one regime to another; it also has changed the national political discourse of the country. TPLF had forged nationalist discourse, derived from the Stalinist theory of nationalities, which opposes the well established interpretations of Ethiopia’s imperial period, i.e. the ‘nation –

building’ thesis [11]. TPLF/EPRDF harshly condemned the preceding imperialists’ and Derg’s conceptions of Ethiopian nation-hood discourses. TPLF/EPRDF discourse has been made based on peoples’ differences and through leveling Ethiopians as friend and enemy. The following Bach’s quote from EPRDF program states that:

The chauvinist ruling classes adhere to the principle of “Itiopiawinnet” (Ethiopianess) which kills identity based on nationality. ... They aspire to form a dominant multi-nation organization composed on individuals from various nationalities and ethnic organizations that have betrayed the causes of their people and bowed to these chauvinists. Secessionists and narrow nationalist organizations do not want the fulfillment of the peoples’ common interests. So, they, too, do not want to form a nation-wide organization together with other nationality-based organizations [11-12].

This quote clearly indicates how TPLF/EPRDF labels Ethiopians as chauvinist, secessionists, and narrow nationalist. These labeling was a pre text for making them enemy. The TPLF/EPRDF political discourse stretches even to the level of portraying somebody as ‘terrorist’ if that body voice critically against the TPLF/EPRDF power. TPLF, as minority ethnic group, might be dominated by big ethnic groups’ (Oromo and Amhara) in sharing government power unless it divides and rules them. Critics of the TPLF/EPRDF claim “Revolutionary Democracy” as communist oriented ideology. In this vein, Abbink argues that the “(...) ideology of the ruling TPLF/EPRDF party is a hybrid ruling ideology derived from Leninism, infused with some democratic principles, and confronted with or applied to ethnic diversity in the country” [13]. He also states that Ethiopia’s ethno-federal democracy is a centralist and vanguardist, under a ruling party and a direct product from revolutionary Marxist – Leninist thinking and does not entertain the possibility of a possible loss of power in elections, although of course elections have been held regularly in five years term [13].

TPLF/EPRDF’s revolutionary democracy lacks willingness and attention for humanity as equal as the economic “development” agenda. As TPLF/EPRDF declared itself as “developmental and democratic” state, the development agendas such as five years economic plans, growth and transformation objectives, huge national projects and sustainable development goals become its center of discourse underestimating the humanity issues. In line with this, Norwegian institute of international Affairs report states that “the revolutionary democracy has converted in to limited attention to political reforms, human rights, democratization and a widening of the political space, which also have enabled an entangled government, part and state apparatus to reproduce their position” [14].

## 2.3. *TPLF/EPRDF Representation of Identity, History and Pluralism*

In TPLF/EPRDF, ethnic identity is the basis of its politics, and Pan – Ethiopian identity is deemphasized [13]. To TPLF/EPRDF citizenship has no value; it sees Ethiopia as a

<sup>6</sup> It consists of four regional ethnic based political parties- Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF), Amhara Democratic Party (ADP), Oromo Democratic Party (ODP) and South People and Nation Nationalities Democratic Movement (SPNNDM). But TPLF was the center of the political power.

country of identity. TPLF/EPRDF's program states that "The Revolutionary Democratic objective could be represented in a nation and nationality only through one organization"[15]. TPLF/EPRDF refers Ethiopian identities as "nation nationalities and peoples", but it is not clear which ethnic group refers as people, which one as nation and which one as nationalities. The word citizen and Ethiopians are so uncommon in TPLF/EPRDF discourse of identity.

The EPRDF political program mentioned the word "Ethiopia/n" only 12 times [12]. From these, citizenship or nationality is represented by the word "Ethiopia/n" only six (6) times throughout the document. On the other side, the phrase "nation nationalities" mentioned 13 times to indicate that Ethiopians are not the same rather they are different [12]. The government officials poorly used the word Ethiopian and Ethiopianess (Ethiopianism) while the phrase "nation nationalities" is their buzz keyword in their discourses. So TPLF/EPRDF portrays Ethiopian as a country of ethnics, nation nationalities rather than citizens<sup>7</sup>. As TPLF/EPRDF political discourse, Ethiopians whose parents are from two ethnics background are forced to choose either of their parent family ethnic line.

TPLF/EPRDF's understanding of Ethiopian history is different from its predecessors. Most Ethiopian by common sense believes that Ethiopia have three thousand year's history. Some Orthodox Christian church peoples trace back Ethiopia history to five thousand years. The Front denied such long and ancient history discourse and coins its own version of history. Bach wrote the following on this:

By referring to Axum and by getting rid of the Solomonic filiations, the TPLF /EPRDF was redefining the historicity of the Ethiopian state and Ethiopianess, but not rejecting it. By replacing Solomon and the Queen of Sheba with Axum, Ethiopian history "lost" 1000 years of history [11].

TPLF/EPRDF usually highlights Emperor Menilik II's<sup>8</sup> nation building project and the then time of civil war stories to serve its purpose of divide and rule. The Front uses this history to label the Amhara ethnic group as ruling Imperialists and the Oromo and South Ethiopian as historically oppressed societies. It draws itself as savior of the oppressed from the oppressor aimed to fabricate enemies. To the Front, "National" 'enemies' were at the moment just those who opposed such a deconstruction of Ethiopianess with in Ethiopia" [11]. Starting from its transition government (1991-1995) time, TPLF/EPRDF was working hard to divide Ethiopians along with their ethnic lines. For

example, the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi in his press conference as a president of the transition government stressed that every Oromo, Tigrean or Kembata would consider himself/herself first as an Oromo, a Tigrean or a Kembata and only then as an Ethiopian [11]. The Front believes that such divisive discourse help to redefine Ethiopian history in a way it serves the interest of the regime, TPLF/EPRDF. On top of these, such discourse benefits the Front to define pluralism only from multi- identities perspectives over shadowing idea pluralism.

### 3. Analysis and Discussions

#### 3.1. Outlines of the Speech

The P.M. inaugural speech consists of the following outlines. The numbers under the bracket indicates the paragraphs of the inaugural speech:-

1. PM Abiy expresses the opportunity to be Ethiopian leader and thanks Ethiopians (paragraph 1-4):

2. The P.M. Pointes out Ethiopians commitment to their country (paragraph 5-10):

The P.M. states how much Ethiopians are courageous to their country glory. He says Ethiopians "strive relentlessly out of a great spirit of love for their country" (5) ... "they shout, debate and litigate for the national unity of the country and for its peace, for justice and equality" (6). He uses strong words like "our forefathers, broke their bones... shed their precious blood" (10) to notice how they keep Ethiopian independence.

3. P.M. Abiy defines Ethiopianess as identity (paragraph 11-15):

P.M. Abiy stress that Ethiopians have proud history (11) and inseparable identity integrated in love (12). He lists a few ethnic groups of Ethiopian and points that "peoples of Ethiopia have fallen saying my death before [Ethiopia] and intermingled with its soil" (12-13). He also says that "Our unity... embraces our diversity and highlights our multinational identity" (15).

4. The P.M. explains how to build democratic system in Ethiopia (Paragraph 16-23):

He highlights that "We Ethiopians need and also deserve democracy" (16). He mentions the essences of democracy like freedom, idea pluralism, freedom of expression, supremacy of the law, realization of justice and peace keeping (17- 22).

5. He addresses the issues of Ethiopia foreign relations and the Horn of Africa (paragraph 24-26):

P.M. Abiy prefers people of Horn of Africa as a place which is "...gripped by lots of crisis ... different interests ...complex ... [but] interconnected with culture, language and long history" (24). He calls to Eritrean government to settle down the disagreement with Ethiopia (26).

6. P.M Abiy speaks how to combat corruption (paragraph 27-28):

He stress that "Ethiopia won't become a country where

<sup>7</sup>Federal Democratic Revolutionaries Ethiopian (FDRE)'s 1994 constitution offer key right like sovereign power and land ownership to nation nationalities. The constitution has not said anything about the power and the decision of citizens on their country where as nations and nationalities have the right even to secession (Article 39)

<sup>8</sup>Emperor Menilik II unified the divided Ethiopia in the last decayed of 19<sup>th</sup> century. During the unification civil war were held between a few village kings and Emperor Menilik II although the kings remain in power after defeat since they accept Menilik II as Kong of Kings. Menilik II won Adaw war with colonizer, Italy mobilizing Ethiopian. But, for political reason elites have been divided on these history; TPLF/EPRDF utilizes the kings' civil war as political tool to divided and rule.

one works hard and the other simply snatches it away” (27) and also he aims “overcoming... scarcity and shortage mindset” (28).

7. He mentions economic achievements and challenges (paragraphs 29-35):

P.M. Abiy points poverty alleviation, building infrastructure and human resource developments practices as visible success of EPRDF (29). He also confirms foreign trade, foreign exchange, inflation, living expense, foreign debt and poor saving are challenges of the country (30)

8. He addresses youths and women (paragraphs 36-39):

P.M. Abiy states that the youths’ questions “... are not only economy and equitable benefit ... also about justice and democracy” (36). He also shed light on women role and struggle by saying “you have built Ethiopia: you have made history; shaped generations ...” (38).

9. He points out current crisis and solutions (paragraphs 40-41):

The P.M. highlights the major problems such as “lack of democratic culture, poverty, organized corruption and bureaucratic inefficiency.” He also notices that the solution is love and unity (41).

10. He addresses Ethiopia compatriots and development partners (paragraphs 42-48):

He uses the saying “you can take an Ethiopian out of Ethiopia but you cannot take Ethiopia out of the heart of an Ethiopian”. He asserts that no need of more unnecessary sacrifices (43-46). P.M. Abiy also asks for apologies to those who scarify a lot for change and democracy (47).

11. P.M Abiy addresses opposition parties (paragraph 49):

He has an inclusive message to political parties. He says “... we will look at political parties ... as competitors rather than enemies ... their supporters as brothers and sisters who have alternative ideas and love their country...” (49). He promises to free the political space.

12. He made calls to all walks of life (paragraphs 50 - 52):

He addresses farmers, business people, intellectuals, security forces, residents of rural and urban, Christians, Muslims, Waaqefattas<sup>9</sup> and to nations, nationalities, and peoples (50) to build their country in all aspects (51).

13. He thanks women and his families at his closing remark (paragraphs 53-55):

He thanks all Ethiopian mothers in the name of his late mother. He notices how his mother raised him and portrays himself to be seen as one of the Ethiopian country boys. He also thanks his wife for taking his mother role. This part of his speech is not a simple closing remark, it tells a story of Ethiopian women as mothers and wives (53-54).

14. After 44 years, P.M Abiy is the first Ethiopian leader to say “May God blesses Ethiopia and its people!” (paragraph 56).

The overall theme of the P.M. inaugural speech can be summarized as “strength from our heroic past”, which is manifested by examples from the Ethiopian past glory and

established Ethiopian moral values. The values he mentions are universal and timeless – love, forgiveness, unison, and patriotism. A few examples of past glory references are here: “in our long history” (paragraph 4); “return the country to its past glory” (5); “our foregatherers, broke their bones” (10); “we have a beautiful country and a proud history ... that has traversed many centuries” (11); “Adwa to protect the country’s sovereignty” (12); “Gadaa system”<sup>10</sup> (16); “foundation of pan - Africanism” (25). It is clear P.M. Abiy plans reform not revolution; to build up on the existed good practices not to start from the scratch. His predecessors both Mengistu (Derg) and Meles (TPLF/EPRDF) did revolutions on the grave of their predecessors.

### **3.2. Analysis of Ideology, Identity, Ethiopian History, Moral Values and Pluralism**

This part consists of ideological analysis, identity analysis, Ethiopian history, moral values and pluralism analysis; and also it has a few keywords pattern analysis. As Ritchie and Lewis “unlike quantitative analysis, there are no clearly agreed rules or procedures [to analyse] qualitative data” [16]. Critical discourse analysis concerned with the way knowledge is produced within a particular discourse in order to make sense of social actions, for example ideology, identity, power, gender relations, poverty [16].

This study analysis highlights only the intentions of the speaker, P.M. Abiy, and the message of his speech in line with the social context - the ongoing Ethiopian political reform. The analysis expands from direct quotes of the inaugural speech to contextual interpretation. The paragraphs already leveled in numbers from (1 to 56) and this analysis also uses these numbers to indicate from which paragraph/s the inaugural speech excerpts are taken.

#### **3.2.1. Analysis of Ideology**

The analysis and explanations of the ideological aspect of P.M. Abiy’s inaugural speech attempts to link with the social processes and make sense of covert ideology of his speech. In so doing, a diachronic technique is useful for contrasting P.M. Abiy’s discourse with the TPLF/EPRDF political program reviewed under (part 2) on this paper.

It is a historical day for our country. In our long history, we have been given so many opportunities at different junctures to chart a new political beginning .... Therefore, it is important that we make use of it appropriately with the spirit of utmost responsibility. (4)

P.M. Abiy highlights common issues rather than specific to one political group or any one of the ethnic entities. His focus is on what Ethiopians share together to day, experiences together in the past and can do together in the future. The phrases “for our country, in our long history, we have been given, and we make use of it” in his speech are clear indications of his preference of a kind of discourse which

<sup>9</sup>a tradition of religion kind belief practiced by some of the rural resident Oromo people, Ethiopia

<sup>10</sup>Gadaa System is one of Ethiopian indigenous traditional administrative which structures the society in their age line and gives responsibility based on that age division. Leaders elected each 8 years. It is still in practice mainly in Oromya people and some South Ethiopian

spot light on common efforts, common contributions, and common plans of Ethiopians. But, TPLF/EPRDF has a different discourse. For example, Abbink mentions that “(...) a notable increase of accusations of ‘narrow nationalism’ or ‘tribalism’ was seen in the government’s [TPLF/ EPRDF’s] public statements and in the official media” [1]. EPRDF Program also indicates that TPLF/EPRDF levels some Ethiopians as “chauvinists... Secessionists and narrow nationalist” [15]. It portrays them as enemies. After the coming of Abiy as P.M. these words are eliminated from his government and Ethiopian national media coverage. P.M. Abiy prefers inclusive discourses rather than divisive discourses which is indication of a shift of discourse from TPLF/ EPRDF’s divisive discourse.

Democracy is not for us an alien idea. When it was foreign to many peoples and countries, we lived under and governed by our democratic Gadaa system becoming an example on to the world. (16)

Democracy will flourish in our country; so that freedom and justice shall reign; so that the supremacy of the law becomes a reality. (22)

P.M. Abiy acknowledges that even if democracy is an indigenous system for Ethiopians, Gadaa system, the government is still undemocratic. The above excerpts of his speech reveal that he believes without respecting each essence of democracy i.e. freedom, supremacy of law, justices Ethiopia cannot build a democratic system that yields peace. TPLF/EPRDF blindly argues that the Ethiopian government is democratic although the basic essences of democracy are invisible on the social sphere. TPLF/EPRDF responds to questions of democracy by saying “it is written in the constitution” and it also levels critical voices as “anti-development, anti-peace and terrorists”. P. M. Abiy shifts such discourses to “genuine” discourses that the critics on the government are right and he promises for real democracy to happen. He inclines to pragmatists’ ideology.

Our country ... plays a notable role in regional, continental, and global matters. This policy of ours built on common interest and common benefits; we will strengthen and continue with it. (25)

With the government of Eritrea, we want ... the disagreement... to end... through dialogue. I ... call on the Eritrean government to take a similar stand not only for the sake of our common interest but also for the common blood relations between the peoples of the two countries. (26)

He insists to strengthen Ethiopian foreign policy with a principle “built on common interest and common benefits” and he confirms that Ethiopia will continue its roles in the regional and international issues. Furthermore, he calls on the Eritrean government for dialogue to end the 20 years’ disagreement because the two countries have blood relations more than common interests. Unlike his predecessors, he did not use any provocative statement rather than more diplomatic and family unit. This reveals that the P.M. is pro-globalization and non-protectionist. He also changes the approach to Eritrea case from coercive power and enemy

orientation, what TPLF/EPRDF has done for two decays, to soft power and family orientation. He shows an inclination to liberal democrat ideology!

A truth that we should never forget though is that it is the youth itself, through its efforts and creativity, that can create a better future for itself and for the country. (37)

Another political discourse shift has been seen in understanding the questions of youths. TPLF/ EPRDF view the youths’ questions only from the economic benefits perspective; it was also attempting to answer their questions through bank loan and forming small cooperation. But, their protests were continuing against the TPLF/EPRDF regime change. P.M. Abiy changes such discourses to more genuine concerns of the youths’ acknowledging that they have justice and democracy questions too. He is also consistent in highlighting the role and participation of the people to solve their own problems. He believes in reducing the exaggerated plays of the government in every aspect of the people. He is defying the top to down, democratic centralism, ideology of TPLF/EPRDF and promising participatory approach.

### 3.2.2. Analysis of Ethiopianness and Ethiopia History

Ethiopia is a country of fertile wombs. Its children strongly aspire and strive tirelessly to return the country to its past glory. (5)

Be it in the country or outside of the country, they shout, debate and litigate for the national unity of the country and for its peace, for justice and equality (6).

The P.M attempts to glorify Ethiopia as a country of heroism and Ethiopians as citizens who loves and falls for their country. He refers Ethiopian past as a time of glory and urges the people to aspire to repeat that history again. He draws mother and children relationship between the country and the citizens which is assumed to be the highest form of family bond. In so doing, he refers Ethiopia as “a country of fertile wombs” and Ethiopians as “children”. When, the covert is uncovered, it is an argument to who undermine Ethiopia to accept as a country and, on the contrary, to who claims as sole lover and saver of Ethiopia. TPLF/EPRDF portrays TPLF as freedom fighter and saver of Ethiopian. On top of that, TPLF’s discourse is based on the oppressed and oppressor relationship of among ‘nation nationalities’. The EPRDF’s 1994 constitution itself reveals such concept on its preamble; it says “our common destiny can best be served by rectifying historically unjust relationships” [17]. P.M. Abiy speech defies the discourse “there were unjust relationships” where TPLF/EPRDF grounded its political base.

Yesterday, our forefathers broke their bones in Metema<sup>11</sup>, Adwa<sup>12</sup>, Maichew<sup>13</sup>, and KarraaMarra<sup>14</sup> and shed their precious blood to preserve and bequeath to us a country

<sup>11</sup>The war place located in North Ethiopia where Ethiopian Emperor Yohanise IV killed by Sudan, Derbush

<sup>12</sup>The war place, name of mountain and town, located in North Ethiopia where Ethiopians defeated Italians

<sup>13</sup>The war place, located in North Ethiopia where Ethiopians fought with Italians during WWII

<sup>14</sup>The war place located in East Ethiopia where Ethiopians fought with Somalia and won during Derg time

that has been able to keep its independence and pride. (10)

P.M. Abiy challenges those who are obsessed only criticizing Ethiopia ex-leaders, specifically emperor Menilik II (1989 – 1913), emperor HaileSelasie I (1930-1974), and President Mengistu HaileMariam (1974-1991). Very pacifically, TPLF has conducted negative campaigns on emperor Menilik II nation building project. TPLF portrays the King as only Amhara representative who “invade” the ethnic Oromo and the South Ethiopian. The negative depiction of emperor Menilik II somewhat helps TPLF to create suspicion between the two big ethnics, Oromo and Amhara.

Emperor Tewodros II (1855 – 1868) and emperor Yohannes IV (1871 – 1889) who started the modern Ethiopia nation building project and who had more severe internal wars are not part of the TPLF negative campaign. The reason is emperor Yohanise IV ruled Ethiopia after emperor Tedrose IV and before emperor Menilik II and he is from Tigray ethnic group. If Yohanise IV is added to TPLF/EPRDF's black list of history, the Tigray ethnic may also portrayed as oppressor ethnic. TPLF intentionally reserves the discourse of oppressor and oppressed relationship between Amhara ethnic and other ethnic of Ethiopia respectively. TPLF omits the two first emperors and starts narrating from Menilik II for a purpose.

P.M. Abiy includes emperor Yohanise IV in Ethiopia nation building history by mentioning the place where he is slotted by Sudan Derbush, Metema war between Ethiopia and Sudan; then, P.M. Abiy mentions Adwa, noticeably the war between Ethiopia and Italy. P.M. Abiy continues to Maichew again a war between Ethiopia and Italy which led by emperor Haileselesie; and again he reminds the war in Karraa-Marra between Ethiopia and Somali which was led by President MengistuHaileMariam from Ethiopia side. The mentioned war places are not arbitrary lists. P.M. Abiy attempts to interconnect Ethiopia history taking one sample from each leader's war incidents. He portrays the leaders as hero shifting from depicting them from negative views. It is again an indication of his efforts to change the TPLF/EPRDF's deliberate half history narrations of Ethiopians nation building project. M.P. Abiy rejects distortion of history for political purposes and politics of conspiracy.

We are lucky; we have a beautiful country and a proud history. We know our beginnings. We are a great people that have a history that has traversed many centuries. Our unity can be example to the world. It has vanquished our enemies; ... becoming an example for other people struggling for their independence. (11)

The P.M. is curious to Ethiopia history and cares not to commit any mistake which may collides him with others who have their own version of Ethiopia history. For instance, he did not specify that Ethiopia has neither one thousand nor 3 thousand or 5 thousand years of history, as many argue on these times. He used the phrase “a history that has traversed many centuries”. His history timing is inclusive to all sides of the claimers. It is consistence with his call for unity among

Ethiopians. He urges, through history, only unison can solve our problems. He asserts that Ethiopia is built as a country because forefathers were united. He advocates looking back to our parents' unity, love and harmony to solve to days challenges. He asserts for learning from the good past that can be built upon. He defies the TPLF/EPRDF concept of revolutionary acts.

My mother is counted among the many kind, innocent, and hardworking Ethiopian mothers. She did not have a lot of material wealth and worldly knowledge. In thanking my mother, I consider it equivalent to extending thanks to all Ethiopian mothers. (54)

This part of the text is the most heart breaking section of the P.M. inaugural speech, in which a few members of parliaments were watched tearing on live TV screen. He represents feminism as motherhood, using his mother as example to show how women are strong, committed, and innocent even in time of hardships. On the occasion, he omitted naming his father, but it could not be because he hates him but his primary goal was highlighting the missed side of Ethiopians history, the role of women struggle in building the nation.

### 3.2.3. Analysis of Identity

Our identity is built in such a way that it is inseparable; it is threaded in a manner that cannot be untangled. It is integrated out of love. The Amhara have sacrificed in Karra-Marra for our country's sovereignty – becoming intermingled with its soil. The Oromo have given his chest on the mountains of Adwa to protect the country's sovereignty and have intermingled with the soils of Adwa. (12)

This part of the speech focus to build solidarity among Ethiopians referring history. He mentions the war places Adwa and Kara-Mara where all Ethiopians participated to keep their country sovereignty. To evoke the eroded nationalism feeling, P.M. Abiy attempts to link the heroic past to the present. He promotes Ethiopianess as a single identity which he refers it “inseparable”, “untangled”, and “integrated out of love”. He strongly challenges the TPLF/EPRDF's “ethnic identity is supreme” identity over Ethiopianess.

We Ethiopians, while alive, we are Ethiopians; when we die, we become Ethiopia. (14)

This statement becomes a famous P.M. Abiy's saying and the most celebrated quote painted on T-shirts, banners, and posters. It is a powerful expression that extends Ethiopianess beyond peoples' life span. It is a very far reaching portrayal of citizenry. He presents it as a resemblance to life after death. He is to mean either you die or alive you are an Ethiopian. He is strongly Ethiopia first!

What we have is one Ethiopia. Above any political thought, national unity is Supreme. (15)

Let us eliminate racism and discord from our country. Let us create an educated citizen that debates ideas based on reason. (51)

Former Ethiopian nationalists' slogan was “one Ethiopia,

one people, and one flag". But such discourses have been attacked by the TPLF/EPRDF regime for nearly three decades. These phrases have been considered as the orientation of unitary government (basically Derg) advocates. TPLF/EPRDF levels groups and individuals who argue for one Ethiopia as chauvinists. P.M. Abiy removes this black curtained remarking that national unity is above political thought. He directly speaks to all Ethiopians as a people not as sum total of national nationalities and peoples. The address targets to construct citizenship identity over ethnic identity. P. M. Abiy shows strong nationalism.

### 3.2.4. Analysis of Moral Values and Pluralism

The famous Indian freedom movement leader, Mahatma Gandhi, once said, "The world has enough resources for everyone's need, but not enough for everyone's greed." (28)

P.M. Abiy presents corruption from the perspective of low moral practices than presenting it simply as one of the crimes. He understands well that greediness is highly disgraceful to Ethiopians than criminality. Greedy individuals have no place at all in the society. So in terms of moral evaluation, portraying corruptors as greed person is sounder to Ethiopians than presenting them as mere criminals. Mahatma Gandhi by himself is a standard of high moral values; and his saying is more accepted morally than other measurements. P.M. Abiy attaches his moral view to the level of Gandhi moral view, because he knows that Ethiopians value moral leaders than political leaders. He believes leading by moral values!

The coming time in Ethiopia will be a time of love and forgiveness. We desire our country to be one of justice, peace and freedom and where its citizens are interconnected with the unbreakable chord of humanity and brotherhood. (44)

He utilizes the words love, forgiveness, justice, peace, freedom, humanity and brotherhood in two sentences. It is clear that he is asserting that dry law cannot solve all the problems, looking things from moral values is better off. His words are allied to religious doctrine too. It is also estimated that about 99.3% ~Ethiopians are believers of either Christianity or Islam [18]. In Ethiopia, believers assumed to have high moral standard than non-believers. He carefully presents himself as a believer that helps him to be trusted in Ethiopian!

The Somali, the Benishangul, the Walayta, the Gambella, the Gurage, the Afar, the Silte, the Kambata, the Hadiya, the Harari, and all other peoples of Ethiopia have fallen saying my death before Badme<sup>15</sup> and intermingled with its soil. (13)

He attempts to call some of the ethnic identities in their name even if it is impossible to list more than 80 various Ethiopian ethnic identities in a speech. He gives recognition that Ethiopia is a country of multiple identities and praises their sacrifices to protect Ethiopia. He effects to create cohesion between ethnic identity and national identity. TPLF/EPRDF discourse is different; it puts the ethnic identities in a single basket calling

them "nation nationalities and people". The P.M. is wiser in both recognizing each ethnic groups and linking them one another. TPLF/EPRDF signifies Ethiopian as the sum total result of ethnic groups; P.M. Abiy represents Ethiopia as the intermingled process result of the ethnic identities. TPLF/EPRDF's Ethiopia is diversified and separable; but P.M. Abiy's Ethiopia is multinational and inseparable.

The sentiment that "I rather die than see my idea not win" destroys families, let alone nations. We need to however underline that national unity doesn't mean oneness. Our unity needs to be one that embraces our diversity and highlights our multinational identity. (15)

He stresses that intolerance to idea diversity is as dangerous as intolerance to identity diversity; in his words, it "destroys families, let alone nation". When he took the P.M. position, Ethiopia was in the verge of state collapse because of intolerance mainly to idea pluralism. TPLF/EPRDF put thousands of political prisoners and some journalists in jails. P.M. Abiy tries to show a new dimension of a need for idea pluralism which is omitted by his predecessors. He intends to break the long lasting TPLF/EPRDF's fear propaganda, as such unity as intent of domination. P.M. Abiy shows respect to idea pluralism!

We have to cleanse our thoughts from hatred; different political views and religion are our blessings, we have to conduct them with love. (45)

He extends his pluralism view to political and religious diversity. He refers the variety of political views and religion as blessing. In contrary, TPLF/EPRDF warns that if it loses power, Ethiopian will be turned into religious state. P.M. Abiy defies TPLF/EPRDF's negative view of religion by brining reconciliation between the divided Ethiopian orthodox Churches' Sendos. He also settles the conflict between Muslim leaders, Ethiopian Islamic councils. It is a practical indication and revelation for his pluralist philosophy called, in Amharic, "Medemer"<sup>16</sup> (synergy). In short, the P.M. is persistent with his inclusiveness. This October he has contributed a book entitled "Medemer" and the P.M. aims to apply it as his political party philosophy. P.M. Abiy also won Nobel Peace Prize 2019 for his leadership to bring peace in East Africa; and for his effort to transform Ethiopia to democracy although ethnic tension rises in the country.

### 3.2.5 Analysis of Keywords

In order to find a quantitative based result of this study, a keyword analysis of frequently used words and phrases are vital. Then, the keywords' connotations of the P.M. Abiy's inaugural speech is taken and the following results are found. The P.M. Speech generally consists of 4975 words including salutations. The pronoun "we, our and us" together found to be the dominant figures of the speech word count. The P.M. utilized these pronouns 241 times in his speech, which can be attributed to his persistence with inclusive approach and his effort to bring harmony among the ethnic groups to ease the existing ethnic tension.

<sup>15</sup>The land which was the superficial immediate cause of the war held between Ethiopia and Eritrea in 1999

<sup>16</sup>P.M. Abiy's new philosophy, explains the value of inclusiveness, multiplying positive energy and subtracting negatives.

*Table 1. Words Analysis.*

Keywords	Occurrences	Share	Connotation
We/our/us	84/12/33= 241	4.84	Inclusiveness, togetherness and harmony among the people
You/your/	25/16 = 41	0.82	Belongingness, attachment and direct talk to audiences
Ethiopia/Ethiopian/s Ethiopianess	39/23/1= 63	1.26	Creating sense of nationality, intermingled identity, identity as Ethiopia first
Each Occurrences			
Love	13		
Forgive/ness	3	31	0.62
Unity/unison	15		
Democracy/tic	23		
Freedom	7		
Justice	16	65	1.30
Peace/ful	19		
			Governed by universal normative values, in dedication of political reform commitment, pragmatic approach for democracy

**Word findings:**

The keyword finding analysis uncovers that P.M. Abiy concerns about Ethiopians division based on their ethnic lines. Ethnic cleansing was undertaken as the most dangerous of the time for Ethiopian to continue as a country. It also indicates that he worried that peoples, specifically the youths feel marginalized and lack their sense of being part of the country. He attempted to cure the division and the

marginalization in the country through applying moral values for social functions. He tries to divert the people attention from seeing each other as different and never have common values, to one country citizens whose destiny is better off in unison. His focus as a solution is reminding the people to back to the pre TPLF/EPRDF sense of national identity. The P.M. strives to make the peoples to be Ethiopian first.

*Table 2. Phrases Analysis.*

Keywords	Frequencies	Share	Connotation
Ethnic group/Ethnic identity	0	0.00	Omitting ethnic differences of the people to highlight cohesion. Breaking up from the TPLF/EPRDF discourse.
Nation nationalities and peoples	1	0.02	Minimizing the trends of confusing identities which cannot be attributed to any identified society in Ethiopia.
Your/Our country	32	0.64	Boosting national feeling, creating sense of belongingness.
National/sovereignty	15	0.30	Focusing on internal affairs; inward look to deter outside forces.
National identity/ our citizens/s	15	0.30	Highlighting citizenship, looking for a country of ideas not a country of identities.

**Phrases findings:**

In a country, which has been waived by ethnic politics for nearly three decades is surprising not to find the word “ethnic” at all in the P.M. inaugural speech. On top of that P.M. Abiy mentioned the phrase “nation nationalities and people” only once in his (00:35:35) long inaugural speech. These, the world and the phrase have been used, by TPLF/EPRDF, as revelation of its commitment to ethnic identities. His omission of the word “ethnic” and the phrase “nation nationalities and people” is a clear indication of shifting Ethiopian politics discourses from identity based to idea based political discourse. Generally this quantitative analysis accords with the qualitative analysis.

**4. Conclusions**

Briefly, the analysis shows the following shifts of political discourse resides in the P.M. inaugural speech:

1. The results of the analysis have shown that the main ideological underlined assumptions of P.M. Abiy's inaugural speech can be abridged into the following concepts: liberalism, inclusiveness, leading by moral values, acceptance of pluralism and unity.
2. The P.M. speech highlights Ethiopian heroic past to

build up on in the future; he links the divided Ethiopian nation building history to defy the oppressor and oppressed TPLF/EPRDF's discourse.

3. Ethiopians identity is narrated from the orientation of the pre-TPLF/EPRDF discourses, from the perspective of creating sense of strong nationality, citizenship, and from the orientation of one country and one people discourses.
4. In the speech, Ethiopia is portrayed as a country of citizens, not a country of “nation nationalities and peoples”, whose identity is inseparable, intermingled and integrated in love; the P.M. statements defy the TPLF/EPRDF leveling of Ethiopians as oppressors and oppressed, chauvinists and secessionists as well as enemies and friends.
5. P.M. Abiy's interpretation of pluralism basically emerges from tolerating difference of political ideology, and opinions. In the speech, there is a clear indication of accepting diversities being religious or ethnic identities.
6. The speech intention is find to be diverting people attitudes from being “my ethnic identity first” to “Ethiopia first”, aiming to change Ethiopian ethnic based politics to idea based politics and as well

transforming Ethiopia from a country of identities to a country of ideas.

## References

- [1] Abbink, J. (2011). Ethnic-based federalism and ethnicity in Ethiopia: Reassessing the experiment after 20 years, *Journal of Eastern Africa Studies*, 5 (4), 596-618. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2011.642516>
- [2] Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis*. London: Longman. Retrieved from <https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge.../S00474045000195339>
- [3] Van Dijk, T. (2000). *Politics, ideology, and discourse*. Universitat Pompeu Febru, Barcelona, Spain, Elsevier Ltd. Retrieved from <http://www.discourses.org/OldArticles/Politics,%20Ideology%20and%20Discourse.pdf>
- [4] Gee, J. and Handford, M. (2012). *The Routledge handbook of discourse analysis*. Routledge, London and New York. Retrieved from <https://lib.ugent.be/en/catalog/rug01:002036555>
- [5] Fiske, J. (1987). *Television culture*. London: Methuen.
- [6] Van Dijk, T. (1998). *What is political discourse analysis: political linguistics?* Amsterdam: Benjamins. Retrieved from [Discourses.org/OldArticles/What%20is%20political%20Discourse%20Analysis.pdf](http://www.discourses.org/OldArticles/What%20is%20political%20Discourse%20Analysis.pdf)
- [7] Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and power*. Longman Group, UK, Retrieved from [discourses.org/old/Articles/what%20is%20political%20Discourse%20Analysis.pdf](http://www.discourses.org/old/Articles/what%20is%20political%20Discourse%20Analysis.pdf)
- [8] Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing Discourse Textual analysis for social research*. Longman Group, UK (1<sup>st</sup> Edi), Retrieved from [file:///C:/Users/DELL/Downloads/ii.%20Norman\\_Fairclough\\_Analysing\\_discourse.pdf](file:///C:/Users/DELL/Downloads/ii.%20Norman_Fairclough_Analysing_discourse.pdf)
- [9] Fairclough, N. (2000). *Analyzing discourse textual analysis for social research*. Rutledge; USA and Canada. Retrieved from [https://edisciplinas.usp.br/...php/.../ii.%20Norman\\_Fairclough\\_Analysing\\_discourse.pdf](https://edisciplinas.usp.br/...php/.../ii.%20Norman_Fairclough_Analysing_discourse.pdf)
- [10] Lawrence & Wishart. (1957). *Political economy: A textbook issued by the economics institute Of the academy of sciences of the U.S.S.R.* London. Retrieved from [www.revolutionarydemocracy.org/archive/PoliticalEconomy.pdf](http://www.revolutionarydemocracy.org/archive/PoliticalEconomy.pdf)
- [11] Bach, J. (2014). *EPRDF's Nation –Building: Tinkering with convictions and pragmatism*, *CadernosdeEstudosAfricanos*. Retrieved from <http://journals.openedition.org/cea/150>; DOI: 10.4000/cea.1501
- [12] Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) (September, 2006). *Program*. Retrieved from [www.eprdf.org.et/documents/10184/.../1f87f164-8fde-4831-8341-oc0fbcec1444](http://www.eprdf.org.et/documents/10184/.../1f87f164-8fde-4831-8341-oc0fbcec1444)
- [13] Abbink, K. and e ta ls. (2016). Intergroup Conflict and Intra-Group Punishment in an Experimental Contest Game. *American Economic Review* 2010, 100 (1), 420–447 accessed from <http://www.aeaweb.org/articles.php?doi=10.1257/aer.100.1.420>
- [14] Sande, J. Berouk, M. (2018). *Ethiopia: A political economy analysis*. Report commissioned by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018 report, Norway. Retrieved from [https://brage.bibsys.no/.../NUP1\\_rapport\\_%2BEthiopia\\_%2BSandeLie\\_Mesfin.pdf](https://brage.bibsys.no/.../NUP1_rapport_%2BEthiopia_%2BSandeLie_Mesfin.pdf)
- [15] Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) (1996). *Program*. Retrieved from <https://journals.openedition.org/cea/pdf/1501>
- [16] Ritchie, J. and Lewis, J. (2003). *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*. Retrieved from [Psy.au.dk/fileadmin/site\\_files/filer\\_psykologi/documenter/CKM/NB36/Ritchie.pdf](http://Psy.au.dk/fileadmin/site_files/filer_psykologi/documenter/CKM/NB36/Ritchie.pdf)
- [17] Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) 1994 Constitution
- [18] Ethiopian Central Statics Agency Census Report (2007).