

The Challenges of Demography and Democracy in Ethiopia, Part II: Internal Conflicts and the Fighting Youth Force

Introduction

Weaving the facts of war, deaths, and dislocations into a coherent narrative supported by statistical discourse isn't for the faint of heart. Propitiously, however, the air is laden with contented calm as a nation savors the sweet taste of spectacular war victories won by a yet fully unheralded force – a new generation of young men and women fighters. I believe this gives me license to launch right into such discourse with data-supported accounts by carving out slices from the demographic underpinnings of Ethiopia's population now surpassing 120 million¹. The goal of this exercise is to offer solid statistical foundations supporting the subtleties of the subheading to today's article: Internal Conflicts and the Fighting Youth Force. The slice I have chosen is the war-scarred age structure (past and present), of Tigray *Kilil* – the region hosting the most recent conflict.

“...pay homage to the only Nobel Peace Prize winning leader whose masterful wizardry in war-making salvaged the peace he received a prize for and saved a nation on the brink...”

This article is 1) a follow-up to my June 13 Reporter article by the same title 2) intended to highlight the near impossibility of true peace in a toxic environment strained by a seemingly endless overabundance of hoodwinked youngsters led by cowardly old men stocking war from a perch atop the apex of regional government power. I will refer to these craven old men henceforth as pseudo-alpha while respecting everyone else's prerogatives to call them Junta. I am naturally not given to name calling but the beyond-the-pale satanic cruelty perpetrated in Mai-Kadra leaves me no choice 3)

uses as a fitting example, the November 4 bestial nightly attack on the young men and

women of the Northern Command (*Semien Ezz*) while asleep in their beds 4) will pay homage to the only Nobel Peace Prize winning leader whose masterful wizardry in war-making salvaged the peace he received a prize for and saved a nation on the brink – Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) war and peace wizard extraordinaire 5) a revisit of some predictions I made in my June 13 Reporter article by the same title.

Data sources

A Central Statistical Authority (CSA) report² of the 1984 population count – the first ever census in Ethiopia - and of the second national census (1994), would be excellent resources to get us started. CSA's documents remind the worn and weary of notable facts of the 1984 census results for Tigray *Kifile Hager* and Eritrea *Kifile Hager* (that was what regions were called then). The most salient fact being that the counts in both *kifile Hagers* were incomplete. And the reason?

“...the insidious plan (nearly five decades in the making) was thwarted by demographics - a new generation of stone-throwing youths sporting crossed wrists and clenched fists.”

You guessed it! Military confrontations of Ethiopia's fighting youths in the rural countryside of Eritrea and Tigray had not allowed it. Dare I remind the reader that on one side were fighters of the Tigrian Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), and on the other side the young and poorly led but brave men and women making up the *Derg's* army? Dare I also tell esteemed readers of this news magazine that the fight was to avert Eritrea's secession as well as nip in its bud an insidious plan for Ethiopia's dismemberment espoused in TPLF's 1976 manifesto³? Well, I just did and, by the way, the insidious plan (nearly five decades in the making) was thwarted by demographics - a new generation of stone-throwing youths sporting crossed wrists and clenched fists. More than

half of Ethiopia's populace (not yet born then), may be reminded too that, in the span of just seven years following the 1984 national census, TPLF's and ELF's fighting youths (many in shorts, really short shorts) would find themselves marching into Addis Ababa as well as the regional capital Asmara. As a courtesy to those not yet born at the time, I would add a not too insignificant cue that this marked the end of the gorilla fight and the start of a total state capture by TPLF; the birth of a new nation in the case of Eritrea.

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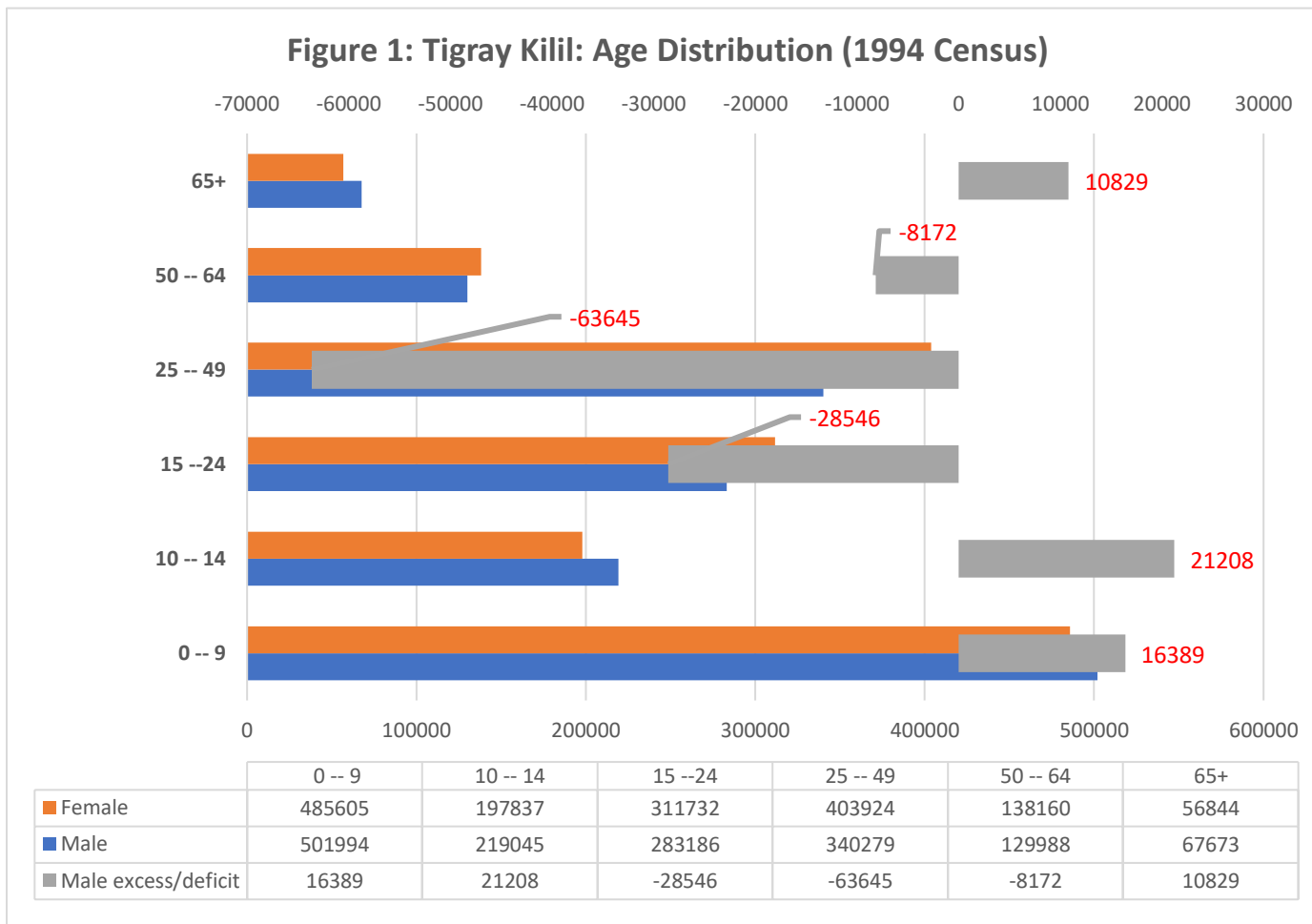
The second national census was conducted in 1994. It took place three years after TPLF's founder Meles Zenawi had arm-twisted battlefield captive heads of three fighting youth groups to form the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). Although the 1994 population count took roughly 10 days to wind down, the above source cites October 11, 1994 as the official day of the census in Tigray *Kilil* (yes, *Kifle Hager* had given way to *Kilil* by then). This date would come to precede by 26 years and 26 days, the infamy of the November 4, 2020 slaughter of

Ethiopia's fighting youths of the *Semien Ezz* in the dark of night upon the order of criminal escapees who had been dislodged from the nation's capital two and half years prior.

Results

Figure 1 is based on the 1994 census. It lays bare in the most spectacular fashion, the scars of war already baked into Tigray *Kilil's* age structure by the time of TPLF's power grab, and the start of its malignant entrenchment into the fabric of Ethiopian society. A careful examination reveals excesses of nearly 38,000 males below the age of 15. Although the male excess below age 15 requires its own explanation, I will sidestep it for now. The excess turns into a nearly 30,000 deficit in the 15 to 24 age group - characteristic of a young male population impacted by significant loss of life. Even more dramatic is the male deficit of nearly 64,000 in the 25 - 49 age group. Figure 1 also shows a deficit in the 50 - 64 age group; men in this age group were in the 30 to 44 years age band at the writing and publication of TPLF's manifesto. Taking into account male surpluses in the below-15 age group and adding up all the deficits in subsequent ages, an unsophisticated arithmetic unencumbered by demographic modeling and projection rules would produce a male war casualty estimate of at least 100,000 from TPLF's inception to its leaders' rise to power as the undisputed pseudo alpha heavyweights in Ethiopia's political theatre. Given the size of the generation of mothers in the 50 to 64 age group numbering around 138,000, it is logical to assume that each Tigraway mother had lost a son on average, including thousands killed by TPLF itself. The word average needs emphasis here as some mothers had lost a lot more sons and, on occasions, daughters too.

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Source: The 1994 Population Census of Ethiopia: Results for Tigray Region, Addis Ababa, November 2015. The scale below the bar graph is for male/female population sizes. The scale above the bar graph is for male excess or deficits. Minus sign show deficit.

Nearly all of TPLF's civilian and military leaders were in the middle two age groups of Figure 1 at the time of the 1984 census but they weren't counted then on account of being foxhole combatants beyond the reach of census takers. I am reminded, here, of George R.R. Martin's war quote: "every man should lose a battle in his youth so he does not lose a war when he is old". Pseudo alphas Sibhat Nega, Debrtsion Gebremichael, Getachew Assefa, Abay Tsehaye, Siyoum Mesfin, etc., would be forgiven for taking this quote to heart in ordering the November 4 massacre. Unfortunately for them, however, history did not repeat itself in this instance and they now find themselves in the throes of death whether by violence or through justice for treasonous acts.

The Demographic Undertones of the Attack on the Northern Command (*Semien Ezz*)

"... launched this day's nightly massacre buoyed by tantalizingly surreal certainties of harnessing this demographic potential to score countless victories culminating in a triumphant do over. The do over would, of course, be a return to power in the nation's capital for another quarter century of rule over what the alphas thought would be an emaciated fragmented Ethiopia that is at war with itself. As the esteemed reader knows, it did not end that way."

Table 1 shows projected 2020 population sizes of Tigray's youth in various age groups based on their age during the 2007 census count (the latest census in Ethiopia). The purpose of this exercise is to address a question that already has a patently obvious answer: who attacked the young men and women of *Semien Ezz* the night of November 4? Specifically, what was the size of the force that had aligned itself against the *Semien Ezz* on the night of November 4? For a robust response built on demographics, I trust that the reader will persevere a quick escapade into the hidden crevices of Tigray's 2007 population and housing

census⁴. The last two columns of Table 1, do not directly confirm TPLF’s claim of a million strong men and women in arms. They do nevertheless prove the demographic potential Tigray *Kilil* had to raise such a force. The projected 2020 numbers equate to two and half million men, women and boys between the ages of 14 and 37 the night of November 4, 2020 (see brief notes below the table for projection methodology). TPLF’s pseudo alpha launched this day’s nightly massacre buoyed by tantalizingly surreal certainties of harnessing this demographic potential to score countless victories culminating in a triumphant do over. The do over would, of course, be a return to power in the nation’s capital for another quarter century of rule over what the alphas thought would be an emaciated fragmented Ethiopia that is at war with itself. As the esteemed reader knows, it did not end that way.

Table 1. Population of Tigray by Select Age Groups (2007 Census)⁵

Age group in 2007	Male 2007	Female 2007	Age group in 2020	Death Rate Per 1000	Male, projected (2020) **	Female, projected (2020)
1 -- 4	259,796	251,414	14 - 17	2	253,121	244,955
5 -- 9	324,407	316,894	18 - 22	3	311,980	304,755
10 -- 14	315,241	299,331	23 - 27	4	299,236	284,133
15 -- 19	244,674	251,827	28 - 32	5	229,238	235,940
20 -- 24	175,573	186,931	33 - 37	6	162,360	172,863
Total	1,319,691	1,306,397			1,255,935	1,242,646

Source: Based on Summary and Statistical Report of the 2007 Ethiopian Population and Housing Census., Population Size by Age and Sex. Federal Republic of Ethiopia Population Census Commission. Addis Ababa, 2008, PP 113. *Assumptions based on reference (5). ** Example: Projected males aged 14 – 17 in 2020 = Males aged 1 – 4 in 2007 multiplied by $(1 - 0.002)^{t = 2020 - 2013}$ t = 13

How many of the two and half million Tigraway young men women and boys (yes boys were deployed too) in the last two columns of Table 1 ended up dead following the national military's response to the November 4 nightly massacre? Only time will tell. Another war quote, this time by Herber Hoover, would be fitting here: "older men declare war but it is the young who must die".

Commentary: The Fiasco of Delusional Quests for Tigriyan Supremacy

The pseudo alpha's early years: Despite the harshness of its formative years compounded by grueling droughts of the 1970s and 80s depriving its host - Tigrian mothers and fathers – of ability to provide sustenance, TPLF was able to weather devastating battlefield losses. It did so aided by demography – Tigray's bottom-heavy age structure providing a continuous supply of fighting men and women - and by commandeering international food aid to buy arms. The mid to late 1980s brought the pseudo alpha a reversal of fortune with ramped-up battle-front assistance from the Eritrean side as Mengistu Hailemariam's flailing erratic headship atop a weakened chain of command and a demoralized army left the ranks of *Derg's* fighting youth dispirited and in disarray. Propelled by Mengistu's departure and the façade of inclusiveness EPRDF brought, the pseudo-alpha took control of a nation grappling to shake off the shackles of a communist experimental debacle.

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Coming to power: The 1990s and 2000s saw TPLF grow into adulthood with the coincidental collapse of the Soviet Union freeing up hundreds of billions of Western aid dollars a substantial chunk of which was allegedly routed to the National Bank of Ethiopia

only to be siphoned off by the pseudo alpha in tens of billions for safe keeping in Euro-Asian and US Banks. It is widely claimed that much, too much, was also spent buying off lackies and so-called federalists - henchmen masquerading as heads of nations and nationalities - to tear apart Ethiopia at the seams with ethnicity as the preferred line of cleavage. Time eventually ran out on the pseudo alpha as their ways grew too old for the times, with the death of its founder Meles Zenawi in 2012 hastening its inevitable demise.

War is Peace: Commander in Chief Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed

My third and final war quote, “war is peace”, is by George Orwell. Remember the census day of October 11, 1994? Fate has brought another shine on this date, for October 19 was the day in 2019 (25 years later to the date) when the Nobel Committee in Oslo, Finland announced the winner of the 2019 Nobel Prize for Peace. Abiy Ahmed was just seventeen years old on October 11, 1994. The Nobel Committee might have as well awarded him a prize for saving a nation they declared themselves to be a citizen of (committee members had declared themselves to be Ethiopians citing Lucy). There is no denying, and he has admitted as much, that the seventeen-year-old had been preparing for his premiership role all his 25 years since.

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Having spent two-thirds of my life abroad listening to, and on occasions meeting with, the great political, legal, and scientific minds of the world, I find myself at a loss trying to pin down an all-rounded (repeat all-rounded) equivalent for the one and only Abiy Ahmed. And I believe that demography (at 43, he is the youngest leader in Africa) more than a

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leadership instincts, and 25 years of readiness (having been anointed King by his mother) have a lot to do with his all-roundedness. Although I would not go that far on account of my less-than-stellar religious credentials, I would throw it out there that the late Professor Mesfin Woldemariam never retracted, revised, or watered down his statement that he thought Abiy Ahmed was sent by God to help Ethiopia turn a new leaf in its historic chapter by bringing true unity among its people and by ensuring democracy, freedom, and prosperity for all.

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college degree, is the prime factor. I also attended a December 19, 2020 conference in Addis Ababa titled Ethiopia 2050, joined in by the country’s bright minds and top-notch academics. Lo and behold, Abiy Ahmed has us all conference participants beat to the punch! I saw footage of him declaring that he sees Ethiopia in 2050 as the second most powerful nation in Africa. I believe that high intelligence quotient (IQ), natural-born

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diaspora locking arms with egotistical political opportunists, threatened to produce alternative narratives about Abiy Ahmed and his character. And they almost succeeded. He has been maligned, disparaged, denounced and made to dodged bullets and grenades at every turn. Echoes of “down, down Abiy ” have rang through corridors and alleyways in national capitals of Europe and North America including by individuals who have never set foot on Ethiopia’s soil. His book - *Medemer* - was burned on live video in Oromiya, his region of birth. It did not matter that much, or not at all, that what was put out there about Abiy was blatantly untrue, for falsehood itself had found equivalency with freedom of expression and democracy in the minds of a populace that has never known true freedom or democracy. Pundits, opinion writers, pseudo intellectuals, federalist secessionists, and political newbies made Abiy-bashing fair game. Regardless, he has indisputably risen from a prisoner Prime Minister status to a vanquisher of TPLF whose ashy relics are destined for the dustbins of history assisted by demography. By demography, I am once again referencing Ethiopia’s twenty and thirty-something-year-old men and women in uniform and the forty or fifty-something-year-old generals. Having said this about demography, and acknowledging the truths now permeating the pregnant air of contented calm on account of new war victories referenced in the opening passages of today’s article, my hopes are firmly pinned on the fighting youths’ generals’ future peacemaking (not war-making) abilities and actions.

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Revisiting my June 13 Article⁷

In a Reporter article, the Challenges of Demography and Democracy in Ethiopia (June 13, 2020), I wrote this: “The whirlwind ride could give one a whiplash except for the calm manners and call for unity – *Medemer* – espoused by the new leader who may have

“The whirlwind ride could give one a whiplash except for the calm manners and call for unity – *Medemer* – espoused by the new leader who may have subconsciously discovered the built-up wave of demographic momentum in the country and its capacity to wipe away everything in its path unless managed with care and due diligence.”

subconsciously discovered the built-up wave of demographic momentum in the country and its capacity to wipe away everything in its path unless managed with care and due diligence.” At the risk of being unashamedly glib, I would hasten to assert that I was right. The consignment of TPLF to the dustbins of history was consummated by none other than the youth bulge I referenced in that article and the masterful harnessing of this force by PM Abiy Ahmed. I also wrote this: “With readers’ permission, I would like to start by laying out the main premise – that, in my view, and given Ethiopia’s youthful age structure, activist leaders of Ethiopia’s youth movement will not be a force for stability in the long run unless they mend their ways”. Right again! All three (without exception)

of the most prominent activists I had in mind – Jawar Mohammed, Bekele Gerba, and Eskindir Nega - are now in jail.

My June 13 article started with this opening statement: “Do not ask me why former President Lemma Megersa’s trip to Bahir Dar and his declaration of Ethiopian-ness as an addiction became the launching pad – a time-stamp – for my near-compulsive tracking of the travails of Ethiopian politics”. It ended by concluding that “Ethiopian-ness does not

have to remain an addiction— just a principled acceptance coming from somewhere deep in one’s own convictions”. Our hope for democracy, peace, and prosperity in the next decade and beyond are singularly pinned onto the hopes, aspirations, and actions of Ethiopians themselves, the selfless, indefatigable, and incorruptible leadership of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, and a free and fair national election in 2013 (Ethiopian calendar).

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Last but not least, a revisit of my objection to an article in Addis Standard titled “Dangerous Interregnum: Anatomy of Ethiopia’s Mismanaged Transition” is warranted. It sought to highlight the author’s conviction that the reform movement was being mismanaged by the PM. I disagreed with the author’s viewpoints but called it a family feud (gross naivete on my part given recent revelations of the author’s alleged coordination with TPLF and its pseudo-alpha). I called it a family feud then on account of the writer and I growing up

in the same sleepy town of Nekemt (I hear that it is sleepy no more) and attending the same schools. Lo and behold, the Professor and resident of these great United States are now on a most wanted list put out by Ethiopia’s Federal Police.

Fast Forward to Ethiopia's New Year 2015: The Intervening Months

A National Election, Pseudo-alpha's Return to Mekele, and Invasion of Afar, Wollo, and Northern Shewa

Eight months after the November 4, 2020, nightly attack on the Northern Command, elections were held (June 2021) across much of Ethiopia excluding the Tigray Region. Meanwhile, the government of Ethiopia had decided to pull all troops out of Tigray in response to TPLF's masterminding of civilian human-wave-style attacks in which troops were outnumbered by hundreds of thousands of Tigrayan youth, some armed others not. The survival of ten or so individuals in TPLF's civilian and military leadership, among them Debretsion Gebre Michael, Getachew Reda (civilians), Tsadkan Gebrekidan, and Wodi Wereda (military) meant that TPLF was able to once again restore itself at the helm of regional government power in Mekele holding the entire population of Tigray hostage. But they did not stop there. In subsequent human-wave-style attacks, hundreds of thousands of Tigriyan youth descended on parts of Gondar and nearly all of Wollo, in the Amhara Region with advances that took them into Debre Sina in northern Shewa, just 190 kilometers from the capital Addis Ababa. They also invaded the Afar Region seeking to cut off the town of Mille along the Ethio-Djibouti corridor and chock off Ethiopia's vital supply line of goods and services including fuel and import/export merchandise.

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed Heads to the Front Lines, Wins all Battles (not the war) and offers a Genna/Christmas Amnesty

Not too long after the most transparent, though not perfect, election in Ethiopia's history, and his swearing-in as Prime minister (October 4, 2021) Dr. Abiy Ahmed made another history by arriving on the frontline (November 24) to personally direct the counter-

offensive against TPLF. This makes him the only seating 21st-century leader to leave the comfort and safety of an office in a nation's capital to lead firefights against enemy positions in the mountain ranges and trenches of the rural wilderness. This was preceded by Ethiopia's declaration of a state of emergency (November 2, 2021) to contain fifth-column - TPLF saboteurs hiding in plain sight in the capital Addis Ababa with readiness to turn on the public that has hosted them for decades, just as they did in Dessie. In the weeks Abiy was at the front lines, the Ethiopian military had recaptured a string of towns, including Gashena, Lalibela, a UNESCO World Heritage site, Dessie, Kombolcha, Haik, Mersa, Woldiya, and Kobo. The spectacular reversal of TPLF's delusional aims to return to national power by seizing a capital located over 900 kilometers away was portrayed to the Tigrayan public and diaspora sympathizers as a strategic retreat.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed returned to the capital victorious and just in time for the celebration of Ethiopia's Christmas – Gena - (January 7, 2022), and the announcement of a victor's pardon for imprisoned war captives and reputed activists including Sibhat Nega, Jawar Mohammed, Eskindir Nega, and Bekele Gerba.

Round 3- Fight! TPLF's Third Round of Attacks against Ethiopia

On August 24, 2022, TPLF forces launched the third round of human-wave-styled attacks involving an estimated semi-professional fighting force of 200,000 individuals on the Raya front in southern Tigray. After nearly a week of fighting, Ethiopia's forces withdrew from the town of Kobo to avert the devastation likely to accompany an urban firefight, thus paving the way for the seizure of Kobo by TPLF. TPLF forces promptly moved south to recapture the city of Woldiya still reeling from the devastation its forces wrought during its second offensive on Ethiopia. However, they were repelled by the joint fighting forces (locally known in Amharic as "*Timir haail*") of the Ethiopian military, Amhara special forces, Amhara Fano youth group, and Amhara militias.

Fighting also broke in the region TPLF calls Western Tigray – Welkait, Teghede, and Humera – which it lost to Ethiopia’s coalition of forces (“*Timir haail*”) during the first round of fighting in November of 2020. This region had been forcibly carved off and made part of Tigray in the early 1990s when the ascendant Tigrean forces became the de facto rulers of both Tigray and Ethiopia. In the third round of fighting, Ethiopia’s coalition of forces broke several fortifications built by TPLF and moved to within several hundred kilometers of the traditional borders of Tigray province while repelling the well-trained and armed forces comprised of tens of thousands of Tigrian refugees originating in Sudan. The refugees-turned-trained fighters had sought to create an eastern front for TPLF in its top priority war to retake Western Tigray.

The Sacrifice of a Half Million Tigraway Youth in War and the Future of Tigray’s Demography

On August 9, 2022, the Zehabesha news channel put the estimate of Tigrian youth that perished in war at half a million. A week or so prior, the TPLF spokesman Getachew Reda had simply said “be meto shih yemikoter” (“estimated hundreds of thousands”) when describing the human cost of the war on the Tigrean side. Months prior, another spokesperson had reported TPLF’s inability to know the whereabouts of over 300,000 Tigryan youth, adding that the government of Tigray “feared” these youths may have perished in the hands of “Abiy Ahmed’s murderous army”. On September 19th, it was reported by social media outlets that TPLF lost an additional 150,000 fighters in its third pie-in-the-sky campaign to retake territory and return to power in the nation’s capital Addis Ababa.

Combatants Sign a Peace Deal

In the months since TPLF launched the third round of attacks, Ethiopian Defense Forces (EDF) were able to regain more territory lost in the second round of fighting and advance to within 40 Kilometers of Tigray's capital Mekele – the only major urban center not in full control of EDF. The military gains included the seizure of TPLF's traditional hideout in the deserts of Tembien and the cities of Shiraro, Shire, Axum, Adowa, and Adigrat. The writing on the wall was plain and obvious for TPLF – they were losing the war in earnest. In a letter addressed to the Secretary of the United Nations, TPLF requested the cessation of hostilities and a peace deal to stop all fighting and end the war.

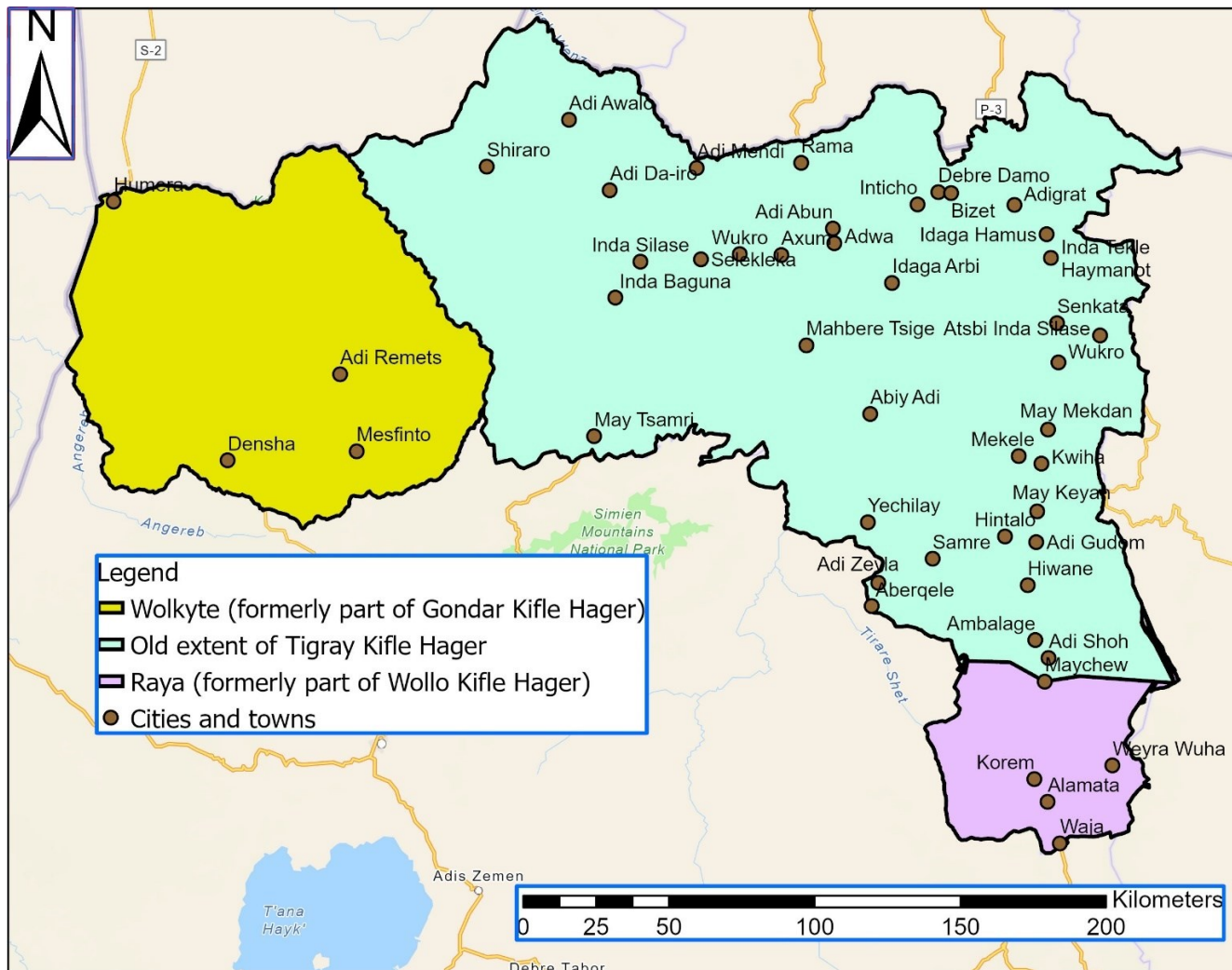
On November 2nd, just two days short of the second anniversary of the start of the war, Tigrean forces and the Ethiopian government agreed on a peace deal. According to Reuters-Africa, the agreement which was signed in Pretoria, South Africa, calls for the immediate cessation of hostilities followed by the disarmament of TPLF within a month as well as delivery of humanitarian aid and restoration of public services including telecom, banking, and electricity. As a reminder, one side of the delegation at the negotiating table was receiving guidance and directions from a home-office team led by a Nobel Peace Prize laureate. It is no wonder then that peace is now knocking on the doors of a nation beset by two years of intense violence and untold destructions costing billions and displacing millions of its citizenry.

Tigray's Population Sizes and Hypothetical age Pyramid at the Start of the war and at the Signing of the Peace Deal

The loss of what used to be Western Tigray – Welkait, Tseghede, and Humera as well as the northern parts of what used to be Wollo Kiflehager - the Raya portion of southern

Tigray (Figure 2) and their possible reintegration with the Amhara Kilil, reduces the size of Tigray's population by approximately one million from an estimated pre-war size of seven million. There were also war-related deaths including battlefield deaths estimated to be about half a million, post-battlefield injury deaths, and the indirect human cost of war through lack of food and access to medical services. Adding these to the number of refugees fleeing into Sudan, it is reasonable to assume that Tigray's November 2022 population shrunk by a further million compared to the size on the eve of November 4, 2020, when TPLF launched its first-round offensive on the nation of Ethiopia by massacring as described in the opening paragraphs of this paper, members of the Semien Ezz (Northern Command) - by far the biggest contingent of Ethiopia's armed forces at the time. This brings the estimated total population residing in the old extent of Tigray's Region (see Figure 2 below) to approximately five million which is two million fewer than on the eve of the start of the northern war in early November 2020.

Figure 2. Map of Tigray Kilil

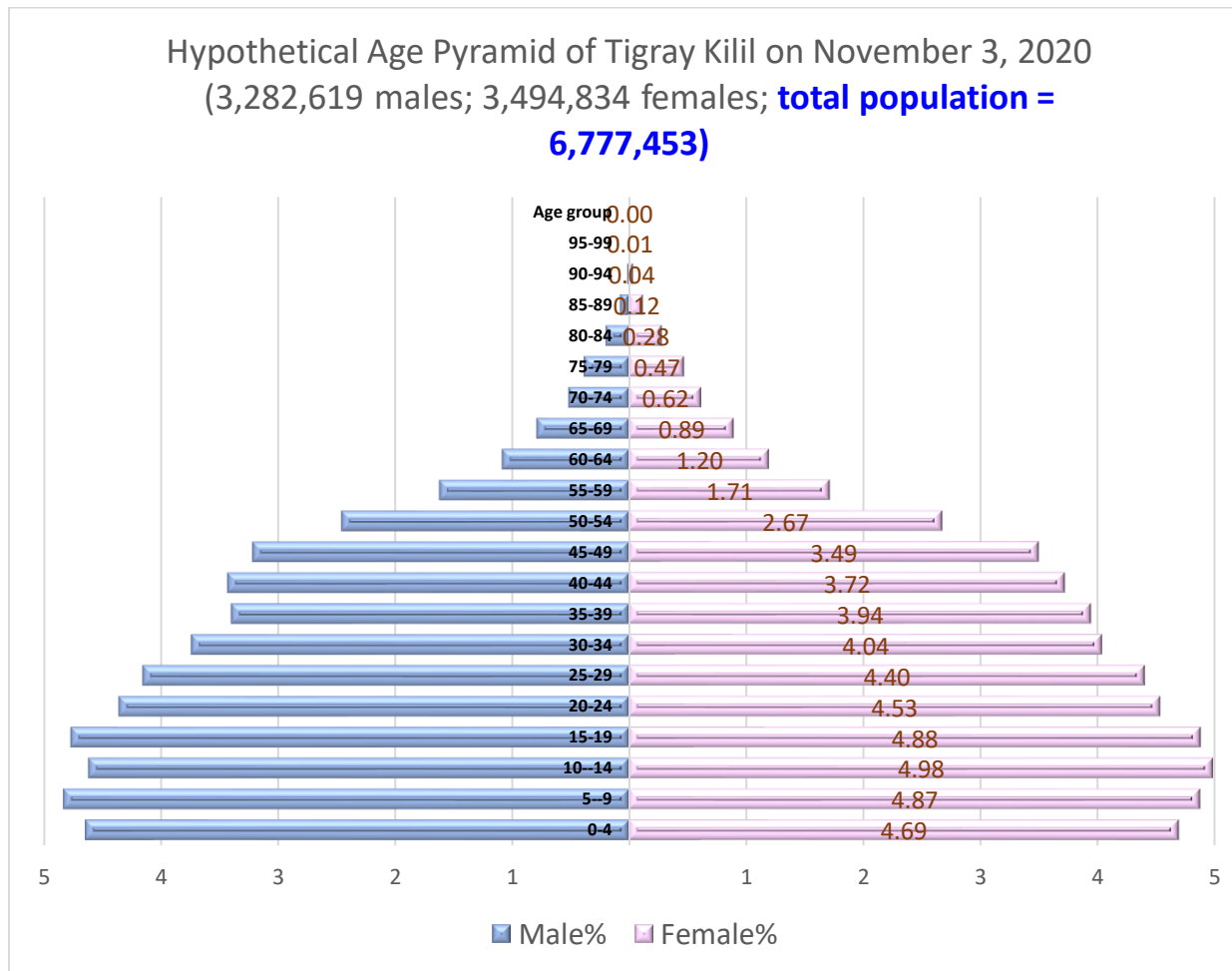


Likely Population Sizes and Age Distributions of Tigray Kilil on November 3, 2020, and November 2, 2022

The below pyramids show Tigray's likely population totals by sex and hypothetical age distributions on the eve of the start of the northern war, November 3rd, 2020 (Pyramid 1), and at the signing of the peace deal two years later – November 2nd, 2022 (Pyramid 2). There is no data on the sex ratio of Tigrayan armed or unarmed combatants that were killed on various fronts. We are assuming that 80% were male and 20% were female.

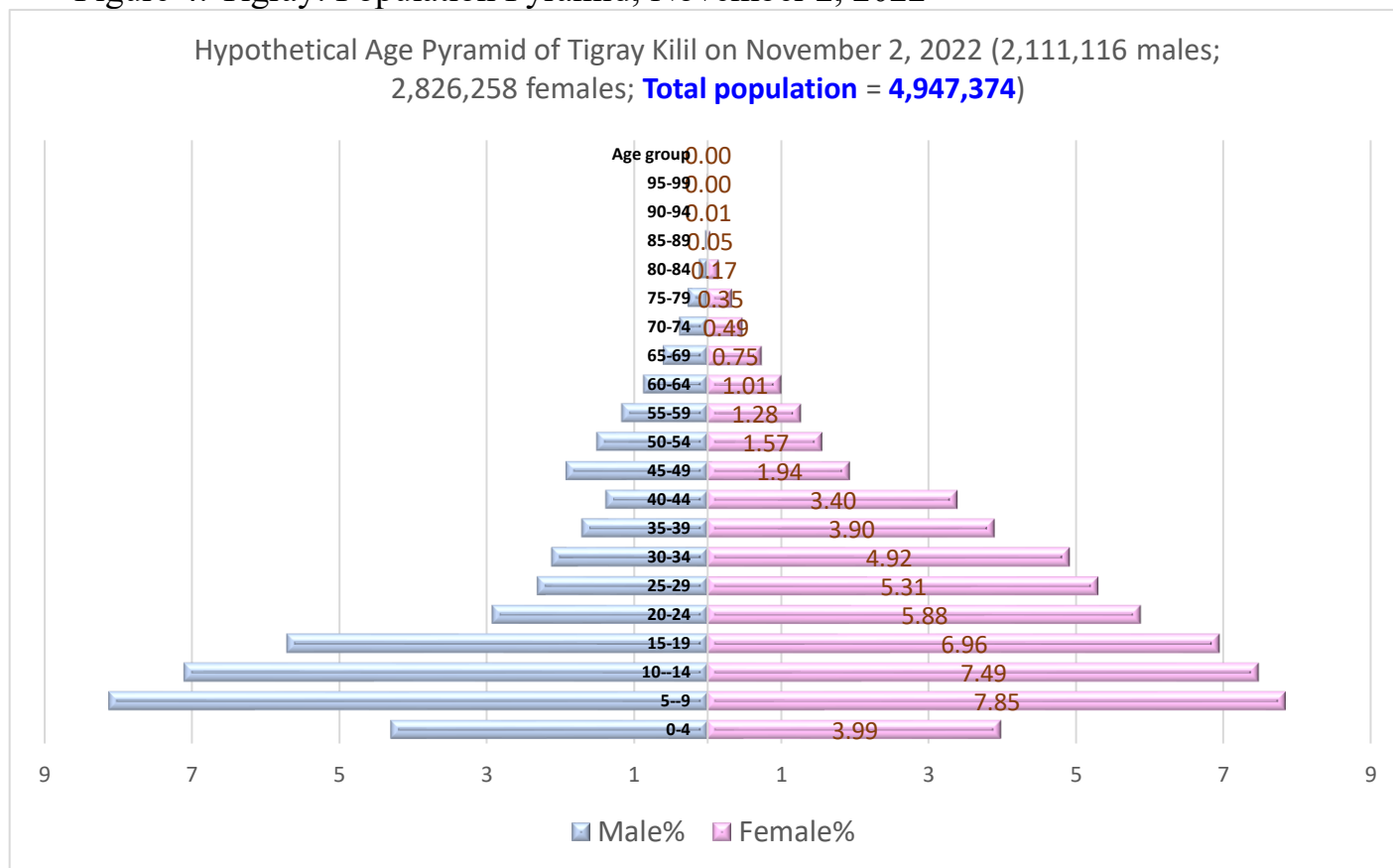
A Population Pyramid provides the age-sex distribution of a given population with the sexes shown on the left/right sides, age as the y-axis, and the percentage of the population as the x-axis. Demographers use population pyramids to see population trends in the past, examine the current age profile, as well as project likely future increases/decreases by age segments. As the title of this paper includes the words “fighting youth”, and the county has been at war, the fighting age portions of the pyramid – age groups 20-24, 25-29, 30-34, 35-39 – and to a lesser extent age groups 15-19 and 40-44 become a significant focus of analysis.

Figure 3. Tigray: Population Pyramid, November 3, 2020



Note: This age pyramid should not be reproduced or used in citations as it is hypothetical and not based on real data

Figure 4. Tigray: Population Pyramid, November 2, 2022



*The much lower numbers in the 0-4 age group compared to the 5-9 age group is thought to capture the impacts of reduced fertility resulting from the battlefield death of hundreds of thousands of would-be fathers and, to a much lesser extent, would-be mothers. As for sex composition, the totals show an excess of approximately 725,000 females, which is not surprising given existing male deficits from the gorilla wars of the 1970s and 80s.

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Summary

What transpired in northern Ethiopian between November 4th, 2020 when war broke out in earnest, and November 2nd, 2022 when a peace deal was signed to end it, might very well have left the most widely covered and meticulously recorded accounting (thanks to social media and US-EU interventions) of the consequences in human lives and suffering of defective aims espoused by the non-apologetic group - TPLF - over a half-century. The below lessons have been left behind for humanity to ponder and use as cautionary tales in its national affairs, both domestic and international:

1. That a fringe group (TPLF) with ideologies and goals not endorsed in a referendum by the wider Tigrayan public, would take up arms, form partnerships with an entity seeking self-determination for its people (EPLF), topple a seating national government (the Derg), subjugate an entire nation (Ethiopia), and stay in power for 27 years - the goal included Tigray's liberation – a euphemism for full “independence”.
2. That, while a third to two-fifths of the population TPLF promised to liberate (the L in TPLF) lived off of food aid for all those 27 years, a select few built skyscrapers in Addis Ababa and luxury hotels in Mekele while siphoning off billions of United States dollars sent as development aid, for deposition in private accounts. Some of this cash would later be used to buy off Western media companies, lobbyists, and the so-called “White Woyanes” – hired foreign reporters.
3. That, in an unmistakable rejection of the ideas of equality, equitable power-sharing, and peaceful coexistence, TPLF would leave the capital city Addis Ababa upon being toppled from power, choosing instead a return to its place of birth – Tigray – to regroup and plot its quick return to power.

4. That, the first shots of an ill-conceived violent return to power through reconquest of a capital city located 933 kilometers away, would start by massacring members of the biggest contingent of Ethiopia's defense force which had, ironically, lost 100,000 members in its ranks two decades prior while defending Tigray against TPLF's former comrades in arms who had successfully achieved independence for Eritrea but sought to resolve border/boundary issues by force.
5. That TPLF's confidence in achieving its ("return-to-power by any means possible") aims sprang from full knowledge of its 27-year build-up of a military that was, for all intents and purposes, Tigrayan, especially at the leadership core, with members of the remaining 79 ethnic groups symbolically sprinkled here and there through the military hierarchy and ranks.
6. That members of the ragtag military at the fringes of power and cut off from each other by sabotaging the military command-and-control communication systems by TFPL, would fight back at a fighting force ratio of 44,000 (Ethiopia) to 250,000 (TPLF) and win. **End of round 1.**
7. That TPLF would regroup by deploying civilians in a human-wave-style counterattack that forced Ethiopia's professional military who would not aim their guns at civilians to leave Tigray. In a hastily orchestrated hot pursuit, TPLF managed to reach Debre Sina, only 190 kilometers from Addis Ababa, leaving on its path the wanton destruction of cities and towns, its main targets being Amhara and Afar regions' government and civilian institutions including schools, industries, health institutions, and infrastructure. Prime minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed responded by going to the frontlines and masterminding counterattacks that returned TPLF back to the vicinities of Tigray's borders. **End of round 2.**
8. That, in what seemed to be a last-ditch effort to try its luck at returning to the capital Addis Ababa, TPLF would launch the third round of attacks along the same routes and with identical human-wave fighting styles as in round 2 but would only

manage to go as far as Kobo. In an overwhelming military might and coordinated counterattack, Ethiopia's defense forces broke all of TPLF's fortifications and beat back several rounds of attacks including incursions by tens of thousands of Tigrayan refugees trained in Sudan, and retook 70% of Tigray with a striking distance of and readiness to move on Mekele. **End of round 3.**

9. That a peace deal signed with Tigray *Kilil* would peg Tigray's defacto geographic extent to the boundaries of the final front lines (see Figure 2), leave public services yet to be restored, and infrastructure yet to be rebuilt. The deal sealed TPLF's losses (and the consequences of its rejection of equality and equitable power sharing) in place as set in concrete for all of humanity to learn from.
10. That an important lesson for humanity would be the self-destructing results that defective aims bring. Case-in-point is the devastation in Tigray and the suffering of its people as portrayed over the many months of life without food, medical services, clean water, jobs, schools, electricity, or communications with the outside world.
11. That, in a final lesson for humanity, the logical victor - the nation of Ethiopia – would also lose. This is to say that, in addition to the destruction the three rounds of fighting brought, Ethiopia lost hundreds of thousands of its Tigrayan citizens missing from the age pyramid in Figure 4, as well as significant numbers of its fighting force (the subject of this article) drawn from Amhara *Kilil*, Oromiya *Kilil*, Afar *Kilil*, Somali *Kilil*, Southwest *Kilil*, Sidama *Kilil*, Debub *Kilil*, Harari *Kilil*, City of Diredawa, Gambella *Kilil*, Benishangul and Gumuz *Kilil*, and the capital city Addis Ababa. Civilians were killed in Tigray *Kilil*, Amhara *Kilil*, and afar *Kilil*. Rape was used as a weapon of war in all three *Kilils* and in all three rounds (granted that humanity has existing knowledge of rape as a weapon of war going back centuries and millenias).

The author Aynalem Adugna, Ph.D., lives in the United States and is a Research Scientist.

He is also an Adjunct faculty at Addis Ababa University

He can be reached at AynalemA2012@gmail.com

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