



University of Tennessee, Knoxville  
**Trace: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange**

---

Doctoral Dissertations

Graduate School

---

8-2009

# Contested Legitimacy: Coercion and the State in Ethiopia

Dima Noggo Sarbo

*University of Tennessee - Knoxville*

---

## Recommended Citation

Sarbo, Dima Noggo, "Contested Legitimacy: Coercion and the State in Ethiopia. " PhD diss., University of Tennessee, 2009.  
[https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk\\_graddiss/98](https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_graddiss/98)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at Trace: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctoral Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Trace: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange. For more information, please contact [trace@utk.edu](mailto:trace@utk.edu).

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Dima Noggo Sarbo entitled "Contested Legitimacy: Coercion and the State in Ethiopia." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Sociology.

Jon Shefner, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Harry F. Dahms, Paul K. Gellert, Robert A. Gorman

Accepted for the Council:

Dixie L. Thompson

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

---

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Dima Noggo Sarbo entitled “Contested Legitimacy: Coercion and the State in Ethiopia.” I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Sociology.

Jon Shefner, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation  
and recommend its acceptance:

Harry F. Dahms

Paul K. Gellert

Robert A. Gorman

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the  
Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records)

CONTESTED LEGITIMACY: COERCION AND THE STATE IN ETHIOPIA

A Dissertation  
Presented for the  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Degree  
The University of Tennessee Knoxville

Dima Noggo Sarbo

August 2009

Dedicated to my wife,  
Kulani Gudina, and our children,  
Babsa, and Bafta, for their patience, love and support.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As many such undertakings are, this dissertation project took me through an arduous intellectual and emotional journey. I began with a very ambitious agenda of doing a comparative study of experiences with liberal democracy in Africa. Then, I shifted to the crisis of development with a case study of Ethiopia. The journey eventually led me to the critical role of the state, in having a democratic order as much as in organizing development. Therefore, I settled on looking at the characteristics of the African state, with a case study of the oldest, the Ethiopian state. This has been emotionally challenging, as I was involved, for most of my adult life, in political struggles committed to change and transform the Ethiopian state.

I have incurred several debts in the course of this journey. The list is long, and I cannot mention all of them here, but I hope they all will accept my heartfelt thanks. However, a few deserve special mention. In this endeavor, Jon Shefner not only provided me with academic guidance, but cleared some of the uncertainties and doubts I had. He made me feel confident that I was on the right track. He was also patient with me, as I was often unable to meet deadlines. I thank him very much for his guidance and constant support and encouragement throughout this process, and my years at the University of Tennessee. Harry F. Dahms has been a source of intellectual inspiration, also serving as my academic adviser. Robert Gorman took special interest from early on and has been sympathetic and supportive I benefited a great deal from his political theory classes. Paul K. Gellert has been very helpful in many ways, and his knowledge of other states and societies was very useful. Sherry Cable has not only been of tremendous support to me personally, especially during the early years of my time at the University of Tennessee, a time filled with many uncertainties, but, she has also been very helpful in guiding

me through many procedural and administrative issues. To all of them, I say thank you for your interest and support.

My friend Asafa Jalata, whom I have known for many years, was instrumental in my coming to the University of Tennessee. He has served as my adviser and has been a source of support. Zeituna Kalil helped me to settle down in Knoxville as I began this journey. I was welcomed into the family, and I enjoyed our lively conversations. I therefore express my gratitude and thanks to Asafa, Zeituna, Beka, and Kulani for their friendship, kindness, and support throughout my stay in Knoxville.

There are many relatives and friends scattered all over the world that have supported and encouraged me on this journey. I would not have been able to begin this journey and reach my goal without the constant support and encouragement of my brother in law, Alemayyehu Katama. He deserves my regards, gratitude, and special thanks for the interest he has shown in my efforts and for all he has done for me. My friends, Simone Wolken, Thomas Albrecht, Konrad and Nina Melchers have been reliable friends, and very supportive of my family and myself. My friends from early youth, Mohammed Kitessa Melki, Getachew Begashaw, and Alamayyehu Tareke Tobo have been a source of support and encouragement. I express my gratitude and heartfelt thanks to all of them for their friendship, support and encouragement.

Of all those who stood by my side in the course of this journey, my greatest indebtedness is to my immediate family. My friend, comrade and wife, Kulani Gudina, is a very strong and remarkable woman, with phenomenal qualities. This undertaking would have been impossible without her patience, love, support and encouragement. Our children, Babsa and Bafta, were

forced to endure my long absence, and be content with occasional visits and a weekly telephone conversation during this journey. I always felt guilty for not discharging my responsibilities to them when they needed me most, and I feel they deserved better with my presence, care, and attention. I hope my successful completion of this project becomes a source of pride and a consolation to them. This dissertation is therefore deservedly dedicated to Kulani, Babasa and Bafta, for their patience, love, understanding, support, and encouragement. I say to them thank you and I love you!



## ABSTRACT

Most studies on Africa that analyzed the institution of the state emphasized the colonial origins of state formation, tracing the crisis of socioeconomic and political development to that specific historical trajectory. Colonialism has shaped the characteristics of modern African states, but it is also important to address institutional factors, methods of governance, and state-society relations in the post independence period. As Ethiopia was not directly constituted by European colonialism, a study of the Ethiopian state provides an opportunity to look at how the state has performed, and how it relates to its own society, without the colonial baggage. This case study explores the characteristics of the Ethiopian state employing neopatrimonialism as a theoretical framework. It addresses the system of personalization, hybridization, patronage, coercion and external factors in the exercise of state power.

According to both Weberian and Gramscian theories of the state, the legitimacy of states is contingent upon the tacit acceptance of its authority by the majority of the population under its jurisdiction. Coercion is used as a threat and a last resort when all other persuasive and ideological methods have failed or become inadequate. Yet, the case study shows the use of coercion as an enduring feature of some states. The Ethiopian state has been consistently challenged internally and isolated regionally. Consequently, it has depended on a combination of coercion and external patronage as a survival strategy. This strategy has further complicated internal cohesion, and external patronage has also served as a disincentive to accommodate internal demands for inclusion. The endurance of violence and internal challenges to the authority of states is a general characteristic of states with contested legitimacy.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter I.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Prologue .....	1
Why Study Ethiopia? .....	2
Renewed Focus on the State.....	7
Theoretical Framework .....	11
Methodological Framework .....	23
Data Sources.....	30
Overview .....	31
Chapter II .....	37
Conceptualizing the Development and Role of the Modern State.....	37
War and State Formation.....	39
The National State and Economic Development .....	40
The Modern State and Globalization .....	48
Chapter III.....	64
Conceptualizing and Analyzing the Modern African State .....	64
Historical Development of the Modern African State .....	66
The Postcolonial State.....	70
The Enduring Legacy of the Colonial State .....	78
The African State and the Crisis of Development.....	84
The African State in Crisis: Sovereignty, Legitimacy, and State Society Relations .....	86
Chapter IV.....	90
Contextualizing and Analyzing the Ethiopian State: Historical Background and Emergence of a Modern State.....	90
Historical Evolution of the Ethiopian Polity .....	96
The Modern State: Empire Building in the Waning Days of Empire .....	111
Italian Colonization of Eritrea and the Battle of Adowa.....	113
The Death of the Empire Builder and the Struggle for Succession .....	117

Italian Occupation (1936-41) and the Disintegration of the Ruling Class .....	126
The Italian Defeat and Britain .....	131
The Post-War Imperial Regime.....	134
The Social and Economic Background of Revolution .....	138
The Collapse of the Revolutionary Regime .....	146
The Post-Cold-War Regime .....	151
Chapter V .....	157
The Ethiopian State: Internal Challenges and the Intersections of Class, Ethnicity, Region and Religion.....	157
Reforms: Missed Opportunities .....	159
Personalized Power and Elite Fragmentation.....	164
The State and Society .....	167
Patronage .....	169
Emergence of Parasitic Elite.....	172
Ethnicity, Religion, Regionalism and the State.....	175
Implications of Failure of Integration and Reform .....	180
The Formal Institutions and Actual Exercise of Power .....	183
The State and Illegitimate Methods of Social Control.....	192
Violence and the State: The Primary Method of Social Control.....	205
The Consequences of State Violence and the Attitudes to Political Power .....	222
Chapter VI.....	227
The Ethiopian State: External Challenges and State Response .....	227
The Ethiopian State and Regional Challenges .....	235
Ethiopia and the Middle East.....	240
Ethiopia and Egypt .....	242
Ethiopia and Sudan .....	246
Ethiopia and the Somali Challenge .....	249
Ethiopia and Eritrea: From Federation to War .....	257
The Ethiopian State and Its Global Alliances .....	262

The Ethiopian State and the Impact of Global Factors .....	267
Chapter VII .....	274
Conclusion: Coercion and States with Contested Legitimacy .....	274
Hybrid Structure and Personalized Power .....	276
Institutional Instability .....	277
Patron-Client Relations .....	281
The Role of Violence and Coercion .....	282
External Factors.....	283
Some Theoretical Conclusions.....	291
The Future of States with Contested Legitimacy .....	295
LIST OF REFERENCES .....	307
APPENDIX.....	322
VITA.....	324

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

AI	Amnesty International
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ANC	African National Congress (South Africa)
ANDM	Amhara National Democratic Movement (successor of EPDM, part of EPRDF)
AOI	Africa Orientale Italiana
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
AU	African Union
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BMME	British Military Mission in Ethiopia
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency (US)
CSA	Central Statistical Authority
EAL	Ethiopian Airlines
EC	Ethiopian Calendar (follows the Julian calendar). The Ethiopian year starts on September 11 and ends the following year on September 10. It is seven or eight years behind the Gregorian calendar.
EDORM	Ethiopian Democratic Officers Revolutionary Movement
EDU	Ethiopian Democratic Union
EIU	Economist Intelligence Unit (journal)
ELF	Eritrean Liberation Front
EPDM	Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (forerunner of ANDM)
EPLF	Eritrean People's Liberation Front
EPRDF	Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (front organization of TPLF)
EPRP	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party
ERD	Emergency Relief Desk (A consortium of Western church agencies)
EU	European Union
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (forerunner of WTO)
	GDP
	Gross Domestic Product
GLC	Greater London Council
ICC	International Criminal Court
IEG	Imperial Ethiopian Government
IMF	International Monetary Fund
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HRW	Human Rights Watch
LDC	Least Developed Countries
MAAG	Military Assistance Advisory Group
MEISON	Amharic Acronym of All Ethiopian Socialist Movement (AESM)
MLLT	Marxist-Leninist League of Tigray
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCA	Norwegian Church Aid
NCP	National Congress Party (Sudan)
OAU	Organization of African Unity (forerunner of AU)
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (Paris Club)
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
ONLF	Ogaden National Liberation Front
OPDO	Oromo People's Democratic Organization (part of EPRDF)
OPEC	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
OSG	Oromia Support Group (UK)
PDRE	People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
POMOA	Provisional Office for Mass Organizational Affairs
PMAC	Provisional Military Administration Council
SALF	Somali Abo Liberation Front
SAP	Structural Adjustment Program
SEPDF	Southern Ethiopian Peoples' Democratic Front (part of EPRDF)
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency

SSDF	Somali Salvation Democratic Front
SPLA	Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army
SYL	Somali Youth League
TFYP	Third Five Year Plan
TGE	Transitional Government of Ethiopia
TNC	Transnational Corporation
TPLF	Tigrean People's Liberation Front (leading organization of EPRDF)
TWA	Trans World Airlines
WPE	Workers Party of Ethiopia
WSLF	Western Somali Liberation Front
WTO	World Trade Organization
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
USDOS	United States Department of State
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

## ETHIOPIAN TITLES AND TERMS MENTIONED IN THE TEXT

<i>Aqabe Sa'at</i>	Appointment time; routine imperial audience for officials
<i>Betwoded</i>	Ethiopian feudal title, meaning 'beloved'
<i>Chilot</i>	Court
<i>Dejazmach</i>	Ethiopian feudal title, equivalent to a general
<i>Dergue</i>	Committee in the Amharic acronym of PMAC, and used to refer to the military regime of Ethiopia (1974-91)
<i>Fitawrari</i>	Ethiopian feudal title, meaning 'Commander of the Front'
<i>Kebele</i>	Neighborhood, mainly refers to the lowest level urban neighborhood organization, but also used for the lowest level peasants organization
<i>Lij</i>	Ethiopian royal title, meaning 'prince'
<i>Negarit Gazeta</i>	Ethiopian official gazette, where proclamations, orders, legal notices, appointments are published
<i>Ras</i>	Ethiopian feudal title, literal meaning 'head' the highest rank below the king
<i>Tsehafe T'ezaz</i>	Head of Ethiopian Imperial Secretariat
<i>Wagshum</i>	A title reserved for the chief of the Wag province in northern Ethiopia
<i>Woyyane</i>	Used to represent "front" in the Tigrinya acronym of TPLF, and refers to the post 1991 TPLF led Ethiopian regime



## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

#### **Prologue**

Explaining the continued and growing political, economic, and social crisis in Africa, half a century after the visible forms of European colonial presence ended in most parts of the continent, is a daunting and gigantic task. It is even more daunting to explain the case of Ethiopia, which, at least formally escaped colonial rule, but has performed miserably in economic and social development even as compared to those who fell victim to colonial domination. But, it is a task social science has to undertake, and a reality it has to explain. Leaving aside economic and social progress, democracy, human rights, and other liberties that are taken for granted in many parts of the world, few African states have stable and viable regimes. This dissertation is a case study of Africa's oldest state, and one of its largest. It is a historical and theoretical analysis of the Ethiopian state, but the lessons to be drawn from the analysis presented here may have implications for similar states. Although in order to make generalizations about such important issues as characteristics of states, economic progress and political change requires several and multiple cases, an in depth look at a single case can generate insights, and furnish new theoretical understanding of the issues. It can also encourage further studies into other cases. Moreover, looking at the trajectory of the Ethiopian state helps us to understand the general characteristics of similar types of states and their survival strategies.

This study refocuses attention on the role of the state in development. Development being a national undertaking, the state has to be able to mobilize internal and external resources, and in

this the cooperation of societal actors is crucial. To achieve this however, the state has to act legitimately and be seen as promoting the general interests of society. In short, only a legitimate state can succeed in achieving broad societal acceptance and cooperation. The study has four main parts. The introductory part expounds the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of the study. The second part reviews the literature on the emergence and role of the modern national state and the specific character of the African state. The third part explores the case of the Ethiopian state and its historical trajectory. It describes the specific characteristics of the Ethiopian state, methods of governance, and the strategies of state survival pursued under three different regimes. The final and concluding part explores the lessons to be drawn, especially key theoretical issues, and puts the case within a comparative perspective. It expounds on how similar states, especially states with limited societal embeddedness and contested legitimacy survive, as well as the relationship between domestic structures and international patronage.

### **Why Study Ethiopia?**

Historically, Ethiopia represented the hopes of many in Africa and beyond for maintaining an independent statehood, in the face of the rest of the African continent falling victim to colonial rule. Yet, in more recent decades, it has also represented the frustrations of the same people, as it became the epitome of the failures of African states, with images of mass starvation becoming almost synonymous with its name. The peoples of Ethiopia have such a remarkable ability of endurance in the face of adversity, surviving through continued repression under various forms of tyranny. In a single generation Ethiopia went from feudalism, to a short lived socialist project under a brutal military dictatorship, and then to a liberal market political economy under a no less brutal and tightly centralized dominant party rule. During the long

period of imperial rule, Ethiopia's failure to lift the people out of backwardness and poverty were blamed on the archaic feudal political economy that was predatory and stifled innovation and a medieval political structure that was repressive and had no space for popular participation. The period under the revolutionary regime that lasted between 1974 and 1991 is associated with economic failures, political repression and the proliferation of civil wars and conflicts. The regime's monumental failures have been attributed to the misguided economic policy of excessive state control that drove away capital and skilled manpower, and most importantly killed initiative and discouraged entrepreneurship.

The post 1991 regime has been hailed as not only an improvement over its predecessors, but a marked departure in its political and economic policies. The United States and its Western allies have given it credit for being a new and 'progressive breed' of African leadership establishing institutional governance and democracy in Ethiopia (Ottaway, 1999: 1-3). The same forces have commended the regime's economic performance for turning Ethiopia's fortunes for the better by presiding over the fastest growing economy among the non oil producing African states, especially since the end of the 1990s. If the statistics are to be believed growth rates have reached double digits during the second half of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, though it has been slowing down and expected to be reaching 6.8 percent in 2009 (World Bank, 2008; EIU, 2009). However, most of the registered growth is the outcome of favorable weather patterns, external inputs, and in the service sector. In other words, the productive sectors of the economy, especially agriculture, manufacturing, and mining have not shown significant growth, and a single year's drought can wipe out some of the gains.

Nevertheless, Ethiopia faces monumental challenges, political, economic, social and environmental. It is not only one of the 49 states designated as Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in the world, but belongs to the bottom ten even among the LDCs (UNCTAD, 2008). Moreover, it belongs to one of 31 land locked developing states, and the most populous among them, a factor that has severe implications for development, raising costs of transportation and storage of imported and exported goods. With increased pressure on the environment, Ethiopia faces a number of problems such as soil degradation, deforestation and destruction of vegetation, drying streams, creeping desertification, shrinking farm sizes and diminishing resources. The adverse effects of these environmental factors on food production and the livelihood of millions cannot be overstated. Besides millions of people periodically sliding into starvation, common diseases as well as new epidemics, including HIV/AIDS are rising. On top of these, the population is growing fast, putting even more pressure on diminishing resources. Ethiopia is the second most populous state in Africa, after Nigeria, and by the year 2025, with over 140 million people, it is expected to be one of the ten most populous states in the world (US Bureau of Census, 2009). Given the monumental tasks of facing these challenges and reversing their adverse effects, the performance of the post 1991 regime, hailed in the West as market friendly and democratizing, is less than satisfactory. Some of its actions indicate the continuation of policies of the previous regimes. Far from instituting democracy and institutional governance, the regime uses the same or similar methods of governance as all its predecessors; it is intolerant and repressive of dissent and opposition. As its predecessors, its legitimacy is contested and is challenged by important sectors of the population. Consequently, it resorts to the use of excessive violence to maintain power. Like its predecessors, it remains fundamentally a military

autocracy. Thus, despite change of regimes, the Ethiopian state exhibits certain enduring features and has failed to overcome the historical legacy of a crisis of state legitimacy.

The regime's much touted democratic credentials were tested in May 2005, when for the first time in the history of the state the people were provided with real choices in a general election. The regime previously held several elections following their seizure of power through an armed insurgency in 1991, but without any opposition, running alone and winning practically all contested seats. In 2005 however, as a result of pressures from its external supporters, and eager to increase its democratic credentials, and also confident that it would win the contests, it allowed the opposition to contest the election. For the first time, state run public media were opened to all parties, and the people got the opportunity to be exposed to alternative views. All went well until the day of the voting, and the peoples of Ethiopia demonstrated beyond any doubt that they were enthusiastic about being able to make choices as to who should govern them. Over eighty five percent of eligible voters had registered to vote, and they came out in massive numbers to cast their ballots, as voting hours had to be extended to accommodate the large turnout (EU, 2005: 11). By the end of the day of the election an unprecedented over 90 percent of the registered voters had cast their ballots. The voting process went well peacefully and there were no reports of violence, unlike recent experiences in several African states, like Kenya, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe. It was a tremendous demonstration of the patience and confidence of peoples subjugated under decades of feudal and military autocracy.

Since the regime was so confident that it would win a sweeping victory, it was not even prepared to rig the ballots. As the counting started and results began coming in, it became obvious that the opposition coalition had gained significant support. In the capital, Addis Ababa,

the regime lost all but one of the seats. However, before all results were reported, the ruling party declared that it had won the elections. Then, the evening of the election, the Prime Minister appeared on radio and television and declared a state of emergency, banning all public meetings, and deploying his army in the capital and all major towns. With that decision, the outcome of the election, and who should govern was back in military hands. The election turned out to be an illusion, and when people came out to protest, the regime unleashed a reign of terror killing more than 200 protesters in the capital alone in two separate incidents. The regime also engaged in the widespread harassment and intimidation of the population (Smith, 2007). It rounded up and put behind bars all those suspected of being opposition activists, their numbers running into the tens of thousands. It followed this up with not only the detention of over one hundred leaders of the main opposition coalition, but charged them with treason, genocide and attempting to overthrow the ‘constitutional order.’

As the ruling party controlled the electoral commission, only the regime knows the actual results of the election. Conclusions can be made, however, that the measures taken by the regime indicated a lack of confidence of winning in a fair game on the part of the ruling party. In effect, the measures taken by the prime minister amounted to a reversal of the election and a military coup. It was a signal that the regime would never concede power through the ballot box and it would stay in power at all costs, using all means, most importantly violent repression.<sup>1</sup> Repression has been the principal method of governance for the post-1991 Ethiopian regime just as it was for all its predecessors. As the Ethiopian state has been unable to institute legal and institutional governance, coercion has become part of the character of the state. Thus, despite

---

<sup>1</sup> One of the leaders of the ruling party told me in 1992 that they will never concede power through a piece of paper (meaning ballots) that they gained through a bitter struggle.

several changes in regimes there are certain enduring features of the Ethiopian state in methods of governance, and this study focuses on them.

I argue that the state is critical in organizing social and economic development. I do not dispute the assertions that external factors have been the primary contributing factors for the underdevelopment of many African states, including Ethiopia. That being said, internal cohesion and the strength of states and their institutions not only enhance the ability of states to mobilize internal resources and manage external factors, but also enable them to exploit and manipulate external opportunities to their advantage. In the case of Ethiopia, I also argue that despite changes in regimes the essential characteristics of the Ethiopian state remain the same, the legitimacy of the state is contested, and the system of rule has been one of military autocracy. Moreover, despite escaping direct colonization, the political economy of Ethiopia is not fundamentally different from those states that were under colonial domination.

### **Renewed Focus on the State**

The concept of the state is an abstract one, but is central to any political, social, and economic analysis. In recent years new developments in the contemporary world have made it the focus of critical attention in academic and political debate. Prior to the 1980s, the state was relegated to irrelevance and almost disappeared from academic analysis, as it came under severe attack by conservative politicians, especially in the United States and the United Kingdom. By the middle of the 1980s it was back as a subject of analytical discourse as some scholars (among them, Evans, Rueschemeyer and Skocpol, 1985) revived the debate on the state. By the early 1990s a number of events in the world also underlined the centrality of the state in political and

economic management and international relations. A number of factors related to the collapse of the Soviet Union have also increased attention on the state. The birth of more states into the international system, as well as the fragility of many of these states, the plethora of failed and collapsed states in Southern Europe, Asia, Latin America, and Africa, and the proliferation of intrastate and interstate conflicts are among the contributing factors to this increased attention (Ghani and Lockhart, 2008: 26). The economic rise of East Asia and the role of the state in that success on the one hand, and the crisis of development and the failures of many of the interventions of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank on the other, as well as the global focus on security, following the rise of international terrorism, have all highlighted the role of effective state institutions (Ghani and Lockhart, 2008: 26). Moreover, the severe economic crisis that unfolded in 2008, starting in the United States and spreading throughout the world has put into question over three decades of neoliberal erosion of the regulatory role of the state. The resulting crisis has highlighted the failure of the market to regulate itself and hence increased more attention on the role of the state.

As an organized system of power in society, the state is a unique institution that has evolved over a long time in the collective endeavor of human societies an institution with the sole legitimacy to use violence to maintain order (Weber, [1922]1978: 908). It was Niccolo Machiavelli who was the first to come up with a more secular definition of the state emphasizing the use of force as a fundamental element of the state (1997). But, it was Weber who elaborated on this aspect of the characteristic of the state, defining the state as a political community that successfully claims the monopoly on the legitimate use of force within a given territory, and even when there are other institutions or individuals to whom the use of physical force is



ascribed, it is only to the extent to which the state permits it (Weber, [1922]1978: 908). The state is however expected to use its immense powers within limits defined by a certain sense of justice and the rule of law, both of which have also evolved over time. Justice and the rule of law are both central to the state's exercise of unlimited powers within its jurisdiction, and as the medieval Christian theologian St. Augustine wrote, if we take away justice and the rule of law, states cannot be easily distinguished from large gangs of robbers (1945: 115).

States are fundamental to and the most dominant mechanism of organizing the collective action of societies on a large scale, historically the most important of which has been warfare. A broader definition of the state also emerged over time involving the idea of a "social contract" focusing on the relationship between the state and citizens. This theme was espoused by European thinkers of the 'enlightenment,' especially Hobbes and Rousseau. Thomas Hobbes argued that individuals living without a state and the rule of law find themselves in a situation of war of all against all in which life is 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short' (Hobbes, 2007: 83). His idea was that individuals would voluntarily make a social contract with an absolute sovereign government, i.e., the state, by giving up some of their freedom in exchange for guaranteed peace and security (Hobbes, [1651] 2007: 87). Jean-Jacques Rousseau based his theory of social contract on popular sovereignty, in which the people are directly involved in the formulation of laws under which they are governed, with the right to be able to change or revise them, a condition necessary for the preservation of liberty and prosperity (Rousseau, [1762] 1997: 49-51, 121-126).

The conceptualization and role of the state has therefore been expanded and transformed throughout the ages, and in the modern era states are expected to shoulder a variety of national

and international responsibilities. For example, until very recently, the conduct of states within their territorial jurisdiction was considered to be their own internal affair. In fact one of the principles of international relations has been that of non interference in the internal affairs of states. This evolved gradually, as the terrible experience of the Second World War changed the parameters, and principles as well as practices of international law. Since then international law has evolved to include issues of common concern to humanity. Thus, states are more and more subject to international censure, sanctions and even outright military action as international interventions in Southern Europe and Sudan have demonstrated. In other words, though states continue to exercise immense authority within their jurisdiction, they are required to conduct their affairs within the principles of observance of certain acceptable norms and international standards, fulfilling their obligations under international law. Today, certain crimes like war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide, which are broad in definition, can be prosecuted under international jurisdiction. The establishment of the International Criminal Court is among the latest changes in international law.

The principles of state sovereignty mean that all states have equal rights under international law. But, not all states are capable of protecting their rights and pursuing their interests. States differ in their capacity and many other respects. There are arguments that some states, including most African states, do not actually fulfill the characteristics of modern states, their empirical statehood is limited, and therefore can best be described as ‘quasi states’ (Jackson, 1990). Others have argued that there are degrees of statehood, and we must be cautious about ascribing the universal characteristics of statehood to those entities in the peripheral parts of the global system, especially those entities in the so called ‘Sub Saharan Africa’ (Clapham,

1998). However, I argue that all states in the contemporary global system are modern, as they have all been made in the image of the national state system of Europe, and most importantly by the Europeans themselves. Historically speaking, there have always been variations among states, in size, population, resources, wealth, strength, ability to project power, and many other qualities. This is not a new phenomenon or unique to the contemporary world, although the gaps in wealth and power have widened between states and even within states more than ever before. States have been historically constituted in different sizes, resources, populations, and inequality among states in various respects has always been present. Therefore, there are no non-modern, traditional, quasi-states, or sub-states. What distinguishes modern states from the classical and medieval states is their territoriality and sovereignty within their jurisdiction. There are other formal and substantive characteristics as well. These substantive characteristics include the possession of armies, administrative systems, economic organization, external recognition and representation, including membership in international organizations. What we can say is that, there are rich and poor, big and small, strong and weak, more populous and less populous, etc. states, not in absolute terms, but on a continuum. In other words, what distinguishes modern states from one another is not whether they are traditional, medieval, or modern, fully fledged or quasi-states, but their size, capabilities, economic and military power.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The authority of states has to be accepted as legitimate by their own society for the state to be able to mobilize its citizens for the tasks it deems necessary. But, the capacity and ability to mobilize society and resources varies a great deal and depends on the quality of a state's internal organization and its relations to society. These two factors, internal organization and relations to

society, are dependent on each other, as the system and operations of the internal organization of the state have implications for its relations to society. Likewise, relations between society and the state have important implications for how the state operates and functions and for its effectiveness. States depend on society to survive and function effectively, through the cooperation of societal actors in terms of provision of resources and manpower, such as in the form of taxes and mobilization for war or other important public and state requirements. On the other hand societal actors provide the needed cooperation only if the state is regarded as legitimate, perceived as representing societal interests, acts lawfully, treats societal actors justly and fairly and provides them with information. States cannot function properly or effectively when state actors and societal forces are unable to cooperate in implementing policies and fail to share the necessary information and resources as examples of several failed experiments by states imposing their whims from above and with disastrous outcomes have amply demonstrated (Scott, 1998). Moreover, success requires state actors and societal forces to be bound by multiple ties between them that allow a two way transfer of knowledge and resources (Esman and Uphoff, 1984). A strong bond between societal actors and the state also allows the former to monitor state agents in their discharge of duties and make sure that state agents implement policies in favor of public interests instead of their private gains. Societal oversight can help to prevent the structures of the state from becoming not only unresponsive to public interests and ineffective, but also from becoming ossified and repressive. In other words, in order to function effectively states have to be embedded in society (Evans, 1995).

At the same time states also require a measure of autonomy from various societal actors in order to carry out their functions fairly and effectively. They should not be viewed, at least in

the perception of society that they are acting in the interests of a fraction of the society. Instead states, their constitution and activities should be perceived as acting in the common interests of society at large (Tsoukalas, 2002: 221-244). Thus, for states to function optimally and effectively they require a symmetrical combination of both autonomy and embeddedness within society (Evans, 1995: 59). The degree of societal embeddedness and state autonomy are not the same in all social formations. These depend on the manner in which the states were constituted and evolved historically and the functions for which they exist. The strength and effectiveness of states very much depend on the characteristics of societies that constitute them. According Migdal, in those societies with a social structure of entrenched groups having vested interests in maintaining control over society, like chiefs, landlords, or other similar social strata, states cannot effectively implement their policies, and are consequently weak (1988: 33-41). On the other hand, those societies where patterns of social control by various social groups have been weakened through land reform, institution of new procedures and systems of taxation, and the development of transportation systems making mobility easier, all have relatively stronger states, making it easier for state actors to penetrate society (Migdal, 1988: 52-96). The optimal relationship between states and societal actors therefore is crucial not just for the effective functioning of states, but also for social progress.

The organization, role, functions and reach of states as well as relations between state and societal actors have been evolving since the emergence of the modern national state in Europe in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Tilly, 1990). This historical development is closely linked with the effectiveness of state institutions to serve societal goals, and the relationship between states and societal actors, as the latter demanded more say in their own affairs and for states to reflect their identity. Ever

since, issues of the relationship between the state and society and making the state more relevant to society have been at the center of most social revolutions and popular struggles. As a result, while societal actors have achieved a great deal of say in the running of the affairs of state in many places, states have also developed a measure of autonomy in relation to various fractions of societal actors.

Based on the premise of the societal embeddedness as well as autonomy of political institutions, I will look at the problem of governance in Ethiopia at two levels. The first one is the dichotomy between the formal structures of governance and the real dynamics of power. The second is the role of the state and its relations to society, and the methods the state employs to maintain itself in power. Many Africanist scholars (Chabal and Daloz, 1999; Bratton and van de Walle, 1994, 1997; Englebort, 2000, among others) have employed neopatrimonialism as an analytical tool for understanding the African state. Neopatrimonialism is a concept derived from one put forward by Max Weber ([1922]1978: 1013-15) to describe systems of rule in which the distinction between public and private spheres is blurred. Weber saw patrimonialism as a traditional form of governance, where family background and personal ties are the basis for authority as opposed to the more modern rational/legal system based on rules and regulations. While there is no general agreement on the scope of neopatrimonial practices in Africa, previous studies have focused on various aspects, including the informalization and personalization of politics (Chabal and Daloz, 1999), the confusion between public and private spheres (Medard, 1991), the traditional and personalist variants of states (Le Vine, 1980), systems of patronage and clientelism (Lemarchand and Legg, 1972), transition of authoritarian regimes (Bratton and van de Walle, 1994, 1997), and the developmental capacity and performance of states (Englebort,

2000). There are no precise definitions of what exactly neopatrimonialism represents, but it has been variously presented as ‘hybrid political systems in which the customs and patterns of patrimonialism co-exist with, and suffuse, rational legal institutions’ (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 62); ‘politics that stresses personal political relations’ (Hansen, 2003: 203), or a state that is ‘simultaneously illusory and substantial,’ meaning both informal and at the same time ‘the ultimate prize for all political elites’ (Chabal and Daloz, 1999: 9). Other features of neopatrimonial governance include the practices of resource exchange between political personalities and strategically located individuals, the rapid turnover of government personnel, as well as insecurity about the role of state institutions (Bratton and van de Walle, 1994; Chabal and Daloz 1999; Theobald 1982). Formal institutions are present in most of the states characterized as neo-patrimonial, but actual power and decision making takes place outside these institutions.

Although the concept provides an essential tool of analysis for states like Ethiopia as well as many other similar states, critiques of the neopatrimonial approach have argued that it is not a sufficient analytical tool, as there are other additional factors that characterize many of these states described as neopatrimonial. Abbink (2006) notes that there are other important elements we have to look at in order to understand the nature of governance in Africa. Among them, he mentions four factors: the force of ideology, inherited tradition of state capacity (like professionalism in the bureaucratic institutions and the civil service), the idea that the state has a responsibility to act in the interests of society (the common good), and finally the role of the donor community and their political and financial support in keeping government in place. The last point is an important factor that has often been overlooked.

The characteristics of neopatrimonial states are such that they are simultaneously personalist and institutional, rational and traditional. In other words, we cannot grasp the nature of governance in these states by simply examining the formal institutions of the state. Obviously, informal networks of power exist in all states, even in the most rational/legal states. But, these networks do not define the nature of decision making and governance as they do in the states described as neopatrimonial. There are two important elements of neopatrimonial authoritarian rule that have not been given sufficient attention. The first and most important is the role of coercion and violence as an enduring feature of social control and state survival. The second is the role of external patronage in maintaining neopatrimonial rule, and the dynamics of the intersections of global and local factors.

In order to analyze and understand the character of the Ethiopian state under three successive, but markedly different regimes, I will employ neo-patrimonialism as an analytical tool. But, though the main features of neopatrimonial rule in Africa as identified by the different scholars cited above are important, they are not sufficient. Therefore, I argue that we have to include two important elements, the role of violence and external support as important elements of neopatrimonial rule in Ethiopia and similar states. In analyzing the Ethiopian state, I will look at three key characteristics of neo-patrimonial rule, as articulated by scholars who have studied various states in Africa, and the two additional elements which I argue are important features of governance in Ethiopia and similar states. These are: the hybrid structure of political domination behind a façade of legal-rational authority; personal rule and institutional instability as an inherent feature of neo-patrimonial domination; the system of patron-client relations; the culture of violence and coercion; and external patronage and the manipulation of global and external



factors. Therefore, the enduring legacy of the use of violence as the principal means of social control and state preservation, the role of external support, the impact of global factors on the political dynamics in Ethiopia as well as their interplay with local factors will be addressed. Comparisons of the three regimes will also help us to understand the changes that have taken place in the course of the last century and those that remained unchanged.

Firstly, the hybridization of power is an important feature of governance in Ethiopia. The state, the country and its politics remain the domain of the privileged power holders, who operate not only through the formal structures of government per se, but through informal networks and very often in a nontransparent manner. The formal institutions of the state have no say over these groups or their decisions, and operate as facades behind which the real decision makers operate. For this reason, on the one hand efforts to strengthen the effectiveness of the formal structures of the state to discharge their societal responsibilities are thwarted by the same people responsible for the state, and who benefit from state weakness. On the other hand other efforts to effect changes through the formal institutional framework, for example, investigating or combating corruption, increasing accountability, and transparency become futile exercises. Thus we cannot understand the nature of the Ethiopian state and the manner in which it operates by simply looking at the formal structures of the state. Many fail to see behind the façade, and as a result fail to understand how power operates in Ethiopia. Some (for example, Henze, 1991; 2000) were misled by provisions in the written constitution and the federal structures it has created. I argue that first, although the constitution and the structures may look reasonable on paper, changes in the sphere of the formal institutions, like parliamentary votes or elections, or the independent functioning of the judiciary are not tolerated if they threaten the existing power network. They

are used as exercises designed to give the appearance of rule based institutional governance in order to impress the donor community. When we look at the pattern of the exercise of real power and decision making under the three Ethiopian regimes, it can be established that it takes place outside the formal institutions.

Secondly, I argue that personalized power and consequently political and institutional instability are enduring features of the Ethiopian state. Power remains personalized, and institutions are inherently unstable. Moreover, during the past century, moments when the state was at peace and was not engaged in fighting one insurgency or the other have been rare. Consequently, violent struggles for power have characterized the state, and power transitions have been marred by periods of intense violence. As a result, there has been no peaceful transfer of power at least since the modern state was constituted at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and institutions have been unstable, subjected to fundamental changes with the coming and going of new rulers, to fit their desires and methods.

Thirdly, personalized and hybridization of power requires structures of patronage and clientelism for the preservation of authority. Power depends on and critical decisions are processed through these networks, not through the formal institutions of state like parliament, the council of ministers or courts. The hierarchical structure of patron-client relations constitutes the main basis of power as well as the allocation of resources.

Fourthly, a critical element of neopatrimonial rule in Ethiopia has been the use of violence by the state, which has become part of the political culture and an enduring characteristic of the state. As a result the military is the means and basis of power, and

consequently gets a disproportionate share of the resources. All these factors reinforce each other. A recent example of the interplay of these factors is the events surrounding the 2005 general elections. As already noted, when it became clear that the power of the entrenched ruling elite might actually slip away, or at least diluted, the ruling elite used massive force, making clear that they were not prepared to concede power through popular choice. In fact, the event led to the further consolidation of the regime's hold on power with further restrictions on the activities of the political parties, civil society groups and journalists that have been allowed to exist.

Finally, another important source of survival for the Ethiopian state has been external patronage. No regime in the modern history of the state has survived without the patronage of global powers. All Ethiopian rulers have manipulated global factors for maintaining neopatrimonial rule, and the readiness of global actors to support them has been another enduring feature. An example of this is how the post-1991 regime in Ethiopia has manipulated the United States-led global "war on terrorism" for domestic political purposes to the extent of invading and occupying a neighboring state, given the readiness of the United States to support the regime based on narrowly defined temporary tactical gains.<sup>2</sup>

One of the arguments of this study is to emphasize the significance of political violence. One of the major deficiencies of the neo-patrimonial approach is the failure to take into account

---

<sup>2</sup> The Ethiopian regime's invasion of Somalia in December 2006 was designed to impress the US and the West with its swift victory over 'Islamic terrorists' in Somalia, at a time when the United States was facing considerable difficulties from the 'Islamic' insurgency in Iraq. The regime was actually feeding the United States unfounded and exaggerated intelligence about the threat of Somalia becoming a base for international terrorism and as if *Al-Qa'ida* had already established a base there. It was designed to deflect attention from the regime's repression at home in the aftermath of the 2005 elections. After the initial success of Ethiopian forces US officials told European diplomats to cool down their criticism of the Ethiopian regime (Personal Communication).

the use of force resorting to coercion as a characteristic method of rule and maintenance of the status quo. The extent to which many political actors in Ethiopia, and similar systems elsewhere, are prepared to use violence has not been sufficiently explored and grasped. I argue that neopatrimonial rule cannot survive without repression, especially when legitimacy is at issue. As a study of Cameroon indicates, coercive force is an important element of many political systems with contested legitimacy (Hansen, 2003). In Ethiopia, the political culture of the state suffers from the historic burden of violence, used as a political means throughout the recorded history of the state, continuing into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This problem is not specific to Ethiopia, but is a general characteristic of states with certain deficiencies, including institutional weaknesses, crisis of state legitimacy, the character of politics as a zero sum game, the conceptions of power being unitary, and the absence of the idea of political opposition with loyalty to the state. In the case of Ethiopia, these deficiencies are not only glaringly present at all levels, but political dissent is even criminalized. Power is absolute, and the epithet '*le Etat ce moi*' best describes the attitude those in power have for political power.

The most important contribution of this study is therefore the permanence of the use of coercion and violence by some states as the principal means of social control and state survival. Both the Weberian and the Gramscian notions of the state contend that any state depends principally on the tacit acceptance of its authority by the population it rules. For a state to be legitimate, the society (at least significant sectors of them) must identify with it and be convinced that the state acts in the common good and provides society with security and defends their interests. Weber maintained that the legitimacy of a state depends on its legality, and identified three main forms of legitimate authority, rational/legal, traditional, and charismatic (Weber,

[1922] 1978: 212-254). However, there are some states that do not correspond to any of these forms of legitimate governance. As we will see later in this study, looking at the Ethiopian state throughout the rule of the three regimes, none of them fulfills these three bases of authority. Many might consider the imperial regime as traditional, but the Emperor's authority was not based on tradition. He invoked tradition only after coming to power through a military coup and external support. Nor was the revolutionary regime under a charismatic authority, but rather based on brute force. The same is true for the post 1991 regime, and though it would like people to believe that its legitimacy is based on rational/legal authority, it gained power through military means and maintains it through the same means. Therefore, I argue that the character of the Ethiopian state diverges from the basis of authority expounded by Weber, and as a result it suffers from a crisis of legitimacy.

Hence legitimate authority uses legitimate methods of governance. Historically, the state has utilized ideological justifications to sanction its authority, and in most cases, coercion has been used either as a threat or a last resort. In other words, the state cannot rule by material force alone. As we can understand from Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony, the state must depend on the ideological ascendancy of the dominant classes of the state (Gramsci, 1971: 245). The state imposes its authority through ideological dominance by instilling a measure of consensus among the population to the status quo. It is only through this that the state can gain legitimacy and hence establish a measure of stable rule over the territory it governs. This is true for many stable and cohesive states, whose legitimacy is not contested. However, those states with a crisis of legitimacy are very often forced to resort to coercion to maintain order and their authority. It is also true that, on the other hand, the continued use of coercive measures not only creates more

instability, but further erodes whatever residue of legitimacy the state has and its credibility. But, there are many examples of states that have endured despite contested legitimacy and with coercion as the principal method of social control. Ethiopia is such a case as its legitimacy has persistently been contested both internally and externally. For a considerable period of its existence it failed to unite and create a consensus behind the state even among the dominant classes, let alone the majority of the population. As a result, throughout its history, the state has used coercion as the main method of rule over the population. Such actions defy much theory that has implicitly or explicitly focused on Western models of democracy (Held, 1996; Dahl, 1998). Thus, an important contribution of this study of the Ethiopian state is to emphasize the long standing capacity for states to defy both internal and external calls for legitimate governance and survive by relying on coercion. Looking at the Ethiopian state we observe that violence has cycles, it has its ups and downs, there are times when it is intense, especially during periods of transition and strong opposition, and subsides once a particular ruler has consolidated his position, but it is never absent at any one time.

The second contribution of this study is that states with contested legitimacy do not necessarily have singular control or monopoly over the use of violence. Throughout the history of the modern Ethiopian state, there have been very brief moments, when there were no armed insurgent groups challenging the legitimacy of the state, and invoking their own legitimacy from the populations they claimed to represent. The endurance of the Ethiopian state against persistent and sustained internal and external challenges, and indeed many other such cases stand in marked contrast to both the Weberian and Gramscian notions of state legitimacy. Thus, I argue

that the monopoly of coercive power is relative, and as the balance shifts gradually, the state loses control, leading to state failure and even collapse.

### **Methodological Framework**

The methodological framework for this study is informed by a combination of factors, including the nature of the research problem, access, and resource availability, as well as personal choice. This is a case study employing comparative historical analysis. It aims to look deeper into the characteristics of the Ethiopian state, its transformation from a traditional polity to a modern African state interacting in the global framework. It expounds on some of what has changed and some of its enduring features. The subject is partly based on a personal choice and my personal experience in working at various levels of the Ethiopian state, as well as in opposition to the state also informs the study. The aim is to better understand the Ethiopian state, which has a unique history. But, at the same time the problems we see in other African states are glaringly present. By looking at both the internal and the external challenges faced by the Ethiopian state over time, I want to establish some causality by looking at its historical evolution and by relating it to the general characteristics of the African state. To achieve this, the case study method is the most appropriate.

According to Robert Yin, case studies are the preferred research method when the ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions are being posed, because such questions require explanation and deal with ‘operational links needing to be traced over time,’ (2009: 9). Moreover, case studies are helpful tools when the investigator has little control over events and the focus is on contemporary phenomenon within some real life context, as well as to investigate not only the processes, but

also outcomes (Yin, 2009: 9-10). In this study, I will look at how the Ethiopian state evolved historically, and why its performance has not been satisfactory. Therefore, the case study method is useful in finding out not only how the state has evolved, but also why it is faced with a continuous crisis of stability and development. The term ‘case’ is used very broadly by researchers, and there are no conclusive criteria for what constitutes a case (Ragin and Becker, 1992). But a case can be defined in various ways. In this study, it is a specific entity, the Ethiopian state, among nearly 200 states in the world (53 of them in Africa). It is an attempt to understand the fundamental problems of states with similar characteristics, especially contested legitimacy, by doing an incisive look at one case.

Critiques of the case study approach have two major issues with the method. The first is that the method is weak in establishing external validity or generalizability of findings due to its dependence on a single case. The second is that the researcher’s intensive exposure may bias the findings of the research. On the other hand, proponents counter by making a distinction between analytic and statistical generalization. According to Yin, case studies employ analytic generalization, using previously developed theory as a measure of comparison for findings of the study (2009: 38-39). In other words, generalization of findings is made to theory rather than populations. Regarding the second criticism, proponents argue that case study researchers can minimize bias in their analysis and increase the reliability of their findings by employing multiple techniques to gather data, such as archival records along with direct observation.

The specific characteristics of social-scientific investigation impose certain burdens on the researcher, including that of choosing among various methodological approaches. Case studies do have the advantage of providing researchers with an in-depth understanding of



complex social phenomena, the processes and historical trajectory, which in turn might lead to new questions for further research. I chose the case study approach in order to be able to have a holistic, in-depth and historical understanding of the Ethiopian state. It also allows me to look at both processes of change and outcomes. I can look at the process of state formation and consolidation as well as the result. Some of the major characteristics of Ethiopia include the state of abject poverty of the population, with slides to periodic famine, and the persistence of violent conflicts and political instability. This method allows me to at least tentatively address the factors responsible for the state's inability to organize socio-economic development and/or create political stability. The approach is also flexible enough in the sense that it allows me to modify my questions and come up with new ones as the investigation progresses.

I have chosen Ethiopia as a case among 53 African states for two reasons. The first is a personal one. I was born and raised in Ethiopia and have a personal interest in its fate. Most importantly, I have been involved at opposite sides of the political equation in Ethiopia for over three decades, both in struggles against the state as well as working at various levels of the state. Secondly, Ethiopia is the oldest African state, and the only one to escape from direct European colonial rule. Yet its trajectory has been even worse than most African states which are mostly creations of European colonialism, in terms of economic underdevelopment, political instability and contested legitimacy.

This case study will also employ a qualitative method of comparative historical analysis, as this is the best tool to critically look at large scale social processes and long term changes like state formation and the changing role of such institutions over time. The study depends on existing literature on processes of state formation in various contexts, and the experience of the

unique (colonial) circumstances of state formation in Africa. The different historical trajectory of the Ethiopian state to the process of state formation and development in Africa will be analyzed against this background. I argue that though the process of state formation has been different in the case of Ethiopia, the outcome (meaning the performance of the Ethiopian state and its relations to society) has been not been much different. Therefore, systematic analysis and comparisons of the processes will not only place the situation in perspective, but will also help in identifying causes and effects (Tilly, 1988: 11).

By employing comparative historical analysis of state formation and performance in Africa in general and Ethiopia in particular, the assumption inherent in this method is that political institutions are embedded in the social structure. In this regard, it is the argument of this study that there are fundamental deficiencies in the process of state formation and the general characteristics of the state in Ethiopia as well as the rest of Africa that departs from this assumption. Moreover, no meaningful efforts have been made to overcome the shortcomings so that the state can legitimately conduct itself and function effectively as its counterparts in other parts of the world. In short, not only institutional effectiveness, but also the social and political disconnect between modern state structures in Africa and their societies have not been addressed. Comparative historical methodology allows one to look at the formation of the modern state and how it has functioned in the postcolonial period in historical and comparative perspective.

Yet social and historical processes are very diverse and complex. It is very difficult to establish causal relations as well as to generalize on the basis of a small number of cases. However, it is possible to establish some broad general patterns. Though there are certain similarities between most (if not all) African states in terms of geography, population make-up,

and historical experience, there are obvious limitations to generalizing about the whole continent based on a single case. Most of Africa fell under alien colonial rule at different stages, and the pattern and policies of the colonial rulers themselves varied from colonial power to colonial power and from colony to colony. North Africa came under Arab conquest at the beginning of the Islamic era, and later on came under Ottoman Turkish rule. Egypt was under Ottoman rule, but also became a regional power in the nineteenth century colonizing parts of Sudan and the Horn of Africa region. In North Africa, France took over Algeria early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and Tunisia later the same century, and Morocco as of 1904. Libya came under Italian rule in 1912, under an agreement with Turkey. South Africa began as a Dutch settler colony, later coming under British domination. But nominally the Union of South Africa existed as an independent entity since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Namibia, Cameroon, Rwanda, Burundi, and Tanganika were German colonies, but Germany was forced to hand over its colonies to the victorious powers after its defeat in the First World War. While the rest were divided between France, Britain and Belgium, Namibia was given to South Africa. Portugal was an early entrant into Africa, colonizing Mozambique, Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde for almost five centuries, and was the last to leave. Spain and Italy were late comers and smallholders. Spain occupied Equatorial Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe and the Spanish Sahara, while Italy possessed Libya, Somalia and Eritrea, and made repeated attempts to colonize Ethiopia, but failed. The Congo, a rich and large territory more than the size of all of Western Europe, was a Belgian colony, initially owned personally by the Belgian King Leopold. The rest and largest parts of the continent were divided between Britain and France.

The manner in which various African territories were incorporated into the colonial empires of these European states are not the same and each one of these colonial powers pursued different policies at different stages. The process of decolonization was also different in many cases. Some fought for long years to regain independence, while others were “prepared” by the colonial powers for “self government.” Two states, Liberia and Ethiopia, have been considered different in many respects and thought of as the two oldest independent African states. Ethiopia can indeed be considered so, though Liberia’s distinction in this regard is questionable. Liberia was established by the United States in 1847 as a colony for freed slaves, who were gradually resettled there and accorded political power over the rest of the population of that territory. They had nothing in common with the population they ruled, except skin color, and established an apartheid style rule over the indigenous population for nearly a century and a half until a military coup in 1980 brought to power the first and short lived indigenous leader in that country’s history. As of the late 1980s, the country degenerated into anarchy, and only in recent years returning to some order under international (UN) supervision.

Ethiopia alone was lucky to have escaped European colonial domination by successfully resisting attempts by colonial powers. Its entry into the modern world was heralded by a decisive defeat it inflicted on Italy in March 1896, when the latter launched a massive military campaign on the rest of Ethiopia, after establishing a base in Eritrea six years earlier. There was also an intense rivalry among the European powers over the control of the Horn of Africa region. It was, however, after the Battle of Adowa in March 1896 that the European powers reluctantly recognized Ethiopia’s sovereignty. European powers sought to establish spheres of influence within Ethiopia, and to divide it among themselves if and when the opportunity availed itself, as

the Tripartite Agreement of 1905 indicates.<sup>3</sup> Ethiopia's boundaries were also defined to a greater degree by the limits of the boundaries of the possessions of the three European powers. The population mixes of these territories, including Ethiopia's are similar. Eritrea has the same population mix as in Ethiopia, and all of the ethnic groups in Eritrea are also found in Ethiopia. The two ethnic groups of the French territory of Djibouti have their larger kin in Ethiopia. The Ogaden region in Ethiopia is inhabited by Somali clans similar to those in Italian and British Somali lands. Northern parts of Kenya are inhabited by Oromo clans who have their larger kin networks in Ethiopia, and the same ethnic groups in western and southwestern Ethiopia also inhabit Sudan.

Therefore, historical analysis is a useful tool to put the colonial experience, especially in relation to state formation, into proper perspective. The use of this method allows the researcher to compare and contrast different sets of ideas, values, institutions, behaviors and personalities by identifying similarities and differences, as well as make comparisons across time and space. It enables researchers to challenge various historical narratives. In this study, this method helps me to look at the trajectory of Ethiopia's political development across time. I will be comparing the performance of three different regimes over time, and the method helps me to see what has changed and what factors are enduring. Nevertheless, as in all social scientific investigation, we use this method with caution. One of the major issues confronting historical sociology is the practical problems of using primary historical materials as evidence, as the researcher has to

---

<sup>3</sup> The three powers agreed to establish zones of influence among themselves, the eastern part along the Franco-Ethiopian railway line going to France, the northern part going to Italy with the possibility of joining its colonies of Eritrea and Somalia through Ethiopia, and the western and the regions along Lake Tana and the Blue Nile basin going to Britain.

establish their authenticity. As a result interpretations of history must be held as tentative, as new evidence may always be uncovered and new interpretations made.

## **Data Sources**

In a case study, data collection and gathering techniques can include surveys, interviews, archival records, census data, observation, ethnographic data, and collection of physical artifacts (Harper, 1992: 147-150). This study is a reinterpretation of the development of the African state in general and the Ethiopian state in particular. Therefore it depends on secondary sources and existing literature on the subject. However, archival resources, published and unpublished reports, government documents, and memoirs of Ethiopian leaders will also be examined. I have also been a participant in the Ethiopian government at various levels, the last of which was at the cabinet level. Moreover, I also participated in movements against the Ethiopian state. I also continue to follow developments in Ethiopia very closely and with keen interest. These experiences give me some insight, as a participant observer, which I will use in this study. In the course of the last three decades, I have also lived in several African countries, including Kenya, Senegal, Somalia, and Sudan, and I have also visited more than a dozen other African states during the same period. These experiences provide me with the insight and knowledge to draw out comparative implications and draw conclusions.

Thus, looking at the trajectory of the performance of the African state in general and the Ethiopian state in particular, it can be discerned that the state has been ineffective compared to other states in the rest of the world, especially the older states. It has been unable to organize social and economic development, institutions are weak, state legitimacy is challenged, and the

state resorts to illegitimate methods of governance to maintain its legitimacy and status quo. These can be partly explained by the historical formation of the state, the relationship between the state and various societal actors, relations with global actors, and the interplay between these factors.

## **Overview**

Besides this introductory chapter, the study will have five main chapters, and a concluding chapter. In order to place the study in historical context, the second chapter looks at the emergence and development of the modern state in Europe beginning in the seventeenth century. Since then the particular form of the state, the national state has spread throughout the world through European colonial expansion. Today, there is hardly any place on the globe that is not under the jurisdiction of the modern national state. Of the states in the world today, nearly three quarters of them came into being in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Demands for statehood continue even in the older states. State formation and war are also inextricably linked as wars make states, and states make wars (Tilly, 1990: 183-187). Most states came into being with the collapse of large empires and after major global wars, as evident from the emergence of many states at the end of the first and second world wars as well as the cold war.

The development of the modern state and capitalism are also linked. The modern state facilitated the process of capital accumulation through various means, as the development of capitalism also provided the resources in strengthening the national states and in their expansion. Today, with heightened globalization, there is a growing debate about the future of the national state. Some have questioned the viability of the modern state in its present form with the

expansion of transnational economic and political actors as well as the growth of international organizations. Others argue that states are adapting to new situations as most international organizations are forums for states, and transnational economic actors continue to depend on the backing of their states. Moreover, there are arguments that as security has become a dominant concern, states remain indispensable in providing security.

The third chapter deals with the development and characteristics of the modern state in Africa. The African state is generically different from the modern state that emerged in Europe, as it came into being, not through an internal process of state formation, but as the result of European colonization. European states carved up the African continent among themselves into territories, on the basis of their own convenience without regard to the inhabitants and natural or cultural boundaries. The rationale of these territories was also different. The colonial powers built structures in these territories for the purposes of extracting resources and controlling the population. As a result, African states have been described as artificial creations which did not evolve from the experiences of African societies. When colonialism ended these territories emerged as the new states, and the post-independence leaders did not attempt to restructure the territories they inherited to serve the interests of the inhabitants, but continued the same structures built by colonialism. Consequently the legacy of the colonial state endures. In other words, most African states face crisis of legitimacy, state-society relations, as well as that of development. The prevalence of conflicts in many parts of the continent is a reflection of this crisis, an outcome of the incomplete nature of state formation.

The fourth chapter is specifically focused on the Ethiopian state. Ethiopia is the oldest African state, and one that has escaped direct colonization. Yet, it is evident from all the



indicators that Ethiopia also shares many of the characteristics of the other African states. In order to be able to understand the characteristics and performance of the Ethiopian state, the chapter begins with an outline of the historical evolution and the formation of the modern state. It also looks at regime transitions in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the system of personal rule. This chapter provides the historical background for the chapters that follow.

One of the functions of states is being able to respond to and manage conflicting demands from its constituents. When it is unable to fulfill the demands of most sectors of its people, the legitimacy of the state becomes not only shaky, but also questioned and contested. The Ethiopian state has faced serious internal challenges from a variety of social forces, and has failed to adequately respond to them. Political transitions have been tortuous and very often violent. As a result violence has become deeply rooted in the political culture of the state, as it uses excessive violence to maintain the status quo. Moreover, opposition has been criminalized, and consequently, those who oppose the government and the state have also resorted to violent means. Over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Ethiopian state was confronted by various demands on the state through various means, including through violence. Consequently violent conflicts between the state and various social forces demanding rights, inclusion, fair share in the state, autonomy or independence, have characterized the history of modern Ethiopia. Therefore, on the basis of the theoretical framework laid down in this first chapter, chapter V addresses the enduring features of the system of governance, the dual structure of power, personal rule and institutional instability, patronage, clientelism, the use of violence, and external patronage. It also addresses what is known as the ‘national question’ in Ethiopia, i.e. the issue of ethnicity and the state, and how it affects its domestic as well as its regional relations.

The sixth chapter looks at the external challenges to the Ethiopian state. Very often the state's lack of cohesion internally and contested legitimacy has made it vulnerable to external challenges. Moreover, due to certain traditions it has maintained from its ancient origins, and some of the choices in alliances it has made, the Ethiopian state has not been viewed favorably among the majority of its neighbors. As a result it faced regional isolation and serious challenges to its legitimacy from its neighbors over the course of the last half a century in particular. For example, two major conventional wars were ever fought between African states in modern African history and both of these have involved Ethiopia. Ethiopia's neighbors have also helped to sustain internal rebellions against the Ethiopian state by providing safe havens, provisions and even direct support.

The sixth chapter also addresses the dependence of the Ethiopian state on global patronage, and the intersections of global political and economic changes and how these have affected the Ethiopia state. While global patronage has been instrumental in maintaining the state, global changes have also had a major share in destabilizing the Ethiopian state. Looking at all the major political upheavals in Ethiopia in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we can observe that they all coincided with major changes in the global environment and waning support from its global patrons. These cannot be mere coincidences, and the factors that make the Ethiopian state vulnerable to and unable to cope with changes in the external environment and the local dynamics will therefore be looked at. Moreover, the tendency and ability of the Ethiopian state leaders to manipulate global factors as part of the mechanisms of sustaining neopatrimonial rule will be discussed.

The concluding chapter will address the future of the particular form of state represented by the Ethiopian state. The Ethiopian state is not an exceptional form of state, but there are many in the African continent as well as other parts of the world that share similar characteristics. African states are particularly affected by external factors and increasingly marginalized in the global political economy, especially under the process of heightened globalization. The continent also faces serious economic, social, political and environmental challenges, and states have been unable to respond effectively to these challenges. How can the Ethiopian state in its present form be able to cope with these challenges? What sort of changes does it require? What are the lessons for the rest of Africa and other parts of the world with similar predicaments?

This study is significant in one sense. As already noted, Ethiopia is the oldest African state, and was able to successfully resist colonial rule. But, despite these achievements, it remains one of the poorest countries in the world. As it has no known and significant mineral resources, its only means of organizing development and achieving social and economic progress lies in its internal capability of mobilizing and developing skills and resources, and its ability to attract and manage external resources. This would require the organization of the state in a manner geared towards this purpose, gain the tacit acceptance of significant sectors of the population and improve its relations to society. In other words, it has to be embedded in the real society and perceived by society as legitimate. The state's successes and failures have important implications for the rest of the African continent. It is also important for the rest of the world. The world cannot afford for Africa to remain indefinitely as a place of disasters and violent conflicts. Ethiopia has represented both the hopes and frustrations of Africa, and people of African descent. It is also located in a very volatile region. The international community has

come to its rescue with emergency relief and humanitarian assistance on several occasions during periodic outbreaks of famine. Therefore, understanding the trajectory of the development of the Ethiopian state will help in understanding the key factors inhibiting socioeconomic and political progress, with lessons for similar states.

## Chapter II

### Conceptualizing the Development and Role of the Modern State

Both conceptually and historically, the modern state is a specific form of polity that emerged at a specific historical period in the political and socioeconomic development of the world. The national state<sup>4</sup> emerged in Western Europe in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and became the dominant form of political organization with the spread of capitalism and European colonial expansion throughout the world (Hay and Lister, 2006: 5-13). The task of this chapter is therefore to put the emergence and development of the modern national state in historical perspective, and the various roles states are expected to fulfill in the modern era. The chapter also briefly addresses the debate concerning the continued viability of the modern national state in the era of globalization, with the resultant growth of international organizations and transnational forces. Moreover, it will also briefly address other threats to the traditional basis of the modern state and how states are coping with and adapting to new circumstances.

The emergence of the modern national state is closely associated with resistance and war, as well as the development of capitalism as a dominant mode of production. At every stage, the growth and development of European national states has been attributed to the use of a combination of “capital and coercion” (Tilly, 1990: 30). The first national states were born as an outcome of the “Thirty Years War” in Europe with two peace treaties signed in two cities in

---

<sup>4</sup> Throughout this dissertation, I use the term “national state” instead of the more common “nation state.” I do so because very few states are constituted by a single nation, but with the exception of the colonial states, most historically constituted states have dominant nations, and others constitute numerical and often political minorities (O’Leary, 2001).

Westphalia in 1648, between the Catholic and Protestant warring factions. This war was said to have cost the lives of a third of the German speaking peoples (Opello and Rostow, 2004: 79). The war was one consequence of the Protestant Reformation, which sought to undermine the power of Rome, monarchy, and the intermediary role of Rome, popes and the clergy between God and the believers. The Protestant Reformation was also a nationalist project, expressed in theological terms, as one of the first actions of Martin Luther was to translate the Bible into German, so that ordinary people can directly access the scriptures, without the intermediary of Latin (a preserve of the learned class, and also signifying the power of Rome and the clergy). The national state thus began the process of the popularization and use of the vernacular languages of Europe lifting them from mere domestic use to that of state and intellectual domains. In this sense, as language is inextricably linked with identity, what distinguishes the national state from earlier forms of state, and one of its characteristic features was that states came to reflect national identity. Thus, when the modern state was born, it was assumed that states were to be based on nations.

Ever since Westphalia, the number of national states has been increasing as empires and large multinational states defeated by their external rivals and/or internal resistance gave way to the emergence of smaller polities based on historical and identity claims. The national state is thus a creation of the modern era and is neither an old form of political arrangement, nor historically a universal form of political organization. In actual fact the largest number of states came into existence in the course of the twentieth century, and the number continues to grow. While there is hardly any space on the globe left that is not assigned to a state, new claims to statehood are raised even in the older national states. The best examples are the struggle for

Basque statehood in Spain, that of Scotland in the United Kingdom, Flanders in Belgium, Corsica in France, and Quebec in Canada. I argue that when we look at the history of the formation of states, the success of establishing a new state does not necessarily depend on the internal dynamics of the contests for statehood alone, but on the interests and the balance of power among the most powerful states at any given historical period. The more recent cases of the dismantling of Yugoslavia in the 1990s are good examples of this argument. While the Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina could not achieve statehood, when they attempted to set up an independent state, but forced into in a multiethnic federation, the Albanians of Kosovo (a province within Serbia) was severed from Serbia as a result of the NATO intervention and the major western powers recognized the independence of Kosovo in January 2008. The unresolved cases of the Kurdish people, divided between Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, and that of Tibet are other examples.

### **War and State Formation**

In the history of state formation, war, capitalism, nationalism and the modern national state system have been inextricably linked. Indeed, when we look at the emergence of new states from the treaties of Westphalia to modern times, it was always achieved at the end of every major war. Most states were born when major shifts and changes occurred in the international balance of forces. The peace of Westphalia itself came with the decline of Spain's global hegemonic position and that of the Habsburg dynasty, and the rise of new challengers for hegemony (Philpott, 2001: 259).

In the twentieth century, the outcomes of the two major world wars have been responsible for the creation of the largest number of new national states in history. The empires of those who lost in the First World War, Austro-Hungary, Ottoman Turkey, and Germany were dismantled. Out of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires emerged new national states in the Eastern and Southern Europe. Ottoman Turkish possessions in North Africa and West Asia were divided up among the victorious powers, France and Britain. With its defeat in Europe, Germany also became 'unfit' to have colonies and its possessions in Africa were divided among France, Britain, Belgium and South Africa as "trusteeships" under the mandate of the League of Nations. Likewise, the end of the Second World War resulted in the decline of the hegemonic power of Britain and France and the rise of the United States and the Soviet Union, giving impetus to the dismantling of the British, French, Dutch, and Belgian, Spanish and Italian empires in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean. In the 1990s, the collapse of the Soviet Union and with it the end of the Cold War with the United States, also resulted in the creation of several new states out of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Ethiopia, and Indonesia. The emergence of a free South Africa was also one outcome of this. As a result, the membership of the United Nations increased nearly fourfold from the original fifty states in 1945 to 192 state by 2006 (UN, 2009).

### **The National State and Economic Development**

As the modern national state is associated with the development of capitalism, one of its defining characteristics has been its active role in economic affairs, especially in promoting capital accumulation and organizing trade, in comparison to its predecessors. One of the major issues in sociology from the beginning of the discipline has been the issue of development and



the state's role in this process. Why capitalism developed in Europe and not elsewhere in the world, has been one of the questions that both classical and contemporary thinkers tried to resolve. The relationship between development, on the one hand, and the state, society and the world market (trade) on the other, are therefore crucial to our understanding of the subject. In other words, the interaction among the state, society and the world market has been critical for capital accumulation. But, there are factors that explain the interaction between these variables either to promote or hamper development.

There is a vast sociological and other social science literature on this subject, but with different and sometimes conflicting explanations. The modernization literature (Rostow, 1960; Huntington, 1968; Harrison and Huntington, 2000) suggests that success and failure in development, including capital accumulation, and its logical outcome democracy, is influenced by cultural factors. This has been the dominant paradigm for quite a long time, especially from the 1950s until the 1970s. Though it has come under severe academic scrutiny since then, its strength lies in the fact that it continues to influence development policy within the multilateral agencies like the IMF/World Bank, as well as major western donor governments. In the modernization literature, the state was seen as one of the agents for pushing traditional societies to pursue the goals of cultural, economic, and political modernization.

More recent sociological literature on development stresses the role of structural and institutional factors, especially the interplay among the state, social forces and the global market. Scholars who recognize the crucial role of the state in this endeavor stress two interrelated roles of the state in this sphere; i.e., that effective states are necessary as they provide both direction and resources to the various societal actors, and corporate coherence of the state and its ability to

act collectively on a large scale (Rueschemeyer and Evans, 1985; Lange and Rueschemeyer, 2005). Others who stress the role of civil society assert that dense and horizontal ties within civil society are necessary to mobilize the participation, knowledge and skills of societal actors as such relations promote trust and norms of reciprocity as well as collaboration among diverse actors (Putman, 1993). According to Evans (1995) the actual structure of relations between the state and societal actors affects the interplay between the state and society. Thus, the state and societal actors must engage one another in collaborative relationships in order to pursue common goals, including how to act within the global market and the international community.

However, the crucial role of the modern state in the economic sphere has been questioned with the rise of neo-liberalism. This aspect of the role of the modern state is important, as states are judged more on the basis of their economic performance and their perceived and real strength also depend on that. However, in recent decades, development policies propagated and implemented by international organizations and the major western governments have been undermining this traditional role of the state. Development policy towards the developing world in particular, as pursued by the IMF/World Bank as well as the major western donors stands on just two pillars, but in reality amounting to just a single pillar. These are free markets at home and trade with the rest of the world. Based on neoliberal economic theory, the current approach requires the developing world to limit the role of the state in the economy and the provision of social services, and promote free market policies by removing all restrictions and opening their markets for international trade. Arguments are made that not only the older capitalist states, but also the East Asian success stories of development during the second half of the twentieth century, namely Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and others achieved unprecedented growth in a very

short time because they pursued these prescriptions and implemented them (Bhagwati, 2004; Bhagwati and Hirsch, 1998; Sachs and Werner, 1995 ).

However, these claims are not supported by historical facts. States like Korea have indeed made remarkable achievements in a relatively short time. In 1961, just eight years after the end of the Korean War, which devastated the country, South Korea's per capita GDP was 82 US dollars (Ha-Joon Chang, 2008: 3). If we compare this, for example, with Ghana (one of the first British colonies in Africa to gain independence), we find out that in 1961 Ghana's per capita GDP stood at 179 US dollars, twice that of Korea's at the time. Today Korea has been admitted to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), also known as the Paris Club (the club of the rich states), while Ghana remains one of the poorest countries in the world. How did Korea succeed and why did Ghana fail, and what are the keys to the successes that Korea got hold of and what were the opportunities that Ghana failed to grab and let it slip by that led to its failure? These are important questions to consider for many African and other underperforming states. Clearly the role of the state is crucial in understanding these different trajectories.

Even colonial policies have an impact and different colonial regimes have resulted in different outcomes. Atul Kohli (1994) traces Korea's success to Japanese colonial policies between 1905 and 1945 as decisive in putting Korea on the path of a high growth developmental state. Even the same colonial regime pursuing different policies in different colonies can have different outcomes. According to Matthew Lange (2003) the configuration of ties linking the state and society affects state-society synergy. He compared the impact of reforms carried out by British colonialism after the Second World War in two former British colonies in Africa,

Mauritius and Sierra-Leone, and concluded that two different policies resulted in two different outcomes. The policy of indirect rule in Sierra-Leone resulted in decentralized despotism, while direct colonial rule in Mauritius promoted dense ties between the state and societal actors that made decentralized development possible.

Thus the state's role in economic progress cannot be underestimated. The state has always concerned itself with economic matters, and the modern state has especially facilitated the process of capital accumulation since its inception. A closer look at the history of development reveals that while trade (voluntary or forced) made important contributions, the role of the state has been critical, including in organizing and enforcing trade. The state played a particularly crucial role in regulating and promoting trade while at the same time protecting domestic industry until such time as they were in a position to stand on their own feet and compete globally (Chang, 2008). The history of capitalist accumulation beginning with England, and then the experiences of Germany, the United States, Japan, Korea, and others that have succeeded, and those like Ghana that failed reveals the crucial role of the state and its ability to mobilize domestic and international human and material resources.

Economic progress is a collective endeavor and throughout the ages, human societies have achieved a great deal through collective and cooperative efforts. Economic development and capital accumulation ultimately requires collective action, and states are the most dominant and effective mechanisms for organizing and securing cooperation on a large scale (Lange and Rueschemeyer, 2005: 5). But, not all states are the same and their capacity to organize and secure such societal cooperation depends on a number of factors. There are factors internal to the state, which are crucial for its ability to become an effective instrument of administration and

rule. One such factor is the quality of its internal organization, and the ability and orientation of its personnel to act and conduct state activities in unison as a ‘corporate group’ (Lange and Rueschemeyer, 2005: 7). There are also factors external to the internal workings of the state, especially relations between the state and society. The state must be able to engage and guide societal actors and at the same time be able to oppose and negotiate with them. Therefore, a state needs a measure of autonomy from societal actors to be able to impose its will, when societal desires may be at odds with chosen policy, or at times when societal actors may desire to use the state for their own personal, partisan or factional purposes.

Max Weber articulated the role of bureaucracy in a modern large and complex national state and how it is essential for coordinated and effective state action ([1922] 1978: 956-1005). He considered the state as “a compulsory political organization with continuous operations (*politischer Anstaltsbetrieb*)” as long as “its administrative staff successfully upholds the claim to the *monopoly* of the *legitimate* use of physical force in the enforcement of its order” (Weber, [1922] 1978: 54). Effective and coherent state action therefore requires the rational organization of social relations and control over state actors, which only a professional and autonomous bureaucracy can provide. The history of the development of states demonstrates that strong states, with effective and efficient state bureaucracies and a greater penetration of society have been more successful in organizing economic development and industrial transformation. This is evident from the history of not only the older industrialized states in Europe and North America, but also the newly industrialized states of Asia (Johnson, 1982; Kohli, 2004; Woo-Cumings, 1999). Despite neoliberal claims of market autonomy and self regulating ability, markets have never operated in vacuum and strong and prosperous markets have always prospered under

conditions of strong states, because the latter not only provide protection, but also enforce trade against other competitors. Likewise prosperous markets have also contributed to the strengthening of states, because they make more resources available to the state through taxation and other methods of resource extraction that the state employs. Therefore, the role of political institutions in economic performance cannot be overstated.

However, bureaucratization has a cost. As Weber observed, the growing indispensability of bureaucracy and the corresponding increase in its power is a threat to liberty and this is one of the paradoxes of modernity that he observed already at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Weber, [1922] 1978: 1395-1399). The rise of bureaucracy inevitably leads to the management of the state by technical personnel or bureaucrats, on whom the elected representatives are increasingly dependent to run the state. As noted above, on the one hand increasing rationalization with bureaucracy becomes inevitable and necessary to run large and complex industrialized societies. On the other hand bureaucratization stifles democratic participation and control by citizens. Thus, the twin pillars of 'science' and 'bureaucracy' on which the industrialized Western States rest have fundamentally changed and transformed the political decision making process (Habermas, 1973: 84). Consequently, states have become increasingly remote from the citizens, and the latter depoliticized and disillusioned with the political system.

The paradox emanates from the contradictory phenomena in the very characteristic of the capitalist mode of production. On the one hand capitalism has an inherent tendency of periodic crisis emanating out of the contradiction between the goals of capitalist accumulation and the mechanisms through which this is achieved (Arrighi, 1978). The solutions capitalism and the state adopted at every stage of the cyclical crisis of capitalism gave rise to new problems,

subsequently leading to new crisis (O'Connor, 1984). The consequences of the Great Depression of the 1930s increased state involvement further, in the economy as well as in measures to appease the working class with concessions and incentives to participate in the recovery. Therefore, the state assumed the role of not only promoting and protecting private capital, but also protecting the working class from the adverse effects of capitalist expansion. Historically capitalism tried to solve its periodic crisis by further expansion to new territories or areas. Today there are no more areas of the world that have not been conquered by capitalism. As further expansion was being exhausted, capitalism turned inward, expanding into areas traditionally performed by the state and public bodies, like education, health services, provisions of public utilities, and even into areas of security. The recovery was not only achieved, but with the benefits also fairly distributed. However, with the crisis of the 1970s, capitalism began the neoliberal attack on the social welfare state.

The social welfare state was in essence a compromise, but contradictory to the logic of capitalism. It was a response to growing expectations and played a legitimating role for the state. Nevertheless the economic imperatives of capitalism constrained the state from meeting the expectations of the popular classes. Therefore, in order to maintain the loyalty of citizens, the capitalist state offered the people *formal* democracy instead of *substantive* democracy (Habermas, 1973). The welfare state was able to claim the loyalty of citizens through formal democratic procedures and institutions through the formally democratic procurement of legitimation, but without active public involvement in the decision making process (Habermas, 1973: 36-37). Citizens are structurally depoliticized, encouraged to orient their desires towards consumption, career, and leisure (Habermas, 1973: 37). The state's shift and expansion to the

cultural realm to manage public attitudes and expectations gave rise to a deficit in the process of legitimation, the deficit turning eventually into a crisis with the strategic employment of the instruments of the cultural realm by the state in order to fulfill the requirements of the administrative system (Habermas, 1973). Thus, according to Habermas, the scientification of the political process inevitably leads to a crisis of legitimacy of the political systems of the industrialized Western states.

Yet, states in the less industrialized parts of the world face an entirely different set of crisis of legitimacy. The essence of the crisis is the same in the sense of the gap between the states and the peoples under their jurisdiction. But, the crisis emanates from two opposite factors. In the case of the industrialized world it is a consequence of the overdeveloped state while in the less industrialized parts of the world it is the outcome of the underdeveloped state.

### **The Modern State and Globalization**

While the modern state has just become the dominant and only acceptable form of territorial governance and international order, and is witnessing its greatest and universal triumph, and new demands for the creation of such states continue to be pursued, several scholars (Robinson, 2004; Van Creveld, 1999; Strange, 1996; Ohmae, 1995) have raised the specter of its declining role, and questioned its continued viability in a changing world, and even the possibility of its disappearance and being replaced by other formations. Most of these theorists attribute the decline of the national state to the ramifications of globalization. Martin van Creveld traces the history of the modern state from its beginning in the seventeenth century in Western Europe and its spread throughout the world, and argues that the national state has



been declining since the 1970s (1999: 336-414). He attributes this decline to four factors: the waning of major interstate wars, the retreat of the welfare state, technological developments, and the emergence of other forces destabilizing states, but nevertheless fulfilling the traditional role of states (van Creveld, 1999: 336-414). Susan Strange asserts that since conventional political science fails to recognize the role of non-state actors, we do not see that in actual fact the traditional role of the state is declining and in its place various non-state actors beyond the state are assuming these roles (1996: 31-43). She cites six main areas in which the traditional role of the state has been undermined and replaced, including the deregulation of telecommunications, organized crime from the local to the global level, insurance business, accounting firms, cartels, and international organizations (1996: 100-178). According to William Robinson (2004), the national state is not only disappearing, but being replaced by a transnational state. For Kenichi Ohmae, the national state has become outmoded and no longer provides an appropriate concept, since the world has already become borderless, and he attributes this to the unimpeded flow across borders of what he calls the four 'I's': industry, investment, individuals, and information (1995: 2-5). He goes as far as saying that talking in terms of Germany, Japan, UK, and US is old fashioned, suggesting that we are in an era of the emergence of regional entities like the Silicon Valley, Hong Kong, Aomori, Catalonia, etc. adding that we have now entered the era of individual sovereignty as opposed to the old nineteenth century concept of national sovereignty (1995: 79-100).

Hagen Schulze provides an alternative analysis, attributing the decline of the state not to globalization, but to other factors at work longer than the onset of globalization. He argues that the sovereignty of the European national state system ended in 1939 when Germany's bid for

hegemony unleashed destructive forces that left Europe unable to restore the balance of power, and instead led Europe to be rescued by non European forces, i.e. the Soviet Union and the United States (1994: 307). After 1945, this development subsequently led to the partition of Europe into spheres of influence. Moreover, the explosion of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945 and the subsequent test of the atomic bomb by the Soviet Union in August 1949 gave rise to a security situation that resulted in a redefinition of the sovereignty of individual states (Schulze, 1994: 308). However, even though he contends that the national state is obsolete for today's needs and new arrangements are needed, he argues that it has become only less important and "not yet superfluous," admitting that at the moment only the matrix of the national state provides the capability of serving as a shield for free and democratic institutions (Schulze, 1994: 324).

David Held concurs that state sovereignty faces serious challenges, among them: (1) the global economy, especially transnational companies and capital markets, (2) transnational bodies, including economic regulatory bodies like the WTO, the UN system and the European Union, (3) international law in the form of legal conventions recognized by states and their courts, and (4) hegemonic powers like the United States and power blocs like NATO (1991: 212-222). However, Held underscores the fact that modern national states are still alive and perform vital functions that cannot be replaced by other frameworks (Held, 1991: 212-222).

I argue that there are other factors that are undermining the two main pillars on which the national state was anchored from the beginning. The peace of Westphalia introduced novel concepts into international law that have since served as the basis of international relations. The most important of these are the concepts of 'territoriality' on which the national state has been

based, and the 'sovereignty' of states within their territorial jurisdiction. Historically, war has been, and to a degree it still is, the most dominant mechanism of settling disputes between rulers and states. With the experience of the devastating Thirty Years War in the background, the framers of the peace of Westphalia also introduced the stationing of permanent representations of states in each other's courts with diplomacy as a mechanism of governing relations between states. The principle of non intervention in the internal affairs of one state by another state was also enshrined in international law. Thus emerged the 'balance of power' in principle as in practice as a mechanism of maintaining peace and order between states in order to avoid unending wars like the ones experienced in Europe during the Thirty Years and Hundred Years Wars. In other words, in the centuries that followed, the peace of Westphalia became an important and "crucial watershed in the long process by which the balance of power became the central guiding principle of European international relations" (Sheehan, 1996: 37).

Today, these very pillars of the system of national states and international law, namely, territoriality and sovereignty, are being challenged by new developments in the post-cold-war world. On the one hand, there is the process of economic globalization that is tearing down national boundaries as capital moves freely across borders, and goods and services are produced anywhere and traded everywhere. On the other hand, an even more serious challenge to the functioning of the national state and the inter-state system of international relations is the collapse of the principle and practice of the "balance of power."

There are many developments that have been attributed to the process of globalization. Firstly, the emergence of transnational corporations (TNC) as major economic players on a global scale has been considered as the main mover of the process of globalization (Held and

McGrew, 2007: 93-94; Robinson, 2004: 55-57). Secondly, the spread of efficient and fast means of communication, the revolution in telecommunications and air travel, the growth of international nongovernmental organizations, also operating on a global scale and linking people from various countries from all over the globe in pursuit of certain common objectives, creating more interaction among peoples than ever before, are all considered as aspects of growing global integration (Held and McGrew, 2007: 152-53). Thirdly, and more importantly the growth of international institutions, including the United Nations system, is creating common values, institutions and set of laws and procedures (Held and McGrew, 2007: 114-116; Robinson, 2004: 75-76). The transformation of the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade), into a permanent international institution called the World trade Organization (WTO), and the establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC) are the best examples. Even the evolution of the European Union (EU) into a possible federal state of Europe and the growth of other regional groupings like the African Union (AU) and the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) are being seen as new structures replacing the modern national state.

Economic organization now knows no boundaries and, with the collapse of the Soviet bloc, and its integration into the global capitalist market, in which the bloc participated marginally, as well as China's integration into the same market, a single global market has been firmly established. Economic crisis in one part of the world has also global implications. The financial crisis that gripped major Asian economies in the late 1990s is a case in point. It began with movements of capital in the new industrialized states of East Asia and affected all major economies in the world. Such developments, which have enabled companies and even families and individuals with large assets to move capital across boundaries within seconds is one of the

new challenges to the territoriality and sovereignty of states. While developments in communication and technology have facilitated this process greatly, it is the measures at integrating the world economy that has been at work since the Second World War (the World Bank/IMF and GATT/WTO arrangements in particular), spearheaded and dominated by the United States that is responsible for breaking down the barriers between economic entities and states. The question, however, is whether these developments, especially the growth of international organizations, are encroaching on or replacing the traditional historical role of the state or whether they are adaptations by states to the problem of contemporary international developments.

There are also internal developments within the advanced industrialized states, which have been considered as the 'rolling back of the state' from its traditional roles, particularly in the economic and social spheres (Faulks, 1998: 77-97). Neo-liberalism, the ideology driving economic globalization since the 1980s, has been attacking and eroding the capital-labor-state equilibrium, and the social welfare state built around it as the cornerstone of the post Second World War economic reconstruction, particularly in Western Europe, but also to a certain extent in the United States, where it helped recovery from the consequences of the Great Depression of the 1930s. This equilibrium to a great extent has worked to protect labor from the arbitrariness of capital. Moreover, this arrangement not only guaranteed industrial peace but is also responsible for the recovery of the war ravaged economies and the post war economic boom. Since the 1980s a process has been underway in all major industrialized states to change the post Second World War equilibrium in favor of capital by ejecting the state out of the role of mediating between capital and labor as well as the provision of relief and welfare to those whom capital lays off

from time to time and other disadvantaged sectors of the population. In all the major industrialized states, reducing the role of the state in economic activities, reforming the labor market and the social security system has been touted as measures that would increase economic growth and efficiency. What this has amounted to is the revamping of a system that has helped economic reconstruction and growth with the added advantage of benefits of the growth distributed across the population. The same measures have been promoted in the rest of the world through the World Bank and IMF in what is known as Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), as conditions for loans (Harvey, 2005: 72-76; Faulks, 1999: 77-83).

The state has always concerned itself with economic matters, and as already noted the modern state in particular has been very instrumental in the development of capitalism by creating incentives and the institutional and legal frameworks for capital accumulation. With the rise of neo-liberalism the traditional role of the state in regulating the market and the economy has not only been questioned, but reversed in many cases. As capitalism entered a period of slow growth in the 1970s, conservative political leaders in the capitalist centers of Western Europe and North America began a process of what they called the 'rolling back of the state.' It became a highly charged ideological struggle, and the most notable leaders of this attempt were Margaret Thatcher in Britain and Ronald Reagan in the United States. The economic crisis was blamed on the state. Thus, they set out to unleash changes in the internal role of the state, first in the United Kingdom and the United States, followed by similar moves in the rest of the industrialized west and the rest of the world. In order to accomplish this they set out to weaken the popular social forces, particularly the trade unions, by reversing the post Second World War industrial equilibrium between capital and labor by removing the mediating role of the state. In Britain, the

regime of Margaret Thatcher first crashed the working class organizations by employing the coercive power of the state, abolished popular representative bodies like the Greater London Council (GLC) to minimize popular resistance to the assault on the welfare state (Faulks, 1999: 84-85; Harvey, 2005: 75-76). She then embarked upon dismantling the pillars of the welfare state, the public corporations and services, and transferred them to private capital with the rhetoric of 'dismantling socialism.' The trend was followed in other western European states, though with lesser zeal.

In the United States, though the state was not historically involved in economic enterprises as owner and manager on the scale of Europe, public utilities in particular were run by public bodies. Transferring public utilities to private capital, dismantling some of the achievements of the New Deal and Great Society, and providing tax cuts and relief to the wealthy and corporations began in earnest under Reagan. It was the beginning of the neo-liberal economic agenda, the principal aim of which has been eliminating the autonomous role of the state by redefining its role to work only to facilitate the interests of capital. The abandoning of the post Second World War policies that were primarily responsible for the recovery, the economic boom and prosperity of the post war period was necessitated by the crisis of capitalism, manifested in the falling rate of profit in the 1970s. Neo-liberal economic policies have been implemented in the developing states of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, where states are relatively weaker, with an even greater zeal by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Thus, neoliberalism has a history of its beginning as a dominant ideology of capitalist accumulation in the 1970s and early 1980s, especially in the United States and the United

Kingdom (Harvey, 2005: 71-84). As noted, it gained strength and momentum with the coming to power in the United Kingdom and the United States of the conservative governments of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan respectively. At the World Bank, the more liberal Robert McNamara was also replaced by a likeminded and the more conservative Alden Clausen as president in 1981. Neoliberalism is not an entirely new ideology of economic management as such, but a variant of classical liberalism, stressing individualism, and private enterprise, but it sought to reverse the post-Second World War form of economic management, which recognized the regulatory role of the state. Neoliberalism was therefore a capitalist class response designed to rescue capitalism from the crisis of the 1970s.

The fundamental reasons for the rolling back of the state were many, but the arguments were mainly ideological. There are fiscal reasons to the policy, among which are short-term budgetary considerations, since privatization of state owned enterprises provided ‘significant but temporary injections into the state budget’ (Graeme, 2003: 204). The basic argument was however ideological and revolves around the assumption that the involvement of the state in the functioning of the economy is not only alien to its role, but also negative, because the state is characterized as inefficient. By the same logic the functioning of the economy is more efficient and productive in the hands of private enterprise. In other words, it has been argued that private enterprise does things better and provides services cheaply. This argument was partly a reaction to the role of the state in Soviet society, the West defining itself as distinct from the Soviet model. It was an ideological position that said that Western, liberal, and democratic states do not meddle in economic affairs.



The role the state assumed with the institution of the welfare state, especially in the post Second World War period however, operated only for a brief period in the history of the modern state. The welfare function was historically performed by other institutions such as the church, or not at all. The welfare function of the state was only a response to two factors in the post Second World War period. The first was the need to recover from the consequences of the Great Depression (which was partly responsible for the rise of fascism in some European countries leading to the Second World War) and the devastation caused by the war. The second was a response to the threat, or perceived threat of an alternative form of economic organization from the Soviet Union, and a working class movement, especially in Europe, which was to a greater extent receptive to the idea of socialist economic organization in the immediate post war period. Thus, the social welfare state was in effect partly necessitated by the threat of the existence of an alternative form of capital accumulation in the form of the Soviet model, and to stave off working class and progressive movements in major capitalist states, especially in Western Europe, where radical and working class based political movements had an important history. Therefore the welfare state was a scheme designed to placate the working class in the recovery program by providing it with a stake in the system. By the 1970s, Western Europe had recovered and the economies of the western industrialized states were booming, while the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe entered a period of stagnation, and the threat of the Soviet model was beginning to evaporate. As a result, Western leaders like Thatcher and Reagan were confident to confront the working class organizations and begin dismantling the programs designed to buy the loyalty of the working class to the state. Therefore, though the welfare state has a longer history, especially in Western Europe, it operated fairly well in the post Second World War period,

necessitated by the requirements of the particular historical period for the recovery and survival of capitalism.

The collapse of the Soviet Union, and with it central planning and state management of the economy, has also been seen as an event that heralded the demise of the state. We will see the real impact of this development on the state later, but for the moment suffice it to say that the collapse of the USSR and the emergence of the fifteen constituent republics of the union into independent sovereign states is actually a victory of the very form of the modern state. What collapsed in 1991 was the multinational federal superstructure, and the essential organ of the Soviet state remained in all the fifteen new states. The USSR, which was a reconstitution of the Russian empire, was actually more in the mold of an empire than the modern national state. In fact, the Soviet constitution maintained the fiction that the fifteen republics were independent and sovereign states, and the Soviet Union was a voluntary union of these states. Some of them like Ukraine and Belarus were even members of the United Nations, along with the USSR.

The collapse of the Soviet Union was, however, significant and the consequences far-reaching in one important respect. Historically national states survived and became players on the international arena as a result of the balance of power between the major powerful states. The principle of non interference in the internal affairs of states by other states, however powerful they might be, has been one of the cardinal principles of international law. This principle was maintained due to the existence of the balance of power between powerful states, like the one between the United States and the Soviet Union in the post Second World War period. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 brought to an end to the bipolar world order that was responsible for maintaining peace and the territorial integrity and sovereignty of many states, at

least in the post Second World War period. As a result, the United States emerged as an undisputed hegemonic power on the world stage. Indeed more than economic globalization, it is the collapse of the balance of power on which the national state has rested that is threatening the survival of the national state as it has been known and the international system built on that. For example, if it was not for the balance of power that existed at the time, a relatively small and poor state like Vietnam would never have been able to defeat a powerful state like the United States and preserve its sovereignty and independence.

After the shift in the balance of power, the United States could flaunt international law, ignore the United Nations and the concerns of other states and act irresponsibly trampling on the rights, sovereignty and territorial integrity of other states. The invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan and the overthrow of their governments, the execution of their leaders, the bombings of Yugoslavia, the threats and pressures on other states whose governments the hegemonic powers do not like, show that the system of international order based on the sovereignty of all states, big or small, strong or weak, rich or poor, is being transformed. This is one of the most serious challenges facing the national state, but it is by no means the final nail in the coffin of the national state. It could as well be a passing and temporary phenomenon as more and more states realize the dangers and begin to reassert their rights, including by banding together, and by democratizing and strengthening international institutions. Nevertheless, these attempts are also being resisted and the outcome remains uncertain as it may involve an arduous, long, and bitter struggle.

This discussion demonstrates that the process of globalization with powerful corporations operating across state frontiers has altered the traditional spheres and power of the national state.

This process has also been hastened by the collapse of the balance of power with the transnational corporations of the hegemonic powers having unfettered access all over the world, unencumbered by the limitations of the bipolar world order and the seeming ‘victory’ of capitalism over its adversaries. The capital and corporations that have become global actors are essentially and principally those of the United States, with a few from Western Europe and Japan. As already noted, two developments have facilitated the expansion. The first is the collapse of the Soviet Union which has facilitated the expansion of these corporations into Eastern Europe, the former Soviet republics and the rest of the world. Even the World Bank and the IMF entered the fray by applying what was called the shock therapy, especially on Russia to accelerate the transition to capitalism, a move that totally ruined Russia. These regions are also resource rich and with the growing demand for resources, especially energy, western policies were designed to open up these resources for exploitation by western transnational corporations. Secondly, the expansion has been facilitated by the power and global reach of the United States and its other powerful capitalist allies.

The consequences of the collapse of the balance of power were most severe in those parts of the world where national states were younger and weaker. It led to the collapse of a few states, which maintained some order within their jurisdiction with support from one or the other bloc in the global system. This is true for many parts of Africa as well as Asia and Latin America, particularly those states which were theatres of the cold war, like Afghanistan, Angola, Ethiopia, and Somalia. Overall, the position and bargaining power of all the states in Africa, Asia, and Latin America have declined with the collapse of the balance of power.

This development has also had a profound effect even on the more established and relatively powerful western European states vis-à-vis the United States. To a greater extent, their value to the United States and relative autonomy and sovereignty lay in the existence of the “Soviet threat.” Once that threat no longer existed, their relative influence and usefulness to the United States also declined. The United States also continued to expand the institutions set up to fight the cold war, like NATO, despite the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. NATO now includes former Warsaw Pact members, former Soviet republics and other new states carved out of Yugoslavia. It is even posed for further expansion. It has also expanded its areas of operation beyond its traditional sphere. It deployed troops in Afghanistan, sent a “training mission” to Iraq and a possible involvement in Darfur, Sudan “to support” the African Union contingent. The United States needs the institution more as a mechanism for controlling the states within the alliance and to use it as a vehicle of further global expansion. The United States decision to invade Iraq in the face of opposition from the bigger West European states, dismissing them as “old Europe” is a clear indication of the relative decline of these states.

The above discussion of the decline of the state, its changing role, the spread and impact of globalization and global institutions, as well as the decline of state sovereignty and the collapse of the balance of power underlines the fact that the role of the state in the modern world is changing. One important outcome of this development is that states have to be responsive to their citizens needs and aspirations more so than ever. Over the past century in particular citizenship rights have expanded to a considerable degree on a scale never seen before. On the other hand, contrary to some of the claims discussed above, the functions and obligations of the state in the modern world has not only changed but also expanded. According to Ashraf Ghani

and Clare Lockhart, today's states must be able to fulfill the aspirations of their citizens for inclusion and development, as well as perform a variety of interrelated, complex and vital functions that cannot be performed by any other institution (2008: 124). These functions range from maintaining the rule of law, regulating the market, financial management, creating infrastructural services, investing in human capital, maintaining and expanding citizenship rights to administrative and security functions (Ghani and Lockhart, 2008: 124-166). In other words, in response to the demands and expectations of citizens, the responsibilities and functions of states have increased. However, states have varying degrees of capabilities to shoulder their increased responsibilities. As a result of various factors, some states have been unable to shoulder their increased responsibilities, and fulfill the demands and expectations of their citizens, and have simply ceased to function. Thus, new terms like failing, failed and collapsed states have entered the political lexicon in academic as well as political debate. Today the majority of the states considered as failing, failed or collapsed are to found in Africa. There are historical as well as other factors responsible for this situation, and this will be the focus of the next chapter.

To conclude this chapter let us recap the most salient points raised. The modern state developed at a particular historical period in Europe as a rejection of the authority of empires, and the desire of new social forces to make the state more reflective of national identities on a territorial basis. Within its territorial jurisdiction, the state assumed sovereignty, and relations between states came to be governed by a system of interstate relations, and the practice of the balance of power. Moreover, states came to assume important roles in the political, economic and social spheres. While the Europeans rejected empires at home, they however became increasingly engaged in competing amongst each other to build empires in the rest of the world.

Through that process they introduced the territorial basis of political organization, but without reflecting the identity of the peoples that were incorporated into the European empires. The territorial form of the state thus spread all over the globe and has become a universal form of political association, but with varied outcomes. With the increasing integration of the world within a single global capitalist market, the revolution in information technology and the growth of international institutions, a debate has been going on among scholarly and political circles regarding the transformation of the territoriality and sovereignty of states, whether or not the national state is still central to political analysis, as well as whether its roles are being undertaken by other actors or not. As Europeans expanded throughout the world, it was only in those states where Europeans settled in large numbers by reducing or eliminating the indigenous populations did the states built from the European possessions come to resemble those in Europe in form and substance. In the rest of the world, especially in Africa, a new type of state, the colonial state was constructed, with the outward trappings of the modern national state, but without its substantive aspects.

## **Chapter III**

### **Conceptualizing and Analyzing the Modern African State**

Like all state formations, the African state is also historically constructed, and therefore it is important to look at its historical evolution to conceptualize and understand its place and performance in the modern world. Prior to the arrival of Europeans, like elsewhere in the world, there were empires and other social formations on the continent, whose political economy was primarily based on agriculture, artisan crafts, and long distance trade (Asante, 2007; Collins, 2006). Unlike the modern state, the pre-European African states were defined by populations rather than territories. In other words, territories were defined by the people under the jurisdiction of the states, rather than the territories defining the peoples. Some of the ancient empires that flourished in the Nile Valley, Egypt and Nubia for example, have left extraordinary and long lasting civilizations with immense legacy for Africa as well as the rest of the world (Bernal, 1987, Diop, 1974). These are very well known to the world. But, the empires that flourished in the immediate period before the Europeans arrived on the continent are relatively less documented, mainly due to the fact that the Europeans would like to convince themselves and the rest of the world that there was chaos and no order in Africa before they arrived. Besides the Axumite and Abyssinian kingdoms, there were large political communities in various parts of Africa before the European conquest. The empire of Ghana ruled much of West Africa between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries AD (Asante, 2007: 118-124). The empire of Mali flourished between 13<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries and ruled much of the Northwest Africa (Asante, 2007:124-33). The empire of Mali was one of the greatest, enlightened and most prosperous. It developed a



scholarly tradition and by the 14<sup>th</sup> century it had established the world's first institution of higher education at Timbuktu, where people came to study from all over Africa, the Iberian Peninsula, and the Mediterranean region (Saad, 1983). At the height of its scholarly tradition in early 15<sup>th</sup> century, Timbuktu was reputed to have had 20,000 students, and several hundred scholars.<sup>5</sup> A few other empires, including the Songhai, Bakongo, Great Zimbabwe flourished for several centuries in Western, Central and Southern Africa. The Bakongo Empire ruled much of the South West African Coast and the Congo River basin for five centuries until it was displaced by the Portuguese at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Slade, 1962: 1-15). When the Portuguese first arrived they formed an alliance of equals with Bakongo, and the two traded on an equal footing, but, later on the relationship increasingly came to favor Portugal, especially with the beginning of the slave trade. Thus, by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Portuguese displaced the Bakongo Empire, and established the Angola colony over parts of that empire. The political economy of these empires was agriculture, pastoral production and long distance trade, especially the trans-Saharan trade with the Mediterranean world.

Among the Europeans, the first to arrive in Africa were the Portuguese in 1443 on the West African Coast, followed later by other European powers to grab wealth and participate in the lucrative trans-Atlantic trade in human beings. It is possible to imagine that like their historical counterparts in Europe, these empires could have given way to the emergence of different social formations, including national states if they were left to proceed on their own historical trajectory. But, that historical process of state formation was broken by external intervention, and did not follow the course that European states went through. Thus, the modern

---

<sup>5</sup> I visited Timbuktu in 2001, and saw the ruins of the famous university, the library, books and manuscripts in several African languages as well as Arabic, and these have been preserved amazingly well.

African states were not formed through an internal process, but through a process of external intervention. Consequently, this historical process produced a uniquely different kind of state compared to its European counterpart. Therefore, the main purpose of this chapter is to look at the historical evolution, and characteristics of the African state, its relationship to society, performance, and role in the modern world.

### **Historical Development of the Modern African State**

Until very recently, most studies on post independence African politics have concentrated on formal structures of government and state institutions. The day to day functioning of these institutions and relations to diverse sections of their populations were hardly treated, except by a few (Callaghy, 1984; Joseph, 1987) who tried to make broader comparisons with early European states with references to Weberian models of patrimonialism. Even in these cases, very little attention was paid to the social settings of African societies. Later studies, particularly those within the framework of the state-civil society relations, made inquiries into the societal relationships of the states, but very often taking the state as an autonomous player, and as if society as well as the state are relatively cohesive, distinct, and antagonistic entities (Rothchild and Chazan, 1988). Other contributions addressed military coups, authoritarian rule, and more recently the new wave of the “democratization” process that began in the early 1990s, and the myriad of conflicts that have engulfed the continent (Joseph, 1999).

The years immediately following the independence of most of the colonial territories were periods of high hopes and expectations. But, it was not long before frustration and despair set in, already by the 1970s, followed by a serious crisis of development and governance, with a

series of military coups in one African state after the other. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, civil wars, widespread starvation and the flow of millions of refugees across borders characterized the external image of the continent. Thus, it is only after the initial enthusiasm regarding multiparty liberal democracy faded away, and was replaced by a recognition of the tragic crisis of development, that a few started addressing institutional issues of governance, and why post independence regimes failed to successfully organize development. Most of the literature on development, particularly the dependency school and the world systems approach, concentrate on the impact of neocolonialism and the external factors that have hindered socioeconomic and political progress. They look at the internal structures in Africa as appendages of the global capitalist system (Amin, 1976; Wallerstein, 1986).<sup>6</sup> Arrighi (2002) has argued that demographic and environmental factors are to blame. Others have pointed out the deficiencies in the historical process of state formation especially the artificial nature of the states that were created in Africa and their inability to thrive in an unfavorable international system (Clapham, 1996). It is worth mentioning that there are even those who have been outrageous enough to suggest that, since the history of state formation is inextricably linked to warfare, the conflicts that have been raging in various African states are part of this historical process, and that others should refrain from interfering to stop these conflicts, and rather give war a chance to reach its logical end, where the victors would establish order as it happened elsewhere historically (Luttwak, 1999). Obviously, there is ample historical evidence that the process of state formation is riddled with conflict, violence, and uncertainty over institutional structure as groups compete to establish positions of power and legitimacy (Tilly, 1990). But, it is cynical to

---

<sup>6</sup> This contrasts with the more traditional Africanist scholarship, informed by the modernization school that emphasizes the role of cultural factors as the main reasons for Africa lagging behind the rest of the world (Harrison and Huntington, 2000; Huntington, 1968).

advocate for the present conflicts in Africa to run their course, as they are not just caused by internal factors, but there are also external catalysts responsible for fueling them.

In recent years the resurgent Neo-Weberian literature on the state has helped to focus attention on the institution of the state, its rationale, functions and the dynamics of relations to society. Crawford Young (1994) traces the crisis of contemporary Africa to the colonial period, which created the institutions of the state that have been inherited in the post-independence period. The colonial state is a distinct type of state, an essentially coercive and extractive apparatus, whose main purpose has been to control the colonial population and use them as cheap labor and extract resources for the benefit of the colonial power. There is no doubt that the colonies were mapped for the convenience of the European powers without any consideration for the inhabitants of these territories. The mapping and peaceful division of the continent among the European powers took place at the infamous Berlin conference of 1884-85, when a newly emerging European power, Germany, sought to have its fair share of colonial possessions in Africa and convened a conference of the European colonial powers. In most cases rulers were used on the drawing board to divide up the continent among the rival claimants without regard to the inhabitants or geographical and other factors. As a result most African boundaries today are straight lines without regard to traditional boundaries. The colonies were created for colonial exploitation, and they existed for colonial trade, and the nature of colonial trade was such that the wealth drawn from African produce was spent in Europe and not in Africa. At the same time the consumer goods in African cities have been imports from Europe. Exports were essentially primary products with very little or no processing. Unlike their counterparts in Europe, African cities did not encourage the existence of a wide circle of economic and other activities around

them, but they produced a local petit bourgeoisie that was dependent on the European connection (Brown, 1995: 23-27). The majority of African cities (and capital cities) are on the coasts, demonstrating their external connection. Most were established during the triangular trade which began in the sixteenth century.

The colonial state uses its repressive powers to pursue exclusionary hegemony. The colonial powers of Britain, France, Belgium, Portugal, Spain, and Germany set out to destroy all indigenous institutions with any potential of contesting the hegemonic ambitions of the colonial state (Young, 1994: 218). The outcome of this was a weakened civil society at the time of independence, a factor responsible for abetting the emergence of authoritarian regimes. The post independence African leaders were therefore tempted to rely on the colonial institutions in order to consolidate and maintain power.

Young argues that we cannot understand and explain the current crisis in Africa without looking at this colonial legacy (Young, 1994: 244). In other words, there is continuity between the colonial and post-independence African state, but although this essential link has been underlined by others before him, it has not been comprehensively addressed until Young. In the 1970s, inspired by the institutional, legal, educational, and sometimes personnel continuity between the colonial and postcolonial states, many of those sympathetic to Africa have argued that the state and its structures were externally imposed, and as a result are alien institutions divorced from African societies (Davidson, 1992). Englebert (1997) has even dismissed the African state as neither African, nor a state. He argues that the African state is an external creation and has not evolved from the relationships of groups and societies; in other words, it has no local roots and is not embedded in the society it purports to represent. At the same time,

Englebert argues that the African state does not fulfill Weber's definition of state, in that the state in Africa neither effectively controls the territory assigned to it, nor has the required legitimacy in that these states govern over "dubious community of heterogeneous and occasionally clashing" assortment of identities (Englebert, 1997: 767). Another scholar Goran Hyden, described the African state as a "balloon suspended in mid air" without any structural roots in the society (1983: 19). In other words, the colonial state has been an alien institution with no internal rationale. However, scholars like van de Walle (1997) argue that even though the African state has colonial origins, during the decades of independence, African elites have completely transformed the political project embodied in the institutions they have inherited, in order to fit their own needs. Thus, though it has a colonial lineage the postcolonial state in Africa is different from its predecessor.

### **The Postcolonial State**

One of the outcomes of the Second World War was the decline of the European imperial powers and the rise of the United States and the Soviet Union as global powers. With declining European dominance came demands for national liberation and emancipation in the European colonial possessions of Asia and Africa. The first to regain independence were such populous states as India in 1947, followed by Indonesia in 1949. The Chinese Revolution of 1949 also had far reaching global implications, and all these developments coupled with the setting up of the United Nations gave voice to those seeking freedom from alien domination in the quest to regain national independence. Thus, the 1960s saw the independence of one African country after another from British, French, and Belgian colonial rule. Portugal held out until its own

revolution in the 1970s, and South Africa, the last bastion of colonialism and racism in Southern Africa became free in 1994.

But, African independence was won within a very difficult and unfavorable international system. Starting with the first Portuguese encroachments on the western and eastern African coasts, and most importantly since the European “discovery” of the Americas, Africa has been subjected to over four centuries of European interference and domination. When independence came in the 1960s, the new African states were born into an international system of the declining sovereignty of states, especially the weaker and poorer states, due to several factors. The new African states found their newly gained sovereignty already constrained as the result of three major problems, i.e., the continued dominance and interference by the colonial powers, a bipolar world system with divisions of spheres of influence among two super powers and ideological systems, and most importantly an unjust international economic order tilted to the advantage of the western powers, and over which the new states and others in Asia and Latin America had little or no say.

Thus, once formal independence was won, the newly independent states were soon confronted with the desire to reverse the neglect and underdevelopment from centuries of European involvement in Africa. Once political independence was achieved, the goals became freeing the new states from the stranglehold of neocolonial domination and control, and the achievement of rapid economic and social development. Post-independence African leaders saw the state as an instrument to be used to reverse the colonial injustices of the past and as a vehicle for rapid transformation (Nkrumah, 1970: 87-131). The nationalist leaders thought that the capacities and developmental energies of the state were enormous. The rallying cry was a united

assault on underdevelopment, to which Africa has been condemned as the result of colonialism and centuries of foreign interference and domination. Political opposition was thus regarded as diverting the political energies of the new states from the tasks of development that required a united and single minded approach.

The focus on unity led to arguments for the single party state. It was argued that the consolidation of statehood and nation building required the elimination of polarizing tendencies (Nyerere, 1967: 195-203). Therefore concentration of authority was considered vital for achieving this goal. Competitive liberal democracy was deemed a luxury that poor countries could ill afford. The Soviet Union and China provided the inspirational models for rapid economic transformation and social progress while avoiding gross inequalities. The Soviet model of central planning, the capacity of the state to organize and direct development, the urgency of industrialization, and the political and economic attractions of a large scale state enterprise sector were all very attractive to the post-independence leaders.

However, not all single party states followed the Chinese or the Soviet model; and some attempted free market policies with varying degrees of success, while maintaining the single party hold over the state. Nevertheless, the outcome was all the same, and there was a lack of any serious attention given to the development of institutional and constitutional governance in all of them. There was no western opposition to the approach and to the waning of constitutional government so long as these states did not ally with the Soviet bloc. The dominant Western theory has been that of “modernization theory,” which acknowledges that economic development came first and that democracy would logically follow later (Huntington, 1968). This perspective was even taken further to accommodate military regimes. Many of the military coups were



actually encouraged by the western powers through their intelligence agencies, because most of the nationalist leaders were perceived as pro Soviet, and therefore anti-Western.<sup>7</sup> In fact, some of the rationale for military regimes came from Western scholars like Huntington, who advocated for strong states to counter political decay, while guaranteeing order and economic development (Huntington, 1968). In their sphere of influence, Soviet scholarship also strengthened the argument for strong states, including military rule. Even when African states were not considered socialist, Soviet influenced theory tried to maintain that after all they were part of the worldwide national liberation and progressive movements against imperialism, pursuing the “non capitalist path” to development, a path which would lay down the material basis for and eventually pave the way to socialism (Afanasyev, 1972: 72-77).

In their endeavor to unleash rapid development and extricate Africa from neocolonial domination by using the power of the state, post-independence leaders embarked upon ambitious schemes. When these intentions alarmed the western powers, many of these efforts proved short lived, as a series of military coups unseated many of the progressive and nationalist governments put in place through the constitutional processes handed down by the colonial powers. Most notable among these is the mineral rich Congo, whose government was overthrown and its first prime minister arrested after less than three months in office, and murdered a few months later (Witte, 2001). Congo has not been able to recover from the consequences of this tragedy, and nearly five decades after independence, it remains one of the most unstable states in Africa, though one of the largest and potentially one of the very richest. Ghana was the first British

---

<sup>7</sup> There was no ground for these perceptions from the major Western powers; though the very fact that the colonialists being Western powers, the nationalist leaders were logically anti-colonial. These leaders could not have been expected to be gratuitous to these powers for their colonial pillage and domination.

colony in Africa to gain independence in 1957<sup>8</sup>, and its leader Kwame Nkrumah was one of the most ambitious in attempting to transform not just Ghana, but the whole of Africa by campaigning to unite the continent (Nkrumah, 1970). He was overthrown in a military coup in 1966, and it took Ghana over three decades to recover from the consequences of that incident, and Nkrumah died in exile in Guinea. While the efforts of some of these post independence regimes were thwarted at early stages, the other states tried various channels to development. Intentions and results are however different. While there are a small number of success stories, the majority of the cases are dismal failures.

When we look at the pace of development in the post independence period there are a few cases that stand out as success stories. Interestingly, in comparison to the larger and resource rich African states, some of the smaller and island states have fared better. Botswana and Mauritius are among the few states that managed to break out of the league of failures, and achieved remarkable progress in a very short time. Initially, Botswana was one of those cases considered hopeless at the time of its independence in 1965. But, it managed to pull off an African success story as a result of a combination of and interplay between domestic and external factors. In fact, in the face an HIV/AIDS pandemic, Botswana continued to prosper economically and also maintain a stable social and political order. It is true that Botswana is endowed with a very precious resource; it is the biggest producer of Diamond in the World. But, being endowed with resources is not enough. There are other bigger African states like the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola, and Nigeria that are endowed with even more abundant and strategic

---

<sup>8</sup> Sudan was the first to gain independence in 1956, but technically Sudan was not considered as a colony, as it was ruled through an arrangement called “the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium,” though Egypt itself fell under British domination as of 1882.

resources, like oil and strategic minerals. For these states being endowed with these resources has been a curse rather than a blessing, by attracting not only global competition, especially during the Cold War, but also domestic corruption, lack of accountability, and political instability. Botswana however, used its resources wisely to finance sustainable development, by at the same time maintaining good governance and minimizing corruption.<sup>9</sup> It has maintained one of the fastest growing economies in the world during the last three decades. At 13,300 dollars,<sup>10</sup> Botswana has one of the highest per capita GDP in Africa surpassed only by the small oil rich state of Equatorial Guinea (\$44,100) and the small tourist island of Seychelles (\$18,400), (CIA, 2008, World Fact Book). Botswana's per capita GDP is even above that of oil rich states like Libya (\$13,100), and comparable to some of Asia's success stories like Malaysia (14,400). Samatar mentions four major internal factors for its success, namely the unity of the dominant classes, the legitimacy of the leadership, with a clear purpose and agenda for development, conscious attempts by the leaders at building and guiding an autonomous state to access and exploit a favorable international context, and the building of strong and effective public institutions (1999: 186-188). Although domestic circumstances were critical, they were not sufficient by themselves, and favorable external circumstances, particularly, the opening of the European Union market and the EU's stringent quality standards helped Botswana considerably (Samatar, 1999: 186).

The case of Mauritius is another of the few African successes in the use of state power in organizing development. An island in the Indian Ocean, off the Southeastern coast of Africa,

---

<sup>9</sup> According to Transparency International, the anti corruption watchdog, Botswana is the least corrupt in Africa (Transparency International, 2008).

<sup>10</sup> This and the following figures are taken from the CIA World Fact book, at [www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/](http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/)

Mauritius has achieved a per capita GDP of 12,100 dollars, the fifth highest in Africa. Mauritius was uninhabited when the Portuguese first set foot there in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and was settled by the Dutch in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. After that period, it changed hands a few times, the French occupying it in 1715, followed by the British conquest 1810 during the Napoleonic wars in Europe. It became independent in 1968. Mauritius was gradually populated by various peoples from the African mainland and from Asia. As a result, Mauritius became a society ridden with ethnic, class, religious and other divisions. But, the fact that there was no existing social order established on the island prior to colonial occupation allowed for a conscious effort to build institutions that somehow ensured broad representations. In turn this fostered civic peace as well as a deepening of democracy and unprecedented high rates of economic growth, and unlike in Botswana, with a measure of equity (Brantigam, 1999).

Both Botswana and Mauritius were considered as almost hopeless cases at the time of their independence, due to their small populations, low resource base, and lack of technical manpower. Yet, they not only achieved remarkable economic growth, but have also maintained political and social stability, with a liberal democratic political order. These two examples demonstrate that identifying the structures, institutions and patterns of power that are likely to combine state building, democracy, and economic growth “is a vitally important project” (Joseph, 1999: 13).

On the other hand, when Ghana became independent in 1957, it was one of the most promising cases. Relative to other colonial possessions, it had already a crop of educated and skilled manpower, and sufficient resource base, with exportable commodities like gold and cocoa. Its per capita GDP was twice that of South Korea in 1961, and it was considered a very

promising case of a developing state (World Bank, 2000). Nigeria was another case, with a large population, endowed with immense natural resources, including oil, and a sufficient base of well educated and skilled manpower. But, Nigeria has been a severe disappointment, where the military has ruled for most of its independent existence, and it has become the epitome of massive corruption, mismanagement, and looting of state resources.<sup>11</sup>

There are also massive attempts at transformation with good intentions, but disastrous outcomes. The ruling party in Tanzania, Chama Cha Mapinduzi (Revolutionary Party), and its leader Julius Nyerere set out to transform Tanzania by building African socialism with the Arusha Declaration of 1968 (Nyerere, 1968). The plan was to reconstruct the country on the basis of creating Ujamaa (togetherness) villages throughout the country. The campaign to establish the new villages ran from 1973 to 1976, during which people were enticed to abandon their old life styles, move to the new villages and start production on a cooperative basis. It was a massive undertaking and an attempt at social engineering with the aim of bringing development and social services to the people. Unlike similar schemes elsewhere, this project was supported by many western countries, particularly the Scandinavian states, mainly due to the benign and less rhetorical nature of the Tanzanian regime and its relatively open political life. Though the Tanzanian government claimed it moved about ten million people, others estimate that at least five million people were moved during the period (Hyden, 1980: 130). The outcome was however, disastrous with people moved from their ancestral villages unwillingly and the expected benefits from the new villages never arriving. In the end it was abandoned, and at least the Tanzanian leadership had the audacity to accept failure and abandon the program.

---

<sup>11</sup> The anti corruption watchdog Transparency International list Nigeria as one of the most corrupt states in the world. See the 2007 Corruption Perception Index, at [www.transparency.org](http://www.transparency.org)

There were other such population movements, most notably in Ethiopia during the second half of the 1980s, motivated principally by political and/or military objectives (Pankhurst, 1992). The Ethiopian case had two programs, the first being a resettlement scheme aimed at moving hundreds of thousands of people from the drought prone regions of the north to what was thought to be the most fertile regions of Southwestern Ethiopia. The second program, called villagization, was designed to relocate the entire rural population to new 'planned' villages. The operation of both schemes involved massive human rights violations and immense human suffering, with people forced at gun point to relocate and many dying in the process (Clay and Holcomb, 1986).

### **The Enduring Legacy of the Colonial State**

What the success stories of Botswana and Mauritius demonstrated was the critical role of the state in directing successful development outcomes. The failed cases also demonstrate the absence of this critical element, the absence of a conscious leadership and effective state apparatus in achieving the goals of development and transformation. Moreover, the relative internal autonomy of states in accommodating rival claims to the state, as well as their ability to utilize opportunities available to them in the international system is important in defining and implementing national objectives and priorities. For example, Botswana managed to integrate traditional authority with the modern structures of the state, avoiding a duality of authority, and uniting the class and social forces interested in, and benefiting from economic development. It also utilized the European market through the preferential trade regime provided by the European Union. Mauritius benefited a great deal from the tourist trade, as it provided not only the physical attraction, but also an atmosphere of peace, stability and efficiency.

The general assumption is that after independence in the 1960s African states functioned independently and autonomously within the international system. However this is only a fiction as reality has been different. As already noted, the international system in which they came into being was extremely unfavorable, and the tools available to the new states and the models they were offered to follow were limited. In the first place African states came into being at a time of declining international sovereignty. State sovereignty was already being eroded, due to continued dominance and interference from the colonial powers. As a result the new African states were faced with limited abilities to maneuver within the interstate international order. Political interventions and economic pressures by the former colonial powers, as well as the United States were pervasive, and the cold war between the superpowers made the situation worse as signs of neutrality and attempts at autonomous development were viewed as socialist projects and the work of the Soviet Union. After coming out of colonial rule, Africa actually became a battleground of conflict (many violent ones) and subversion between the two warring blocs. In actual fact decolonization has meant only the relinquishing of responsibility on the part of the colonial powers while they continued political and economic domination by indirect means.

The structure and functions of the colonial state also spilled over into the post independence period. The post-independence leaders inherited the colonial state as it was, and made very little efforts to change or transform it to function as a responsible structure of independent states aimed at fulfilling the needs of the people. Most of the oppressive colonial laws remained on the books, and have often been used to silence and prosecute political opponents.

Moreover, the colonial state never encouraged (it rather discouraged) the emergence and development of an entrepreneurial class of people independent from itself, rooted in the people and the economy of the colonial state. As a result, most of the educated African elite were employed by the state, with no independent base and means of livelihood. In most of the colonies large scale agriculture, mining, whatever manufacturing industry existed, and trade were dominated by the colonial and other expatriate elite. The colonial powers made sure that this remained so after independence. The best example is that of Zimbabwe. In the negotiations for the independence of Zimbabwe, Britain secured the insertion of clauses in the constitution of the new state that entrenched the political and economic interests of the small, but economically dominant white minority (Davidow, 1984: 55-66). Among these was the establishment of two separate voter rolls, one for the African majority, and another for the white minority, with a guaranteed 20 percent of seats in parliament. The white settlers, constituted less than one percent of the population, but certain provisions in the constitution entrenched their privileged position, including, property rights, dual citizenship, the right to repatriate their wealth, and other discriminatory provisions (Davidow, 1984: 55-66). Land was and remains particularly an emotive issue, as the small number of white settlers controlled most of the fertile land of the country.

One of the fundamental weaknesses of the postcolonial state lies in a weak elite base, with autonomy from the government and an independent base in the economy and the professional and nongovernmental sector. The post independence elite has no secure base in business, industry, finance, agriculture, in short, in the ownership of the means of production and distribution. Consequently, it clings to the state as the only means to maintain political



domination and accumulation of wealth, a factor responsible for the predatory nature of most African states and the building of clientele relationships by the ruling elites (Harsch, 1997: 676). Mamdani (1996) attaches significance to the structures and forms of the colonial state, especially the administrative units at various levels. He claims that European colonialism never attempted to implant the European model of the national state in Africa, but established multiethnic entities in which indigenous rights were determined through their affiliation to their “tribes” and the outcome was the formation of states that are structurally bifurcated (Mamdani, 1996: 16-23). On the one hand, a small civil society, with a measure of understanding of rights developed in the urban centers, but even this class was racially segregated. On the other hand, the rural areas were governed by tradition, or “customary laws” through a decentralized system of “indirect rule,” where the chiefs (most of them either created or strengthened by colonial authorities) exercised considerable powers and dominated the country side on behalf of the colonial state (Mamdani, 1996: 17). The chiefs had the power to extract taxes, tributes, forced labor, and political obedience. Mamdani states that the popular anti-colonial movements managed to bridge this gap between the rural and urban areas for a short period, by uniting the urban anti-colonial struggle with the rural struggle against the authority of the chiefs. After independence, reforms were made in the urban centers as the de-racialization of the state and civil society allowed the urban elite to take over positions previously held by Europeans. However in the rural areas very little changed after independence. In fact, the politically conservative regimes like those of Kenya and Cote d’Ivoire retained the laws as well the structures of indirect rule in the rural areas and chiefs and customary laws continued to play important roles in the patron-client relationships that linked the new rulers to the rural areas.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> However, some of the more radical states like those of Benin, Guinea, Tanzania, and Mozambique did carry out

Mamdani actually traces the origin of some of the civil wars in Africa, especially those based on ethnicity, to the method of rule and structures created and maintained by the colonial state. Based on his study of Uganda and South Africa as well as comparisons with others on the continent, he concludes that the popular movements in many African states have used ethnic channels and that ethnic identity and consciousness “signifies both the form of rule and the form of revolt against it” (Mamdani, 1996: 183). Moreover, one of the consequences of the structure and character of the “conquest state” as Mamdani characterizes the colonial state, “removed any trace of democratic accountability to those below and reinforced every sign of bureaucratic accountability to those above” (Mamdani, 2001: 276). Thus, this distortion in the character of the state, and the structural relations to society are at the root of most of the crisis of contemporary Africa, which he pins down to the absence of the very concept and rights of citizenship (Mamdani, 1996, 2001).

Another important characteristic of the colonial territories was that they were never free market territories. They were all protected markets for the colonial power, for the purposes of the extraction of raw materials and the sale of manufactured goods. But, contrary to the experience of the development of capitalism previously or in the Newly Industrializing Countries, the post colonial states were urged to open their markets to the capitalist world during the post-colonial era and also join the IMF/World Bank and the GATT negotiations. As a mark of their participation and to accrue benefits from the system, a number of conditionalities on free market practices, limitations on the role of the state, and private property rights were further imposed on them. There is ample historical evidence to show that the role of the state has been critical in the

---

social reforms and structural changes in local government in an attempt at ‘nation building’ and development.

development of capitalism throughout its history, and in almost every case the state has been instrumental in protecting the domestic market against external competitors, particularly at the initial stages of capitalist accumulation (Chang, 2008). In this regard the historical evidence is clear in suggesting that autonomous national development has been possible mainly under national protection, and the curbing of external influences. Very often this meant national isolation from the rest of the world for a period of time; a period of closure followed by national consolidation. The enclosure movement in England in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Japan under the Meiji regime, the Iron Curtain in the Soviet Union under Stalin, and China under Maoist rule were all conscious measures by the state at national consolidation (Chang, 2008).

In the case of Africa, over five centuries of European and other external involvement contributed to the loss of national autonomy in pursuing the necessary goals of national development. As a result, African states have not been able to reverse the pattern set over five centuries of the external assault on the continent. They could not take advantage of the international system either, as the rules already set by the powerful states weighed against them. In most cases, the postcolonial ruling elites only reinforced the distortions, particularly the rural-urban disconnect, in which the rural areas were always a fair game for plunder, as sources for the extraction of whatever surplus was there for financing the increasing consumption needs of the ruling elites. The departing colonial powers also acted, by the manner in which they organized the transfer of power, in such a way as to encourage continuity in the leading groups of the nationalist leaders. Those who refused, like Lumumba in the Congo, paid a heavy price with their lives within months of gaining independence, and others like Nkrumah in Ghana, and Modibo Keita in Mali were overthrown by military coups. Most of the nationalist leaders were

also educated in the colonial-racist discourse that traditional African society was backward and offered nothing for the future. They therefore saw the solutions to Africa's future only through the prism of European experiences. Even where the transfer of power was won through wars of liberation, the pattern set by colonial rule continued, and even the more revolutionary leaders failed to fundamentally restructure the polities and economies they inherited. Thus, African economies not only remained pegged to the former colonial powers and dependent on their markets, but suffered the most from the periodic fluctuations and cycles of crisis in the capitalist centers.

### **The African State and the Crisis of Development**

Nevertheless, during the decade after independence, even though modest, most African economies registered growth and some demonstrated promising futures with the discovery and exploitation of more natural resources like oil and gas. However, in the 1970s, these economies started stagnating, and even showing negative growth, and African economies in general entered a crisis. These economies depended mainly on the export of primary commodities, on whose prices African states have no control, and the world recession of the 1970s hit Africa hardest. Two main factors were responsible for precipitating the African economic crisis, and these were the rising oil prices following the OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) crude oil price increases of the early 1970s, falling commodity prices, high interest rates, and declining credits. Added to this was the neoliberal attack on state economic institutions and the remedies administered by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and Western donor

governments.<sup>13</sup> The combined effect of these factors left African countries unable to pay their debt, and by the early 1980s, the debt crisis worsened, as the ratio of foreign debt to export income grew by over 500 percent (Watkins, 1995: 74). African states needed “hard” currency to repay their external debts, at the same time as their share of world trade in terms of export earnings was decreasing due to falling commodity prices. Moreover, they paid more for their imports, whose prices continued to increase. Even though the total volume of their exports was increasing, African countries earned less and less. In order to cover for the shortfall they were forced to take new loans to service their outstanding debts, as well as meet their domestic import needs, thus entering a vicious cycle of indebtedness.

African states thus entered a period of serious crisis, which heightened instability and conflict throughout the continent. Added to this the Cold War being fought between the United States and the Soviet Union was rather hot in Africa. The frontline states (in the struggle against the last bastions of colonialism and racism) in southern Africa, as well as Angola and Ethiopia were some of the last theaters of the cold war. In Angola, with massive support from the United States and Western European powers, South African troops on one side, and on the other side troops from Cuba and several African states battled out for the control of the oil and mineral rich country until the end of the 1980s. Civil wars raged in these and many other states, destabilizing the entire continent and exacerbating the economic hardships.

The depth and intractability of the crisis in Africa is now well recognized by those in Africa as well as the rest of the world. Looking at the performance of Africa during the last three

---

<sup>13</sup> For the impact of the neoliberal driven and IMF and World Bank administered Structural Adjustment Programs on various African states and economies, see Campbell and Loxley, 1989; Sahn, et al, 1997; Simon, et al, 1995.

decades in particular, the continent remains the only region of the world that has been characterized with increasing economic decline. More important and challenging to western development theory is the fact that this happened during a period of sustained western Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) administered by the IMF and World Bank. These programs not only failed to bring about the “accelerated growth,” or the market equilibrium and foreign investment that were promised, but the situation went from bad to worse, with deterioration in living standards and mounting external debts (Brown, 1996; Watkins, 1995).

There is now a broad consensus among scholars that the African crisis has structural roots, including the patterns set by colonialism, coupled with natural factors such as drought and shifting ecological patterns that have resulted in environmental degradation. Added to this is the struggle among the elites for a share of shrinking resources, the appalling conditions of health and an atmosphere of indifferent administration. The crisis is an outcome of the interaction between multiple and mutually reinforcing factors, whose origin can be traced to global and natural systems, aided by internal African institutional weaknesses and state policy decisions.

### **The African State in Crisis: Sovereignty, Legitimacy, and State Society Relations**

The crisis of development and the debt crisis meant that the availability of resources to governments became limited. This development resulted in the combined effect of the deterioration of infrastructure, social services and even the capacity of the state to pay civil servants and soldiers on time. Poverty, disease, large population movements, refugees and mass starvation became widespread. While state capacity and resources at its disposal plummeted, the crisis had the effect of hastening the competition among state elites for their share of the

dwindling resources, and consequently increasing corruption, nepotism and looting of state resources. Everything worked in a vicious cycle, one failure leading to another, and resulting in the total criminalization of the state (Bayart, et al., 1999).

The proliferation of conflicts in several parts of Africa, especially since the early 1980s, led to state failure in many states and the collapse of some. Wars have ravaged the continent, not only robbing the productive capacity of the states affected, but also the neighboring states with millions of refugees sharing already scarce resources and putting more burden on an already fragile ecosystem. Beginning in the early 1980s, civil wars primarily generated as a result of the confluence of external pressure and internal factors have erupted in Uganda, Liberia, Sierra-Leone, Somalia, Ethiopia, Central African Republic, Sudan, Chad, the Republic of Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Senegal, Burundi, and Rwanda (Habeeb, 2007). The struggle for the independence of Namibia from South Africa and the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa itself had devastating effects on the frontline states of southern Africa. Moreover, during the cold war, the superpowers have also funded proxy wars in Angola, Mozambique, and Ethiopia. One of the enduring and irreparable damages done to the capacity of African states as a direct result of civil wars, political instability and economic crisis has been the loss of the small crop of educated and skilled manpower the continent produced in the post-independence period. During the last three decades, thousands of them fled the continent, mostly to Europe and North America.

One important function of the state is the provision of security for its inhabitants. The economic crises and the wars have therefore put to test this vital role of the state. The African state was never able to control most of the territory under its jurisdiction even during the best of

times, including during the colonial period. The colonial powers themselves were more interested in controlling the population, and the parts of the colonial territories they had a vested interest in, such as regions with extractive resources. With the economic crises, the inability of post independence regimes to pay security forces and civil servants on time, and the increasing conflicts and corruption, one of the first casualties has become human security. The ordinary people became more insecure, with the state security forces being the primary perpetrators of insecurity. When the Somali state collapsed at the end of the 1980s, it was the armed and security forces of the state that melted into rival clans and turned into warring factions. The same thing happened in Liberia, and Sierra Leone.

This situation has resulted in two fundamental problems for the African state. Its inability to control and maintain order within its territorial jurisdiction has eroded its legitimacy in the eyes of its population, as well as putting into question its claims to sovereignty. The relationship between the state and society, never strong even before, has also deteriorated. Legitimacy and sovereignty are not just given but earned. In an era of heightened globalization, where the role of the state is being transformed even in the older national states, these developments have led many to question the future and viability of the African state. This situation has generated a debate in academic circles about whether African states could be considered states at all with arguments for labeling many of them as quasi-states, or putting them on some hierarchy of degrees of statehood (Jackson, 1990; Clapham, 1998).

In conclusion, it can be argued that the African crisis that has become a tragedy has two sources. There is ample historical evidence that emphasizes that for the most part the centuries of external intervention and domination have had negative consequences on the socioeconomic and



political development of Africa. There is no doubt that Africa's social fabric began to be distorted with the Atlantic slave trade, and in comparison the period of colonialism was historically a relatively short lived episode. However, though Africa has been subjected to crude, devastating and intense intervention by Europeans in particular, especially following their discovery of the Americas, Africa is not the only part of the world to have been a victim of external intervention and domination. The five centuries of European assault has crippled its internal ability to withstand the external shocks and reduced its ability to recover after colonialism has departed. I argue that the postcolonial leaders failed to restructure and transform the state inherited from colonialism by connecting it to society and make the state reflective of the identity and interests of the people, therefore legitimizing the state. Instead they continued on the same path set by the departing colonial powers, and in actual fact the emerging states became more and more dependent on external forces to bolster their legitimacy, only reinforcing the disconnect between the state and society and making the state even more vulnerable to external pressures and manipulation.

In comparison to the rest of Africa, the Ethiopian state was in a relatively better position to legitimize the state with the opportunity to chart out a more autonomous and independent trajectory of development. But, to the contrary it stands out as a failure in many respects, in political stability, and economic and social progress. The next part of the dissertation expounds on the historical origins and the trajectory of political development of the Ethiopian state since its emergence as a modern state.

## Chapter IV

### **Contextualizing and Analyzing the Ethiopian State: Historical Background and Emergence of a Modern State**

It is important to put the Ethiopian state within historical context. According to the official history of the state, Ethiopia is considered as the oldest independent state in Africa, and among the oldest in the world, having maintained continuous statehood for over three millennia (Wolde-Sellassie, [1935] 2000). But these claims aside, our main focus is on the modern state which was formed and consolidated during the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, during the period known as the Scramble for Africa, when the European imperialist powers formally divided up the continent among themselves. The purpose of this chapter is therefore to provide a historical outline of the origins, development and consolidation of the modern Ethiopian state. This survey is useful for it lays the foundation for later chapters to discuss the centralization of the state, the character and conception of power, the crisis of legitimacy, and the method of governance. Very often Ethiopia's unique character among African states is emphasized as opposed to its similarities, and I will discuss both the differences and similarities.

There are 53 internationally recognized African states<sup>14</sup> and nearly all of them share one important characterization, that of being essentially alien formations crafted by European colonial powers for their own convenience without regard to the inhabitants. Ethiopia is an

---

<sup>14</sup> This does not include two entities, the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), and Somaliland. The former was a Spanish colony until it was claimed and occupied by Morocco following Spanish withdrawal from the territory in 1976. The former Organization of African Unity and its successor African Union, and more than 46 states have recognized the republic. The OAU recognition of SADR in 1982 led to Morocco's withdrawal from the organization. Somaliland, a former British protectorate, united with Somalia upon independence in July 1960, but declared independence in 1991, when the Somali state collapsed, but has not been recognized by any state to date.

exception to this rule in that it was constituted as a state by indigenous African forces. Liberia is also sometimes included among the exceptions, but Liberia was created in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the United States for the settlement of freed slaves, and I will not consider it differently from the other colonial territories. But, Ethiopia is indeed unique in some ways, having maintained some greater continuity of statehood than the colonially constituted and new African states. As we have seen at the beginning of the preceding chapter there were several prosperous and successful states in other parts of Africa, but their development was interrupted by the European intervention. Because Ethiopia managed to maintain some continuity, western travelers were fascinated by this fact and attempted to find out what really makes Ethiopia different. At times, some of the assertions have gone as far as recycling the colonialist-racist discourse in constructing the image of Ethiopia as “racially” different, underlining and exaggerating a Semitic heritage (with suggestions of apparently being superior). Most of the western literature on Ethiopia therefore became captivated by its Christian, and ancient origins as well as its having a unique writing system, linguistics, especially its Semitic related languages (Bruce, 1790; Budge, 1960; Ullendorf, 1960). Though Ethiopia has a very heterogeneous population mixture, many have presented the culture of the politically dominant group, particularly those groups with linguistic links across the Red Sea, as representative of the whole. As a result, when reference is made to Ethiopia in most western literature, it is this aspect that is magnified.

Ethiopia embraced Christianity in the fourth century AD, said to be the third polity among those that existed at the time (after Rome and Armenians) to do so. Many western travelers and scholars have dwelt a great deal on this and concentrated on ascribing uniqueness to Ethiopia compared to the rest of Africa, and this description has even been accepted into the

consciousness of the dominant elite in Ethiopia. As a result, the Ethiopian elite accepted the claims that Ethiopia is different from the rest of the continent, and very often these assertions amount to claiming a measure of superiority. This discourse is influenced by two factors. Ethiopia's Christian heritage and successfully maintaining it in a region dominated by Islam definitely plays into the psyche of western travelers and missionaries. Secondly and most importantly, in the background of this discourse is also the fact of Ethiopia's ability in successfully resisting European colonialism by playing the colonial powers against one another, and the decisive military defeat it inflicted on a major European power, Italy, in 1896. The logic of this argument is that Ethiopia was able to achieve this because it is different and therefore superior, and if it was just like the rest of the continent, it could not have defeated a European power. That is why its non-African heritage is also overplayed in western scholarship. This is not to dismiss or underestimate Ethiopia's achievements, or linguistic and cultural links outside Africa. In the latter case, Ethiopia is not alone in having cross cultural currents, as can be observed in Sudan, and much of the Red Sea and Indian Ocean coasts of Africa. North Africa has been Arabized to a great extent since the Moslem invasion.<sup>15</sup> But, for the west it is the Judeo-Christian tradition that figure prominently in the attitudes towards Ethiopia. Nevertheless, there are historical and sociological factors that characterize Ethiopia, and put it apart from the rest of the continent, but these are rarely the factors that have mostly informed Ethiopian studies in the past.

---

<sup>15</sup> Though they have mostly adopted Islam, and despite centuries of Arabization many indigenous groups survive and constitute numerical majorities in states like Morocco and Algeria, but the exclusionist policies of the ruling elites makes them invisible.

There are few sociological and anthropological studies on Ethiopia (Levine, 1965; Shack, 1966; Legesse, 1973; 2000; Cerulli, 1922, 1933; Baxter, 1978; Bassi, 1996; Huntingford, 1955; Haberland, 1963; Braukaemper, 1980; 1983). But they have all concentrated on the cultures and social institutions of particular national groups within Ethiopia. Levine (1974) later attempted to synthesize the common characteristics and mutual influences of the major cultural formations of Ethiopia. A few (Perham, 1969; Greenfield, 1965; Clapham, 1970; Gilkes, 1975) have dealt with politics and governmental institutions, while Trimmingham (1952) has dealt with the role of Islam in Ethiopia. The more recent literature on Ethiopia, especially since the 1970s, was captivated by the 1974 revolution (Lefort, 1983; Ottaway and Ottaway, 1978; Halliday and Molyneux, 1981; Haile Sellassie, 1997; Andargachew Tiruneh, 1993; Clapham, 1988; Haberson 1988; Keller, 1988; Donham, 1999).

On the face of it, if there is one African state that not only escaped European colonialism and managed to remain independent, but was also able to inflict a decisive defeat on a major European power's attempts to colonize it, it is Ethiopia. Secondly, unlike other African states, the Ethiopian state came into existence through a process of war and conquests by indigenous forces. Hence there can be no argument about Ethiopia being just like any other African state, as a creation of the European colonialists, even though its boundaries were shaped and determined by the possessions of the European colonial powers of Britain, France and Italy. But, this fact alone has not been sufficient to make it a viable and legitimate state, and it is as much an artificial assemblage of peoples just like many states in Africa. As in the rest of the continent many national groups in Ethiopia are also related to groups across borders in the neighboring states. Moreover, many of the peoples who were brought together into the Ethiopian state during

the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century through wars of conquest in competition with the European powers have little or no relation to the state and look at it as an alien institution.

Most of the Marxist and neo Marxist literature that deals with development in Africa has tried to explain Africa's underdevelopment in terms of external factors, principally colonialism, particularly the manner in which Africa was integrated into and performs within the world capitalist market to suit the interests of the colonial powers (Amin, 1976; Arrighi and Saul, 1973; Wallerstein, 1986). Even those who have looked at internal factors for Africa's inability to organize development cite the nature of the state and its historical formation as an alien colonial institution (Englebert, 2000; Young, 1994). However, Ethiopia's case does not fit into the underlying logic of this argument. The Ethiopian state was not a direct creation of the colonial powers. Yet, in spite of this Ethiopia exhibits the weaknesses of the other African states in many ways. In economic and social development, it even lags behind almost all the former European colonies in Africa by all the development indicators (UN, 2008). Ethiopia is among the forty least developed countries (LDCs), and even among these it is among the bottom ten least developed (UN, 2008).

However, Ethiopian state leaders lived in a different and imagined world of Ethiopia's greatness and place in the world. But, by the end of the 1950s, the small and more enlightened group of young educated Ethiopians soon recognized the deplorable state of Ethiopia even in comparison to the then emerging African states. The leaders of the abortive coup against Emperor Haile Sellassie in December 1960 said as much. In a statement read by the crown prince over radio, and published in the papers, they clearly stated that despite having a long history of statehood and independence, Ethiopia was lagging behind the newly independent

African states, and put the blame on the Emperor (Greenfield, 1965: ix). In actual fact, in recent decades, the name Ethiopia has become synonymous with famine and mass starvation in the conscience of the world. What is absent in the literature on Ethiopia is some explanation of the internal and external factors responsible for this as well as the dynamics of the relationship between these factors to help us understand the trajectory of Ethiopia's development.

The argument of this study is that though Ethiopia, unlike other African states, was not constituted by European colonialism, it was integrated into the global capitalist system at the same time. Moreover, though a historic polity existed in the northern part of today's Ethiopia for several centuries, the modern Ethiopian state was constituted during the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (the period of the so called scramble for Africa among the European powers). A letter written by one of the Ethiopian chiefs, Menelik, chief of the Shewan principality tells a lot about the ambitions of Ethiopia's rulers. In a circular letter to the heads of state of Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Russia in 1891, he declared that if nations from afar came to divide up Africa among themselves, he could not be an indifferent spectator, claiming that all land between the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean, Khartoum, and Lake Nyanza belonged to ancient Ethiopia and he intended to conquer all of them (Greenfield, 1965: 464-65).

Ethiopian rulers were able to recognize the rivalry among the major European powers over colonial possessions, especially between Britain and France and use that to their advantage to fulfill their own expansionist designs over their ambitious claims. In the end, though Emperor Menelik could not get all the territories he claimed and wished to incorporate into his empire, he built a greatly expanded empire within less than a quarter of a century. There were limits to how far he could expand and eventually Ethiopia's boundaries were fixed by the possessions of the

European powers. As a result when we look at its ethnic composition, Ethiopia is a mirror image of the rest of Africa, and several groups have been divided into several states. For example, the Afar people have been divided between Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Eritrea, and they are minorities in all of them. The Oromo were divided between Ethiopia, the British colony of Kenya and Italian Somaliland. Despite a demographically dominant position in Ethiopia, they are a political minority in all of them, and the Somali state does not even recognize a non-Somali identity. A substantial Somali population exists in Ethiopia, as Somalis were divided into Italian, British and French colonies. Several peoples in Western and Southwestern Ethiopia have their kin across the border in the Sudan, and all the eight or so national groups in Eritrea have their counterparts in Ethiopia.

### **Historical Evolution of the Ethiopian Polity<sup>16</sup>**

Ethiopia is considered as the site of human evolution where the development of Homo sapiens and early humans took place, where the hominid fossil Lucy, dated at 3.5 million years old was discovered (Johanson and Edey, 1981). Though not much is known about the early inhabitants of this part of the world, around the closing century of the first millennium BC, a polity known as the Axumite Kingdom had developed in what is today Eritrea and northern Ethiopia. About 325 AD, during the reign of Ezana, the Kingdom adopted Christianity as its state religion (Trimingham, 1952: 38-40). The period between the fourth and sixth centuries is considered to be the heyday of the Kingdom, a period in which it extended its rule to much of the present northern Ethiopia, Eritrea and parts of present day Yemen across the Red Sea. In 524

---

<sup>16</sup> I have depended on several sources to reconstruct this brief history of the Ethiopian State. Among them, I am indebted to Guillaume (1955) Dilebo (1974), Perham (1948), Trimingham (1965), and Zewde (2001).



AD, the Axumite King Kaleb crossed the Red Sea and conquered Yemen, destroying the Jewish Kingdom, and liberating the Christians, before being evicted by the Persians in 590 AD (Guillaume, 1955:30-33). During Kaleb's rule of Yemen, one of his generals, Abraha was reputed to have built many churches in Sana'a, and in 570 AD even launched an expedition to liberate Mecca by destroying the pagan shrine of Ka'aba (Guillaume, 1955: 20-27).

Orthodox Christianity was the main ideological force behind the Axumite Empire. Christianity was said to have been introduced to Axum by two Syrian brothers, Frumentius, and Adesius, both of whom were monks, and were rescued from a ship wreck while en route to India (Trimingham, 1952: 38-40). The latter later returned to Syria, while the former went to Alexandria in Egypt, establishing the link between the Ethiopian Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church. Frumentius returned to Axum to become the first bishop to be appointed by Alexandria to head the Ethiopian Church, a practice that lasted until the 1950s, when the Ethiopian church gained independence from Alexandria (Meinardus, 1970: 368-398).

Since the beginning, the church and the monarchy were intertwined until the 1974 revolution ended the monarchy. According to Ethiopian history (sometimes difficult to distinguish from legend) the Axum Kingdom was established by Menelik I, born from a union of King Solomon of Jerusalem and Queen Sheba of Ethiopia around the 10<sup>th</sup> century BC, being the first king of the Solomonian Dynasty.<sup>17</sup> He is even reputed to have brought the Ark of the Covenant from Jerusalem, believed to be still in the Church of Zion in Axum. This gave the dynasty certain religious virtues and relations to the Holy Land as well. Until the revolution in

---

<sup>17</sup> As in many other cases it is difficult to distinguish legend from history and the Queen of Sheba is a subject of claims and counter claims. There are claims that she was from present day Yemen. But, since at least parts of what is today Yemen was ruled under the same polity with northern Ethiopia and Eritrea, she could belong to both.

1974, the Emperor was not only the head of the Church, his legitimacy also rested on the anointing he received from the archbishop of the church. Even after the revolution, the link between the church and the state was never really severed, and though formal ties to the state were no longer evident, the church remains an important pillar of the Ethiopian state, as the history and identity of the state is inextricably linked to that of the church.<sup>18</sup>

The heydays of Axum also coincided with the rise of Islam across the Red Sea, and the first Moslem communities were established in Egypt, and the coastal areas of the Horn and Eastern Africa. In fact, Islam arrived in Ethiopia earlier than anywhere else, even before it was firmly established in Arabia. The first Moslem communities came to Axum during the early period of the prophet Mohammed, when the new creed was seen as subversive among his own people, the *Qureyshi*. When the Mecca nobility were persecuting his followers, the prophet himself sent his early followers, the *Sahaba*, to go to Axum, the land across the Red Sea, where he believed a just Christian leader was ruling (Trimingham, 1952: 44-46). We have to look at this incident briefly,<sup>19</sup> because it forms the background against which the Ethiopian state is viewed in the wider Moslem world, particularly among its Moslem neighbors in North East Africa and the Middle East. It is important as it informs relations between the Christian Ethiopian state and its Moslem neighbors. The first group of seventeen refugees included the son in law of the prophet, Uthman bin Affan, who later became the *Caliph* (644-656), and the Prophet's daughter Ruqayya, accompanied by her Abyssinian maid, Baraka Um Ayman, who was said to have nursed the Prophet himself until the time he married. A second and much larger

---

<sup>18</sup> Ethiopian Christianity has certain unique features that make it exotic for some, but different from its counterparts, as it has integrated certain Judaic as well as local African rituals and practices.

<sup>19</sup> This narrative is based on Guillaume, 1955: 143-169.

group, some of the core of early converts and Mohammed's followers, headed by Ja'far Abu Talib, a cousin of the Prophet, were sent to Axum by the Prophet, and they reached Axum in 616. These early refugees were said to have been welcomed and provided protection by the Axumite ruler,

The *Qureyshi* rulers later sent emissaries to the Axumite ruler with lavish gifts requesting the refugees to be surrendered to them for not only having abandoned their own religion but also accepting the one of their place of refuge. The Axumite ruler is said to have asked the refugees some clarifications about their old faith, as well as the new one and its views on Jesus, and was said to have been satisfied with their explanation. As a result, though he was showered with lavish gifts and praise, the Axumite ruler, against the advice of his own generals, refused to give them up and granted them continued asylum. This was very important in the early development and survival of the Moslem faith, as these people constituted the core of the followers of the prophet.

As the result of this gesture of the Axumite ruler and the protection he gave to the persecuted followers of the prophet in Arabia, Ethiopia is said to have been exempted by the prophet from the *Jihad*, as enshrined in the *Hadith* (prophetic sayings).<sup>20</sup> In 622 when Mohammed made the *Hijira* from Mecca to Medina, he sent for the *Sahaba* to return and join him. While some of them returned immediately, others remained in Axum, marrying into the local community. Some of those who remained behind died in Axum, but a few others returned to Arabia later around 631 AD.

---

<sup>20</sup> The *Jihad* (Holy War) has been a practice that subjected many communities to war and forceful conversion, and even today many Islamist groups justify attacks against non-Moslems, and even Moslems who they believe have strayed from the 'correct' path.

In 628, Mohammed sent emissaries to five local chiefs and three kings of neighboring states, those of Persia, Byzantium, and Axum encouraging them to submit to the new religion. According to Islamic sources, the Axumite King, *Ashama* accepted the request and converted to Islam, though he was said to have refrained from announcing it publicly to his subjects for fear of rebellion from the clergy and military leaders (Guillaume, 1955: 657-659). But, Ethiopian and western sources dispute this claim, asserting that King *Ashama* never converted to Islam (Erlich, 1994: 9). Both these versions are important points of departure for how Ethiopia has been viewed in the wider Moslem narrative.

This early contact and the two versions about the Axumite King's attitude towards Islam left two contradictory views about Ethiopia among Moslems. On the hand there is the negative message, of a Christian people who resisted conversion to Islam, and on the other there is a measure of gratitude for the help provided to Islam during the very crucial phase, as enshrined in the *Hadith*, in which the prophet is said to have proclaimed to "leave the Abyssinians<sup>21</sup> alone, so long as they do not take the offensive" (Trimingham, 1952: 46). This is the reference that is considered as exempting Ethiopia from the *Jihad*. According to Erlich, the latter view of Ethiopia represents orthodox Islam which accepts Ethiopia as legitimate, while the former view represents radical Islam, which considers Ethiopia as illegitimate (1994: 10-19).

Axum entered a period of decline from the middle of the seventh century and by the ninth century, the ruling dynasty lost power and was replaced by the Zagwe Dynasty. The Zagwe

---

<sup>21</sup> Ethiopia has been known as Abyssinia (*Habash* in Arabic) until it adopted the name Ethiopia after the Second World War, though the name Ethiopia existed in religious texts, as it is also mentioned in the Bible. Popular Arabic references to Ethiopia still use the name *Habash*. In this dissertation, I will use the name Abyssinia to refer to the historic polity and the name Ethiopia to the modern state that emerged at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

rulers, originating from the Agaw people, one of the original peoples of this region, but until then subjects of the Axumite rulers, left their imprint in the history of the region through their construction of eleven monolithic churches (carved out of single rocks) in Lalibela, named after one of their kings.<sup>22</sup>As evident from these churches, the ideology of the Zagwe Kingdom was also Christianity, but they worked out a rival genealogy of their dynasty based on Moses instead of the Axumite dynasty based on Solomon (Greenfield, 1965: 33).

After three centuries, the Zagwe dynasty declined in influence and power and was overthrown around 1270 by a certain Yukunno-Amlak, a military chief of one of the subject peoples, the Amhara, who spoke a variant of the Semitic language. The Tigreans (who also speak a variant of the Semetic language) claim to have dominated the Axumite Kingdom and the Agaw, who belong to the Hamito-Cushetic speaking peoples dominated the Zagwe Dynasty. Numerically it is more likely that the Agaw were the most dominant national group in ancient Ethiopia, as sizable pockets of this national group are still spread all over northern Ethiopia and Eritrea, scattered in the provinces of Gojjam, Wollo, Gondar, Tigray and Eritrea. But, they were gradually assimilated and supplanted by the Semitic speaking Tigreans and Amhara. Both of the Amhara and the Tigreans initially spoke the same Semitic language called Ge'ez, now only surviving in the liturgy of the Orthodox Church. Especially after the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the Amhara, who were originally relatively less numerous, soared their own numbers by assimilating large numbers of the peoples they conquered and ruled, the Agaw in particular, and later the Oromo.

---

<sup>22</sup> These churches and sites have been designated by UNESCO as world heritage sites, and are important tourist attractions today.

The following centuries, particularly the period after the 14<sup>th</sup> century, were dominated by a struggle between the Christian Kingdom and various Moslem forces, principally the Sultanate of Adal, based in the walled city of Harar, in today's eastern Ethiopia. In 1527, under Turkish influence and with their support, the Moslem Sultanate led by a charismatic military leader, Ahmed Ibn Ibrahim Al Ghazi (known in Ethiopian history as Ahmed Gran, meaning Ahmed the left handed), launched an all out offensive against the Christian Kingdom, burning churches, destroying books and religious texts, and forcing the monarch and the royal family to flee and take refuge among the neighboring peoples. In 1529, he scored a major victory against the Christian forces led by King Lebna Dengel (r, 1508-1540). Ahmed Ibrahim Al Ghazi established his Sultanate in Gondar (today in Northwest Ethiopia), declaring himself Imam and ruled for nearly fifteen years. The defeated Christian king escaped, but died in 1540 before regaining his kingdom. Just before he died he sent a desperate plea to the Portuguese for help on account of religious solidarity (Trimingham, 1952: 87). The Portuguese eventually arrived in 1541, and with their help Lebna Dengel's son, Gelawdewos (r.1540-1559), who also escaped the Moslem onslaught, took refuge among the Oromo, in one of the Oromo principalities in the Southeast of the Christian Kingdom and grew up there, managed to link up with the Portuguese, defeated the Moslem forces and restored the Christian Kingdom in 1543 (Trimingham, 1952: 89). The Portuguese forces arrived from India, and they numbered 400 hundred armed men, under the command of Cristovo da Gama.<sup>23</sup> Between 1541 and 1543, Cristovo da Gama won four major battles against the Moslems, but in the final battle, he lost half of his men and he was captured and killed by the forces of Imam Ahmed (Trimingham, 1952: 89). With the defeat of the Moslem

---

<sup>23</sup> It is worth mentioning that Cristovo da Gama was the son of the famous explorer Vasco da Gama, who is reputed to have discovered the route to India round South Africa.

Sultanate in 1543, the Christian Kingdom was restored, but never recovered its former might.

The legacy of this historical episode remains, considered as a catastrophic episode and left bitter folk memories in the Christian population.

The Moslem Sultanate of Adal was also weakened by the defeat, and could not threaten the survival of the Christian Kingdom again. The Moslem defeat and the rise of Oromo power was even more disastrous and enfeebling leaving the Moslem state impoverished as most of their former territories were overrun by the Oromo (Trimingham, 1952: 90). Thus, both the Christian Kingdom and the Moslem Sultanate not only exhausted each other during the decade and half long struggle, but during the chaos between them they were overwhelmed by a new force in the region, the Oromo, who overran and swept across most of the territory previously under the Christian and the Moslem dominance.

Although the Oromo permanently altered the balance of forces as well as the demography of the region, they eventually accepted either of the two religions, Christianity and Islam, depending on their proximity. Nevertheless, the rise of Oromo power was significant in historical terms; it brought to an end the historical struggle between the ideologically driven expansionist forces of the Christian state centered in the highlands and the Moslem principalities drawing support mainly from the lowlands. Though both the Christian Kingdom and the Moslem principalities were historically multiethnic, the dominant form of struggle was always religious. The Oromo factor not only relegated that form of struggle to a secondary one, but introduced a new form of struggle, what later became known as the national question; in other words the rivalry and struggle between national groups.

The Portuguese helped to save and restore the Christian Kingdom, but they soon found themselves embroiled in controversy with their hosts. Along with the soldiers the Portuguese also sent some Jesuit missionaries, a move designed to strengthen Catholic Christian hegemony. Through their missionary activities, the Jesuits managed to convert some of the Orthodox clergy, and even members of the ruling family. Eventually they succeeded in converting King Susneyos (r. 1607-1632), who hoped to strengthen the declining power of the monarchy by embracing Catholicism. But, this sparked resentment and rebellion among the Orthodox clergy, nobility and the peasantry. The rebellion eventually resulted in the abdication of the king in favor of his son, Fasilidas (r. 1632-1667). Fasilidas then exiled the catholic clergy and expelled the Portuguese missionaries, and restored the supremacy of the Orthodox Church.

However, the monarchy continued to weaken as the result of the combined effects of internal and external pressures. It was during this period that the Oromo of Wollo came to dominate the imperial court in Gondar. The low point of the decline of the monarchy was reached in 1769, when a Tigrean chief called Mikael Sehul killed King Iyaos (r.1755-1769), from the Yejju dynasty, and replaced him with his own favorite Yohannes II. In less than a year, Mikael Sehul felt dissatisfied with his own handpicked king, deposing him and replacing him with another one called Tekle-Haymanot II. Thus, imperial power became powerless, and the kingdom disintegrated into feuding petty principalities, though symbolically, the monarchy continued to exist in Gondar. Between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in particular, the Orthodox Church remained the only institution that maintained a semblance of unity in the Christian



kingdom.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, during the same period, the collapse of central authority did not spare the Orthodox Church also, as it became divided into regional factions, arising from doctrinal controversies.

The attempt of Mikael Sehul to dominate politics at the imperial capital in Gondar did not last long. During the last quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Yejju dynasty reestablished their authority under the leadership of a powerful chief called Ali Gwangul, based in Debra-Tabor, east of Gondar (Zewde, 2001: 11-12). The members of the Yejju dynasty were Oromo and Moslem in origin, but were Christianized and followed Amharic customs, as they came to dominate the politics of the Christian Kingdom. For nearly a century, they controlled the imperial throne in Gondar and dominated imperial politics until in 1855, when a local warlord named Kassa rose in rebellion and overthrew the Yejju dynasty, declaring himself Emperor Tewdros II.

Tewodros's rule (1855-1868) was characterized by attempts at centralization of the state, and restoring the monarchy to its traditional preeminent role. But, he faced considerable resistance to his rule from regional lords and the Orthodox clergy. He wanted to reverse the internal disintegration of the state into warring regional fiefdoms to be able to face the external challenges, especially from Egypt. Before this period, Egypt did not pose a serious threat as it was slumbering for a long time under the rule of the Mamlukes, until the short lived, but eventful Napoleonic rule (1798-1801) undermined the rule of the Mamlukes. French rule was terminated by a combined Anglo-Turkish conquest, leading to the establishment of British interest in Egypt

---

<sup>24</sup> The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has a very distinct character, and its central belief is based on the unity (single) nature of Christ (Tewahido), as opposed to the dual nature of Christ of other denominations.

and the Red Sea Basin. This also brought the emergence of Mohammed Ali (an Albanian officer in the Turkish Army) as the ruler of Egypt, who established a dynasty that ruled Egypt until Nasser's military coup in 1952. Mohammed Ali administered a final blow to Mamluk domination, and after establishing a firm economic and military base for his rule, he began a policy of external expansion. After his attempts to expand towards Syria were thwarted by the British, he turned his attention southwards and towards the Red Sea region. In 1821, he defeated the Funj kingdom and occupied Sudan. During the same period, his conquest of Arabia signaled the decline of Ottoman authority and the emergence of Egypt as a new regional power. This development put considerable external pressure on the weak, and decentralized Christian Kingdom of Abyssinia.

Thus, the period of internal disintegration in Abyssinia also coincided with intense external pressures, especially from Egypt, and the weakened Christian Kingdom felt threatened on several fronts. Once again, the Christian Kingdom under Tewodros appealed to the European powers for support on account of Christian solidarity (Zewde, 2001: 36). Tewodros was so ideologically driven that he did not really grasp how European power politics operated, and it was a tremendous shock for him to find out that Britain and France could ally with Moslem Turkey against Orthodox Christian Russia during the Crimean War of 1853-56. The Europeans were also vying for control of Northeast Africa, and there was intense rivalry going on among them over the control of the region. Following the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 (built by the French), European powers entered the scene and became increasingly interested in this part of Africa, as it was strategically located on the route from Europe to Asia. The first to establish a possession were the French in Obock (in Djibouti), and the British in Aden (Yemen) across the

Red Sea), both guarding the entrance to the Red Sea from the Indian Ocean, the Bab El Mandab. The British later established a foothold in Somaliland<sup>25</sup> and also invited the Italians to purchase the Benadir coast (Somalia) from the Sultan of Zanzibar, and also establish a post in Asab, on the Red Sea coast (in today's Eritrea), apparently to counter the French presence.

In his bid to reestablish a centralized and powerful kingdom, Tewodros defeated the northern regional warlords, one after the other, and sought European help in his quest for further expansion of his domain, and the defense against Moslem Egypt. Further expansion, however, proved more challenging as the resistance he faced from the Oromo Kingdom of Wollo was fierce and intense. In response to the resistance to his rule and expansionist designs, Tewodros unleashed terror, and his ruthlessness became one of the defining characteristics of his rule. His military campaigns against Wollo ended with his capture of Magdalla (a plateau in the western part of Wollo) in 1865. Surrounded by a hostile enemy, Magdalla became not only the seat of his rule, but also where it ended three years later. Tewodros also exhibited a very erratic behavior besides his ruthlessness. From his fortress in Magdalla, he wrote letters to European rulers, especially Queen Victoria, in a desperate plea for help to break out of the Moslem blockade (Zewde, 2001: 36-37). Tewodros was expecting a favorable response on the return of Captain Cameron, the British Consul appointed to Ethiopia in 1862, when the latter made a visit to the Red Sea port of Massawa, occupied by the Ottomans since 1557, and Egypt in 1841. However, Cameron not only failed to bring back a response from the Queen, but returned through Matamma, on the border with Sudan, at the time controlled by Egypt (Zewde, 2001: 36). This

---

<sup>25</sup> Somaliland was considered as a protectorate, and the main aim of the British was to secure the supply of livestock for the meat consumption of their garrison in Aden. It must have also been designed to deny the French expansion to that territory from Djibouti.

angered Tewodros as he suspected collusion with Egypt, leading him to imprison Captain Cameron at Magdalla.

With rebellions against him everywhere and isolated in his fortress, the lack of European response to his pleas increased his fury, and led Tewodros to suspect and eventually imprison Europeans in his domain, including protestant missionaries. At that stage the British decided to send an expedition of 32,000 men commanded by Sir Robert Napier, to rescue the Europeans and punish Tewodros, (Myatt, 1970). Tewodros was already finished, releasing his European prisoners even before the British arrived as many of his followers deserted him and his enemies became emboldened (Greenfield, 1965: 80-81). Some of the regional chiefs, like the Tigrean Kasa Mercha (later to crown himself Emperor Yohannes IV), not only betrayed him and sided with the British, but facilitated the advance of the British expeditionary forces by supplying them with provisions, means of transport, and accompanying them en route. By the time the British arrived in Magdalla, Tewodros had shot himself, rather than be captured alive by the British forces (Greenfield, 1965: 82-84).

There was no resistance to the British assault on the imperial fortress, but they bombarded it and inflicting several thousand casualties (Myatt, 1970: 143). The British took the prisoners, and the twelve years old son of Tewodros (who later died in Britain at the age of 18) and left the country. But, they made sure their man, Kasa Mercha, was rewarded with large quantities of weapons, tipping the balance in his favor among those vying for the imperial throne at the time. The main contender was Wagshum Gobeze of Lasta, who declared himself Emperor Tekle-Giyorgis (1868-1871). But, emboldened by his newly acquired weapons from the British, Kasa Mercha refused to accept the authority of the Emperor, and thus ensued three years of

fighting between the two, until Kasa Mercha won as a result of the superiority of his weapons. As we will see later in the following chapter, such collaboration with external enemies for personal power became part of the political culture among Ethiopian rulers. Kasa and Tekle-Giyorgis were brothers in law, but the former defeated the latter in 1871 and crowned himself Yohannes IV in January 1872 (Gabra-Sellassie, 1975: 34).

During the same period another center of power was taking shape in Shewa, in the south of the kingdom, with the rise of another chief called Menelik. Tewodros had earlier invaded and subdued Shewa in 1855, taking Menelik, a young son of the local chief as prisoner. In 1865, Menelik escaped from Tewodros's prison in Magdalla and returned to Shewa, with the help of the Oromo of Wollo and Abbichu (Dilebo, 1974: 46-47). After the death of Tewodros in 1868, he sided with *Wagshum* Gobeze in the latter's struggle with Kasa, and while northern warlords were struggling among themselves for supremacy, Menelik gradually built his power by expanding and conquering the rich Oromo lands to the south of his kingdom, initially forming alliances with the Oromo chiefs. He also found a new ally in Italy, who supplied him with the weapons and expertise he needed for his expansion. At the same time, through his alliance with Italy, he also undermined Yohannes by encouraging the Italians to expand further to the highlands from their coastal outposts and seize more Tigrean territory. After Yohannes declared himself Emperor, Menelik reluctantly paid his allegiance, but continued to conspire with both domestic and foreign enemies of Yohannes.

When Yohannes died fighting the Sudanese Mahdists in Matamma in March 1889, Menelik sent a desperate plea to the Italians to immediately move to the Eritrean highlands and capture Asmara, to make sure that Yohannes's son, Mengesha, did not claim succession to the

throne, immediately crowning himself Emperor Menelik II (Dilebo, 1974: 148). Thus, Menelik (r.1889-1913), as Yohannes did before him, was also prepared to betray his own emperor and collaborate with external enemies of the state for personal power. Menelik expanded his power and empire greatly, and he not only established his authority over northern Ethiopia, but also occupied large territories to the south, and east of the Christian kingdom.

The modern Ethiopian political elite regard Tewodros as the one leader who began the process of state centralization and attempted to modernize it. After the sixteenth century defeat in Moslem hands, the Abyssinian Kingdom never really recovered from the shock, and actually splintered into provincial fiefdoms, a period known in Ethiopian history as the *Zamana Masafint* (the era of the princes),<sup>26</sup> when central authority declined and the Emperors became only figureheads, and actual authority was in hands of the provincial rulers (Abir, 1968). As we have seen, at times the provincial rulers even attempted to make and unmake emperors, and this period is regarded as a period of anarchy in the absence of effective central authority. Tewodros is therefore credited with ending that period and attempting to reestablish central authority. However, his rise to power is significant in one very important sense, which was to have fateful consequences for the Ethiopian state, an aspect that has been neglected in the analysis of the period. I argue that he fundamentally altered the manner of succession to power. Until 1855, when Tewodros assumed power, however weak it was, the monarchy was hereditary, and succession to the throne and legitimacy was based on descent. Tewodros altered this age old tradition, and since then succession became governed by the organization and control of force. When we look at all those who declared themselves Emperors since then, Tewodros, Tekle

---

<sup>26</sup> The best source in English for this period is Abir's (1968), *Ethiopia: The Era of the Princes*.

Giyorgis, Yohannes, Menelik, and Haile Sellassie, all acceded to the throne by conquering state power through military means. None of them were even related, though each claimed descent from the same legendary Solomonian Dynasty. Even the ethnic background of all of them is different. For example Emperor Haile Selassie claimed that he belonged to the Solomonic dynasty through his paternal grandmother, the daughter of the Shewan King Sahle Sellassie. One only needed to muster sufficient power and then claim and establish the links, and as the existence of the dynasty itself is a legend, the links are also fictitious. Hence the Ethiopian monarchy was not in the sense we understand of a traditional hereditary monarchy, as known elsewhere and as existed in Ethiopia also for a period, but rather what Clapham termed a military autocracy (1988: 28).

### **The Modern State: Empire Building in the Waning Days of Empire**

There is some continuity in ideology and history between the ancient Abyssinian polity described in the preceding section, and the present state within the present geopolitical entity of Ethiopia. The northern provinces of the Ethiopian state also belonged to the historic polity. But, the modern state that was created towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is markedly different from the ancient polity in geography, composition, as well as the very character of the state. During nearly three decades of war and destruction the Abyssinian polity expanded and the size of the new empire grew by more than four fold. The process through which the conquests took place was a very brutal one, using unequal resources. The Ethiopians used modern European weapons, and even had European advisers in some of their campaigns. The Oromo, Walayita, Kafficho, Sidama and other peoples resisted the conquests, but were armed with primitive weapons, such as bows, arrows, and spears. Yet they put up fierce resistance, requiring several campaigns over

several years to conquer each of the territories. In the process the casualty rate was extremely high, and the conquests were also accompanied by looting for grain, livestock, and slaves, leading to outbreaks of famine and disease, depopulating the conquered regions. For example, according to official Ethiopian sources, during the conquest of Walayita Kingdom in 1894 nearly 120,000 people were massacred, and thousands more taken into slavery, while 36,000 heads of cattle were looted, in addition to the several thousand killed (Guebre-Sellase, 1930: 363).<sup>27</sup> In the campaign to conquer the Kafficho Empire in 1897 (whose population was estimated at 1.5 million in 1850 by a French missionary Father Massaja) the population was reduced to 200,000 by the 1930s (Dilebo, 1974: 121a). According to Menelik's own official chronicler, after nine months of fierce resistance, the Kafficho disappeared from the face of the earth as a society and civilization, the Kafficho Emperor was finally captured and whatever remained of the Kafficho submitted (Guebre-Sellase, 1930: 461). According to a French missionary, the Oromo population, estimated at about 10 million in 1870 had been reduced to five million by 1900 (de Salviac, 1901).

With the expansion to vast and very rich territories, the historic Ethiopian polity was transformed. The empire not only increased in size by over five fold, but the newly incorporated peoples far outnumbered the inhabitants of the old polity by four to one. Non Christians, particularly Moslems became a significant part of the inhabitants of the new Empire. Most importantly, the historical period and the process through which the Ethiopian state expanded and consolidated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century fundamentally altered and transformed the relations of the state at two levels. As I discuss in the following chapter, the first is the transformation of the

---

<sup>27</sup> The brutality of this campaign was also documented by a French officer who accompanied the campaign in Vanderheym, 1896).



state's relations with society, the second being Ethiopia's relations to the rest of the world. These two factors are at the core of the fact that no other African state in modern African history has been as consistently challenged both internally and externally as Ethiopia has been.

### **Italian Colonization of Eritrea and the Battle of Adowa**

If there is one fateful incident in the history of modern Ethiopia, it is the Battle of Adowa of March 1896. The historic Abyssinian polity that existed in the northern regions of the present state fought foreign encroachments coming through the Red Sea and from its western borders for most of its existence. Positive as well as negative influences also came through these routes. Since the Turks occupied Massawa on the Red Sea coast in 1555, thus denying Abyssinia a direct access to the sea, successive rulers maintained a policy of eventually recovering the Red Sea coast. During the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a period that witnessed the gradual decline of Ottoman power in the region, all regional and national rulers of Abyssinia (including Wube of Semien, Sebagadis of Tigray, Tewodros, as well as Yohannes) made efforts to get their territory back. According to Getahun Dilebo, this was a common policy of the Abyssinian chiefs, with the exception of the Shewan chief Menelik, who made a political deal with Italy. In exchange for allowing the Italians to occupy parts of the Tigray, Menelik received arms to expand to the south, weakening Ras Mengesha, the son and successor of Emperor Yohannes, and claiming the imperial throne for himself (Dilebo, 1974: 126).

In 1869, Italy established a foothold in Asab, on the Red Sea coast, and gradually started encroaching into the hinterland, eventually establishing the Italian colony of Eritrea in 1890. This development was facilitated by the internal turmoil in Abyssinia at the time. After the defeat

and death of Tewodros in 1868, there ensued a period of intense power struggles among Abyssinian chiefs for supremacy. Three major centers of power and claimants to the imperial throne emerged, the Wagshum Gobeze of Lasta, (later to briefly declare himself Emperor Tekle Giyorgis), the Tigrean chief Kasa Mercha, and the Shewan chief Menelik. At the time, Menelik was the weakest of the three claimants. The Tigrean chief was helped by the decisive role he played in helping the British expedition against Tewodros, and as compensation for his help the British left him with considerable arms, ammunition, and other supplies when they withdrew, and made sure that their ally succeeded to the Abyssinian throne. This tilted the balance in favor of Kasa Mercha and gave him the upper hand to declare himself emperor in 1872.

Yohannes was, however, facing not only internal challenges, but also Italian encroachments on his territory from the north and pressures in the west from the Mahdists in Sudan. Meanwhile, in the southernmost Abyssinian principality of Shewa, Menelik's power was rising and with his new found friendship with Italy (through an intermediary called Antonelli), he was amassing weapons. Emboldened by that, he was expanding his domain into the Oromo country, by war and also deceit, and then towards the south. First, in the struggle between Kasa of Tigray and Gobeze of Lasta between 1868 and 1871, Menelik declared his allegiance to Gobeze, and while the two were fighting it out for the imperial throne, Menelik declared war on the Oromo Kingdom of Wollo, who initially helped him escape from Tewodros' prison. Moreover, while gradually expanding to the rich and fertile territory to his south, he was also watching the Tigrean chief consolidating in the north, but facing serious challenges. After Yohannes defeated Gobeze and declared himself Emperor, Menelik declared nominal allegiance to the Emperor, but also sought to undermine his power, through alliances with other regional

lords, like the ruler of Gojjam, as well as reaching a tacit understanding with Italy. In the face of these internal challenges and the threat from Sudan, Yohannes was not in a position to seriously challenge Italian encroachments on his territory. According to a letter Menelik wrote to the Italian King on March 26, 1889, Menelik not only announced the death of Emperor Yohannes, but also called upon Italy not to recognize his successor and requested the King to order Italian forces in Massawa (on the coast) to move to the highlands and occupy Asmara (the military garrison of *Ras Alula*, Yohannes's military commander, and present capital of Eritrea) as soon as possible.<sup>28</sup> This was designed to weaken the Tigrean base of his rival, Mengesha, the son and chosen successor of Emperor Yohannes. Menelik's machinations underscore my contention that for Ethiopian rulers, personal power has always been the overriding principle that guided their policies, including with foreign powers, rather than the interests of the state.

After the death of Yohannes, Menelik was crowned Emperor, and he ruthlessly suppressed other claimants to the imperial throne. He also signed a treaty with Italy, in which he recognized Italian colonization of Eritrea, in return for Italian weapons and recognition of his authority and sovereignty over his newly found empire. But, the interpretation of an article of the treaty later became a subject of controversy as the Italians interpreted it as entitling them to a protectorate over his Ethiopia. Consequently, due to strong objections to the treaty, especially from the Empress Tayitu (Menelik's powerful wife), who felt the treaty compromised Ethiopia's sovereignty the Emperor eventually denounced it. This provided the pretext the Italians needed to expand their encroachments into northern Ethiopia to a full scale invasion, crossing the Mereb River and occupying parts of Tigray in October 1895.

---

<sup>28</sup> Menelik to Umberto, March 26, 1889, Quoted in Dilebo, 1974: 147-148.

Initially Menelik was reluctant to engage the Italians in battle, and was hoping that an amicable resolution could be found through diplomatic means. But Italy had larger ambitions, the total conquest of Ethiopia. It assembled a large force of 20,000 soldiers led by five Italian generals (among them General Baratieri, the Governor of Eritrea), including seventeen Italian infantry brigades, supported by 57 artillery units, and thousands of Eritrean auxiliary forces (Rubenson, 1976: 403). The Ethiopian Emperor ordered a general mobilization and marched north at the head of over 100,000 men (Rubenson, 1976: 403). On March 2, 1896, the two forces met at Adowa. A fierce battle ensued, and within six hours, 262 Italian officers, including a general, and 7000 Italian soldiers were killed, and 3000 Italian soldiers and officers, including a senior general, as well as thousands of Eritrean auxiliaries were taken prisoners (Rubenson, 1976: 403). According to Anthony Mockler, “it was the greatest single disaster in European colonial history” (1984: xxxxi).

The outcome of the battle sent shock waves in European capitals.<sup>29</sup> The defeat of a European power in battle in the hands of an African state was not taken lightly by many of the European leaders. In Rome, it led to the fall of the Italian government. On the Ethiopian side, the battle was led by the Emperor and all his regional chiefs, with his wife also at the war front. In a sense the battle demonstrated the capacity of the Ethiopian state, its ability to mobilize about a hundred thousand men from all over the empire and defeat a better organized and armed colonial power. It also introduced the newly emerging Ethiopian Empire into the modern world.

---

<sup>29</sup> A decade later, the 1905 Russian defeat by the Japanese was viewed in similar terms. For other peoples suffering under the yoke of European domination however, the Italian defeat at Adowa had a significant symbolic weight, particularly in Africa, and the African Diaspora.

Within six months, Italy and Ethiopia exchanged prisoners and concluded a peace treaty, in which Italy recognized Ethiopian sovereignty, but Ethiopia also accepted Italian colonization of Eritrea.<sup>30</sup> The previous and disputed 1889 treaty was abrogated, but the delimitation of the boundary between Ethiopia and the Italian colony was deferred to be negotiated at a later date. The victory was significant also in the sense securing Ethiopia's independence at least in the immediate short term. For forty years, further Italian colonial ambitions in Ethiopia were thwarted, but the Italians would return forty years later with vengeance.

### **The Death of the Empire Builder and the Struggle for Succession<sup>31</sup>**

The Adowa victory enhanced Menelik's position at home and abroad. With even more weapons amassed at Adowa, he invaded the Kafficho Empire devastating the country and massacring its people, in today's language, committing genocide. He also made further expansions into the south conquering the Borana Oromo, Ogaden in the east, and other territories in the west along the Sudanese border. Moreover, he not only subdued his domestic rivals, but even got rid of such powerful figures as *Ras Gobana*, a formidable figure and real architect of the empire building project. Gobana was an Oromo and overseer of all conquered lands until he was dismissed, and in his place Menelik appointed twelve personal loyalists from his Shewan clan base. Thus Menelik consolidated his personal power, with all legislative, judicial and executive

---

<sup>30</sup> Tigrean nationalists as well others allege that the Amhara King Menelik II deliberately ceded Eritrea to the Italians in exchange for weapons as well as to weaken his Tigrean rivals. Menelik's letter of 1889 to the Italian king is an indication of these claims.

<sup>31</sup> I have depended on three Ethiopian sources (all in Amharic) for this section. The first one is Zewde Retta's (n.d.), *Tafari Makonin*, a more recent biography of the early rise to power of Emperor Haile Selassie (up to the time he was crowned emperor) and is sympathetic to him. The second is Tekle Hawariat, 2006, an autobiography of an eye witness of the period, a Russian educated artillery officer, reputed to be the author of the 1931 Ethiopian constitution, and also sympathetic to the Emperor. The third one is Gobeze Taffete's 1996 biography of Lij Iyyasu, and sympathetic to him.

powers over the empire centralized in his own hands. Moreover, in an attempt to introduce a semblance of modernity, he instituted a ministerial system and appointed members of the Shewan nobility to various ministerial positions. But, this remained only cosmetic as it never operated as a government, since no real government departments existed, and the affairs of the empire were conducted from the palace by the Emperor through his personal servants and the provincial governors.

Menelik also gained more recognition abroad as the result of the victory at Adowa. But, Ethiopia's independence was never absolute, as it was politically circumscribed by the influence the major European powers exerted over Ethiopia. In fact, his health became a subject of considerable interest among the European powers represented at the Ethiopian court. The expectations were that there would be a major break down of order upon the Emperor's death. They often concluded agreements among themselves regarding Ethiopia without its involvement. In 1906, Britain, France and Italy concluded a tripartite agreement, which stipulated that the three powers would cooperate and come to a mutual understanding in safeguarding their interests in the event of any change in the situation in Ethiopia (Perham, 1965: 60). This agreement demonstrated that the colonial powers saw the Ethiopian victory at Adowa as an aberration. Among other things the agreement included that in the event of a breakdown of order in Ethiopia, the three powers would respect their respective interests in the country. Among other things, it included the recognition of French interest in the territory along the railway line running from its colony in Djibouti to the Ethiopian capital, British interest over the Lake Tana and Blue Nile region, and Italian interest in linking her two colonies of Eritrea and Somalia across Ethiopia (Perham, 1965: 60).

The agreement amounted to plans to partition Ethiopia among the three powers, but they would wait until the opportunity availed itself with the pretext necessary. This agreement was driven by the declining health of Emperor Menelik, who suffered a stroke in 1906. The colonial powers hoped that order would break down upon the death of the Emperor and would give them the pretext to fulfill their ambitions. It was probably in response to these colonial machinations that the Emperor, in a move to give some institutional form and continuity to his regime, introduced a ministerial system in 1907, as already mentioned. Moreover, in May 1909, he designated a successor to his throne, his teen age grandson, Lij Iyyasu (born in 1896), and also appointed *Ras* Tesemma Nadew, an elderly member of the Shewan nobility as regent to guide the young prince.

After the Emperor was incapacitated in 1906 and until 1910, power was actually effectively exercised by his very formidable and powerful wife, the Empress Tayitu.<sup>32</sup> Compared to the Empress, the Emperor was reputed to be more adept at compromising, especially with foreigners. One example is the 1889 treaty with Italy, which compromised Ethiopia's sovereignty. The treaty was signed immediately following the death of Emperor Yohannes, and Menelik agreed to the provisions of the treaty for temporary personal political gains, especially to gain Italy's support in his struggle for the imperial throne against Yohannes's successor, and for the continued supply of Italian arms which he needed to further bolster his position on the throne. The second example is his 1896 treaty, also with Italy, which, despite Ethiopia's decisive victory, recognized Italy's colonization of Eritrea. On the other hand the Empress was reputed to be a woman of exceptional strength of character and uncompromising with foreigners over the

---

<sup>32</sup> A good source on the Empress is a relatively recent and admiring biography of hers with a great deal of information and some details about her influence and character (Prouty, 1986).

fate of the empire. She was reputed to have strongly objected to the provisions of the 1889 treaty which eventually led to its abrogation and war (Prouty, 1986: 70-79). Therefore, even when her husband was capable she exerted a great deal of influence. Once the Emperor was incapacitated, she began exercising her immense powers. Thus, realizing that the Emperor was no longer in charge, the Shewan nobility regarded her as a threat to their supremacy (as she hails from the north) and began plotting to remove her from the center of power. They eventually succeeded in 1910, and with the blessing of the Egyptian archbishop of the Ethiopian church, she was removed from the palace and retired to a church north of the capital.

The regent and guardian of the heir apparent died in 1911, and after this period, the young prince assumed de facto reign of the empire. The Shewan nobility, however, were not happy with him, and once they succeeded in removing the Empress, they began plotting against the prince. They were only waiting for the passing away of the Emperor, and when he finally died in 1913, they began openly challenging the succession of Lij Iyyasu. Though brief and he was also very young, Lij Iyyasu's reign was an eventful one.<sup>33</sup> Within the short period of his reign (1913-1916), he had gone to all corners of the empire marrying into the leading families, in an apparent attempt to cement ties and broaden the appeal of the imperial regime. Lij Iyyasu's effort to reinforce his strategy included redressing the marginalization of the north and integrating some of the prominent nobility among the conquered peoples into the state. Historians confirm that he represented a clear departure from the policies of the past, in that he was bent on redressing the injustices by treating Christians and Moslems, Amhara and non

---

<sup>33</sup> Iyyasu was never formally crowned Emperor, and according to some sources, he was reported to have pledged that he would only be crowned as Emperor after expelling the Italians at least from Eritrea, if not from East Africa (Taffette, 1996).



Amhara equally, and appointed the local nobility to govern their regions, instead of sending members of the Shewan nobility (Greenfield, 1965: 134-136). Lij Iyyasu's was the first major attempt to address the issue of national integration, which continues to haunt Ethiopia (Zewde, 2001:124). He also introduced a number of reforms, including a more equitable system of taxation, abolished the *quranya* system (where the plaintiff was chained to the defendant and the creditor to the debtor until justice was delivered), and other abuses of the criminal justice system. He also introduced an auditing system of government accounts exposing a lot of embezzlement, a municipal police, among other policy changes. These were radical reforms for the period. With these reforms, Iyyasu challenged the old establishment and the notables who had surrounded the Shewan throne since Menelik's rise to power. These were people who benefited from the loot of the conquest, and continued to abuse their authority (Zewde, 2001: 120-23). The beneficiaries of the status quo, the Shewan nobility, therefore interpreted these policies as a threat to their position, and did not take long to start scheming against the young heir to the throne.

Some of Iyyasu's foreign policy gestures were not welcomed by the three colonialist powers also and as they already joined in a tripartite agreement regarding Ethiopia, they also joined the plot against him. Italy was particularly incensed by his courting of the Afar, who inhabited areas including the Red Sea coast of Eritrea. He married a daughter of the Sultan of the Afar, and there were indications that he was in favor of mobilizing the Afar in order to oust the Italians from Eritrea and reunite it with the rest of Ethiopia. There were also indications that he would also work to expel them from Somalia. The British resented his courting of the Somalis, and his supplying of weapons to the Somali nationalist leader Mohammed Abdille Hassen

(known by the British as the Mad Mullah<sup>34</sup>), who had organized and led a simultaneous twenty years resistance against the British and the Italians in both Somaliland and Somalia, respectively (Zewde, 2001: 127). Moreover, in a desire to diversify his external sources of support, Iyyasu was also reported to have sent a delegation to Austria to establish friendly ties and procure weapons (Taffete, 1996).

These policies also played into the hands of Iyyasu's domestic opponents, who were informing on him to the three powers. For example, the information about Iyyasu's supply of weapons to the Somali resistance leader was supplied to the British in writing by the Governor of the Eastern region adjoining the two European Somali colonies, *Ras Tafari*, the man who was later to become Emperor Haile Selassie (Taffete, 1996). It is important to note here that this was the period of the First World War. The three powers were allies in that war and Austria, with whom the Ethiopian leader wanted to establish ties, was on the opposite side of the alliance. Eventually, an alliance of the Shewan nobility, the archbishop of the Orthodox Church, and the three powers staged a coup on September 27, 1916, what became known as the Shewan coup d'etat, and deposed Iyyasu on charges of apostasy, a move designed to appeal to the Christian clergy and peasantry (Greenfield, 1965: 131-146). He was replaced by Menelik's daughter from a previous marriage, Zawditu (apparently to legitimate the coup, and who was also forced to divorce her husband) as a figurehead. *Ras Tafari Makonin* was appointed as heir apparent and regent, and effectively head of the government. In practice, power was exercised by the heir apparent. While Tafari did have some ties through his grandmother to the King Sahle Selassie of Shewa (r. 1813-1847), there were many others with similar claims, and his rise to power has

---

<sup>34</sup> For an account of the twenty years British campaign against Mohammed Abdille Hassen, see Jardine, [1923] (1969).

been attributed to his ability to mobilize the clients and army built by his father, as well as his close ties to the allied powers (Zewde, 2001: 129).

Iyyasu's father, Negus Mika'el tried to reverse the coup, by mobilizing 80,000 men and marching to Addis Ababa, but though victorious at first, he was tricked into negotiations, a move designed to buy time for Shoan reinforcements to arrive from Tafari's power base in the east, and he was finally defeated and taken prisoner at Sagale, 40 miles north of the capital (Zewde, 2001:128). The Battle of Sagale was the one of the bloodiest battles in the history of the modern Ethiopian state, comparable to the Battle of Adowa and left bitter memories, especially among the people of Wollo (Zewde, 2001: 128). Iyyasu escaped, but after five years as fugitive he was captured and imprisoned under miserable conditions, and was later murdered in 1936 at the orders of Emperor Haile Selassie, just before the latter left for exile in Europe (Tafette, 1996).

Tafari's path to the throne was bloody, with a series of confrontations one after the other, the last of which was in 1930, with *Ras* Gugsa Wole, who was defeated and killed in battle. The psychological impact of the battle was significant, as for the first time aircraft was used (indicating some European involvement on Tafari's side), probably intended to underline the immense powers of Tafari, and to send a message to all that resisting him would be disastrous. Two days after the defeat and death of *Ras* Gugsa, her ex-husband, Zewditu also died, and Tafari's path to the throne was cleared. His coronation, on November 2, 1930, was a grand and elaborate affair, with representatives from European royal houses in attendance. He assumed the throne name of Haile Selassie I, (meaning Power of the Trinity).

Haile Selassie began centralizing power in his own hands as soon as he became heir apparent, and it was not long before he came into conflict with the same forces that helped him to power, especially the entrenched traditional forces. His close association with the allied powers and his French Catholic missionary education (some even suspecting and accusing him of being a closet Catholic) did not endear him to the more conservative forces among the Shewan nobility and the Orthodox Church clerical hierarchy. Most importantly, he was obsessed with centralizing power, but he was also patient. In order to enhance his power, he slowly but surely worked to remove some of the old guard one by one. For example, in 1918, he discreetly organized a public petition to the Empress through his supporters and got the well entrenched ministers appointed by Menelik dismissed.<sup>35</sup> In 1923, he achieved Ethiopia's membership of the League of Nations, with French support, despite Britain's objections. The following year he made a grand tour of Europe, which he considered so important that he devoted a considerable part of his autobiography (about 40 pages) to it (Haile Selassie, 1973). All these moves were designed to enhance his domestic position.

Haile Selassie's regime was an absolutist one, as he forged a unitary state, with the excessive centralization of power in his person. If there was one Ethiopian monarch who ever achieved absolute power, it was Haile Selassie. While respecting the economic privileges of the nobility and the regional lords, he stripped them of their political authority. In 1931, he introduced a written constitution, which stamped his absolutist power, and stripped the prerogatives of the regional lords. He forced all of them to sign to it and confined them to the

---

<sup>35</sup> It is interesting to note here that he wanted that action to be an exceptional one time affair and conscious of the long term implications, in a speech to the petitioners, citing what he termed the 'anarchy in Russia' at the time, he warned against the dangerous consequences of anarchy that could arise from public intervention in politics (Zewde, 2001: 131).

capital by appointing them to the Senate. One issue the constitution tackled with considerable detail was succession of power. The document laid down that only Haile Sellassie's direct descendants were entitled to the throne. As expected, there was considerable opposition to this provision among the many descendants and royal houses of previous rulers. This issue was treated with even more detail in the Revised Constitution of 1955. But, it was never tested in practice, as Haile Selassie turned out to be the last Ethiopian monarch.

The constitution also introduced a two chamber parliament, the upper chamber appointed by the Emperor from among the nobility (a sort of the House of Lords) and the second chamber constituted through indirect elections, mostly drawn from the landed gentry. The land ownership requirement for membership precluded even rich merchants, let alone common people. The Revised Constitution of 1955 made members to the lower chamber directly elected by the people, but the "immovable property" (meaning land) requirement remained a prerequisite and political parties were not allowed. The constitution was also intended to impress his foreign allies by presenting himself as a benevolent and reforming ruler. Both the 1931 and 1955 constitutions made the Emperor not only the chief executive, but also the chief legislator, and the chief judge, as well as the head of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

Haile Selassie also set up a central bureaucracy and a standing army, under his personal command, undermining the traditional regional basis of the military, and for the first time soldiers' salaries were paid from the state treasury. Foreign trainers and advisers were brought in to help establish the standing army with the first unit created being the Emperor's own Imperial Bodyguard. Regional troops continued to exist, but since he appointed most regional governors, Haile Selassie also had indirect control over them. The regional organization of the military

finally came to an end only after the Italian occupation. Civil servants and soldiers also benefited from a system of land grants by the emperor, as they were granted land in the southern regions to augment their salaries. Haile Selassie's rule was abruptly interrupted when Italy again invaded Ethiopia in 1936, this time successfully. Italy occupied the empire, forcing the Emperor into exile in England.

### **Italian Occupation (1936-41) and the Disintegration of the Ruling Class<sup>36</sup>**

The rise to power of the Fascist Party dedicated to restoring Roman glory in 1922 rekindled Italian colonial ambitions. Skirmishes began along the border with Italian Somaliland in December 1934, and in October 1935, Italian forces crossed the northern frontier from Eritrea launching a full scale invasion. The Emperor ordered a general mobilization and marched north, but lost the battle, and was forced to retreat. With the bitter memories of their defeat at Adowa forty years earlier, the Italians were determined to succeed this time round, and used all means at their disposal to the extent of committing atrocities and war crimes, employing prohibited weapons like poison gas. Italian forces entered Addis Ababa, the capital, on May 5, 1936, and the Italian parliament declared Ethiopia an Italian colony on May 9, 1936, even though the Italians controlled less than a third of Ethiopia. The Italian king was also declared Emperor of Ethiopia, to be represented in Ethiopia by a viceroy. Thus, Ethiopia, along with Eritrea and Italian Somaliland became part of AOI (*Africa Orientale Italiana*, or Italian East Africa). The colonial administration divided Ethiopia into four governorships, namely Amhara, Harar, Galla-Sidamo, and Shewa. The governors were given wide powers, including financial, judicial and

---

<sup>36</sup> For the facts information on the period of the Italian occupation, I am indebted to Sbacchi's 1997 and 1985 studies on Ethiopia under Italian rule.

administrative autonomy. Each of the governorships had its local executive council and each governor was authorized to correspond directly with the Ministry of Africa and with other ministries in Rome.

By the time the Italians occupied Ethiopia, Ethiopians were very much disillusioned with their state of affairs. The succession battles following the death of the Emperor Menelik, and the chaos that followed were partly the reason. But, in most parts of the south, that were conquered only less than a generation earlier, Ethiopian rule was crude, harsh, exploitative, and as a result very much resented. Hence, at the beginning, the Italians were welcomed in many parts of Ethiopia, with the hope that they would improve living conditions by developing the country. Some of the measures the Italians took, like the abolition of the *gebbar* system (a system worse than the medieval system of serfdom), and suppression of slavery freed millions of people from onerous burdens. But, it took only a few months for the fascists to demonstrate, and for the Ethiopians to realize, that the Italians were there to oppress and exploit Ethiopia. Many of the measures employed to pacify the empire were also brutal. Thus, spontaneous uprisings and protracted guerilla resistance campaigns began in most parts of Ethiopia within the first year of Italian rule. During the five years of the occupation, there were three viceroys – Marshall Pietro Badoglio, conqueror and the first viceroy, followed by Marshall Rodolfo Graziani (1937) and Duke Amedeo of Aosta (1938-41). Italian rule faced considerable and organized resistance. Organized Ethiopian resistance forces were estimated at between 100,000 and 300,000, the lower estimate given by Italian sources, and the higher estimates by Ethiopian and British sources (Sbacchi, 1997:165). This indicated significant resistance, and Mussolini and Marshall Badoglio were reported to have estimated that it would require at least twenty years to pacify Ethiopia and

eliminate all armed resistance, though the Italian public was said to be more skeptical and thought that half a century would be needed to accomplish that task (Sbacchi, 1997: 165). The Ethiopian resistance not only sapped Italy's energies and morale, but it was also expensive. Between 1937 and 1941 annual military expenses in Ethiopia were nearly 4 billion lire (Sbacchi, 1997: 166).

The brief Italian colonial interlude altered the established system of the state in Ethiopia for a while, but did not last long enough to have transformed it. If there is one thing that Italian occupation revealed, it was the fundamental weaknesses of the Ethiopian state, particularly the ruling class, especially its factionalization and the personalized culture of power. As soon as the Emperor went into exile, and the Italians entered the capital, members of the Ethiopian nobility surrendered to the Italians and started vying for personal gains and influence. While there was considerable resistance and opposition to Italian rule, there was also considerable disarray and divisions within the nobility, one reason that made the resistance less effective than its size would have entailed. The resistance was organized regionally and lacked unity and a central command and leadership. Many among the nobility collaborated with the Italians, and others fled into exile, while those who attempted to organize resistance were betrayed by those who collaborated with the Italians. The Gojjam chiefs for example refused to heed the emperor's orders to mobilize in 1935, and deserted *Ras* Imiru (whom the emperor appointed as head of the government before his departure into exile), opening the way for a column of Italian troops to occupy Gojjam in April 1936. Many of the Ethiopian chiefs in Gojjam, Gondar, and Tigray saw Italian occupation as a welcome agent for ending Shewan rule, and they collaborated with the Italians against the forces who resisted the occupation.



The Italians also effectively employed the age old divide and rule method, and many of the prominent Ethiopian chiefs played into Italian machinations. For example, the surrender and execution of the Kasa brothers (resistance leaders in Northwestern Shewa) was accomplished through the use of the good offices of *Ras* Hailu of Gojjam and *Ras* Seyyoum of Tigray. *Ras* Desta (son in law of the emperor and leader of the resistance in the south) was captured and handed to the Italians by a Tigrean chieftain, *Dejazmach* Teklu Meshesha, who received a reward of 20,000 Lire, a silver medal and the honorary Italian title of *Cavaliere dell'Ordine Coloniale Stella d'Italia* for his services (Sbacchi, 1985: 189).

Thus, many of the Ethiopian aristocrats collaborated with Italian rule, including Tigrayan chiefs like *Ras* Seyyoum and *Dejazmach* Haile Selassie Gugsu. The latter was the son in law of Emperor Haile Sellassie, and both were grandsons of Emperor Yohannes IV. Other notable collaborators included *Ras* Hailu of Gojjam, and *Ras* Getachew of Gondar. All of these nobles helped secure the acceptance of Italian rule among their followers. However, though the Oromo had more reasons to be happy at seeing the back of imperial rule, many Oromo leaders resisted Italian rule, recruiting and organizing large resistance forces from among the Oromo, especially in the central regions. The most prominent of these were *Ras* Ababa Aragay, *Dejazmach* Geresu Dhuki, and Haile Mariam Mamo in Shewa, as well as Balay Zallaqa in Gojjam. Quite a few saw Italian rule with some relief, hoping that it signaled the end of the harsh treatment they received under imperial rule. Initially, the Oromo, especially those in the periphery, and other peoples of southern Ethiopia were by and large indifferent to the Italian occupation due to earlier Ethiopian policies. As a result, in the initial years, the Amhara led resistance in the south lacked popular support and was crushed by the Italians by the end of 1937. The capture of *Ras* Imiru, and the

execution of the Kasa brothers, Archbishop Qerlos, and *Ras* Desta were all a consequence of the lack of popular base. In comparison, leaders like Ababa Aregay and Geresu Dhuki were able to organize large resistance forces and survived in regions not far from the capital. According to Sbacchi, Italian successes against *Ras* Desta and similar Amhara led resistance in the South was not only a result of disarray in the Ethiopian ruling class and the participation of collaborators with Italian rule among them, but also a result of Oromo hostility to the Amhara landed class (1997: 176). Nevertheless, the Oromo had misgivings about Italian rule, and the longest and most sustained resistance to Italian rule survived among the Oromo, especially in the regions close to the capital, Addis Ababa. This resistance was led by local leaders and former low level officials in the imperial government.

No sooner than the Italians thought most resistance leaders were either, killed, submitted, or exiled, on February 19, 1937, seven hand grenades were thrown at the Italian viceroy, Marshall Graziani in an assassination attempt at his palace on the occasion of celebrations for the birth of the Prince of Naples. A few people were killed and several were wounded, some seriously, and the viceroy himself escaped death but was severely wounded (Sbacchi, 1997: 176). Two Eritreans, Abraha Deboch and Moges Asgedom, both of whom worked for the Italians were involved in the attack. Italian reaction to the incident was mass murder, arson, robbery, and the burning down of entire areas of the capital. Churches were burnt down, and some like St George's Cathedral in the capital were blown up. Graziani's plan was to destroy the capital and move the population to concentration camps, a method he used earlier against the resistance in Libya. Within a matter of days at least 30,000 people were reported to have been massacred, according to Ethiopian estimates, though other sources estimate at between 3000 and

6000, and Italian sources dispute and underestimate the casualties (Sbacchi, 1997: 192). But, the scale of the repression was obviously large. Between three thousand and four thousand Ethiopians were rounded up and imprisoned and of these at least 1500 additional people were executed (Sbacchi, 1997: 192). Thousands of notables were deported and exiled in Italy, and in camps at Danane and Nocra in the Italian colonies of Somalia and Eritrea respectively. The Italians also summarily executed at least 449 monks at the Debra-Libanos Monastery in addition to several members of the higher clergy of the Orthodox Church, and the rest of the occupants of the monastery were sent to the penal colony of Danane in Somalia (Sbacchi, 1997: 178).

### **The Italian Defeat and Britain**

When Italy invaded and declared Ethiopia a colony, the Ethiopian Emperor appeared before the League of Nations and appealed for support. His appeals were, however, ignored and the western powers endorsed Italy's occupation of Ethiopia, actually formally recognizing the occupation.<sup>37</sup> There were even attempts by Britain, France, and the Secretary General of the League to exclude the Ethiopian delegation from the League (Spencer, 1984: 78-79). The Emperor's speech before the League turned out to be prophetic, as he warned them that their appeasement of Italian crimes would haunt them as they are not immune from falling victims of aggression (Haile Selassie, 1936). That prophecy became true, and the Western powers' appeasement of Italy became an embarrassing failure, when Mussolini entered the war in Europe on Hitler's side in 1940. At that stage, the British helped the Emperor to return through Sudan and lead the resistance to Italian rule. Ethiopian exiles in the neighboring colonies were

---

<sup>37</sup> Only the United States, the Soviet Union, China, and New Zealand refused to recognize the Italian conquest of Ethiopia (Spencer, 1984: 160).

organized and with the support of some Commonwealth troops the offensive to oust Italy from the Horn of Africa was launched. This also gave impetus to the resistance forces that have been fighting Italian rule, and in March 1941, the resistance forces led by Ababa Aregay defeated Italian forces and liberated Addis Ababa. The Emperor returned on May 5, 1941.

The fact that the emperor spent his exile years in Britain, coupled with the role they played in the liberation campaign gave the British a domineering position in Ethiopia. First they established a Military Administration of Occupied Enemy Territory over Ethiopia. They exerted considerable authority over financial, administrative, military and judicial decisions. Britain's objective was to establish a protectorate over Ethiopia (Spencer, 1984: 97). The Emperor and his advisers resisted forcing a series of agreements to be signed between Britain and the Emperor's government. In the first one, the Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement of 1942, Britain nominally recognized Ethiopia's independence, but with provisions that maintained their dominant role in Ethiopian affairs. The second agreement of 1944 restored some measure of sovereign rights to Ethiopia, but still provided the British with substantial control over Ethiopia. For example they continued to control the Ogaden region in the east, which they did not hand over to Ethiopian control until 1954. They also controlled Eritrea and Italian Somaliland. The excuse at the time was the Second World War and the necessity of making adequate provisions for the defense of the allied war effort.

The domineering position of the British prompted the Emperor to establish ties with the United States as a counter weight. Though Americans established relations with Ethiopia as early as 1903, the Tripartite Agreement among the three European Powers did not leave any room for the Americans to play any visible role in Ethiopian affairs, except trade in cotton products. The

first contacts were made in 1943, with the visit of Ethiopia's Deputy Foreign Minister at the time, Yilma Dheressa, to Washington, and the Americans followed by sending a technical mission in 1944 (Spencer: 1984: 105). In 1945, the Emperor himself met President Roosevelt on a US cruise ship in the Suez, in Egypt, a meeting that was arranged without the knowledge of the British, who still held control over many areas of Ethiopian governmental affairs (Spencer, 1984: 159-60). The same year, an agreement was signed with Trans World Airlines (TWA) to set up Ethiopian Airlines (EAL), and the former provided the management for EAL until the first Ethiopian was appointed to head the company in 1971 (Spencer, 1984: 167). With the withdrawal of the British Military Mission to Ethiopia (BMME) in 1950, the Emperor requested the United States for military assistance. The United States also supported the UN decision of 1950 to federate Eritrea with Ethiopia. In 1951 Ethiopia and the United States signed a treaty of friendship and economic relations, followed by a Mutual Defense Treaty in 1953, and the Emperor Haile Selassie made his first official visit to the United States in 1954 (Spencer, 1984: 261-268). As the result of this growing American involvement, Ethiopia sent a battalion of troops and participated in the Korean War on the side of the United States, as part of the seventeen nations United Nations force. It also leased a vital communication base to the United States in the Eritrean capital, Asmara, a naval research center in Massawa, and other military facilities. In 1952 a program known as the 'Point Four,' involved in agricultural and public health education, locust control, public administration training and the award of scholarships was established by the US. During the same period, a Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) was established to train three army divisions for Ethiopia (Zewde, 2001: 186).

Thus, the post war period witnessed significant American presence in Ethiopia, and as we will see later, though the Emperor's regime benefited from this presence, it was not without problems for Ethiopia, as it was not viewed favorably by some of Ethiopia's neighbors. The American presence was also not without self-interest on the part of the United States, especially after the 1952 revolution in Egypt required a rethinking of western security interests in the Red Sea and the Middle East.

### **The Post-War Imperial Regime**

In the aftermath of the end of Italian occupation, the Emperor's energies were consumed by reestablishing his authority, undermining the position of some of popular the resistance leaders, extricating Ethiopia from British control, establishing new relations with the United States, reclaiming Eritrea, and further consolidation of his powers. In 1952, Eritrea was federated with Ethiopia, and Ethiopia regained access to the sea. In 1955, the Emperor issued a Revised Constitution, which, for the first time made him (constitutionally) head of the Orthodox Church. His jurisdiction over the Church gave him more powers over the appointment of bishops and to issue legislation on church matters, except spiritual and monastic affairs. For the Coptic Church in Egypt, it was a period of crisis, and the Emperor and the Ethiopia Church felt that the functionaries sent by the Egyptian Church were not religious emissaries but agents of the Nasser regime. As a result the Emperor pressed for the Ethiopian Church to have its own patriarch and consecrate its own bishops, and an agreement was achieved in 1959.

Thus, by the end of the 1950s the Emperor had achieved his consolidation of power. But, by the same period the state's failure and inability to tackle some of the most serious

socioeconomic crisis the country was facing also became starkly evident. Famine outbreaks became common, and exposed the crisis in Ethiopian agriculture. This crisis was exacerbated by the regime's inability to reform the institutional framework, most importantly the land tenure system. Though the Emperor wielded absolute powers, he was still unable to tackle land reform because he could not bypass the stiff opposition from the powerful land owning aristocracy. This class, supported by settler landowners in the Southern regions constituted the main social base of the imperial regime, and the Emperor was in no position to challenge their interests. This crisis led to several problems, economic as well as political. Since there were no industries or minerals under exploitation to talk about, the state increasingly resorted to squeezing the peasantry to raise revenue for the state. This often led the restive peasant population to rebellion. Additionally, the failure of the state to carry out political and economic reforms led to student agitation, and to one of the most serious challenges to the state, a rebellion from within the ranks of the military. In December 1960, a section of the military, the Emperor's own Imperial Guard unit, supported by a small number of civilians, rebelled and overthrew the Emperor while he was on state visit in Brazil. The coup was eventually crushed by loyalist troops and the Emperor returned home and survived on the throne.

However, it looked as if the very attempt of the coup instilled a sense of defeat in its very victory. The Emperor had carefully consolidated his power, sidelined and silenced the popular anti fascist resistance leaders, and by that time, he thought there was hardly any challenge to his authority. The regime therefore worked under the assumption that its authority, especially that of the Emperor was unchallenged. The challenge, coming from the very institution that was supposed to protect the Emperor and his power at that was unexpected. Several leading members

of the regime were also killed once the coup leaders realized their defeat.<sup>38</sup> Despite its failure, the abortive coup became a watershed for two reasons. It was a wakeup call for the regime, as it started contemplating some reforms, including land reform. Secondly, the prospect of further challenges to imperial rule could not be discounted, and rumors continued to spread about plots to unseat the government. But, the limited resources at the disposal of the state fueled and further exacerbated the frictions and bickering within the factionalized ruling elite at the top. Resource limitations also made it difficult for the state to prepare in facing external challenges, especially as new challenges were cropping up from neighboring states.

The regime's inability to reform the land tenure system due to resistance from the land owning classes made the agricultural crisis a chronic one, as the outbreak of yet another famine in 1972 underscored. The government faced increased pressure with further student unrest and an increasingly restless political climate. However, the regime was not responding to the growing domestic and external challenges and by the early 1970s, it seemed to have lost direction. The regime could not initiate any social, political and economic reforms, and generally ineptness and stagnation characterized the state in the period leading to the 1974 revolution. Eventually, when a popular uprising broke out in February 1974, the regime was unprepared, and was swept away by a combined student and worker unrest and mutinies among the armed forces.

The regime's ineptness in the face of growing crisis was partly the result of the power structure that the Emperor had built. On the one hand the landed aristocracy continued to exercise formidable powers. The power of the Amhara/Tigrean landed class rested on their

---

<sup>38</sup> The massacre of the dignitaries took place inside the Imperial Palace, to which the Emperor never returned. He gave the buildings and the premises to Ethiopia's first University when it was established in 1961.



access to their hereditary landed wealth and position in the feudal order. The Emperor built a modern state apparatus initially filled with members of the same class and their educated offspring further strengthening their hold on the state and their economic power. Positions in the bureaucracy also became the source of power, socioeconomic privileges, prestige and wealth. The modern system of education also added new avenues for the ruling class as it enabled their children to acquire modern know how and recruited into the bureaucracy, enhancing their position. Since positions in the government were not filled on the basis of skills and qualifications, other social sectors were systematically kept away from power. But, as the bureaucracy was expanding and the educational system also produced people who came from modest backgrounds, they started trickling into the system. With the beginning of higher education in the 1950s the return of those sent abroad increasing in number, they were becoming impatient with the dominant position of the aristocracy, the limited opportunities for their own advancement, and the overall pace of reforms. The government itself was divided between factions, the aristocracy on the one hand and the bureaucrats on the other. Though the Emperor Haile Sellassie welded absolute powers, and in later years there were hardly any political challenge to his authority, certain policies were resisted by the landed class whenever they felt their economic interests were at stake. Two important examples of this are the Local Self Administration Act (later proclaimed by the Emperor as an executive order, but never implemented) and the Agricultural Tenancy Proclamation (which never saw the light of the day). The tenancy legislation sought to establish a contractual relationship, enforced by law, between the tenant and the landlord. It was aimed at providing security of tenure to the tenant from arbitrary eviction by the landlord. The provincial self administration legislation was intended to

make provincial administration more responsive to the needs of the local people, and would have introduced elected representatives on the provincial councils. Both of these reforms were attempted in the early 1970s and though not far reaching, they were nevertheless resisted by the landed class through their representatives in parliament.

Historically, and for most of the pre-1870s period the power of the emperors was relatively weak, and checked by that of powerful regional chiefs, who were able to collect taxes and mobilize their own fighting forces from the peasantry, and often challenging the emperors by force. Under Emperor Haile Selassie, centralization, the establishment of a paid professional army and civilian bureaucracy had tilted the balance of power in favor of the emperor. By the 1970s the excessive centralization of the state also became a liability, both to imperial power and that of the entire landed aristocracy. As domestic problems worsened, the Emperor resorted to directing his attention to foreign affairs, and his advanced age further contributed to weakening the state further, as it lost direction. Eventually, the outbreak of yet another famine disaster, coupled with the global oil crisis and falling commodity prices, resulted in an economic crisis leading to a political crisis for which the regime was ill prepared.

### **The Social and Economic Background of Revolution**

Peasant rebellion, student demonstrations, and workers unrest had been common for much of the 1950s and 1960s. But, when this was joined by a rebellion in the ranks of the armed forces in 1974, it was organized by the lower ranks, which was unexpected and for which the regime was not prepared at all. The higher ranks among the officer corps were fully integrated into the aristocracy and the bureaucratic class and were considered part of the ruling

establishment. Thus, the factors that historically checked and balanced the power of the monarchy also became a constraint on the Emperor's powers not only to initiate reforms, but also to organize resistance to the military rebellion. The power of the state was centralized in the person of the emperor, and the emperor depended mainly on the armed forces to execute his authority. Faced by growing popular unrest and rebellion in the armed forces, the emperor and his regime were unable to respond effectively to the new situation. The fragmentation, cleavages and weaknesses in the ruling class further constrained imperial power from initiating reforms, or initiating effective measures to quell the rebellion and defend the regime. The short term interests of the ruling class rather hindered the achievement of long term national objectives. In other words, narrow short term class power and keeping other social segments out of power inhibited safeguarding long term class interests, and the achievement of national goals.

In addition to the balance of power between the monarch and the landed aristocracy there were other factors that contributed to the stagnation and inaction of the state. The power of the land owning strata limited the power of the state as it constituted a barrier between the state and society, particularly the peasant masses. The landed class not only exercised direct control over the peasantry, but also exerted powerful influence on the state offices. Regional and provincial governors, both houses of parliament, were dominated by the aristocracy and they further maintained power through patronage, marriage, and other links to the officer corps of the armed forces and police.

The Ethiopian monarchy also remained a very personalistic and patrimonial institution, and was unable to transcend this and create a distinction between public and private realms. It was, therefore, unable to initiate changes to further economic development and national progress.

The Ethiopian ruling elite has been highly factionalized, and the only factor that kept it together was the person of the Emperor. The strife and fractures in the ruling class also made it difficult to design a cohesive response to growing internal and external challenges. The advanced age of the Emperor not only made it difficult for him to maintain his firm grip, but also further contributed to more factionalization and rivalry as the question of succession also became a pressing subject for debate within the ruling class, especially after the crown prince was incapacitated following a stroke in 1972.

Because the reach of the central state to the periphery was mediated by the local and provincial lords, the state's reach and authority were greatly limited. Regional and provincial officials were appointed from the center; but while some were laws to themselves, many depended on the local landed class for local governance. These officials were lowly paid, and in the case of lower level functionaries they were not paid at all; they lived on their positions and corrupt practices, and as a result were neither efficient nor neutral administrators. The lower level functionaries depended on free peasant labor, and they were also allowed to keep a certain percentage of the taxes they collected for the state as compensation for their services. These offices were hereditary, and these local chiefs also exercised judicial powers.

Like all other African states, the manner of Ethiopia's integration into the global economy has had adverse implications for the country's political economy. Ethiopia was integrated into the global capitalist system following its constitution into an empire state during the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is at this historical juncture that the process of internal hierarchical centralization of the state amid an externally oriented economic structure to support the internal structures began. Both of these policies have had serious implications for the

viability of the state as they impeded the development of a horizontal political and economic integration. This has been a result of the policies pursued after the conquests, which left the conquered territories with an agrarian structure that reduced the southern peasantry to landless tenants and serfs, with northern landlords dividing up the conquered lands and population, while the northern peasantry remained small holder peasants with excessive fragmentation of holdings under an archaic land tenure system.

After the conquest, one of the critical factors in building and sustaining the empire has been foreign trade in the global system. Foreign trade was used by Ethiopian rulers to expand the empire and maintain the ethnic based hierarchical centralization of the state. Ethiopia's early integration into the global system took the form of exchanging gold, ivory, coffee and slaves acquired from the conquered regions to buy firearms that facilitated further expansion and raids. This trade was mainly conducted through the intermediary of foreign merchants. Some of these foreign merchants played important roles in the state, and in the consolidation of the empire. Descendants of some of these merchants served in the imperial regime until its collapse in 1974.

After the end of the brief Italian occupation, a small commercial sector still dominated by expatriate businessmen emerged, mostly based on imports of goods for the consumption of the ruling elite. In order to finance these imports, export of cash crops was encouraged. In the past, the state depended on extraction of surplus primarily from the peasantry. The traditional army of the state was irregular, periodically mobilized for war and lived off the peasants. With the expansion of the state and the setting up of a bureaucracy, military garrisons and a standing army, the state required regular revenue for its expenditure. Therefore, it turned to foreign trade to augment its revenue. Government policy and market forces encouraged the direction of

resources towards this sector, and in due course it became to be viewed as the engine for growth and transformation of the economy.

Even the emergence of the commercial sector was a spontaneous development at the beginning, resulting from the needs of the local and expatriate elite. Therefore, until the 1950s, the Ethiopian government did not even start thinking about economic development, though there were some innovations beginning in 1900 with the setting up of telegraph and telephone lines, introduction of electricity to the imperial palace, and the laying of the Franco-Ethiopian Railway line between Addis Ababa and Djibouti. However, these were necessitated by a desire to exert power over the much expanded space of the empire.

The period following the Second World War was also a period of independence struggles in Africa and, for the first time the Ethiopian ruling elite started looking at their position in Africa, as the colonial powers with whom they established close ties were about to depart. In comparison Ethiopia also found itself in the position of lagging behind many of the African colonial territories, despite claiming the longest independent statehood on the continent. Thus, towards the close of the 1950s, the imperial regime began thinking about a planned development of the economy as it was also encouraged by its external allies. Three Five Year Development Plans (1958-1973) were promulgated during the life of that regime, and a fourth one was to be pursued when the regime collapsed in 1974. The first plan was supposed to develop infrastructure, and the second industry, while the third one was to develop agriculture (IEG, TFYP). The first plan was drafted by Yugoslav experts, and the second and the third with some input from UN and World Bank advisors. The third plan's emphasis, at least on paper, on agriculture (which employed more than three quarters of the population and accounted for two

thirds of export earnings) was a result of pressures from the World Bank and other donor agencies, especially the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), which was engaged in a rural development project in the Arsi region at the time. A closer look at these plans however, clearly demonstrates that the direction of investment was towards the commercial sector. This economic policy led landlords (most landlords were also government officials and businessmen) to pressure their tenant farmers to produce cash crops instead of food crops, while others started evicting peasants from their ancestral lands to leave room for large scale farming of exportable cash crops.

Despite a disproportionate share of the investment, however, the commercial sector remained a minor enclave in the economy and a very volatile one depending on an uncertain world market. In fact, by the early 1970s it had stagnated, owing to the world recession at the time resulting in deteriorating terms of trade and declining price of commodities. These and several other factors coupled with drought produced a serious economic crisis, including the devastating famine outbreak of the early 1970s. The genesis of the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution lies in this economic crisis. The effect of the world oil price increases of this period was even catastrophic for an already weak economy. With a weak domestic base, the economy could not withstand the shock. This externally oriented economic system also prevented the development of an internal market, which in turn inhibited internal economic and national integration. The modern and commercial sector was also geographically limited and remained an enclave around the capital, Addis Ababa, and Asmara, and the other regions remained peripheral as in many other respects.

The 1974 revolution was a culmination of decades of scattered struggle by the popular masses. Every decade after the end of Italian occupation witnessed peasant uprisings in one region after the other: in the regions of Shewa and Sidamo in the 1950s, in Bale and Gojjam in the 1960s. The first trade unions also came into being in the 1950s, and put forward demands for better working conditions and pay for workers. The 1960s also witnessed increasing radicalization among students, who in 1965 ushered in a new era of struggle with a slogan 'land to the tiller,' and since then student demonstrations and agitation becoming annual affairs. Meanwhile, the condition of the ranks of the armed forces was also deteriorating especially in the outlying garrisons. The war against the independence movement in Eritrea, and defending the empire from the threats and subversion of neighboring Somalia, under harsh conditions, were also sapping morale among soldiers, as they were ill equipped to face the growing challenges.

The immediate triggering factor for the revolution was a famine outbreak in region of Wollo in 1972, and when the regime tried to cover up the extent of the disaster, university students came out in protest drawing attention to the famine. Then came the 1973 global oil crisis, and when the regime doubled the price of petrol, taxis went on strike, followed by that of teachers over a World Bank instigated unpopular educational policy. Students joined the protests by boycotting classes, holding sit in strikes, and demonstrations. These popular protests were finally joined by mutinies in the armed forces. The popular pressure forced the government to resign and the Emperor came up with a new one. He also set up a constitutional commission, and ordered a review of the constitution to initiate political reforms. He also set up an inquiry commission to investigate corruption and abuse of authority in the government. But, it was too little too late, and the Emperor himself was eventually deposed by a committee of the armed



forces, police, and territorial militia. The committee, which became known as the *Dergue*<sup>39</sup>, assumed state power on September 12, 1974, nearly seven months after the start of the popular uprising, calling itself the Provisional Military Administration Council (PMAC).

The popular uprising of 1974 which brought about the Ethiopian Revolution was thus precipitated by the dismal economic performance at home and the inability to withstand external pressures, as well as the failure of the regime to tackle external domination and internal inequalities. These issues were articulated in leaflets, popular meetings, and the in the press during the revolutionary upsurge. The military regime that came to power in 1974 recognized these fundamental failures of the economy. One issue raised during the popular protests was the growing inequality, and in an apparent response to that the military regime declared that it would be guided by a socialist policy. It followed this by the abolition of the system of agricultural tenancy and nationalized all land. It carried out further nationalizations, including industry, urban landed property, and wholesale and import and export business. The nationalizations were so extensive that even retail business, like grocery stores were included. The solutions the military regime attempted were far reaching, but faced with external and internal challenges to the revolution, its priority was one of survival, and was thus unable to turn the tide in the economic fortunes of state. In fact the seventeen years rule of the *Dergue* was a period of economic decline, as the annual growth rate was consistently in the negative, except for a few years (Easterly, 2006: 7). The nationalizations not only overburdened the state bureaucracy, but also became a source of corruption and nepotism.

---

<sup>39</sup> *Dergue* means committee in Amharic, but the word was not in everyday usage until then.

## **The Collapse of the Revolutionary Regime**

The revolutionary regime tried to implement profound changes in the society. The land reform was seen as an emancipation of millions of the peasantry from feudal bondage. The reform also included organization of peasants at all administrative levels including at the national level. Other social groups like artisans and crafts people were freed from social subjugation and stigma. Youth, women, and professional groups were all organized, and public debates were conducted about the social position of various sectors of society. The regime not only abolished the monarchy but also separated church and state. For the first time, Moslem holidays were recognized as national holidays. The regime also recognized the multinational character of Ethiopia and sought to redress some of the injustices in this regard. It allowed radio broadcasts and newspapers in Oromo and a few other languages. It launched a literacy campaign in fifteen of the country's languages. It declared that it would recognize the right to self government through regional autonomy for the various national groups. In short, in a marked departure from its predecessor, the *Dergue* attempted a policy of national integration. For a society that was slumbering under feudalism and national oppression these measures had far reaching implications, but the regime faced stiff resistance from all corners. In order to stay in power it turned extremely violent, even turning its early supporters into enemies. In the early period of the revolution, the regime was consumed by internal power struggles, resolved through violence. The urban centers saw some of the worst violence witnessed since the days of the Italian occupation. Summary executions of suspected opponents became the order of the day, and were often glorified on public media. Tens of thousands of people were rounded up and kept in

prisons for years; many were executed. Tens of thousands of youth flock into exile or joined the various armed opposition groups.

These actions only increased opposition to the revolutionary government, which was confronted with a host of organized opposition to its rule from the beginning, both domestic and foreign. On the right of the political spectrum the overthrown classes, particularly monarchists, landlords and other propertied classes who lost their wealth in the land reform and the series of nationalizations took to the bush to organize armed opposition, while others went into exile. The right eventually regrouped and organized under the Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU) and launched an armed opposition from the Northwest of the country with logistical and other support from the Sudanese military. The left was more divided. One wing grouped around the All-Ethiopia Socialist Movement (known by its Amharic acronym MEISON) initially supported the military regime, helping it to acquire the organizational skills and leftist slogans, but soon fell out with it as soon as the soldiers felt confident enough to go about organizing without the need for support from civilian leftists. The other wing represented by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) tried to unseat the military through an armed urban insurrection by infiltrating the armed forces and the military council itself. After that attempt collapsed, the military council unleashed a reign of terror in the urban areas, and the EPRP withdrew to a rural based armed struggle in the northern part of the country. What eventually turned out to be the more dangerous was the nationalist opposition, represented by three main forces. There were the two Eritrean armed organizations, the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), as well as the Tigrean People's Liberation Front (TPLF) in the north. In the south the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) also emerged, with the potential of organizing

Ethiopia's single largest national group. In the east emerged the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) organized, armed, and supported by the regime of the Somali Republic.

The external opposition included two elements, regional and international. The regional opposition came first from Somalia, which saw the revolutionary turmoil in Ethiopia as a golden opportunity to fulfill its long cherished objective of Greater Somalia at the expense of its neighbors, principally Ethiopia. After infiltrating large numbers of guerilla elements and intelligence operatives beginning in 1975, Somalia launched an all out military offensive with its regular military forces in 1977, capturing more than one fifth of Ethiopia. In 1978, Ethiopia managed to reverse these military gains with massive weapons and logistical support from the Soviet Union and troops from Cuba and South Yemen. Somalia also backed the Eritrean and Tigrean liberation movements with arms, training and other support. Until its collapse in 1991, the Somali regime provided diplomatic passports and end user certificates to these fronts for the purchase of arms and ammunition from China and several other sources.<sup>40</sup> The other regional opposition came from Sudan. Sudan not only backed the royalist opposition represented by the EDU, but also provided safe havens and logistical and supply routes to the Eritrean and Tigrean fronts, and later on the Oromo Liberation Front as well. This support was stepped up after a failed military uprising led by the Umma Party and the Ansar sect against the Sudanese military regime in 1976. Though doubtful due to the internal turmoil of the period, the Sudanese regime accused Ethiopia of involvement in that uprising. In the final months of the military regime, the Sudanese army provided vital logistical support to the Tigrean and Eritrean insurgents.

---

<sup>40</sup> Personal information; some of these were collected from senior Somali government and military officials in Mogadishu in 1989 and 1990.

Most unsettling for the regime was the international opposition, headed by the United States. The United States initially tried to win over the military regime from the Soviet camp, but eventually gravitated towards subverting it internally and externally. Sudan became the main hub of the subversion against the Ethiopian regime. At the beginning, it was done under the cover of providing humanitarian assistance to the internally displaced people in the rebel held areas, initially established by a consortium of Scandinavian church groups under the Norwegian Church Aid (NCA). An Emergency Relief Desk (ERD) was established to channel all European and American aid to the rebel groups and the civilian population under their control.<sup>41</sup> Especially after 1985, taking the terrible famine that hit northern Ethiopia as a pretext, the flow of all sorts of aid was stepped up. After the then American Vice President George H. Bush visited the Eritrean and Tigrean refugees in Eastern Sudan, the flow of aid became massive. Thus, Ethiopia, along with Afghanistan and Angola became one of the last theatres of the Cold War, and the military regime became a victim of that international struggle. With all these forces arraigned against it, that the military regime survived seventeen years is surprising. The survival can be attributed mainly to the support it earned from the southern peasantry due in large part to the one popular measure it took, the land reform, which freed them from the shackles of serfdom.

When it first came to power on the wave of the popular revolution in 1974, the military council pledged that it would restore civilian rule and then return to the barracks. But, it soon reneged on that promise, on the grounds that in the absence any organized revolutionary party, the armed forces were the only organized force available to defend the gains of the revolution. It

---

<sup>41</sup> For an account of the cross border operation of channeling supplies to rebel held areas in northern Ethiopia by western agencies through the Sudan, a book commissioned and published by those involved in the operation after it ended with the overthrow of the Ethiopian regime in 1991 (Duffield and Prendergast, 1994).

then began forming such a party, which took ten years to accomplish. The vanguard party, the Workers Party of Ethiopia (WPE) came into being in 1985, and two years later after thirteen years of the provisional government, the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (PDRE) was formally established with all the Soviet style structures and a lot of fanfare. A new constitution came into force, which established the leading role of the party, and a single chamber National Assembly, a state Council of the Assembly, and a Council of Ministers. Each of the newly created twenty four administrative regions, and five autonomous regions were also to have their own assemblies. One of the autonomous regions, Eritrea was promised a more substantial autonomy than the rest. However, once again it was too late too little, and none of these measures could address the serious political crisis of the Ethiopian state, and it was rejected outright by all the principal rebel movements. On the one hand, the armed regional opposition in the north was gaining ground, with substantial external support flowing to them. On the other hand in 1989 the general staff of the armed forces, the very people included into the top echelons of the party and the State Council attempted to stage a coup, but their bid collapsed after a bloody confrontation with the regime's loyalist troops. The aftermath of the coup and the vengeful actions of the regime had fateful consequences for the regime and the Ethiopian state that existed after 1952, and the very idea of the Ethiopian state that the regime claimed to have been defending for seventeen years. The elite officer corps of the Ethiopian armed forces was decimated, as the result of the bloody confrontation and executions. In the wake of the collapse of the coup, and the vengeful actions of the regime, the huge Ethiopian armed forces, the largest in Africa, started disintegrating. In May 1991, the dictator Mengistu fled to Zimbabwe, leading to the disintegration of all institutions, and the collapse of the regime. He was briefly replaced by

the vice president, Tesfaye Gebre-Kidan, who immediately set up an interim government, and even released many of the political prisoners. But, the army was disintegrating and power was already slipping away from the regime.

### **The Post-Cold-War Regime**

The collapse of the *Dergue* regime brought immense relief to the people, but the replacement was greeted with a great deal of apprehension. The military regime had either imprisoned all those critical of its rule or driven them to join the armed opposition, or go into exile. The regime made sure that there was no other alternative, but itself. This meant that, when the regime collapsed the people had no alternative, and once again, the regional armed insurgents who descended on the capital from the north conquered state power. By 1991, two regional insurgencies could muster sufficient force to replace the vacuum left by the *Dergue*. Thus, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front entered the Eritrean capital Asmara, effectively declaring independence, and the Tigray People's Liberation Front entering Addis Ababa with the full military backing of the former. The third insurgent group, the Oromo Liberation Front had a much wider appeal, since the Oromo constitute close to half the population of Ethiopia, but it did not manage to organize sufficient fighting forces to come close to the capital. It even failed to take advantage of the collapse of the *Dergue* regime by effectively and efficiently deploying the fighting forces under its command by taking over large territories, and improve its bargaining position.

Therefore in effect, power fell into the hands of the EPLF in Asmara and the TPLF Addis Ababa. For the Ethiopian state elite, the main concern became that of the division of the state

into two, with Eritrea effectively separated, and the insurgent group that took over the capital endorsing that. Prior to the fall of Addis Ababa, in May 1991, the United States sponsored a conference four parties, the WPE/*Dergue* regime, the EPLF, the TPLF, and the OLF, to discuss the formation of an all inclusive transitional government. However, this was done without any cease fire, and the United States also played a dishonest role.<sup>42</sup> While it was sponsoring these talks in London, the US was on the one hand encouraging the insurgent groups to move towards the capital and take over, and on the other negotiating with the interim government to surrender the city to the rebel groups. On the day the US sponsored conference was to take place the TPLF entered the capital and took over the state assuming power under an assumed name of the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). The TPLF then formed a provisional government and agreed to convene a conference of all parties in Addis Ababa within one month to work out and agree on a transitional government.

During the first week of July 1991 the proposed conference was convened, with the principal parties being the TPLF and the OLF, as well as several smaller parties and hastily put together groupings present. Most of the pan Ethiopian parties, principally the left wing parties, the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Party (EPRP) and the All Ethiopian Socialist Movement (MEISON) were excluded from the beginning, because the TPLF did not want them. In other words, all those parties who could pose a challenge to the legitimacy of the TPLF, and/or create obstacles to facilitating the independence of Eritrea were excluded from the outset. The OLF also presented a serious challenge to the TPLF, but the latter needed it to be present in the transitional government to give the appearance of a broad representation, but without sharing in the exercise

---

<sup>42</sup> I was at the London conference and subsequent talks with the US government before and after the conference as part of the OLF delegation, and later as a member of the Transitional Government.



of any real power. The United Nations, the Organization of African Unity, the European Union, members of the UN Security Council and all the neighboring states were invited and took part in the conference as observers. The EPLF also chose to sit in the conference as an observer. The conference had only two agenda items, the Charter of the Transitional Period, and Relations with the EPLF. The first item was resolved and a two years period of transition was agreed upon (TGE, 1991). The Transitional Government of Ethiopia was subsequently established, with the TPLF and the OLF as the principal partners. The EPLF chose to set up a separate government in Asmara, but was also in the background of the transitional government. The second item on the agenda was discussed but never resolved.

The transitional government however collapsed in less than a year, the TPLF declaring war on its erstwhile partner, the OLF and the latter leaving the TGE. The TPLF however, continued to rule in the name of the transitional government for another three years. The regime also requested the United Nations to facilitate the independence of Eritrea, the first such case, and in 1993 Eritrea formally declared independence and joined the United Nations, making Ethiopia a landlocked state. The TPLF regime was the first to recognize the new state. In 1994 a Constituent Assembly, made up of TPLF and its surrogates, was elected, which approved a constitution that, in theory set up a federal government of nine regional states, five of them dominated by the principal national groups, and the rest multinational regions (FDRE, 1995). A general election was conducted in 1995, contested by the TPLF without any challenger and power was ‘transferred’ from the TGE to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE). In practice, however power remained centralized under the dominant party and the coercive

apparatus of the state, the army and security services, loyal only to the core leadership of the ruling party.

While retaining Amharic as the language of the federal government, the TPLF also introduced a language policy that allowed students to get primary education in their mother tongue and for the major languages to be used in regional and local administration. This was a marked departure from its predecessor, which considered imposing a single language as a medium of integration and unity. But, the new regime reintroduced the hierarchical stratification of ethnic groups, reminiscent of the practices of the imperial regime. The ruling party the EPRDF is hierarchically centralized under the TPLF, with three other member groups supposedly representing the three principal federal regions of the state. The TPLF has always been at the top, with next in hierarchy being the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM), and the Oromo People's Democratic Organization and the Southern Ethiopian Peoples' Democratic Front at the bottom of the hierarchy.

Like all its predecessors however, the principal source of power is force and the regime's control over the coercive apparatus of the state, manned and controlled principally by members of the TPLF. As the aftermath of the 2005 elections demonstrated as we saw in the first chapter of this dissertation, for the TPLF, like all its predecessors, repression and violence remain the primary methods the regime employs to rule and stay in power. With its policies, the regime has angered two principal sections of the population, and as a result there is considerable opposition to the regime coming from these sectors. Due to its policy of what is now known as ethnic federalism, on the one hand it has angered the traditional Ethiopian state elite, principally the Amhara, but by no means restricted to them, who consider these policies as a recipe for the

disintegration of Ethiopia. They have also not forgiven the TPLF for endorsing Eritrea's independence. Many still harbor the hope of at least gaining access to the sea, and this includes many Tigreans, even within the ruling party.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, its repression and centralized dominant one party rule has not satisfied the Oromo, and other national groups who seek more autonomy, and/or greater participation in the central government and the decision making structures of the state as their position allows them. Since its withdrawal from the transitional government in 1991, the OLF has continued an armed insurgency against the TPLF regime. Likewise the regime faces similar insurgencies in the Ogaden region, and several other groups in Southern and Western Ethiopia. Following the break in relations and outbreak of hostilities between the TPLF and the Eritrean ruling group in 1998, most of these insurgencies are supported by the regime in Eritrea. However, despite the array of internal opposition, the regime enjoys tremendous good will and support from the United States in particular and Western powers in general. The Clinton Administration considered the Ethiopian Prime Minister as belonging to a new breed of 'progressive' and 'democratizing' African leaders, and used his regime in the effort to destabilize the Islamist regime Sudan. The Bush Administration regarded him as a vital ally in the 'War on Terrorism.' As the result the United States has become the principal patron, facilitating military assistance and vital economic support to the TPLF regime, a factor that has emboldened the regime to continue its repressive practices at home, and aggression in the neighboring states, including its invasion and occupation of Somalia in 2006.

---

<sup>43</sup> An opposition party formed by former TPLF leaders purged by the Prime Minister in 2001 over differences of policy on Eritrea, have included provisions for reclaiming access to the Sea through Eritrea as part of their political program.

Thus, there are fundamental similarities among the three Ethiopian regimes that came to power in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the principal similarity being in their method of assuming and maintaining power. All three assumed power through violence, and their internal legitimacy is contested. As a result, all of them employed repression and violence to maintain power. The military has been the fundamental basis of their power, and all three can best be described as military autocracies. At the same time all three depended on the support of external patrons. The imperial regime adopted first Britain, and later the United States as its patron. The military regime created the necessary ideological basis, and adopted the Soviet Union as its principal patron, and once again the United States is back as the patron of the post 1991 regime. External patronage has therefore been critical for the survival of these regimes, as they have been challenged internally and regionally. All of them were unable never able to achieve internal cohesion, not just in the state, but even among the ruling elite. The social basis of the regimes, the method of rule, and the internal challenges is the focus of the next chapter.

## **Chapter V**

### **The Ethiopian State: Internal Challenges and the Intersections of Class, Ethnicity, Region and Religion**

The preceding survey of the history of the Ethiopian state documents expansion, conquests, violence, political instability, and the personalized culture of power, as enduring characteristics of the state. Another enduring feature has been the continuous challenges, both internal and external. Consequently, despite this long history of statehood, Ethiopia has been unable to consolidate a viable state. In other words, it remains a state in the making. Therefore this part of the dissertation focuses on the internal and external factors that inhibited stability and reforms, and continue to bedevil the state even a century after it was first formed. Specifically, this chapter deals with the internal challenges to the state, including the missed opportunities of reforms, problems associated with personalized power and elite fragmentation, the relationship between the state and society, ethnicity, the system of patronage, the structures and methods of social control, and the implications. First we will look at the internal factors, including the structure of the ruling class, the relationship between the state and the people and the structure, institutions and conduct of the state. The aim of this chapter is therefore to look into the internal factors that have inhibited state consolidation and contributed to the crisis of state legitimacy.

The Ethiopian victory over the Italians at the Battle of Adowa in 1896 was historically a significant achievement, and should have heralded the emergence of Ethiopia into the modern World as an economically successful state and a regional power, just as Japan's victory over Russia in 1904 established it as a power to be reckoned with. The comparison with Japan has

been made in the past, including by a few Ethiopians. One of these, an Ethiopian author, Kebede Mika'el wrote a book (in Amharic) in the 1960s entitled, "*Japan Endemin Seletenech?*" (How did Japan Develop?).<sup>44</sup> The book disappeared from circulation, not long after it was published. But, it was a book that was talked about in intellectual circles, and caught my attention very early in my youth. I later learned that it was banned by the government. I reread the book recently, and it discusses the reforms carried out in Japan following the Meiji restoration, in industry, in education, literature, and various other areas. It makes comparisons of how Ethiopia could be in an even better position, considering the resource base of the two states, Japan being very poor in resources, and Ethiopia endowed with resources. He discussed the role of the feudal military elite in the two and half centuries before the restoration, and how Japan stagnated then and how changes were introduced with the Meiji restoration. The author makes clear suggestions that if Ethiopia took a similar course, it could also put itself on the path of social and economic progress. From the disappearance of the book from circulation, it was quite obvious that the Emperor Haile Selassie's government and the aristocracy considered the indications in the book as a call for the restructuring and reform of the state. Apparently, they did not see that allusion favorably, and considered the book as not only offensive, but also subversive.<sup>45</sup> The point here is that what the book indicated was the frustrations of many in Ethiopia with socioeconomic and political stagnation.

There are lessons to be learned from the experiences of others, and though external factors can sometimes work as catalysts, the decisive factors for socioeconomic and political

---

<sup>44</sup> The book was reprinted recently (Mika'el, 1999 EC)

<sup>45</sup> Emperor Haile Sellassie was also known to be jealous of people who came up with original and constructive ideas, because as 'Elect of God,' and 'the Light of Ethiopia,' among his many titles, he was the only source of all wisdom, knowledge and all good for the empire and his 'beloved people,' as he called them.

change emanate essentially from an internal process, and in this process there are many factors that determine success or failure. As the successes of Japan and others that have followed a similar path have demonstrated, there are necessary combinations of social, political, and institutional factors that are critical in organizing social and economic progress.

### **Reforms: Missed Opportunities**

Given Ethiopia's status in Africa as the one state that remained independent in the face of the colonial partition of the continent, it is legitimate to ask the question why it was unable to undertake the leap forward that Japan was able to achieve. To be able to make the comparisons and see where Ethiopia failed, it is appropriate to briefly discuss how Japan transformed itself, the factors that helped it and the social forces behind the reforms. There is one important point that the comparisons with Japan have also missed. The 1904 Japanese victory over Russia was the result of over thirty years of reforms carried out by the Meiji reformers; thus Japan was already rising as an economic and military power in the region, a fact demonstrated by its crushing defeat of Russia. The victory was an outcome of an internal process already at work. The Meiji reformers were able to end two and half centuries of military autocracy, restored institutional authority, and carry out social, economic and political reforms that laid down the foundations of transformation from a backward feudal society to a great industrial and economic power. The Emperor, a teen ager at the time, was restored to formal authority, but power was exercised by the reformers below him. This allowed institutional reign to reside in the Emperor, but actual administrative, economic and political decisions to be made by the reforming elite and implemented by an efficient bureaucratic system, copied from the Prussian bureaucracy. Thus

Japan's emergence was preceded by internal changes and transformations within the Japanese state, which helped build its economic and military power.

The significance of the example of the Meiji reforms for our discussion is the existence of an alliance of conscious class and social forces committed to reforms and the achievement of stated national goals. The reforms were carried out from above and the reformers included three important sectors of the Japanese ruling class. They included a section of the feudal class who were enlightened enough and were eager to strengthen Japan's position in the world, the bureaucratic class who wanted to modernize Japan along the lines of the West, and a section of the military elite, lower ranking members mainly from the regional bases (Benson and Matsumura, 2001: 13-14). In other words, the economic, political and military elite were united in strengthening the state and achieving the national goals of renewal, progress and national survival in the face of threats from the West. The coalescence of the alliance of these class and social forces was therefore crucial in laying the foundations for and the implementation of strategic reforms in the political and economic spheres. Until the Meiji restoration, the feudal-military structure in Japan represented stagnation, and therefore, the reform of the state was decisive, and once it was reformed, the state became an important engine of social and economic progress.

Social and economic development is a national undertaking and requires vision, collective action, the mobilization of the human and material resources available, organizing and directing them towards the achievement of national objectives. The 1896 victory over the Italians was important as it not only helped the Ethiopian state to survive, but also heralded Ethiopia's entry into the community of states. However, it did not propel it into the modern age, as Ethiopia



continued to slumber as a medieval tributary feudal kingdom. At the urgings of his European advisers, as well as due to his own failing health, the Emperor Menelik did introduce some reforms, like naming a successor and establishing a ministerial system during the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These reforms were however not significant, in that they were unable to alter both the structure and the culture of political power, as power was gained or lost by force. The ministers who surrounded Menelik were all leading members of the nobility and did not function individually or collectively as executive officers of the state, as political, administrative, and judicial powers remained in the hands of the Emperor, and the power brokers inside the palace. After the death of the Emperor the succession failed as we have seen. The ministerial system was cosmetic in the first place and thus was easily abolished during the regency of Haile Selassie. Emperor Haile Selassie reintroduced the ministerial system after he acceded to the throne in 1930. Most important was the regional and provincial administration which remained a fiefdom of the victorious warlords of the conquest. These warlords ruled their respective domains by establishing military garrisons, and the provisions and personal services were provided by the conquered peoples. Haile Selassie did introduce some of the trappings of a modern state, like the introduction of a written constitution, and the setting up of a standing army, a rudimentary civil service, and even a parliament filled by the regional lords and landed gentry appointed by the Emperor. His reforms were however, dictated by two factors. The first one was to weaken his rivals by centralizing the state under his personal authority, and the second one was to impress his external backers by giving the appearance of being a modernizer.

The Ethiopian elite squandered a historic opportunity to reform the state, modernize it, integrate the newly conquered peoples into the state and embark upon the development of social,

economic and political institutions that would guarantee national survival and independence. Instead they lapsed into internal feud, decay and self destruction that came to haunt the state within a generation. Similar opportunities have come and been squandered several times. After the liberation in 1941, the state and the ruling classes reverted back to their old habits. In fact, history has been generous to Ethiopia, as decades later within a single generation, in 1974, and again in 1991, Ethiopia was presented with similar historic opportunities to recast the state and make it more meaningful to the people, and become a vehicle for embarking upon a program of renewal and progress. However, as it turned out, the ruling classes were content with using the state as a tool for personal and sectarian gains, control and repression. This is an outcome of the nature of personalized politics, as reforms are considered a threat to personal power. Naturally political reforms would include the establishment of rules and procedures, and therefore the institutionalization of decision making and politics in general, curbing personal and arbitrary use of power. Rules and procedures may establish criteria of skills and qualifications to fill public positions, and this does not favor those who depend on birth, patronage and clientelism to hold and benefit from public office. To this day, the political system in Ethiopia has been unable to transform itself beyond personal rule and remains one of a personalized military autocracy.

There were differences in approach as to how the different regimes pursued their policies. In the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were two short-lived attempts at integrating elements from those left on the periphery of the state into the Ethiopian polity. The first such attempt was one under Lij Iyasu, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but due to a combination of factors it was aborted by the Shewan coup d'etat of 1916. After the 1974 revolution the military regime attempted for the first time to integrate people from the political periphery also through a policy

of assimilation and excessive centralization, but with some earnest efforts of expansion of education, recruitment into party structures, government service and the armed forces. The regime also for the first time openly recognized the multinational character of the state. It even promised the equality of all nationalities, and at least on paper, their right to exercise self determination through regional autonomy. Consequently, the first rebellions against the military regime were from those who had been in the political center. Though for the first time the regime recognized that Ethiopia is a state of several cultures and identities, the policies of assimilation, violence and coercive method of rule, its brutal character, and attempts to eliminate not just all political dissent but also all differences, combined with other factors bred resistance. Eventually, it failed to satisfy anybody for that matter. Those who wanted to erase all national differences through rapid assimilation were unhappy with the slow process. In actual fact one of the major failures the military officers who took power in 1974 leveled against the regime they overthrew was its inability to spread the use of the Amharic language.<sup>46</sup> At the same time, the regime also failed to satisfy those who were struggling for recognition of their rights and expression of their particular national identities. Thus, when we look at the fundamental weakness of the Ethiopian polity we see that it alienated the majority of the population; it marginalized and made a demographically significant nation like the Oromo as peripheral to the state and the political

---

<sup>46</sup> This author was present when the strong man of the regime, Mengistu Haile-Mariam addressed nearly two thousand peasant delegates from all over the Ethiopia at Addis Ababa University in September 1976. The day happened to fall on the death of the Chinese leader Mao Zedong, and when the Ethiopian leader paid tribute to Mao and requested his audience for a minute of silence, the audience, not understanding what he was talking about, made a rapturous applause. They were earlier told through interpreters by their minders from the Ministry of Interior to show their approval of the point Mengistu was making at a point he paused. Mengistu made a comment right there that the incident was a clear testimony to the dismal failure of the old regime in not assimilating the non Amharic speaking peoples of the empire and achieving universal use of Amharic.

system. Since the regimes were assimilationist and exhibited ethno-national characteristics, resistance also naturally took the same ethno-national forms.<sup>47</sup>

### **Personalized Power and Elite Fragmentation**

Like Japan, the Ethiopian state could have achieved a similar status and assured prosperity, freedom and independence for future generations had it taken the necessary steps that would have put it on the path of progress. But, Ethiopia was unable to pull off such a miracle for obvious reasons, and there are several factors that partly explain why this was not possible. One of these, and the crucial factor in Japan's success, was the emergence of a broad alliance of forces committed to reform from within the ruling elite. As we will see later, the Ethiopian ruling class lacked the consciousness and the will, and at various historical junctures the state came to be dominated by forces that resisted all attempts at change for fear of threats to their status and interests. Moreover, Japan was a relatively homogenous and cohesive society, whereas Ethiopia was and continues to be very heterogeneous and extremely fragmented on the grounds of regional, national, ethnic, religious, and class identities.

Most importantly, the ruling class lacked internal cohesion and direction and has been extremely factionalized due to the personalized nature of power. The major factor at the root of this fragmentation was the hierarchically stratified feudal structure. The socioeconomic and political structure of Ethiopia in the prerevolutionary period has been described by many as feudal (Gilkes, 1975). The system can be described as such in terms of the mode of production and distribution, and in terms of a hierarchically organized social structure. However, the system

---

<sup>47</sup> The revolutionary regime attempted both cultural and structural assimilation, but the post revolutionary regime seems to have returned to the pre-revolutionary policies of the ethnically based hierarchical centralization of the state.

was never able to produce a hereditary ruling caste, and this factor partly accounts for the fragmentation within the feudal class. As we have seen, in the ensuing struggle for power during periods of transition, the old class was swept aside and every regime produced a new ruling class. This denied the state the emergence of an enduring, strong and stable class system with a stake in the survival of the state. Even landed property was never permanent, and could be given and taken away depending on the loyalty to the ruler. The state was not only the source of access to power, but also to wealth and prestige. The term that best describes the Ethiopian state is the predatory state.<sup>48</sup>

Hence, there is a certain lack of stability in the elite structure. Every new regime dispossesses those associated with its predecessor, and creates a new class for itself. For example, after Lij Iyyasu was deposed in 1916, all those associated with him lost everything, not only power, but also property. His father was captured, imprisoned and died under miserable conditions. All their property was confiscated. Even small children of Lij Iyyasu were not spared, for no other reason than relationship to the deposed monarch. They were confined for decades and barred from marriage so that they could not reproduce descendants of the deposed monarch. The surviving children of Lij Iyyasu were released from confinement nearly sixty years later after the revolution in 1974.

Thus, after the formation of the modern state, with the expansion during the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Ethiopian state failed to come to terms with the changed character of the

---

<sup>48</sup> Predatory states are those states where those in control of the state plunder resources without regard to the wellbeing of the population in the same way as a predator would have no regard for its prey (Evans, 1989: 562). In predatory states, personal ties are both the source of cohesion and the only links between society and the state, and individual incumbents of power pursue their own personal interests, employing the power of the state to squeeze resources from the society for personal and ruling clique gains (Evans, 1995: 12).

internal dynamics, and face the continued external challenges by creating internal cohesion. The inability to reform the system of personalized autocracy and factionalized ruling class largely accounts for the stagnation in the state's socioeconomic and political life. If what we mean by class is a strata of a population tied together by common interests and conscious of itself, the Ethiopian state has not been able to produce such a caste among the elite. The power struggles that followed the death of the Emperor Menelik, and every subsequent transition in the modern history of the state, underline the lack of stability and solidarity among the ruling classes and the absence of institutional governance. This was at the core of the disarray and lack of centralized resistance in the face of the Italian invasion and successful occupation in 1936. As we have seen from the historical survey in the preceding chapter, the same situation happened in 1974 and again in 1991. In the face of the popular uprising in 1974, the ruling class was so much at odds among themselves that they were unable to present a unified response to the situation. Many even began vying for attention and influence with the military officers, informing on each other and discrediting one another. The spontaneous character of the uprising and its lack of any organized political leadership possessing a clear program could not have toppled the *ancient* regime if the ruling class had been cohesive and able to organize a united response. It was the fragmentation of the ruling class alliance that weakened the regime and exposed it to the revolutionary movement. The armed forces movement had intent of taking over power when it began, but once it saw the crack in the ruling class alliance and the weaknesses of the regime, and urged on by student and civilian activists of the revolution, it stepped in to fill the vacuum.

One of the consequences of the inability to integrate the majority of the population so they identify with the state represents an incomplete elite formation and consolidation. Though

the state has existed for a longer period of time than any other state in Africa, this task remains not only lopsided and distorted, but remains an unfinished task. As a result lack of unity within the ruling class and mutual betrayals even in the face of aggression by external enemies of the state has characterized the Ethiopian ruling classes. On several occasions various factions of the Ethiopian political elite have allied with these enemies against their rivals in the struggle for political power to the extent of weakening the state. Thus, relations between the state and society have not only been weak, but the ruling caste remained riddled with factions working against one another, and political power remained personalized.

### **The State and Society**

The process of territorial expansion and empire building resulted in two important consequences for the Ethiopian state and these are at the core of the fundamental disconnect between the state and society. We have seen how the process was brutal and extremely repressive with the huge loss of life; enslavement; serfdom and the loss of freedom, land, and dignity for millions of people. Most importantly it is the permanent structures of control and the political economy ensuing from the conquest that have stood and still stands in the way of building a viable, legitimate and prosperous state out of the territorial entity today called Ethiopia. On the one hand, the process resulted in a structure of hierarchical centralization of the state (based on ethnic, regional, and religious stratification) that alienated the vast majority of the population. For those who were conquered, the state became a symbol of their loss of freedom, servitude, and exploitation. Their languages, beliefs, history, culture and personalities were systematically degraded, so that they would be convinced and accept their defeat and oppression. Even assimilation and adopting the religion, language, culture and customs of the ruling elite did

not bring the expected benefits. Assimilation had its limits, and the structure was not large enough to accommodate the assimilated. In short, a significant proportion of the population was dehumanized.

On the other hand, Ethiopia's integration into the global capitalist economy took place at this juncture with trade as the main vehicle. The main purpose of trade was to facilitate the expansion of the state, and support the internal political and economic hierarchical structures. Principally, it was geared towards the importation of weapons and to satisfy other consumption needs of the state and the ruling class. It was not directed towards encouraging production and/or any form of social and economic development. Both the political and economic structures have reinforced each other, with serious implications for the viability of the state, impeding socioeconomic and political progress as well as horizontal political and economic integration. The state remained the private sphere of a small class of people around the center of power, the military autocracy.<sup>49</sup> In other words, the state became more and more alienated even from its historical roots, and consequently less and less embedded in the society it claimed to represent. In turn, this failed to enhance the legitimacy of the state. The alienation of the majority from the state resulted in the loss of confidence in the system and any hope of redressing wrongs or getting justice. The state was therefore forced to depend on strengthening the exclusive traditional methods of patronage and clientelism, by supporting a small parasitic class and building the coercive apparatus of the state.

---

<sup>49</sup> The imperial regime, the military regime that replaced it, as well as the post 1991 regime all achieved and maintained power by military means and are essentially based on military organization and military power, despite differences in style and rhetoric. Therefore, I use the concept of 'military autocracy' to refer to all three of them.



## *Patronage*

Despite differences in ideology, rhetoric and style, the method of rule and practices of the three successive regimes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are very much alike. All sought to centralize power, employed repression as a method of control and resource extraction, and used the system of patronage. Among the most important resources at the disposal of the ruling elite, land has been a critical instrument for patronage. In the prerevolutionary period the peasantry constituted part of the resource structure with the land, as they worked the land, paid taxes, tribute, provided other resources and performed a variety of services to the landlords and the state. The status of a landlord was actually measured not by the size of his land but by the number of peasants working on his land. The granting or denial of rights to land has been used by the imperial regime, and the post 1991 regime to reward supporters or to punish opponents.

The resources at the disposal of the state dramatically increased under the military regime, with the series of nationalizations it carried out. The regime utilized access to these resources, their management, trade licenses, foreign travel, and political offices to reward loyal supporters of the regime. Political opponents were not only imprisoned or killed, their trade licenses, property, and even vehicles were confiscated and given to loyalists. Through these and other methods of patronage, a network loyal support for the regime was built in the military, the bureaucracy and the civil society. Both the imperial and military regimes were content with exercising power and control of the state, and they used the economic resources at the disposal of the state to facilitate the military and political control of the state.

The post-1991 regime graduated patronage and clientelism to a new level, and there is a close correlation between personalistic power and clientelistic networks. Even before it assumed power, the TPLF saw the military control of the state as a means of facilitating the accumulation of wealth. For them power must have economic benefits. Owing to its origin as a provincial separatist movement with a narrow base, the regime's legitimacy has been even more precarious when compared to its predecessors. Thus they devised a mechanism not only of military and political control, but also economic control which became the driving force behind their actions. The system of patronage and clientelism is thus built into the system, and the control of economic resources is the main mechanism for mobilizing support and maintaining loyalty. The ruling party has an intricate mechanism of control over resources, and besides the control over state resources and external loans and aid, it also controls much of the private business. Besides those resources already in the hands of the state, allowing for looting of state resources, the party built a network of companies and enterprises including large farms, manufacturing enterprises, banking, insurance companies, trade, mining, construction and transport companies, media, publishing and others, described as the largest single business enterprise "south of the Sahara and north of the Limpopo" (Anonymous, 2006). These businesses are all controlled by the party through an endowment fund under its control. Moreover, it also controls other private companies through its own clients, TPLF loyalists and those of the prime minister. Other businesses not allied to the ruling party are harassed, denied loans, or taxed heavily so that they are unable to make a profit and compete. Sometimes non-party business owners face outright imprisonment on trumped up charges. Furthermore, the party also controls a number of regional development organizations, as well as nongovernmental organizations raising resources from domestic and

foreign sources. The businesses run by the ruling party are controlled by the Endowment Fund for the Rehabilitation of Tigray (EFFORT). It controls over sixty large companies that include banks, insurance companies, manufacturing, agriculture, trade, construction, mining, printing, publishing, media, and many other areas (Anonymous, 2006). In 2008, the prime minister appointed his wife as deputy director of EFFORT, real power of the control of the large business empire in effect residing in her hands (Belete, 2009).

In a study of the relationship between the dominant party (at the head of the federal government) and three affiliated parties (heading the regional governments) in terms of allocation of resources, Chanie (2007) has argued that the basis of the relationship is one of patron-client, rather than actual decentralization of decision making. He argues that the core of the ruling party, the TPLF uses its control of resources of the central government to control its member parties that head the regional governments. The share of the business enterprises and nongovernmental operations is even significantly skewed in favor of the TPLF, as it controls about 90 percent of these businesses, and other member parties of the EPRDF, sharing the rest (Anonymous, 2006). Moreover, other private businesses are also controlled by individual TPLF members and loyalists. In these arrangements we can clearly see the intersection of personalistic and clientelistic power, and the glue linking them and cementing their relations is the use of state power for personal benefits and the accumulation of wealth.

The allocation of resources is also discriminatory, the highest going to the regional base of the prime minister and his associates. The Tigray region has about five percent of the population of Ethiopia, but per capita the region gets 30.6 percent of all capital expenditure, 49.4

percent of federal subsidies, and 16.1 percent of foreign loan and aid (Valfort, 2006: 11). In comparison, the largest region, Oromia, with a population of over 35 percent of the population (and more significantly most of the resources of the state) gets per capita 13.5 percent of capital expenditure, 27.4 percent of federal subsidies, and 6.9 percent of foreign loans and aid (Valfort, 2006: 11). The other main regions the Amhara, and Southern regions fare better but significantly lower that allocations for Tigray (Valfort, 2006: 11). Oromia, Amhara, and Southern Region, among them, have over 80 percent of the population of Ethiopia. These figures are based on official data, which hides the actual reality, and the transfer of resources from the other regions to the power base of the prime minister and his cronies in larger than this and has been going on for nearly two decades.

Moreover, the key figures in the regime are also rewarded with seats on the boards of the major state owned enterprises. For example, the Board of Ethiopian Airlines, a very lucrative enterprise, was headed by the Minister of Defense, and when he fell out with the Prime Minister, he was sacked from that post, and replaced by the Minister of Foreign Affairs in that position. Other regime stalwarts head the boards of the state owned banks, insurance, manufacturing, mining, and other companies. These measures are designed as means of control and also to benefit the individuals.

### ***Emergence of Parasitic Elite***

With the coming to power of Emperor Haile Selassie (*de jure* in 1930, but *de facto* in 1916), a man born in the Eastern region of Harar, to the first governor of that region after it was conquered in 1887, a man with no connections to northern Ethiopia, the process of an increasing

marginalization of the north and its alienation from the state, became more apparent. Though religious, cultural and linguistic ties between the state and the people in the north remained an important basis of the state, the emergence of a rich settler and increasingly urbanized ruling elite with minimal or no social ties to the rural north exacerbated the disconnect between the state class and the northern population. The settler elite, as the economically and politically dominant class, had an antagonistic relationship with the southern peasantry at the same time it lost its ties to its traditional home base in the north. Emperor Haile Selassie was thus the first ruler of the Ethiopian state to have been born and raised outside the traditional northern base of the state. It is interesting to note here that the succession struggle of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century also assumed a regional character. In the struggle with the anointed successor of Menelik, Lij Iyyasu, the major support for Haile Sellaasie's case came from the southern settler elite, while his main opposition and the support for Lij Iyyasu came from Wollo (his father's kingdom), Gojjam, and the rest of the traditional Ethiopian heartland in the north. But, it is important to note here that Lij Iyyasu also managed to garner significant support among the defeated and surviving southern elite, an early indication that he favored a policy of integrating some of the surviving elite among the peoples of the vast southern regions into the state. That was the first brief attempt to come to terms with the expanded and changed character of the state. But, as we have seen, this attempt was quashed by internal reactionary forces and external imperialist powers. We will come back to see the significance of the interplay between the internal and external forces later.

Because, the center of the state had shifted to the south, when Italy invaded Ethiopia again in 1936, the regime could not mobilize the northern population to resist the Italian advances as it did in 1896. In actual fact many northerners, particularly in Tigray and Wollo

defected and fought on the Italian side. Even the northern elite, especially in Tigray soon joined Italian occupation authorities. Among them were leading Tigrean chiefs, Haile Sellassie Gugsa, a son in law of the Emperor himself, and Ras Seyyum Mengesha, as well as many Amhara chiefs like Ras Hailu Tekle-Haymanot of Gojjam and Ras Getachew of Gondar (Mockler, 1984: 278-279, fig. 11).

To maintain the status and support of the ruling elite, the state resorted to further extraction of surplus from the overburdened peasantry. Moreover, throughout the history of the state, the peasantry was forced not only to feed the marauding band of warlords and their soldiers, but were often forced and mobilized for the military adventures of the warlords. At the same time the state resorted to massive repression to quell signs of protest and dissatisfaction from the peasantry. Often peasants from one province were mobilized to suppress peasants of another region. This has continued into the modern period. The revolutionary regime mobilized the peasantry in large numbers to fight its internal and external opponents. In the case of the post 1991 regime, the human and material costs of the senseless 1998-2000 war with Eritrea, whose independence from Ethiopia was facilitated by the same regime, and the costly invasion of Somalia in 2006, and the occupation lasting officially until 2009, the human and material cost has been borne above all by the peasantry.

The consequences of the conquest has been long lasting as it left the conquered territories with an agrarian structure that reduced the peasantry to landless serfs and tenants, with the northern landlords dividing up the conquered lands and population, while the population of the traditional polity by and large remained small holder peasants. The conquest itself was

accomplished with an importation of large amount of arms from Europe. It even became more important after the conquest to continue to import arms in ever larger quantities in order to maintain the state's grip on a greatly expanded territory and control a very large and rebellious subject population. Thus foreign trade became a critical factor in building as well as sustaining the empire. In the early period Ethiopia's integration into the global capitalist system took the form of exchanging gold, ivory, slaves, and coffee, all acquired from the conquered regions, to buy firearms that facilitated further expansion and raids.

### **Ethnicity, Religion, Regionalism and the State**

Compared to most African states, the issue of national identity has been one of the problematic features of Ethiopian politics. This has to do with policies of the dominant political-cultural formation, Amhara. As we have seen Orthodox Christianity has been an important part of the identity of the state. Moreover, and most importantly, Amhara is a linguistic and cultural identity to which potentially anyone can be assimilated. Since the 13<sup>th</sup> century when they came to dominate the Christian Kingdom of Abyssinia, the Amhara primarily increased their number through assimilation. Only through adopting Orthodox Christianity and the Amharic language and culture could one get access to power and privilege. Since then, in traditional Abyssinia, Amharic language and culture became associated with the monarchy and the state. Amharic language was called "*Lissane Negus*" (the language of the king), and therefore even under the Tigrean Emperor Yohannes IV, the court language was Amharic, as it is today under the Tigrean dominated regime. The policy of assimilation however, required complete subordination to the newly acquired identity, the total abandonment of one's original identity. This was neither easily nor quickly achieved.

Even historically, Abyssinia was never able to forge itself into a nation and has always had the feature of a multinational empire. The state “embodied a claim to universal domination” and “sought to govern any people whom it was able to bring under its control” (Clapham, 1988: 23). It sought to impose its own language, culture and values on all the peoples it conquered. But, despite centuries of efforts at forcefully promoting the Amharic language and culture through various means, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, less than a third of the population can speak the language (CSA, 1994). Thus, assimilation was a strategy the state adopted as a legitimating tool. However, the process was fraught with problems. It was basically aimed at cultural assimilation, without the benefit of structural assimilation, the result being not very attractive to those targeted for assimilation.

The transformation of the Ethiopian state between 1870 and 1900 into an empire further altered state society relations even in the northern traditional heartland of the state, as already noted. First, the newly conquered and vanquished peoples lost not only power and dignity, but also their land as they became serfs and slaves. A report by the League of Nations (1935) summarized the treatment and condition of the conquered peoples in the following words:

The inhabitants of the conquered country are registered in families by the Abyssinian chiefs, and to every Abyssinian settled in the country there is assigned one or more families of the conquered as *gebbar*. The *gebbar* family is obliged to support the Abyssinian family; it gives that family its own land, builds and maintains the huts in which it lives, cultivated the fields, grasses the cattle, and carries out every kind of work and performs all possible services for the Abyssinian family. All this is done without remuneration merely in token of perpetual servitude resulting from the defeat sustained thirty years ago (p. 42).

When the regent Tafari applied for Ethiopia’s membership of the League of Nations in 1919, though supported by France and even Italy, the application was rejected due to British objections on account of slavery, and when Ethiopia reapplied in 1923, Britain again opposed on



the same grounds, and concerns about arms traffic,<sup>50</sup> arguing that Ethiopia was not civilized enough to fulfill the obligations that such membership entails (Perham, 1965: 63, 224-25).

Ethiopia was eventually admitted on the second attempt on condition that its government would suppress slavery.<sup>51</sup>

Soldiers, priests and other settlers from the north were settled in their midst, and the vanquished peoples, who were divided up as slaves, servants and serfs among these settlers in numbers based on the rank and seniority of the settlers (Pankhurst, 1968: 155). Moreover, the cultural differences between the dominant elite controlling the state and the newly incorporated peoples, in terms of language, religion and many other aspects was greater. Since they were regarded as subjects and condemned to serve the conquerors, the conquered peoples could not in any way identify with the state, which they considered as an alien and oppressive institution. Secondly, the traditional northern heartland also lost as a result of the conquest. When a large class of the military-feudal and clerical class was transferred to the newly conquered regions, and the state acquired new and more lucrative sources of resource extraction, the north became of marginal importance. Most importantly the settler class in the conquered regions, with severed ties to the north, became the ruling and dominant class.

At the historical juncture of the emergence of the Ethiopian empire the rulers were faced with the reality of how to rule their vastly expanded domain with a hostile population culturally different from them. Initially they sought to depopulate, dehumanize and pacify the new regions

---

<sup>50</sup> The concerns about arms traffic was the result of British fears that arms might end up in its colonies neighboring Ethiopia.

<sup>51</sup> However, the actual suppression of slavery had to wait for the Italian Fascist occupation of 1936-41. Ironically, one of the reasons the Italians presented to the League to justify their occupation was the widespread practice of slavery and the mistreatment of the conquered peoples.

as much as they could. In particular, in the areas where they were faced with stiff resistance, the policy was one of merciless extermination, and entire communities were nearly wiped out as the case of the Kafficho demonstrated. The Kafficho were targeted particularly because they were prosperous and had an elaborate and highly organized system of government, which was superior to anything the Abyssinians could think of at the time. Interestingly, the Kafficho monarchy also claimed descent from the Solomonian dynasty (Greenfield, 1965: 104). The one area where the Abyssinians were superior was in the procurement and possession of European made weapons. In such instances all land and other property was confiscated, distributed to the conquering army and direct rule was imposed with military garrisons set up in the midst of the population. In those areas where the ruling castes were threatened and enticed to submit peacefully, three quarters of the land was confiscated and the remaining quarter distributed among the local elite who collaborated and submitted as a reward for their services. The local elite were also allowed to rule over their people as representatives of the emperor, but only temporarily until the Abyssinians consolidated their position. In all cases they vigorously implemented a policy of assimilation, and enticed the local ruling families to convert to Orthodox Christianity and adopt Amharic culture. These methods were employed to varying degrees of success. In some places, the Abyssinian rulers attempted whole sale assimilation as in Wollo, or indirect rule as they attempted in Leqa in the west. Indirect rule was however only temporary, and was abandoned once the state felt that it was strong enough to impose direct rule. That was what happened to the Kingdom of Jimma, whose autonomy was abolished when Haile Selassie came to power and put under the governorship of Shewan chiefs (Greenfield, 1965: 102). On the whole, however, they were inhibited by technological limits, demography, geography and resistance from

accomplishing the aims of completely destroying the local population or totally assimilating them. They tried to reduce the native population through mass slaughter, famine, disease, dislocation, and slavery. But, it was too large a population to eliminate completely and geography and lack of technological capability posed serious obstacles to accomplish that. Moreover, they did not have enough surplus population in the north and needed the conquered population as slaves and serfs.

The contrast between the Shewan Kingdom and the vastly expanded domain can be understood from just looking at the size. The extent of the Shewan Kingdom at the height of its greatness under its most famous chieftain, Sahle Sellassie, was the size of a district, about two thousand square kilometers in the 1840s (Darkwah, 1975). By 1900 the empire had reached over a million square kilometers. Thus, policing such a large empire with a hostile population required considerable manpower and skills. The policy of assimilation could also be a double edged weapon, and therefore had to be implemented carefully, selectively and individually. Consequently, the state could not rely on the loyalty of the assimilated, especially the first generation. Therefore it had no immediate effect in raising the legitimacy of the state as it was also a very slow process. Even then the main targets of assimilation were the local elite, with the hope that the population would follow them. Since it was selective as well as devoid of structural benefits, the targets of the policy were not attracted to it. As efforts of over a century of this policy have shown, assimilation has failed miserably. In short, successive Ethiopian regimes since the time of Menelik II pursued a policy of hierarchical centralization of the state and forced assimilation of the ruling elite of the conquered peoples, instead of creating the conditions for horizontal political and economic integration of the inhabitants under the state.

Thus one element of the overall failure of the Ethiopian state lies in its inability to recognize and come to terms with the changed characteristics of the polity at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. One role of a state is to be able to address and accommodate conflicting demands and interests in society. The Ethiopian state failed miserably to accommodate conflicting class, national, political, economic and religious interests, and solve developmental problems. Even the policy of assimilation into the dominant culture was rationalized by an ethnocentric denigration of other cultures. Oromo language, history, culture, and traditions were routinely characterized as backward, primitive and savage, to the extent people were ashamed of themselves and as a result many developed what Du Bois called double consciousness.<sup>52</sup> This went on officially until the revolution in 1974. Naturally excessive centralization of power and resources in the hands of narrow parasitic elite, and the exclusion of the majority from the state bred and fostered resentment and alienation. This accounts for the emergence and growth of national liberation movements rejecting the Ethiopian identity and seeking autonomy and/or independence.

### **Implications of Failure of Integration and Reform**

Therefore the constitution of the Ethiopian Empire was a historical anomaly. On the one hand it was historically a late development, and on the other the Ethiopian state was not in the position of the European powers to have a stable and prosperous homeland and hold on to and exploit colonies. The boundaries between heartland and occupied territories were rather fluid and remained so. The most important boundaries were religion and language (which the regime tried to minimize through proselytizing and assimilation, but never effectively). Overall, Ethiopian

---

<sup>52</sup> In his study of African American society, Du Bois discussed about what he called double consciousness, the contradictory views in which African Americans found themselves, one the African Americans' sense of self, and the other the contempt and pity with which the dominant European society saw them (Du Bois, [1903] 1989).

leaders were unable to recognize the historical trajectory, and as a result the state has not integrated the majority of the population within an acceptable political framework. It incorporated their territories into the Ethiopian Empire, but failed to integrate them into the state. As we will see later, though Ethiopia was provided with opportunities at several historical junctures since then, the state failed to seize upon them. One such opportunity came at the beginning of the twentieth century, with the death of the Shewan chief, Emperor Menelik. Let alone integrating the newly conquered peoples, the Shewan dominated elite even failed to unite the historic Abyssinian elites within the new framework. The second opportunity availed itself at the end of the Italian occupation in 1941, followed by the attempted coup of 1960, and the popular revolution of 1974, which was followed seventeen years later by yet another opportunity, with the collapse of the revolutionary regime.

The 1974 revolution was by far the most important political event in Ethiopia since the Empire was constituted at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and can be credited with many far reaching social and political changes. The revolution involved demands by the popular masses for inclusion and for the state to be meaningful to them. Peasants demanded land, workers fair pay and better working conditions, students and teachers protested against an educational policy that was perceived as intending to stifle social mobility and perpetuate the class structure, soldiers demanded better pay and conditions of service, Moslems demanded equal rights, and a host of other social sectors put up demands for rights and fair treatment. The old regime was not prepared for such a massive popular outburst of anger at the dismal failure of the state. But, there were no popular political organizations ready to channel such an outpouring of demands into a coherent political program and execute the required changes. The regime collapsed and the

power vacuum was filled by an unprepared and chaotic group of junior military officers. Thus, under the leadership of the military, the revolution failed in making a very important departure from the past. It could not make a clear transformation regarding the status of the people from subjects of a chief or emperor to citizens of a state. Christopher Clapham (1988) makes the point that despite major transformations as the result of the 1974 revolution, the regime guarded against altering the essential characteristics, especially the ethnic basis of the Ethiopian state, and therefore the state remained fundamentally the same. The regime failed to accommodate and manage conflicting demands on the state. Thus, imperial autocracy was only transformed into a modern tyranny, and the peoples remained subjects of an even more powerful, penetrating and all-knowing state. Furthermore, even the ruling classes have been unable to forge a unity of purpose. The military regime itself was factionalized from the beginning, and resorted to excessive violence to resolve its own internal disputes, and to maintain its grip on power, while at the same time dealing with maintaining the state and dealing with external challenges that threatened the very character and survival of the state. It is such failures that bred internal rebellions, and one of the most violent revolutions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as the eventual collapse of the revolutionary regime. The Ethiopian state on several occasions also faced challenges from its neighbors. The fact that the two major conventional wars fought between any two African states in modern African history already noted, involved Ethiopia with its neighbors, tells a great deal about the Ethiopian state. Moreover, when we look at the social and political upheavals and changes that we have witnessed in Ethiopia, we see that global changes have had far more serious impact on Ethiopia than any other African state. Major political upheavals in Ethiopia in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (1916, 1941, 1974, and 1991) were preceded by or

happened at the same time as fundamental changes in the global environment, which seriously affected and destabilized the Ethiopian state. We will look at these issues with some detail in the following chapter.

### **The Formal Institutions and Actual Exercise of Power**

An important and enduring feature of the Ethiopian state is the prevalence of the duality of structures governance. On the one hand there are the formal structures of state, mostly copied from the West, which give the appearance of legality and formal institutions. The laws and institutions exist mostly for external consumption, to please foreign supporters. On the other hand, they conceal the actual processes of decision making and the real structures of power, which remain personalized, informal and operate through networks of clientele relationships.

Under the imperial regime<sup>53</sup> there were no political parties, but there was a two chamber parliamentary system, the lower house elected by the population on the basis of individual competition, and the upper house appointed by the Emperor. The emperor can be credited for issuing a constitution, establishing centralized, regular and paid armed forces, police as well as a civil service. He also established a system of provincial administration and a centralized tax collection system. Legal codes were also promulgated, and a system of local, district, provincial, and regional courts, as well as a Supreme Imperial Court, the highest court of the Empire were established. Moreover, in a move to integrate tradition, and provisions in the constitution that provides subjects the right to petition the Emperor, what is known as the Imperial *Chilot* (a Crown Court), was part of the judicial system, where the Emperor gave judgments on matters

---

<sup>53</sup> The best source on the operations of the Emperor's government is Clapham, 1969.

appealed to him. There were other institutions also like the Crown Council, designed to settle issues of succession, in the event of crisis or dispute, as well as play an advisory role to the Emperor on matters of state. Following the restoration of imperial rule after the Italian defeat in 1941, the Emperor also appointed a prime minister and a Council of Ministers was established. However, all these elaborate institutions remained facades designed to impress external supporters and give the impression of institutional governance. Important decisions continued to be made in the traditional way in the palace circles. Some of the structures were even confusing, as there were no defined roles for the prime minister or the cabinet. For example, between 1944 and 1960, the prime ministerial position appeared to be just a title (occupied by Makonin Endalkachew between 1944 and 1957), with no clear functional role in the government. During the same period the title of Chairman of the Council of Ministers was held by *Ras Abebe Aregay*, the Minister of Defense. Interestingly, between 1941 and 1955, the most powerful person after the Emperor was *Tsehafe T'ezaz Wolde-Giyorgis*, who was Minister of Pen, the Emperor's secretary and head of the imperial secretariat (Zewde, 2001: 199). The main job of the holder of this position was providing secretarial service to the emperor and dispatching royal orders (Clapham, 1969: 108-112). He was also responsible for issuing the *Negarit Gazeta*, the official gazette, which carried all imperial orders, proclamations and legal notices. Wolde-Giyorgis was soon the object of envy of others within the ruling establishment, and in 1955 he fell out of favor with the Emperor and was relegated to a provincial governorship. After this period another faction emerged, and until his death during the 1960 coup, the most influential political figure was Makonin Habtewold, the Minister of Finance, whose younger brother Aklilu Habtewold was Deputy Prime-Minster and Minister of Pen. The latter was promoted to become



Prime Minister in 1961, also doubled as Minister of Pen, and served in the same capacity until the 1974 revolution (Zewde, 2001: 2004-5).

However, these structures were nominal and cosmetic as power rested in the person of the Emperor and the traditional institution of the palace, and those closest to that institution whatever position they held or did not hold. Even the Crown Council, though filled with the leading members of the royal family, the nobility, and the church, hardly functioned and is not known if it even held formal meetings.<sup>54</sup> For example, when the Emperor announced an acting Crown Prince in March 1974 (because the Crown Prince was incapacitated and was being treated abroad), no consultation was made with the Crown Council, or any other institution.<sup>55</sup> Thus, the main center of power was always the palace, and ministers and other officials were required to prostrate themselves every morning at the palace, under a system called the *Aqabe Sa'at*, a system of audience with the Emperor (Clapham, 1969: 108-110). During the audience, a daily routine for the Emperor, and in his absence performed by the Crown Prince, each official reports personally and directly on the activities of his department or area and whatever information he felt he should provide. These are normally administrative matters as important matters are discussed and decided behind the scenes (Clapham, 1969: 109). According to my informant, during the last days of the imperial regime, two persons wielded immense powers as the result of physical proximity to the aging Emperor. They were the Emperor's aide de camp, General Assefa Dammissie, and the imperial butler, Admassu Retta. The power of these people depended on their close working proximity to the Emperor, and their ability to decide on who had access to

---

<sup>54</sup> According to an informant, who is a member of the imperial family and knows the workings of the Crown Council, the council met only once during the tenure of its last chairman. That was in 1972, to decide on a gift to the Emperor on his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday.

<sup>55</sup> Information from the informant cited in note 1 above.

him. In 1974, when the cabinet resigned, and the Emperor had to appoint another prime minister, the Emperor initially chose his son in law, General Abiye Abebe, a respected member of the aristocracy, but was forced to retract his name, after his aide de camp advised him that the armed forces actually wanted a different person, namely, Endalkachew Makonin, appointed to the post.<sup>56</sup>

When the *Dergue* came to power in 1974, one of its first actions was not only to suspend the constitution and parliament, but it also abolished the institutions of the Ministry Pen and that of the Imperial Court, along with the Emperor's Private Cabinet.<sup>57</sup> The *Dergue* itself had no formal structures of its own, and important decisions were made by meetings of whatever members were present at any given time. After the armed forces movement began, units from the outlying garrisons were asked to send three representatives each to Addis Ababa, but no one knows how the original committee was formed at the headquarters of the Fourth Army Division in Addis Ababa. Even the total membership was never really known, and reports from knowledgeable sources have given figures ranging from 90 to 120 (Anbasse, 1994 EC).

Initially, the *Dergue* had a Chair and vice Chair, and several committees were formed one after another as the need arose. Eventually, the Chair and vice Chair, and chairmen of the various committees came to assume more powers. When the *Dergue* assumed power in September 1974, they appointed a senior officer from outside their ranks to serve as Chairman, and the chair and

---

<sup>56</sup> This was widely known in 1974, when Endalkachew's name was announced along with General Abiye as Defense Minister, though the former was supposed to name all his ministers and present their names to the Emperor for approval. Endalkachew was the son of the first Prime Minister, Makonin Endalkachew, and his tenure lasted less than three months. He was arrested by the armed forces committee, who demanded that the Emperor appoint yet another one.

<sup>57</sup> The information about the *Dergue* period is based on Anbasse, 1994 EC; Yerom, 1995 EC; interviews over many years with former officials with close working relationship with the *Dergue*, as well as my own personal recollections.

vice chair became the First and Second Vice Chairman respectively.<sup>58</sup> However, the exercise of authority remained informal, and all attempts to restructure and institutionalize the operations of the military council collapsed and ended in the bloody incident of February 1977, in which the Chairman, the Secretary, and five other key leaders of the military council were murdered, and the First Vice-Chairman emerged victorious and took over all power. From then on the military council existed only in name.<sup>59</sup> Legal proclamations, notices, and statements were routinely issued in the name of the council, and most council members found out in the media along with the public. It is this lack of formal structures of decision making that enabled the ambitious First Vice Chairman to emerge as not just the *de facto* leader, but also assume *de jure* authority through the elimination of all potential rivals one by one.

As he assumed all powers, Mengistu established elaborate systems of mass organizations, party and governmental structures, but real power remained in his own hands. He had power over the life and death of everybody, including his ministers and members of the military council. Members of the council and ministers were routinely taken from their offices and kept in prison for years, if they were lucky not to be summarily executed. The structures remained mere facades, so that when Mengistu fled the country, they all disappeared like a thin air. None of the institutions elaborately constructed over seventeen years survived the regime. Only the dreaded *kebele* system (the neighborhood associations), so effectively used by the military regime in

---

<sup>58</sup> The Chairman did not assume the position of head of state however, as according to the order that established the Provisional Military Administrative Council (*Dergue*), odd but, the council assumed that role collectively.

<sup>59</sup> Information gathered in the course of an interview with an army officer, who served for several years as the private secretary of the Secretary of the military council, Fikre-Sellassie Wogderres (1977-1987), who later became Prime Minister of the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (1987-1991). The informant now lives in New York, and the interview was conducted in November 2000.

controlling the population were retained by the post 1991 regime, for obvious reasons, and serve the same purpose.

The *Woyyane* (the post-1991) regime brought the hybrid structure of political power to a level never seen before.<sup>60</sup> The TPLF began the process of creating dual structures even before they took power in 1991. In 1985, the TPLF leadership created an internal party called the MLLT (Marxist-Leninist League of Tigray) within the front. It was designed to empower and legitimize the existence of an inner core already operating within the front, and exclude others from key decision making though they remained in the front's leadership.<sup>61</sup> The inner core has been headed since its inception by Meles Zenawi, who became president in 1991, and Prime Minister since 1995, when the constitution that conferred all executive powers on the Prime Minister came into effect. The party structure was later used to purge key members of the leadership, whom the clique did not like. In 1990, the TPLF created a front organization called the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in preparation for taking power in Addis Ababa.<sup>62</sup> Three other organizations were created for this purpose, the Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (EPDM),<sup>63</sup> the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO), and the Ethiopian Democratic Officers Revolutionary Movement (EDORM).<sup>64</sup> Along

---

<sup>60</sup> The name *Woyyane* comes from the Tigrinya word substituted for Front (in TPLF), and I will use this word to differentiate it from its predecessors, as we also use the *Dergue* to refer to the military regime.

<sup>61</sup> This is based on information gathered over the years in several meetings in Sudan, and Europe (1985-2001) from a former Chairman (1975-1979) and military commander (1979-1985) of the front, who now lives in the Netherlands, and a former vice-Chairman of the front (1979-1985), who now lives in Norway.

<sup>62</sup> According to some of my informants, this move was suggested to them by the United States so that they could appear to be legitimate in the eyes of the majority of the population. However, I could not confirm or corroborate this information, especially from American sources.

<sup>63</sup> EPDM was renamed the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM) in 1995.

<sup>64</sup> The EDORM was disbanded in 1995, and some of its members were integrated into the defense force, when the TPLF militia took the role of the 'national defense force,' and was declared officially no longer part of the EPRDF, but loyal only to the state and the constitution.

with the TPLF, these organizations constituted the EPRDF. The three organizations were formed from people who were under the total control and at the mercy of the TPLF leadership. They were prisoners of war, captured in the course of fighting with the Ethiopian government. Core Marxist Leninist groups were also established inside the EPDM and OPDO. Through the hierarchy already established within the TPLF, the inner core of the MLLT therefore controlled the front itself, and when the group took power in 1991, the government of Ethiopia as well.

In 1995, the *Woyyane* regime issued a new constitution and in theory established a federal government of nine regional states. On paper, all states have legislative, executive, and taxation powers, as well as the freedom even to secede from the federation (FDRE Constitution, Article 39). But, power remains centralized through the TPLF's control of the surrogate parties who administer the federal states. Moreover, the surrogate parties themselves, and the structures of the federal government are facades, as actual power is exercised by a clandestine network of TPLF operatives controlling these organizations and all structures of the federal government. I have interviewed several people who worked at various levels for the government, and they all confirmed the existence of such a network, operating within the structures of the parties and the government. For example, a former leader of the OPDO, who was also a member of the EPRDF executive committee confirmed that when the OPDO structures met, they were not allowed to conduct their business in the Oromo language, as the TPLF minder sitting among them did not understand Oromo. Therefore they conducted their meetings in Amharic. Moreover minutes

were also taken in Amharic, which were sent to the EPRDF office (ran by the TPLF, and there was no OPDO functionary at the office) after every meeting, to be reviewed.<sup>65</sup>

Similar structures operate in the parliament, government departments, the armed forces, diplomatic missions and other structures. For example, the heads of most structures of the government have been meticulously crafted to represent the various ethnic communities in the country. For example, until 2005 the speaker of the lower house of parliament was an Amhara and that of the upper house, the Federation Council, was an Oromo woman.<sup>66</sup> According to the several of my sources, this was a mere public relations exercise, as the key figure in the parliament was the head of administration, ostensibly a minor clerical officer, who wielded more powers than the two speakers, and happened to be a Tigrean. He often overruled both speakers, and had the influence to get them dismissed if he wished.<sup>67</sup>

Ministerial, ambassadorial, and senior positions in the armed forces are all meticulously assigned to the various ethnic communities. For example, the majority of members of parliament and ministers are Oromo and Amhara, the two largest ethnic communities in the country, who among them constitute nearly 70 percent of the population. However, in all the ministries there are TPLF operatives who control the day to day functioning of these government departments.

They are formally assigned either as deputies, or head of some key section in the department

---

<sup>65</sup> This information is obtained from a senior member of the OPDO and EPRDF leaderships until 2001, whose name must remain anonymous. Until the split in 2001, of the nine top leaders who run party affairs at the EPRDF headquarters seven were TPLF veterans and two were from the ANDM (Amhara National Democratic Movement, formerly EPDM), and the OPDO and the SEPDF were not included in those key positions (Chanie, 2007: 363).

<sup>66</sup> The Speaker of the Federation Council left in 2001 and requested political asylum in the United States. The Speaker of the House of Representatives lost his seat in the capital in the 2005 elections, and has since been appointed ambassador to the United Nations.

<sup>67</sup> This information was obtained from various sources and confirmed by all of them. The names of my sources must remain anonymous, as some of them are still in Ethiopia, and others have family members, who could be targets for the regime, as it often does with exile opponents.

concerned. Each of the major ethnic communities also have an equal number of generals in the armed forces, though real command can be in the hands of deputy or a junior Tigrean officer in the military unit concerned. The same rule operates in diplomatic missions and in the civil service. In other words the outward trappings of the state are crafted to reflect a system of ethnic quota, but actual exercise of power operates through an informal structure controlled by the Prime Minister and his closest cronies.<sup>68</sup>

The most powerful person is the Prime Minister (a Tigrean), and he rarely convenes the ministers for a meeting. He runs the government through loyal individuals strategically placed at different structures inside and outside the formal institutions of the state. In an apparent attempt to formalize his kitchen cabinet, he appointed five ministers to his office in 2005 each assigned to oversee several ministries. All of them, except one, are of Tigrean ethnicity. The Prime Minister also chairs a National Security Council, formally an important body, composed of eight members. Five of these belong not only to the Tigrean ethnic group, but are also senior members of the TPLF leadership. As a party, the TPLF initially operated with a collegial leadership at the top, the hard core of the MLLT exercising fairly a collective form of leadership. But, when in 2001, this core attempted to unseat the Prime Minister by a majority in the executive committee, the Prime Minister purged all of them, and they lost not just their party posts, but their parliamentary, government and all other positions.<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>68</sup> Another powerful figure is Sebhat Negga, a former Chairman of the TPLF (1979-1989). He has no formal position in the government at any level, but is probably the most powerful person after the Prime Minister.

<sup>69</sup> I have interviewed several members of this group and other knowledgeable sources, and all of them have confirmed this to me. The hybrid structure of governance and some of the inner workings of the ruling party and the government was explained in a recent book, by a former head of the Press Department in the Ministry of Information, which also confirms my argument (Gebreab, 2009).

## **The State and Illegitimate Methods of Social Control**

The state requires three main structures for social control, an army, a system of tax collection and courts (Migdal, 2001: 51). The first and most significant has been the coercive apparatus, including a standing army, the police and other security forces, along with the prison system. The second was a structure of mobilizing resources from the population, tax collection, to support the standing army and other functionaries of the state. The third was a structure of courts, one of the mechanisms through which state leaders imposed certain set of behaviors on the population, a mechanism designed to shift social control from local lords and other societal actors to the state (Migdal, 2001:51). With the formation of the modern state, the Ethiopian state therefore began building these mechanisms of social control. While the first two institutions were built, in the case of the third one, the Ethiopian state was never able to develop an independent system of courts throughout its history. Historically, from the emperor down to the local chief, they also acted as judges. Until the 1960s provincial governors also functioned as the chief judges, and local administrators also performed judicial functions until the 1974 revolution.<sup>70</sup> Until 1974, the Emperor also sat as the chief judge on the highest appeal court.<sup>71</sup>

According to Migdal the level of social control can be ascertained on a scale of three indicators, compliance, participation, and legitimacy (2001. 52). The first one, a very elementary form of the strength of a state, as its strength depends on the degree to which the population conforms to the demands of the state, and is usually compelled by the sanction of force. The

---

<sup>70</sup> That function was later taken over by the peasant associations, but the associations were provided with judicial tribunals separate from the executive committees.

<sup>71</sup> This court was called the Imperial Crown Court and heard only appeals. Provisions in both the 1931 and 1955 constitutions provided for this. It was considered as a right for his subjects and an obligation on his part. This role was based on a provision in the constitution under the rights of Ethiopian subjects, which stated, 'every Ethiopian has the right to petition the Emperor.'



second, participation occurs when state leaders require from the population more than just compliance by organizing them within frameworks of the state, and the mechanism can include both rewards and sanctions. The final measure, legitimacy, is not only more inclusive than the first two, but is ‘the most potent factor determining the strength of the state’ (Migdal, 2001: 52). Legitimacy involves the tacit acceptance by the population of the state’s right to act in the way it acts, including the measures it takes for social control. In other words, it involves an acceptance of the rules of the game set by the state, and the symbolic meaning of the idea of the state itself (Migdal, 2001: 52). In order to achieve this level of strength, very often ideological justifications are employed, so that the population is convinced that the state acts in the common interests of society at large. Even military adventures abroad, demanding more sacrifices from the population in terms of human and material costs as well as restrictions on their rights are justified on the grounds that it is in the interests of society, the nation, or the people. But, social control by the state can never be complete as there are other actors demanding allegiance from various sectors of the population. Even in the most advanced industrial states, where the state’s social control is the strongest, there are still residual sectors within society who command allegiance from individuals and groups, political and social organizations, including religious authorities and other actors.

While compliance can be imposed by force, and participation also involves enticement with rewards and punishments, legitimacy can only be earned by the state, with its performance as well as convincing the people that it acts in their common good. In other words, to gain legitimacy, I argue that a measure of identification is necessary between the state and the people, at least a significant proportion of the people. In order to achieve such a level of social control

based on legitimacy the state has to be able to accommodate conflicting class, national, religious and regional interests. Resolving the security, social, political and economic needs of the population over which it claims authority is another major function of any state. In other words, a state is required to solve the developmental problems of the society it governs. Moreover, state organs have to be seen or perceived as representatives of the population. These factors are not only important functions of states, but the ability or inability of states to fulfill them can reinforce or erode their legitimacy in the eyes of their peoples.

Despite claiming the longest history of statehood in Africa, and at various times being able to mobilize people and resources to confront external threats, the Ethiopian state's legitimacy has very often been challenged internally. Its power and ability of social control always rested on force, demanding compliance from its subjects. Under the old regime the coercive power of the state was also assisted by divine authority. The Orthodox Church maintains a devout following among the peasantry in the old Abyssinian provinces, and it dutifully preached loyalty and deference to authority, lest they face divine retribution. The Emperor was considered anointed by God, and therefore his authority had divine origins. All officials, including local leaders, were his appointees and representatives, and the structure of the state and the church ran parallel to and reinforced each other. The imperial regime also very much depended on traditional authority, who filled the local echelons of the state, maintaining order and loyalty to the state in return for land and a portion of tax revenue. They also benefited from the free labor of the peasants under their control.

The revolutionary regime formally ended the relationship between church and state, and adopted Marxism-Leninism as its ideology. It established a party and a structure of mass

organizations that incorporated almost every member of society, dramatically increasing the reach and control of the state. Moreover, the traditional structures of control, including the armed forces, police, and other security services tremendously increased in size. The revolutionary regime also introduced a new element of control, the local armed militia organized within every peasant and urban dwellers association. The revolutionary regime also ended landlordism and hence charged the peasant associations to fill the vacuum at the lower reaches of state authority.

Under the revolutionary regime the All Ethiopia Trade Union, the All Ethiopia Peasants Association, the Revolutionary Ethiopia Youth Association, the Revolutionary Ethiopia Women's Association and the Urban Dwellers Associations formed the back bone of the party and the revolutionary regime. In addition various professionals, including artists, teachers, and other sectors of society were all organized and integrated into the structure and under the direction of the party, the Workers Party of Ethiopia.<sup>72</sup> These organizations had multi tier structures, local, district, provincial, regional and national structures.

The *Woyyane* regime did not alter the fundamental structures of control set up by the military regime. As soon as it came to power in 1991, it disbanded the party, the armed forces, the police forces and intelligence services, detaining them in prison and concentration camps. But, it did not take time to fill the vacuum, as it put in place its own ethnic militia as the new army and police force. Its party took over the functions of the party, and its party security apparatus filled the vacuum left by the disbanding of the intelligence services. While disbanding the main structures put in place by the military regime and replacing some of them with its own

---

<sup>72</sup> The Workers Party of Ethiopia (WPE) was formally launched in 1985 with a great fanfare, but the Commission to Organize the Workers Party of Ethiopia (COPWE) existed for almost ten years before that and functioned as a party in all but name.

structures, the post 1991 regime kept those local structures that served the military regime well in controlling the population. It kept the local echelons of the peasants and urban dwellers associations, and abolished their district, provincial, regional and national structures, confiscating all their property. It reorganized both local peasant and urban dwellers associations to fit the new order, by implanting its own personnel, and initially rebranding them peace and stability committees. The peace and stability committees were also established in every government department and work place for purposes of control. The regime also established a new trade union amenable to its manipulation and control, sending independent trade union leaders to prison or into exile. Like its predecessor, the *Woyyane* regime sought to control all social organizations, including even religious organizations. It even organized rebellions within the Orthodox Church, unceremoniously deposing the patriarch, and replacing him with the new regime's handpicked figure.<sup>73</sup> It also purged the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs of Ethiopia, and planted its party and ethnic loyalists in key positions.

The *Woyyane* regime was formed principally by a regional political movement (TPLF) that aspired to establish the regional autonomy of the northern province of Tigray. It seized power with the collapse of the revolutionary regime, and since it was a sectarian movement, it faced difficulties to gain acceptance among the national elite. Hence, in an apparent attempt to widen its appeal, it established a federal structure of government, which gave recognition to the principal ethnic communities. The federal structure was necessitated by two factors. The first one was to fulfill its own original political objective of according as much autonomy as possible to its

---

<sup>73</sup> The previous patriarch had to flee the country to neighboring Kenya, and now lives in the United States. The new patriarch was in exile during the revolutionary regime, and is said to be related to the head of the post revolutionary regime. Ethiopian churches abroad refused to recognize the authority of the New Patriarch, and a rival synod of the Orthodox Church now exists abroad, the majority of the members being in the United States.

regional base, the region of Tigray. The second factor was, using the structure of ethnically based parties and the federal structure as a mechanism through which to divide and control the rest of the country. The strategy has been designed to earn the regime support among the smaller national groups, at the same time creating rivalry among the principal national groups, especially the Oromo and the Amhara, the largest and second largest national groups respectively. However, despite creating new formal structures of the state, power remains highly centralized in the party and the hands of prime minister, who has established an autocratic dictatorship in all but name. The most important structures of control are still the military, the intelligence services, the police, and the party structures and its affiliates, over which the party leader and prime minister maintains his absolute control. The ruling party is in theory a four party coalition, representing the four principal national groups, Oromo, Amhara, Tigray, and the Southern peoples (a multi-ethnic grouping). Of these, the party that represents the Tigray is the smallest, with less than forty seats in parliament, and the other three parties have nearly 400 seats among them in the 547 seat parliament. But, since its inception in 1990, the ruling EPRDF coalition has been led by the chairman of the TPLF (the Tigrayan party). The same person was President of the transitional government between 1991 and 1995, and Prime Minister since 1995 (after the office of the president became only ceremonial). Moreover, he wields absolute powers within the TPLF, as evident from the measures he took against his opponents in 2001. When the majority of the central committee of his party rebelled against him and voted to unseat him, he purged all those who opposed him, sent many of them to prison, and retained control of the party and the state.

Like all other states, the Ethiopian state depends on another vital structure, the structure of extraction and distribution of resources. From ancient times, the principal resource at the disposal of the state has remained land. According to tradition, when the Solomonic Dynasty was restored in 1270 with the support of the Orthodox Church, an agreement was arrived at regarding the distribution of land. Land was divided into three main domains and, since that period, one third of all land belonged to the monarch, one third to the Orthodox Church and the remaining one third to the nobility.<sup>74</sup> In other words, land has always been used by the state for purposes of patronage, and to maintain the privileges of those who support the state. Both the 1931 and 1955 constitutions under the Emperor Haile Sellassie contained articles that conferred upon the emperor the authority to make land grants from the state domain to individuals and groups for their loyal service to him and the state. Prior to the early period of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, peasants paid tributes to the state and local lords in kind and also performed labor services to both. The peasants are a class tied to the land, and also to a particular landlord. The southern peasantry was not even allowed to leave a particular landlord and choose another one. Emperor Haile Sellassie passed a law as soon as he came to power barring peasants in the conquered regions from the right to abandon a landlord for another one without his permission.

After the end of the Italian occupation in 1941, a system of land tax was introduced, in which the landlords collected resources in lieu of tax as they saw fit from the peasants, and paid taxes due to the state treasury. Most of the southern peasantry remained landless tenants, and according to the law they were required to pay up to three quarters of their production to the landlord (IEG, 1960). Until the 1960s they also paid a tenth of whatever they have produced to

---

<sup>74</sup> According to this edict, it is "*siso le negash, siso le angash, siso le qedash*" (a third for the monarch, a third for the aristocracy, and a third for the clergy).

the state treasury. Then in the 1960s an agricultural income tax was also introduced, replacing the tithe. The policy was also designed to extend centralization and the state's control over the peasants. This move was resisted by landlords, particularly in the north. In Gojjam, it led to a serious peasant rebellion, led by local notables, and it could only be suppressed by the deployment of the army and the use of the air force.

The revolutionary regime nationalized all land, abolished the system of agricultural tenancy, and turned the larger private farms it nationalized into state farms. However, it retained the tax structure, the agricultural income tax, as well as a new tax regime for the use of land paid by peasants, called land use fee. Prior to the nationalization of land, land tax was collected from landlords. Moreover the revolutionary regime also nationalized banks, insurance companies, industries, import-export and most wholesale trade, grain marketing, and most urban property, including rented houses. Coupled with customs and other taxes on foreign trade, these nationalizations greatly expanded the resource base of the state and the revenues at its disposal. The *Woyyane* regime has retained the same system, and despite pressures from western donor governments as well as the World Bank and IMF, it has refused to allow the privatization of land. It continues to use the state's control of land as a means of social control over the peasantry, as they constitute over eighty percent of the population. Most of the nationalized properties also remain in the hands of the state, and the post revolutionary regime uses these resources skillfully for political and social control. For example, it has returned some of the urban property nationalized by the revolutionary regime to its own cronies.

The *Woyyane* regime has greatly increased its capacity of resource control and allocation over that of its predecessors. Through the structure of the state it extracts even more resources

than of all its predecessors, as it has increased taxes on individuals and businesses, and introduced new ones, like the value added tax, which did not exist before. Most of the industries, financial institutions, mines, urban property, and trade nationalized under the revolutionary regime also remain in state hands. A few of the enterprises were 'privatized' to companies organized by members of the ruling party and its cronies.

The new regime also benefits tremendously from international sources of support, such as the European Union, the World Bank, and western donor governments, who give in amounts not available to previous regimes. The revolutionary regime in particular could not raise resources from the multilateral agencies and the western governments due to its alliance with the former Soviet Union, and Soviet support was mainly in the defense field. Furthermore, there are a number of nongovernmental organizations set up and run by the ruling party, and these are engaged in raising resources from the international nongovernmental and humanitarian agencies as well as from domestic sources. Moreover, the post 1991 regime has introduced a new system of resource extraction that did not exist before, and that is party control over private business the extent of which we saw earlier. On top of all these are businesses owned and run by individuals friendly to the leaders of ruling party, often their relatives. This practice does not leave much room for private business, and the small number that exist face considerable competition and political harassment, through tariffs, taxation, and sometimes outright imprisonment on trumped up charges.

Historically, there was hardly a distinction between the resources of the state and that of the ruler. As a modern machinery of state gradually came into being, it became necessary to establish a central treasury, and after the Italian occupation a budget system was also introduced.



These did not in any way restrict the power of the Emperor to disperse or allocate resources as he saw fit, but it formalized the operations of resource allocation. The emperor routinely ordered resources for loyal individuals and members of their family directly from the state treasury. The same is true for the current prime minister. Under all three regimes, the priorities of resource allocation continued to be based on the maintenance of power, especially enhancing the personal interests of the ruler and his supporters. The *Woyyane* regime in particular uses the allocation of state resources, including land and trade licenses to benefit its cronies. Budgetary allocations also reflect the priorities of maintaining control. As a result under all three regimes, the largest allocations were made for the armed forces, the intelligence services and other control apparatuses. As already noted, the *Woyyane* regime makes more budgetary allocations to its regional base than its size and population warrants on top of other benefits it provides to maintain regional support.<sup>75</sup>

Extraction of resources involves eventually allocation, and who benefits from state resources tells a great deal about the priorities of the state. Like all states, there are groups of people managing the state, who exercise power, acquire benefits and have a special interest in its maintenance. As already noted the Ethiopian system was never able to produce a stable state class that survived the ruler. Every time a new regime came to power, the old class was swept away. When the Emperor Haile Sellassie was consolidating his power, he eliminated, imprisoned and/or confiscated the property of his opponents. The Italians did the same thing with the Ethiopian elite, except those who collaborated with them. More devastating was the elimination of the small number of European educated intellectuals who were diverse enough to have

---

<sup>75</sup> On the official budgetary allocation the region of Tigray has maintained an allocation of over 15 percent of the budget allocated for the regions since 1991, though it has just about 5 percent of the population.

included members from the major national groups (Zewde, 2002). The revolutionary regime almost physically eliminated the cream of the old class. In one evening in November 1974 alone, nearly sixty members of the old class were executed, and that included two former prime ministers, senior members of the nobility, and over two dozen generals and senior military officers. Thousands more were detained and kept in detention, some of them taken out and executed, and the majority of them remained in prison for almost the life of the regime itself. A few tried to organize armed resistance to the revolutionary regime and were eliminated one by one. Those who escaped death and imprisonment went to exile. The *Woyyane* regime did the same with the class of people that came to dominate the state during the seventeen years of the revolutionary regime. Thousands have been kept in prison, many have died in detention and hundreds are being tried during the eighteen years since the regime came to power. Thousands more lost their jobs as the regime purged the bureaucracy and planted its own cadres.

This history demonstrates consistent behavior by state leaders. Since their tenure is tied up with the regime, these people go to any length to use the state to gain material and other advantages they can gain in the shortest possible time, as well as work ruthlessly against perceived opponents of the regime. Under the imperial regime, family ties and loyalty to the Emperor were very important for consideration of service at senior levels of the government. With the revolutionary regime, education, qualifications and competence played important roles in consideration for senior positions in the government, but ideological commitment and personal loyalty to the leader constituted important criteria.

The *Woyyane* regime seems to be less confident in attracting educated and competent professionals for appointments to senior positions, as it is not comfortable employing

independent minded bureaucrats. Therefore, it has attracted a considerable number of less educated self serving opportunists. Since these people know very well that they would not be in their position if not for the regime, they are overzealous in their loyalty and implementation of the regime's policies and directives, particularly against its opponents. Moreover, due to the duality of the structure of power and decision making, the regime is not interested in the competence and efficiency of these people, as it wants them basically as figureheads to give the appearance of representation.

It is also worthwhile to point out the ethnic composition of the class of people dominating and benefiting from the state. The imperial regime was dominated by individuals from the Amharic speaking population, especially from the region of Shewa north of the capital Addis Ababa, and early followers of Emperor Haile Selassie and his father *Ras* Mekonin. The revolutionary regime was not much different in terms of ethnic composition, though it was more open to include members of other ethnic groups into the party and government structures. The *Woyyane* regime created almost an entirely new class of state leaders from the rebel movement that seized power in 1991, drawn from the Tigrinya speaking people of northern Ethiopia. As their performance of eighteen years has shown, they are even more ruthless compared to their predecessors in using the state to pursue personal gains as well as in suppressing all rivals and perceived enemies of the regime.

In addition to visible organizational and other structures, symbols, myths, legends, and rituals are as important for states, as even in the modern industrialized modern states, symbolisms and rituals form part of how states operate and are perceived. Though, it is not shared by the majority of the population, the Ethiopian state also has its own identifying

characteristics in this regard, which form part of the ideological rationale of the state. There are historical doubts about the legend so common in Ethiopian historiography about the origins of Ethiopia's rulers, but they are important and provided the monarchy and the state with at least some ideological basis. Since its emergence as a politico-territorial entity, every Ethiopian ruler claimed to belong to the so called Solomonic Dynasty, descended from a union between the "Ethiopian" Queen Sheba and King Solomon of Jerusalem. As evident from the Royal Chronicles, this claim has been consistent at least since what has been called the "restoration" of the dynasty in the 13<sup>th</sup> century until the abolition of the monarchy in 1975. Of all the Ethiopian monarchs, while the Emperor Menelik is credited with the building of the empire, the last Ethiopian Emperor, Haile Selassie, provided the state with a centralized modernist and initially reformist and relatively stable leadership. However, as his principal objective was personal power instead of state building, he failed at institutionalizing power, integrating the amalgam of the peoples under his rule establishing citizenship, and tackling the developmental problems of his empire. In the end, the same mechanisms he put in place also constrained the ability of the state to adapt to internal challenges and external pressures, especially as of the 1950s. The educated and enlightened sectors of the society were demanding reforms of the state and the feudal land tenure system, which imposed unbearable burdens on the peasantry. However, the aristocracy and the landed class in general were content with the status quo and resisted all reforms. It was these fundamental failures of the state that produced one of the most violent periods in the modern history of the state. The majority of the population could not relate to the legends and myths of the state and consequently the state was seen as an alien institution to them. Hence, the state was unable to establish an ideological acceptance among the people who came

under its jurisdiction since the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, the state was dependent on naked force to maintain its control over the empire.

### **Violence and the State: The Primary Method of Social Control**

The Weberian theory of the state suggests that the legitimacy of states and their survival depend principally on their acceptance by significant sections of their population that the state functions in their common interests. In other words, for the state to have its authority accepted, and survive it has to be legitimate, and this legitimacy emanates from the tacit acceptance of the population. Gramscian theory also suggests that a state is effective when it has established the ideological ascendancy of the dominant classes over the population. Thus, in both Weberian and Gramscian notions of the state, coercion is only a threat or a last resort and cannot be the main instrument of social control. Here, I argue that the Ethiopian state employs coercion as the principal means of social control, and it has survived for a considerable period of time without being able to establish its legitimacy through embedding itself in the society it governs or establishing the ideological hegemony of the dominant classes. Its legitimacy has been consistently contested, but it survives through violence.

Violence has characterized Ethiopian political culture for the recorded history of the existence of the state, and memories of intimidation, harassment, imprisonment, torture, death and destruction are present in a significant proportion of the population as well as the collective memory of the society. Throughout its recorded history, the Ethiopian state has been essentially a military state and employed violence as means of social control, as is demonstrated by its various campaigns of conquest, slave raids, looting, violent economic exploitation and banditry (Caulk,

1978). At the same time, historically, the use of violence itself imposed certain limits on its use. The threat of rebellion and joining rival warlords or neighboring enemies (including foreign invaders) was always present, and this played a restraining role on the power of warlords in the use of harsh measures (Caulk, 1978: 463). Religion and tradition also helped restrain violence at times. The Orthodox clergy in particular played important roles in curbing the excesses of warlords, and as a last resort victims had the opportunity for sanctuary in churches and monasteries, which were off limits for violent acts. In folklore the clergy are very often compared with women, not necessarily negatively, but in their attitudes towards the sanctity of life.<sup>76</sup> Since warlords sought the prayers and blessings of the clergy for the successes of their military campaigns outside their domains, the latter at times had a restraining influence on the excesses of the former. Yet, the church and clergy also sanctioned extreme violence when it came to the treatment of non-Christians. In traditional Ethiopia the decentralization of power also helped to curb some of the excesses, and Abyssinian peasants always had the option of switching allegiance to the more powerful warlord who could provide them with more protection. This also worked as a deterrent to excesses.

The modern state that was formed in the image of its European counterpart became an all powerful institution that neither respects nor answers to tradition. As the regional warlords were weakened the state and the means of violence became centralized and modern. With the importation of modern European weapons, the mechanisms of curbing violence perpetrated by

---

<sup>76</sup> All societies have customs and rules that govern violence. In the Ethiopian Orthodox tradition women, the clergy and children were often present in battlefields to encourage warriors, but did not engage in direct combat. These sectors of the population are also not allowed to slaughter animals. Only adult men are allowed to perform these functions. These traditions exist among most of the national groups in Ethiopia. Among the Oromo, there are strict and elaborate rules of warfare and hunting that protect certain groups and animals. It is a taboo to kill women, captured prisoners, persons not carrying arms, and children. Women may not engage in warfare.

the state diminished. The rise of Tewodros to power in middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century raised the use of violence by the state to a new level, and the campaigns of expansion in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were particularly violent. The brutality meted against the peasantry, traders, and artisans was unparalleled, and this continued under Tewodros's successor Yohannes IV (Caulk, 1978: 463-64). Tewodros meted his anger even at the clergy, who were traditionally immune from violent retribution. Historically, most of the warlords and the military elite in general began their careers as regular bandits, and successful bandits rallied a following and as a result were rewarded with positions and domains by the rulers. This practice encouraged aspiring warlords, and even disadvantaged members of the ruling families to follow a similar route to gain recognition and hence position. Therefore, there is no wonder if these people continued to employ banditry as a method of governance. Tewodros began his career as a simple bandit, rising to prominence after a chain of victories over prominent warlords, eventually claiming the imperial throne. His successor, Yohannes first rebelled against his own family, built a following, collaborated with the Anglo-Indian expeditionary force against Tewodros, securing vital supplies of weapons and eventually defeated his rivals and assumed the imperial throne.

Muskets were used in Abyssinia as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but the level and intensity of violence perpetrated by warlords reached a new stage in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the importation of European made arms. Armed with new weapons, the conquests of the Oromo, Walayita, Kafficho, Sidama, Hadiyya, Guraghe, and many other peoples of southern Ethiopia were extremely brutal, often with no military rationale as the victims were armed with primitive weapons. During the campaign against the people of Walayita in 1894, personally led by the Emperor Menelik, a Belgian eyewitness (at the invitation of the emperor) described the

destructive violence in which people were tortured and killed, women and children massacred, property, crops, livestock looted or destroyed in very large numbers and tens of thousands enslaved, commenting that all these did not have any military rationale as these acts were carried out after the King of the Walayita was captured and resistance had died down (Vanderhheym, 1896). Menelik's own chronicler estimated the casualties of two weeks of massacre at nearly 120,000 people, and about 36,000 heads of cattle were captured in addition to the ones slaughtered (Guebre-Sellassie, 1930: 363). The Emperor returned to his capital with a personal booty of nearly 20,000 heads of cattle and 1,800 slaves (Vandeheym, 1896: 184-86). In the preceding chapter we have seen the destruction of the Kafficho as a society. In the seventh and final campaign against the Oromo of Arsi, Menelik ordered the massacre of men and mutilation of breasts from women, even after the region was subdued (Haji, 1993).

It can be legitimately argued that Menelik's expansionist campaigns were carried out in the context of the colonial designs of the European powers in Northeast Africa, and that if he did not expand to them, these territories and Ethiopia proper might have fallen victims to European colonial occupation. The likelihood was indeed high, as we have seen from the discussions in the preceding chapter. However, this does not make the crimes committed any lesser, and the consequences of these violent campaigns were long lasting and account for the lack of identification by the majority of the Ethiopian population with the state. Therefore, it is fair to say that these acts have contributed to problems of national cohesion and state legitimacy that has characterized the modern Ethiopian state that was built through this process during the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Abbink, 1995: 62). As a result, the legitimacy of the state has always been challenged by a host of forces, as is evident from the existence of several independence



movements in Ethiopia, including among the demographically significant population like the Oromo, who for decades have been fighting for the establishment of an independent state.<sup>77</sup>

Thus, outside the Amharic and Tigrinya speaking regions of northern Ethiopia, the Ethiopian state is associated with extreme violence, brutality, sanctioned looting, slavery and violent exploitation in the collective memory of the peoples, where even the traditional curbs on the excesses of warlords sanctioned by the Church was absent.

As we have seen earlier, when the Italians conquered and occupied Ethiopia in 1936, many of the peoples who were victims of the imperial expansion initially saw them as saviors. But the Italians also raised brutality to a new level. They used massive force, aerial bombings and the use of poison gas, the indiscriminate massacre of civilians, summary executions, the introduction of extreme forms of repression and terror tactics. They liquidated an entire class of the small intelligentsia that Ethiopia had produced, and in order to terrorize the population executions were carried out publicly, and parents were ordered to watch the execution of their own children. The Italians also employed rape as a weapon of war.<sup>78</sup>

After the Italians were expelled in 1941, imperial rule was restored with the help of British Commonwealth troops. We have already seen how the Emperor Haile Selassie came to power through a violent process, and how he dealt with his political rivals. Nevertheless, when he came to power he was considered a reformer and modernizer of the state, though his priorities

---

<sup>77</sup> Eritrea fought for three decades successfully attaining independence in 1993. The regime that came to power in 1991, led by the Tigray people's Liberation Front began as a separatist movement, and even today, many believe that the provisions in its constitution that allows the regional states to secede was designed to allow Tigray to claim independence in the event they lose power in Ethiopia. Besides, there are political movements like the Afar Liberation Front (ALF), the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), the Sidama Liberation Front (SLF), and many others.

<sup>78</sup> Rape exists in Ethiopia as in many other societies, but in the recorded history of Ethiopia, it was the Italians who, for the first time, introduced rape as a weapon of war (Abbink, 1995: 63).

remained aggrandizement of personal power. Haile Selassie not only centralized the state, particularly its coercive apparatus, but also modernized it. His period of exile in England seems to have instilled a sense of bitterness in him, watching some of the leading Abyssinian aristocrats, including one of his own sons in law, betraying him and submitting to the Italian fascists. The years of exile must have also taught him new lessons on how to exercise power. Being educated under French missionaries, he was already introduced to the history of European absolutism, but it his stay and contacts in England must have strengthened the quest for absolute power in him. The absolute monarchy was to a certain extent a novel idea for Ethiopia, and he enshrined it in the 1931 constitution, which he promulgated as soon as he ascended the throne, and the Revised Constitution of 1955. Historically armies were recruited locally by regional warlords in pursuit of political ambitions, but Haile Selassie centralized and also depoliticized them by establishing a standing army under his command (Abbink, 1995: 63). Though he depoliticized them in terms of his rival's use, he used the centralized army politically, to crush rebellions, rivals and all sorts of resistance to his rule, which were many during his long reign. He deployed the army to deal with regional rebellions among the Oromo in Shoa, Hararghe, Bale, Jille and Karrayyu, as well as other rebellions in Eritrea, Tigray, Gojjam, Sidamo, and the Ogaden, from the period of his restoration to the throne in 1941 until the end of his rule in 1974.

Haile Selassie perfected the use of violence for the first time, burning crops and villages, destroying livestock, aerial bombardment, including the use of napalm, were used against these mostly peasant rebellions. Public executions and floggings were also not uncommon. The use of these violent methods to subdue the population seriously undermined his credibility and legitimacy. His legitimacy was already questioned by most of the leaders of the resistance to the

Italian occupation and the general population, as instead of leading the resistance against the Italian invaders, he chose to go into exile in 1936. As a result, after the return to his throne in 1941, he considered the anti fascist resistance heroes as threats to his authority, and set out to marginalize them. Some like Balay Zallaqa and Nagash Bezabih were even publicly executed, accused of plotting against the Emperor. On the other hand some of those collaborators like Ras Hailu of Gojjam and Ras Seyyum of Tigray were reinstated in their positions as governors of their respective regions. It is ironic that while he rewarded some of those who betrayed the state and collaborated with the Italians, he severely punished those who fought against foreign enemies to restore national dignity. These actions further worked to erode his shaky legitimacy and severely tarnished his image.

In the end, the military forces that were the outcomes of some of his reforms started undermining his rule. In December 1960, his own Imperial Guard staged a coup against him, and he was restored only after a bloody confrontation between the plotters and loyalist troops and the massacre of many of the leading aristocrats. Students, products of his introduction of modern education, also became the most vehement critics of his government, and discontent spread in the ranks of workers, the armed forces and civil service. His biggest failure was to come to grips with the socioeconomic and political reality of the empire and seek political and institutional responses to the crises the state was facing. The emperor failed terribly, especially in dealing with the agrarian crisis. The epitome of the failure was the outbreak of a major famine disaster in 1972, which became his undoing. The emperor's absolutist instincts and paternalistic style of leadership did not allow him to heed the advice and counsel of those who saw the writing on the wall. When the revolution began in 1974 with spontaneous protests, the response of the emperor

and his regime was not commensurate with the situation. He appointed a new cabinet after his old cabinet resigned, raised soldiers pay, set up an inquiry commission to investigate corruption and abuse of power of his government, and ordered a review of the constitution, but it was too little too late. Within months of the spontaneous uprising the monarchy and the entire edifice of the regime he carefully crafted for more than half a century crumbled and were swept away.

As already noted, the members of the committee of military officers that took over power were pushed into power unprepared by a spontaneous popular movement. Once they were in power they had to maintain it. But, faced with opposition from a variety of social sectors from the outset, the regime unleashed an officially sanctioned reign of terror against its real, perceived, and imagined enemies, raising the extent, form and discourse of violence to a new and unprecedented level. As soon as it assumed power, the regime issued a special penal code that applied retroactively, and established a special prosecutor and a special military tribunal to give a semblance of legality to the actions it intended to take. It soon found out that, even with its retroactively applied draconian laws, legality required certain procedures, and sometimes people it did not like were acquitted or given lesser sentences. It soon did away with the formal process and resorted to extrajudicial measures, what it called 'revolutionary measures.' One of its first victims was the president of the Special Tribunal, Colonel Hailu Raggasa who was executed for rebellion against the regime. Most importantly, the regime tried to justify and rationalize violence in ideological terms. It periodically announced the names of 'counterrevolutionaries, reactionaries, anarchists' that were liquidated, or executed. Under the military regime, violence was not hidden; it was public and the regime announced the names of the victims on public media.

The high point of violence occurred during the period 1977-78, and it is perhaps pertinent to look at the context to understand the background to the escalation of violence. The left wing opposition partly shares some responsibility for the escalation, as the result of the splits and the divisions within the left wing movement. The Ethiopian student organizations in North America and Europe had split into two factions by the early 1970s, and by the time the revolution broke out in 1974, two main political factions had emerged, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP), and the All Ethiopian Socialist Movement (known by its Amharic acronym, MEISON), reflecting those divisions. The former became more popular among students and workers and positioned itself in total opposition to the military government, while the latter lent its critical support to the military regime. The latter eventually became a partner of a faction of the military council led by Mengistu Haile Mariam. The struggle between these two groups eventually became violent creating the conditions for the regime to enter the fray.

By then the regime had radicalized and adopted the National Democratic Revolutionary Program. As part of this program, it established an organization to politicize and organize the 'masses', the Political Office for Mass Organizational Affairs (POMOA), staffed by leading members of MEISON and a few other left groups. The new structure had its main office inside the headquarters of the military council, with branches throughout the provinces. The leading members of MEISON were given the palace that belonged to the former crown prince, where they also established a political school to train political cadres.

Several important events happened in 1976 that were to further draw the military council into the conflict between the left wing parties. The EPRP not only made the fatal mistake of declaring an urban based terror campaign against the military regime, giving the excuse the

military regime needed to unleash terror on a large scale, but it also split into two factions. One faction favored a rural based protracted armed insurgency, while another faction advocating for both rural and urban based armed insurgency at the same time. In mid 1976, a leading member of MEISON and POMOA, Fikre Merid, was assassinated in broad day light in Addis Ababa. Then the palace of the former crown prince where leading members of MEISON lived and worked was blown up in a massive explosion, with scores of people killed. Both incidents were blamed on the EPRP. Then there was an assassination attempt on the First Vice Chairman of the military Council, Mengistu Haile Mariam, in actual fact the strong man of the regime. This attack was also blamed on the EPRP, and later it emerged that the Eritrean separatist movement, with whom the EPRP had a close relationship was also involved.

By 1976, the military council of 120 or so officers, non commissioned officers, and enlisted men which had started as a coordinating committee of the spontaneous armed forces movement in June 1974, and collectively assumed power in September 1974, had become unwieldy and cumbersome. Therefore a committee to reorganize it was established. Subsequently, following the recommendations of the committee, the military council was reorganized into a three tier structure. The largest, the General Assembly, in which all members of the council participated, was to meet periodically. A central committee of about forty members was selected by the General Assembly, which would meet every couple of months, and an executive committee of about seventeen members, was selected by the forty member central committee. The main executive functions were entrusted to this body. A secretariat headed by a secretary was also established. The executive committee included the Chairman, the two vice chairmen of the council, the secretary and the chairmen of the various committees of the military

council including defense, intelligence, political, foreign, administration, information affairs, and others.

The main point of dispute from this reorganization was the allocation of responsibilities among the three top leaders of the military council. The chairman, who was not a member of the council originally, but was a general officer appointed in November 1974 to provide a respectable public face to the military council, became chairman of all the bodies of the council, and also assumed the position of head of state, and commander in chief of the armed forces with the reorganization. The first vice chairman was given the responsibility of chairing the Council of Ministers and coordinating the work of the government, and the second vice chairman was given the responsibility of organizing a militia structure throughout the country. The secretary was given the duty of running the day to day affairs of the military council, organizing meetings, preparing agenda for meetings and keeping records. The other members of the military council were assigned various governmental and political responsibilities, while a few others were sent abroad, to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, to undergo ideological training. Most of those sent abroad were supporters of the first vice chairman. As he had earlier accumulated a lot of power in his hands as virtual head of the military council, the first vice chairman was not happy with the reorganization. The reorganization was intended not just to give some structure to the workings of the *Dergue*, but those who opposed the accumulation of the council's powers in the hands of one person also intended to curb such power. The first vice chairman and his supporters interpreted these moves as intended to change the direction of the revolution, by limiting the activities of the 'progressive' forces within the military council. At least was what was publicly stated, but in reality, the actual issue for the first vice chairman was personal power. By this

period while MEISON clearly supported the faction led by Mengistu, the EPRP was reported to have secretly infiltrated the military council and recruited a few of the leading opponents of Mengistu through the good offices of a front organization of the EPRP called the Women's Coordinating Committee.

An internal struggle within the military council went on for months and in early February 1977, the first vice chairman staged a bloody coup, in which the chairman, the secretary and six other leading members of the council were murdered after being taken into custody. Following this incident, Mengistu became chairman, and retained the reorganized structure of the military council. But from then on the military council existed only in name. The crisis in the *Dergue* also coincided with a period when the military regime was faced with other challenges. In the northwest, the royalist opposition EDU, supported by the Sudanese military captured some towns, while in the north, the Eritrean separatist movements had made significant gains in controlling a substantial part of Eritrea. In the south and east Somalia had infiltrated large numbers of paramilitary forces into large parts of the country, and its preparations for a final military offensive to take the third of Ethiopia it claimed was in the final stages.

After his bloody coup, Mengistu openly declared that the revolution was going on the offensive. He linked the internal struggle of the military council to the conspiracy of internal reactionaries (represented by the EDU), separatists (represented by the ELF and EPLF), anarchists (represented by the EPRP), external aggressors (represented by Somalia and Sudan), and the whole episode was presented as a conspiracy against Ethiopia as part of an imperialist strategy (led by the United States). At times, Mengistu would invoke the argument that Ethiopia was being punished for defying colonialist logic and being the sole black state to successfully



resist colonialism. There were indications that the EDU was closely working with the Sudanese, and EPRP had some loyalists in the military council, as well as relations the Eritrean separatist groups and the regime in Somalia. But, the rest of Mengistu's charges were convenient excuses to discredit his opponents. Opposition to the regime came from various sectors for different reasons, but he lumped all together as if there was a coordinated conspiracy. The counterrevolutionary terror unleashed by his opponents was termed 'white terror' and the response Mengistu declared was 'red terror,' terms borrowed from the Bolshevik revolutionary period in Russia. The *Dergue*, which began with a slogan to bring about fundamental changes in Ethiopian society without bloodshed, had turned violent already on the night of November 23, 1974, when it carried out the summary execution of sixty leading members of the imperial regime, as well a few members from its own ranks, including its chairman, General Aman Andom. But, the all-out terror that began in February 1977 and went on until 1978 targeted principally the left wing opposition, mainly the youth. According to some estimates about 30,000 people are said to have been murdered, and in the urban areas their bodies were left on the streets for people to see (HRW, 1991: 101-107). Relatives were told not to mourn, but rather show approval for the liquidation of counterrevolutionaries. There were even reports that parents and relatives were asked to pay for the bullets spent on executing their children and loved ones to be able to collect their bodies for burial. It was designed to produce the maximum effect, to terrorize the entire population. In the end, none of the left wing elements that supported Mengistu initially, including MEISON were spared and they suffered the same fate as the EPRP.

The beginning of the Red Terror not only coincided with Mengistu's assumption of dictatorial powers in February 1977, but according to a former close associate and a member of

the military government, who defected to the United States in 1986, Major Dawit Wolde-Giyorgis, the Red Terror was inspired and orchestrated by Mengistu himself and a small coterie of his ideological cohort (1989: 31-34). As already noted elsewhere, political violence was common throughout the history of the Ethiopian state as warlords engaged in campaigns and looting and struggling among each other for power. But, the Red Terror of the military regime went beyond earlier practices, as it was orchestrated officially, performed publicly, justified politically and rationalized ideologically under the pretext of countering ‘White Terror.’ It was conducted by organized squads, political cadres, and urban dwellers association militia squads. Every neighborhood urban dwellers association office became the scene of terror, interrogation and detention.<sup>79</sup>

Eventually, the military regime created more enemies than it could manage, and some of its misguided policies and mismanagement of the state led to internal dissention, including within the armed forces. The army alone had expanded from four divisions in 1974 to about half a million men, and there were expansions of the air force, navy, police and paramilitary units as well. The expansion of the armed forces was not just in quantitative terms; with the supply of massive quantities of sophisticated weapons and training provided by the Soviet Union, the quality had also improved considerably. As a result, it won significant victories against Somalia, as well as managing to contain the Eritrean insurgency. But, at the end of the day the interlocking of political, intelligence, and other control mechanisms established within the armed forces, and political interference in military and command decisions crippled its effectiveness. Mengistu started blaming the professional officers, even demoting and executing some of them

---

<sup>79</sup> I lived and witnessed the early period of the terror campaign and this has also been documented by Human Rights Watch (HRW, 1991).

in front of their soldiers, for losing battles or for pleading for policy and political reforms, acts which severely demoralized the armed forces and led to military setbacks. In 1989, the armed forces command staged a coup, while Mengistu was on a visit to the German Democratic Republic, but loyalist troops rounded up the senior officers and hundreds were killed and thousands were imprisoned and many executed. This was the beginning of the end for the regime, as with the loss of the most professional and able officers, the armed forces started disintegrating, eventually leading to the dictator Mengistu fleeing to Zimbabwe with his family.

The vacuum was filled by two separatist rebel movements, the EPLF and the TPLF (under the cover name of EPRDF), and assured the separation of Eritrea from Ethiopia. Violence continued under the *Woyyane* regime as well, but no longer conducted publicly. In contrast to the reception the revolutionary regime got when it came to power, the rebel movements were received with a great deal of apprehension by the general population. When the *Dergue* was assuming power in 1974 (it took place gradually over a period of several months), I witnessed its tanks being showered with flowers in the streets of Addis Ababa. Students were at the forefront of the support for the revolutionary overthrow of the imperial regime. Mainly because there was no violence associated with the revolution, and the military council vowed to bring changes without bloodshed, the people were confident that better days were ahead. The military council also pledged to consult with various sectors of the population, and even put suggestion boxes in front of every government office for the public to send in suggestions as to how the council should carry out its work and what it should do to address some of the pressing issues facing the country.

When the Tigrean People's Liberation Front (TPLF) supported by its Eritrean ally, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) entered Addis Ababa on May 28, 1991 and seized power however, they were confronted with a peaceful public demonstration against them. The message was that they were not welcome; the fighters who entered the capital did not even speak Amharic, the language commonly spoken in the capital. But, the TPLF was determined to seize power, and they fired at the demonstrators, using tanks and machine guns, killing scores of people. A similar protest and the same reaction took place in the eastern city of Dirre Dhawa in July 1991. These events signaled how the TPLF were going to rule, and they have pursued the same strategy since then. Thus, in order to consolidate their hold on power and stay there at all costs, the TPLF employed all the tools of violence, including, detention, torture, extrajudicial killings, blackmail, harassment, seizure and confiscation of property and looting. In short, the TPLF has pursued violent repression of its real, perceived or imagined enemies just like its predecessor. Some of the methods they employed were perfected during decades of guerrilla warfare against the central government.

There is one difference from the period of the *Dergue*; violence is hidden and takes place behind the scenes, rather than orchestrated publicly. The *Dergue* at least took responsibility for its actions, and the trials of its officials going on for nearly two decades shows that it kept records meticulously. In contrast, there are no records about the victims of the *Woyyane* regime, as arbitrary treatment of opponents or critiques of the regime is widespread and those responsible do not keep records. Every TPLF soldier, cadre and operative, has carte blanche rights over the life of the people under their rule (Gebreab, 2009). It is difficult to estimate the number of casualties, but they run into the tens of thousands, killed, disappeared, tortured, and imprisoned

(OSG, 2002). While it has tried to manipulate public opinion regarding terror under the *Dergue* regime selectively and for its own political purposes, it has avoided a systematic accounting and assessment of the violence under the previous regime. The *Woyyane* regime has even enlisted the services of several of the perpetrators of violence under its predecessor (Abbink, 1995: 71).

The regime has also used allegations of participation in the Red Terror campaign against its own political opponents. At other times people make allegations out of personal enmity. All these have made it difficult to differentiate the innocent from the real perpetrators. As Abbink has aptly put it, apart from the Tigrinya speaking population, the record of the *Woyyane* regime has contributed to an atmosphere of deception, confusion, distrust of politics and the state, and a clear lack of public commitment to the policies of the regime among large sections of the population (1995: 71). Another study confirms this assessment of the political situation in Ethiopia, as the level of dissatisfaction with the policies of the regime is far greater among the non-Tigrinya speaking population (Keller, 2005). In other words the regime has not succeeded in winning the confidence of the population and therefore has failed to win and establish the legitimacy of its power. The ethnicization of politics and the politicization of ethnicity, besides igniting or reigniting inter-communal conflicts in many parts of the country, satisfied either national groups demanding greater rights and a fair say in the affairs of the state, nor those who believe in the unitary conception of Ethiopian identity and the state. The regime has therefore continued the policy of repression of political dissent, and violence against political opponents, as hundreds of cases of disappearances and extrajudicial killings have been reported. According to the Oromia Support Group, it has documented 857 forced disappearances and 3,085 extrajudicial killings as of December 2002 (OSG, 2002). Human Rights Watch has periodically

reported the grim reality of political repression, gross violation of human rights and crimes against humanity (HRW, 2007a, 2007b, 2008; Tronvoll, 2008). Moreover, since 1991, hundreds of thousands have fled the country being exiled and taking refuge abroad.

The violence and the repression the *Woyyanne* regime unleashed in the aftermath of the 2005 general elections have also been amply documented (Abbink, 2006; Smith, 2007). The people were asked to make choices and were eventually punished for making the choice the regime did not want. The *Dergue* at least never toyed with multiparty politics and free elections, and the people knew the rules of the game. The *Woyyane* regime has punished people for supporting opposition parties. Some paid with their lives, many more faced imprisonment, and others were forced to flee the country.

### **The Consequences of State Violence and the Attitudes to Political Power**

All the regimes that came to power in Ethiopia in the twentieth century have been unable to win the confidence of the people and establish legitimate governance, either on traditional basis or popular basis. This fact has had a tremendous impact on the way they conducted the affairs of the state. With their legitimacy questioned, the method they used to take power also determined the manner in which they maintained control over the state. As all the regimes of the twentieth century came to power with massive use of violence, they employed the same methods to retain it. One exception was the revolutionary regime which came to power on the back of a popular movement using little or no violence. But, when confronted with internal dissent and external opposition to its rule, it turned to unleashing excessive violence instead of seeking political accommodation. Terror became both a means of suppressing its opponents as well as a

mechanism of rule, justified openly as necessary against internal reactionaries, counter revolutionaries, agents of imperialism, and anarchists, as well as external aggressors.

The violence directed by the state under successive regimes has had a transformative effect on Ethiopian society as a whole. Although the use of violence as an instrument of political power has always characterized the state throughout its history, the regimes of 20<sup>th</sup> century Ethiopia (from Emperor Haile Sellassie to Melles Zenawi) made it as the principal basis of policy in their exercise of the authority of the state (Abbink, 1995: 70). Though the height of the Red Terror was brief, lasting a period of less than two years, it became the defining characteristic of the entire 17 years of the *Dergue* regime. The *Dergue* had many positive achievements as well, including the freeing of millions of peasants from feudal bondage, and the first attempt at recognizing the need for integrating into the state the peoples who were hitherto peripheral to the state. However, the defining characteristic of the *Dergue* regime became one of violence, terror, torture, intimidation, war, famine, detention, forced conscription, and forced relocation of the rural population, and the very idea of the state itself came to be defined by repression and coercion (Abbink, 1995).

One of the lasting effects of this period is that in view of the intensity and pervasive nature of the violence everything since then came to be defined by, and viewed against, that background. In the human rights discourse about Ethiopia, the period after the *Dergue* has been viewed as an improvement. Despite its poor human rights record, curtailment of rights and repression of its political opposition, the *Woyyane* regime has been undeservedly viewed, especially by foreigners as better and an improvement over the previous regime. However, many people who live under the regime indicate the capricious and unacknowledged violence of the

regime. At least the *Dergue* did not discriminate its targets of violence, and everyone suffered equally, whereas the *Woyyane* regime targets particular national groups, principally the Oromo for its targeted violence and repression (HRW, 2005).

Another effect of the Red Terror period was the undermining of the entire social fabric of society in Ethiopia, as fear, anticipation of arrest, abuse of power, and arbitrariness became a fact of life for the entire society (Abbink, 1995: 70). This included even those who were at senior levels of the government. The *Dergue*'s terror violated deep rooted cultural norms and moral tenets, for example, concerning deference to women and elderly compassion for the young and respect for the dead. Women, the elderly and the very young were all targeted and became victims of state sponsored terror and violence. Sometimes these went beyond the imaginable as pregnant women were murdered and imprisoned, and children were born and grew up in prisons.

In the end, such use of massive violence was not only counterproductive and self-defeating, but greatly contributed to the eventual crumbling of the state and the very conception of a common Ethiopian identity (Abbink, 1995: 70-71). The use of excessive violence in defense of the centralized Ethiopian state naturally bred the emergence of rebel movements opposed to the very idea of Ethiopia, determined not only to redress their grievances by armed means but also bent on fundamentally altering the very concept of an Ethiopian identity and the centralized state. One of the enduring legacies of the state-sponsored and state directed violence is that terror became part of the collective consciousness of the population, and led to an increasing alienation from the state. The widespread prevalence of political skepticism and cynicism, withdrawal from public life, distrust and suspicions of the intentions of the state, and the trauma of reluctance to talk about past losses of loved ones, relatives and friends is part of this legacy.



There are a couple of conclusions we can make from the preceding discussion of state directed violence in Ethiopian political life. The first and most important is the idea that for Ethiopian regimes the end justifies the means. For the political actors, the conquest of power is for their own benefits, material and other nonmaterial gains. These gains are used as sources of patronage for clientele relationships to reinforce positions and strengthen the hold on power. Secondly, from the frequent internal struggle, we see that power is understood to be indivisible and absolute. It cannot be shared and there cannot be alternative centers of power or checks and balances. Therefore, the exercise of power is personal and there are no institutional or other limits except lack of capacity. Holders of power do not tolerate a second in command, even a weak one. Mengistu got his deputy, Lt. Colonel Atanfu Abate, executed in 1978, not because he threatened his position, but just because he did not want him around. The Emperor Haile Selassie did not tolerate his own son, who was crown prince. Moreover, power is not only absolute, but also held indefinitely. There are no limits not only to the extent of its exercise, but also its tenure. With the rare exception of the Emperor Menelik, all the Ethiopian heads of state during the last century and a half, Tewodros, Yohannes, Zewditu, Haile Sellassie, Aman Andom, and Teferi Bante all died violently. The Emperor Haile Sellassie was humiliated, deposed, imprisoned and murdered at the age of 83. Mengistu fled the country and went into exile after seventeen years in power (three as first vice chairman, and fourteen as head of state). If history is a guide the fate the *Woyyane* regime's autocratic ruler cannot be different; it will end either violently or with exile. The latter is no longer a secure and a viable option for tyrants, as the mechanisms of an international system of justice have been put in place.

To conclude this chapter we can fairly say from the preceding discussion that the Ethiopian state remained alien to the majority of the inhabitants, principally as the result of the policies it pursued and the actions it took. It was never able, and never intended to embed itself in society. Personalized military autocracy, and factionalized ruling elite have characterized the Ethiopian state. The state not only failed, it did not even attempt to broaden the basis of its authority. As a result, its legitimacy has always been contested and challenged internally. The response from the state to the internal challenges has been repression, and no attempts at accommodating the demands of various social forces. In order to offset this internal weakness, the Ethiopian state embedded itself in the global system by establishing clientele relationships with the European imperial powers, the United States and the Soviet Union.

## Chapter VI

### **The Ethiopian State: External Challenges and State Response**

We have seen from the history of the Ethiopian state that it survived the Moslem challenge in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, partly due to a valuable help it received from the Portuguese. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a British military expedition brought an end to the rule of Emperor Tewdros, resulting in his suicide. This expedition also helped Emperor Yohannes ascend the imperial throne. Later on French and Italian arms supplies contributed to the rise of Emperor Menelik, and the expansion of the Empire. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as European imperial power declined, the Ethiopian state attached itself to the United States. When the United States felt it no longer needed the services of Ethiopia, and refused to fulfill its requests, the Ethiopian state, under a new regime, shifted to the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union bailed out the Ethiopian state at a critical time in 1978, when the Somali invasion nearly succeeded in wresting control of the Somali inhabited Ogaden, and other territory, all nearly a third of Ethiopia. When the Soviet Union collapsed, once again, under another regime, Ethiopia had to return to the United States. This embeddedness to external powers has helped the state to survive and expand, but it has had a profound impact on its legitimacy, performance, and long term viability. Ethiopia's choice of alliances has very often put it at odds with its neighbors, and is partly responsible for the challenges to the state from the region.

One of the defining characteristics of the Ethiopian state that exacerbates its internal problems has been the persistence of external challenges from within the region and from afar. The challenges from within and without have also very often reinforced each other, and all

regimes have blamed the internal problems of the state as the work of its external adversaries. Prior to the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century these challenges emanated from imperialist powers that were bent on expanding their control into Ethiopia. But, the situation barely changed as Ethiopian state continued to face similar predicaments even after the independence of the colonial territories in its neighborhood. In fact it was faced with new challenges to its legitimacy. With the exception of Kenya, it has faced persistent challenges from all the major states among its neighbors. These challenges emanate partly from the characteristic of the Ethiopian state, from the choice external alliances it has chosen at various times, as well as the ambitions of the neighboring states.

The purpose of this chapter is therefore to put this into the regional and international context in perspective and assess their impact on the internal challenges faced by the Ethiopian state. We will look at four main issues, and Ethiopia's relations with each of the neighboring states. First we will look at the perception Ethiopian leaders have of the state and its place in region. Second, relations between Ethiopia and its neighbors, and the challenges posed by them will be treated. Third, we will examine the internal weaknesses of the state, and its global alliances that have contributed to the challenges posed by states within the region. Finally, we will look at how changes in global politics have had a far greater impact on the Ethiopian state and contributed to major social and political upheavals in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Before going into these, let see the Ethiopian state and its role within the regional context.

The Northeast Africa region, where Ethiopia occupies a central place, is a region that has been consistently at war for most of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and continues to suffer from violent conflicts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There have been a few interstate conventional wars in

the region all involving Ethiopia, with Somalia in 1964 and 1977/78, and with Eritrea during 1998-2000. But the majority of the violent conflicts in the region are principally internal civil wars. Eritrea won independence from Ethiopia after three decades of civil war, and waged a conventional war with Ethiopia five years after gaining independence. Sudan had been at war between the north and the south, the longest civil war in modern Africa. As we have seen it is a region that was the scene of late colonialism and inter-imperialist rivalry in late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is also a region where indigenous forces, principally the Ethiopian state, expanded in competition with the European powers. Sudan also attempted to expand into Ethiopia, occupying Ethiopia's Northeast region during the brief period of an Islamic revivalist movement during the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but was cut short by British occupation.

One of the outcomes of these internal and external competitions over territories has been the division of peoples across various frontiers and a complicated and incomplete process of state formation. As a consequence, civil wars have characterized almost all of the states in the region for a greater part of the period under discussion. Besides Ethiopia and Sudan, Somalia, Djibouti and Eritrea have also undergone civil wars. In the case of Eritrea, the civil war started even before independence as two rival factions of the liberation movement, each dominated by the two principal religious communities, Christians and Moslems, fought among each other for several years over control of the liberation movement and the eventual outcome of the struggle. Low-level insurgency has continued even after independence between the government dominated by the Christian and Tigrinya speaking sector of the population and various political factions representing the Moslem half of the country, marginalized sectors of the population, and those opposed to the autocratic post-independence regime. In Djibouti, since independence in

1977, relations between the Afar population and the regime dominated by the Isa community have been tense and degenerated into a full scale civil war in the 1980s and 1990s. Historically Ethiopia supported the Afar community, who were also relatively favored under French colonial rule, while the Somali Republic supported the Isa, a clan of the Somali nation. Ethiopia and Somalia supported rival liberation movements before Djibouti's independence dominated by each of the two communities. Before Djibouti's independence, both Somalia and Ethiopia had expansionist designs on Djibouti. Ethiopia even went as far as conspiring with the French to postpone the territory's independence until 1977.<sup>80</sup> Ethiopia's interest was economic arising from the vital port of Djibouti, and Franco-Ethiopian Railway linking the port to the Ethiopian capital. Thus the legitimacy of all the states has been contested, and the political struggles in the region are characterized by the prevalence of excessive use of violence by both state and non state actors, the consequence of which is the immense level human suffering that can no longer be hidden from the rest of the world.

The Northeast African region is unique in post independence Africa in many ways, among them the existence of independence movements as a consequence of which in the 1990s two new states were born, Eritrea and Somaliland, the former recognized by the international community, the latter not.<sup>81</sup> This was the first time in modern Africa that states were formed by

---

<sup>80</sup> Before independence the French conducted plebiscites to ascertain the views of the inhabitants. Often the Afar overwhelmingly voted in favor of continued French presence, while the Issa voted against, hoping that once the French left, they would unite with the Somali Republic. The Afar voted overwhelmingly for the French to stay not just because they had a better deal under the French, but for fear of becoming a minority resulting from the territory's annexation to the Somali Republic. During such plebiscites the Ethiopian state facilitated for the Afar community in Ethiopia to cross the border and vote with their brothers in Djibouti.

<sup>81</sup> Eritrea attained recognition because it was the Ethiopian state that facilitated the process, and Somaliland failed to win recognition because it declared its independence in the wake of the collapse of the Somali state, and even if it is reconstituted, the likelihood of a Somali state recognizing the independence of Somaliland is slim, given the very purpose and irredentist nature of the Somali state, built on the idea of bringing the entire nation under a

breaking away from existing African states. In Sudan, a comprehensive peace agreement was signed in 2005 between Sudan's Arabic speaking Moslem dominated National Congress Party (NCP) Government in the north and the southern indigenous African and Christian dominated Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). On the basis of the agreement, backed by the international community, an autonomous government headed by the SPLA has been established in Southern Sudan, in addition to a share of seats in the central government in Khartoum. The agreement, among other things, includes a formula for the sharing of power and resources as well as a six years grace period followed by a referendum on independence. The referendum is expected to be held by 2011, and though it is difficult to foretell the outcome of the expected referendum, the birth of yet another new state being in the region is a real possibility.<sup>82</sup>

Moreover, there are a host of other independence movements in Sudan and Ethiopia. Besides the conflict in Darfur in western Sudan, which has gained a great deal of international attention, there are also movements in eastern Sudan, seeking independence or autonomy from the regime in Khartoum.<sup>83</sup> Likewise, while Eritrea has already achieved independence, Oromo, Somali, Afar, Sidama, and a couple of other movements on the western edges of Ethiopia have been fighting for and demanding independence or autonomy from Ethiopia for several decades now. Furthermore, the majority of the legal political parties in Ethiopia, including the ruling

---

single state. Nevertheless, Somaliland remains the only part of the collapsed Somali state where there is some degree of order and stability.

<sup>82</sup> Given the political crisis in Sudan emanating from the Darfur region and an arrest warrant by the International Criminal Court (ICC) on the President of the Sudan issued in March 2009, it is possible that the NCP dominated government in the north might renege on the agreement to hold a referendum. The northern Sudanese elite have also a history of signing up to agreements and renegeing on them. The best example is the Addis Ababa Agreement of 1972, which provided substantial autonomy for Southern Sudan, but was unilaterally revoked by the dictatorship of General Ja'far El Numeiri a decade later.

<sup>83</sup> The reason why the Darfur crisis attracted international attention, including the involvement of western celebrities, while there are other even more deadly conflicts, among them the conflict in Congo which has claimed more lives remains a mystery.

party, are all ethnic based parties. These movements may not necessarily end up with the emergence of new states, but their existence is an indication that Northeast Africa is a region where the process of state formation remains incomplete.<sup>84</sup> As a result, in spite of claims of being one of the oldest independent states in the world, Ethiopia suffers from a crisis of state formation, which has made the state illegitimate, in the eyes of the majority of its peoples, making it dysfunctional and unable to manage its affairs peacefully. Hence it is a state that has been consistently challenged internally, and relies on the excessive use of violence and external legitimacy to maintain itself.

Complicating Ethiopia's internal challenges has been its place in the region and how it has been viewed by its neighbors. As we have already seen the Ethiopian state's internal challenges emanate from the failure of political and economic integration, and consequently the existence of identities and political forces contesting the legitimacy of the state. There are obvious reasons why it was unable to achieve this. Among these is the fact that the state has been dominated by an elite minority, lacking the confidence and political will, as well as the skills, to steer the state along that path. Ethiopia not only lost the historic opportunity at the time of its constitution, but Ethiopian leaders instead attempted to build and maintain an anachronistic empire in competition with the European powers, during an era when the currency of empire had already started waning. By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when Ethiopia had just emerged as an empire, all major empires, including the Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman and Russian empires had

---

<sup>84</sup> There are movements for independence or autonomy in many other parts of the world, including in the older national states of Western Europe, like the Scottish, Flemish, Basque, and Corsican cases in Britain, Belgium, Spain and France respectively. But, except for the Belgian case the rest are marginal and being managed, and the passion and intensity of the struggles in Northeast Africa stand out, and as a result, new states have emerged in the closing decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



started to collapse with the subjugated peoples demanding and gaining independence.<sup>85</sup> It was the era of nationalism and popular revolutions, as witnessed in eastern and southern Europe with the collapse of the empires, the emergence of new national states, and the beginnings of anti colonial national liberation movements in Asia and Africa.

It is during such an era that Ethiopia expanded and built an empire, but the people forcefully brought under the empire and treated as subjects never accepted their domination, which they challenged through rebellions. In actual fact it is the character of the state, contested legitimacy, internal weaknesses and unwillingness to address and manage them, which I have discussed in the preceding chapter that has made the state more vulnerable to external challenges. There are three major factors contributing to why Ethiopia's neighbors meddle in its internal affairs and conspire to weaken it. The first and most important factor is the existence of contested national identities and the fact that a majority of the national groups do not relate to the identity on which the state has been built, and consequently have been alienated from the state. In fact many feel oppressed, excluded, subjugated, their identity denigrated and they are denied access to power and resources by the state. In turn, this has contributed to the emergence of many political and armed movements to redress their grievances and they have often sought support from and refuge in the neighboring states. Secondly, in the political culture in Ethiopia, political power is personalized and the ruling elite factionalized. Individuals and factions excluded from the political process tend to organize armed resistance in order to gain or regain access to power by seeking bases and even alliances of convenience in the neighboring states to

---

<sup>85</sup> While the other empires disappeared, after the Bolshevik revolution, the Russian Empire acknowledged the independence of a few, but reconstituted the rest within an entirely new framework fundamentally transforming the imperial relationship by recognizing the national sovereignty of the peoples brought under the empire and survived for another seventy years.

topple their adversaries from power and replace them. Some of these movements have even traded valuable intelligence information on the Ethiopian state with their hosts, further contributing to the weakening of the state. The third factor is the structure of the state that does not allow for political dissention and at the same time does not have mechanisms for redressing injustice within the state. In other words, there is no independent system of justice. This factor drives many to redress injustices through armed rebellion. In addition, Ethiopia's external alliances have also provided the ammunition for some of the neighboring states to undermine and weaken the state by hosting and supporting various insurgencies in Ethiopia. Nevertheless, it is important to note that foreign forces cannot create internal conflicts where they do not exist. They can only exploit and work as catalysts to fan already existing internal contradictions.

These factors have provided ample opportunities for the neighboring states, particularly Sudan and Somalia, to subvert and undermine the Ethiopian state by hosting and supporting various political and armed insurgencies. The Ethiopian state has reciprocated, as successive regimes have supported political and armed movements in Sudan and Somalia. This support seems to be more defensive, obtaining bargaining chips rather than calculated to undermine the regimes instead of the integrity of the states. In fact, in 1972, Emperor Haile Sellassie used his influence to broker a peace agreement between the rebel movement in Southern Sudan and the government in the north. Ethiopia expected reciprocity for this gesture with moves by the Sudanese government to close down their facilities and expel the Eritrean rebel organizations from Sudan. However, though the Sudanese government carried out some of its promised actions on the Eritrean rebels, it is only the more visible aspects of the Eritrean rebel activity that were curtailed, and the Eritrean rebellion continued to operate fairly unhindered. In the 1980s, the

Ethiopian military regime also played a crucial role among the rebel factions in Southern Sudan in tilting the balance of forces in favor of those claiming to change the political system while maintaining the integrity of the Sudan.<sup>86</sup>

### **The Ethiopian State and Regional Challenges**

Until the wave of African independence in the 1960s, the Ethiopian state could take pride in the fact of maintaining an independent statehood in the face of the European partition of Africa. Since the neighboring territories were administered by Britain, France and Italy, the state leaders could only think of relations with these powers. They had very little idea about the social and economic conditions in the colonial territories. Only a small number of people educated in Europe and the United States during the early period of the twentieth century realized the fact that Ethiopia in fact lagged behind many of these territories and needed to move fast if it was to maintain its independence and remain a viable state (Zewde, 2002). These intellectuals raised social and economic issues, but many did not survive long enough to make a positive impact, as nearly all of them were hunted down and summarily executed by the Italian forces in 1937 following the attempt on the life of the Italian viceroy Marshal Graziani (Sbacchi, 1997; Zewde, 2002). After the liberation, the government sent a small number of young people to study abroad, mainly the children of the aristocracy, and this postwar western educated class soon realized that Ethiopia's long history of independence did not actually translate into social and economic progress even when compared with the newly independent African states. In their

---

<sup>86</sup> By the early 1980s there were two rebel factions in Southern Sudan. The first one was called Anya Nya Two, after the first rebellion that lasted between 1955 and 1972, and the second was the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) formed in 1983. The former had a platform of setting up an independent state in Southern Sudan, while the latter came up with a platform of establishing a new but a united Sudan by transforming the political system from minority rule into one where the indigenous African population both in the south and the north would have their rightful place.

public pronouncements, the leaders of the attempted coup of December 1960 stressed Ethiopia's backwardness comparing it to the African states then emerging from colonial rule (Greenfield, 1965: 398-404).

Thus, with the wave of the anti-colonial movements throughout Africa, and the looming independence of many of the European colonial territories, Ethiopian leaders found themselves in a difficult situation. They were used to dealing with European powers. The Ethiopian state has always considered itself as a "Christian island in a Moslem sea," and the fact that most of the territories that were becoming its independent neighbors were majority Moslem states created considerable apprehension among the state leaders. Moreover, the 1952 revolution in Egypt forced the Ethiopian state to rethink and reorient its foreign relations. As a result, the Ethiopian state embarked upon building its African credentials and became very active in pan-African affairs.

Ethiopia was always been considered as an inspiration in pan-African circles and represented the hope of not just Africans, but also the African Diaspora. As the oldest independent state and one of the few African states present at the founding of the United Nations, the organization established one of its five regional commissions, the Economic Commission for Africa, based in the Ethiopian capital in 1958. The first conference of independent Africa's heads of state and government was convened in Addis Ababa in May 1963, and the Organization of African Unity, the first pan-African organization established its secretariat and headquarters in Addis Ababa. The Emperor immersed himself in pan African politics, sent troops to Congo as part of the United Nations mission, and started mediating disputes between the newly independent states. Ethiopia also became active in supporting the

struggle against white minority rule in Southern Africa. For example Nelson Mandela was issued an Ethiopian passport, with which he travelled clandestinely, and got his first training in the techniques of guerilla warfare in Ethiopia, provided by the commander of an Ethiopian commando unit, Colonel (later General) Taddese Birru (Mandela, 1994: 265-66).<sup>87</sup> The first units of military wing of the African National Congress (ANC), Umkhonto we Sizwe, were also trained in Ethiopia (Mandela, 1994: 266).

The Emperor also embarked upon endless state visits throughout the world, from Europe to North America, from Asia to Latin America. He visited all the American presidents from Roosevelt to Nixon, some of them several times. There was no corner of the globe that he did not visit until his downfall. Sometimes, he was on a tour of world capitals for months. One such trip was in the late 1950s when he spent several months visiting all the then existing Socialist States of Eastern Europe. He even offered to mediate an end to the conflict in Vietnam. The Emperor believed in Wilsonian collective security, a concept he invoked at his speech before the League of Nations following Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia (Haile-Sellassie, 1936: 297-300). He asserted that the essence of collective security should guarantee the security and sovereignty of smaller and weaker states; otherwise they would be at the mercy of the powerful. Despite his close alliance with the United States, he was one of the first to come out and condemn the United States invasion of Cuba in 1961. When the Soviet Union invaded Checkoslovakia in 1968, he expressed his condemnation on the same principles.

---

<sup>87</sup> This officer was later involved in an Oromo civic organization that sought to conduct literacy campaigns, build schools, health stations, roads and other infrastructure by mobilizing the population and local resources. In 1967, the organization was proscribed, accused of undermining the unity of Ethiopia and in 1968, its leaders were sentenced to death and long periods of imprisonment. Taddese was among those sentenced to death, but the sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment. He was released in 1974 at the outbreak of the revolution for one of the initial demands of the civilian and armed forces movements was the release of all political prisoners. One year later in 1975 he was accused of rebellion against the military regime and summarily executed.

This increased preoccupation with foreign affairs was a consequence of Ethiopia's regional isolation and the Emperor's efforts were partly designed to build as much international support as possible for the Ethiopian state to offset its regional predicament. However, the increased involvement in external affairs meant that domestic issues were neglected or became of secondary importance. In the end, it was his failure to give due attention to domestic affairs, particularly economic, social and political development that was to determine his own fate and that of his regime.

The regional challenges to the Ethiopian state emanate from three major factors: religion, ethnicity and resources, particularly water. Complicating these factors are Ethiopia's external alliances. Since the Ethiopian state elite presented the state as an "island of Christianity in a sea of Moslems," this perception of itself became very important as it informed its domestic and external policies. On the one hand, this perception of itself created a sense of a siege mentality, and the state as well as the Christian population felt that they were permanently threatened by hostile neighbors. In the collective memory of the state and the Christian population, the experience of the sixteenth century invasion of the Christian kingdom by Moslem forces under Imam Ahmed ibn Ibrahim (Gran) weighed greatly for over four centuries. Stories about that invasion was told and passed on to generation after generation. The invasion itself was presented in Ethiopian history as the work of external forces led by Turkey, and Ahmed Gran has also been presented as a Turkish general.<sup>88</sup> As a result, any domestic rebellion was also attributed to be the work of the external enemies of the state. Thus, the Ethiopian state has been unable to recover from the trauma of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Ahmed Gran conquest, and saw all threats to the state

---

<sup>88</sup> The military regime later tried to amend this history by referring to Ahmed "Gran" as a traitor rather than a foreigner, but nevertheless in the service of the Ottoman Turks.

through the prism of that experience. Even the revolutionary regime of 1974-91 periodically invoked the threats and conspiracies of the "historical enemies of Ethiopia," and considered the rebellion in Eritrea and the Somali invasion of 1977-78 as the work of the coordinated machinations of these forces (PMAC, 1978: 20). However, this perception has had domestic ramifications, alienating the Moslem population from the state. Though the identity of the state has remained Christian, according to the latest census figures, slightly more than a third of the population of Ethiopia is Moslem (CSA, 1999: 56). Nevertheless, the aim of this perception has been directed at maintaining the loyalty of the Christian population behind the state, and by presenting the state as a victim, in order gain sympathy for the state among the Christian communities and states of the world, principally those of Europe and later also the United States. This strategy has worked well, and the Ethiopian state has considerable sympathy in the west compared to the rest of Africa. As a result, the violence that the state perpetrates on the peoples under its jurisdiction is very often either ignored or given the benefit of doubt. Only under the military regime, emanating from the regime's alliance with the USSR, Cuba, and the rest of the then Socialist states, did the Ethiopian state come under periodic censure. The regime that came to power in 1991, despite being one of the most authoritarian and brutal regimes in Africa, managed to get away with crimes against the people and serious violations of human rights. The regime's stealing of the 2005 elections and the violence it unleashed subsequently murdering at least 200 protesters, imprisoning tens of thousands of people for belonging to opposition parties is only the most visible example of its method of rule. Otherwise, violence is conducted out of view as repression and violence has characterized the whole of its rule since it came to power in 1991.

## *Ethiopia and the Middle East*

Northeast Africa is not only geographically close to the Middle East, but there are cultural currents running across the Red Sea between the two regions. As we have seen Ethiopia in particular shares a great deal of history with this part of the world. Very early on, both Christianity and Islam were introduced into Ethiopia from this region. Through widely held mythology Ethiopia perceived itself as part of that history of the world. According to the *Kebrä Nagast* (Glory of the Kings), one of two important books (the other being the *Fetha Nagast*) that have informed the thinking of the rulers and the clergy, Abyssinians are the chosen people of God to inherit all the promises which the Jews have forfeited, and the earth is divided into two: one portion belonging to the Emperor of Rome, and the other portion to the Emperor of Ethiopia (Budge, 1932: 16).

‘From the middle of Jerusalem and from the north thereof to the south east is the portion of the Emperor of Rome; and from the middle of Jerusalem from the north thereof to the south and to western India is the portion of the Emperor of Ethiopia. For both of them are the seeds of Shem, the son of Noah, the seed of Abraham, the seed of David, the children of Solomon’

The point here is that the Ethiopian state is built on the ideology of grandiose legends that are not commensurate with its capacity. There is a strong ideological sympathy for the state of Israel in Ethiopia by the state and among the Christian population.<sup>89</sup> When Palestine was partitioned creating two provisional states, one for the Jewish people, another for the Palestinian people, by a UN General Assembly resolution in 1947 Ethiopia cast one of ten abstaining votes (UN, 1947). It seems that the Ethiopians were on the one hand fearful of its implications for relations with the Arab and Moslem states, if they voted in favor, and were not prepared to

---

<sup>89</sup> Nevertheless, this sympathy was not accorded to the Ethiopian Jews, called the *Beta Israel* or the *Falasha*, who have been historically persecuted throughout the ages. Many are said to have been forcefully converted to Christianity. Ethiopia has lost this sector of its population as nearly all of them were been resettled in Israel in two massive airlifts, in 1984 and 1991.



betray their own ideological commitment and also disappoint its western allies, particularly the United States by voting against the resolution.<sup>90</sup> Since then, even under ideologically different regimes, Ethiopia has consistently cast an abstaining vote in the General Assembly on most crucial resolutions concerning Israel UN, 1975; 1991).<sup>91</sup> However, this position did not win any friends for Ethiopia, and in the end it failed to satisfy either side. Both the radical and conservative Arab states thus openly supported the Eritrean independence cause, considering it as an Arab cause. The Eritreans also played on that and were successful in raising support from varied sectors of the Arab and Moslem world. Therefore, the Ethiopian state found itself isolated regionally as the result of its religious make up and affiliations. In that era of nationalism, anti-imperialism and anti-Zionism, Ethiopia's association with the United States and links with Israel was considered as a hostile act by many of the radical leaders. Besides the radical states, the Israeli link also won Ethiopia the hostility of the conservative states as well. With the Ethiopian state being the lone Christian state in the region, coupled with its external affiliations, the Arab and neighboring Moslem states saw Ethiopia as an alien, illegitimate and hostile social formation in their midst.

In other words, the Arab Middle East never saw the Ethiopian state as legitimate, and saw it as alien and oppressive to the Moslem population. They therefore tried to redress that through subverting the Ethiopian state by supporting insurgencies they thought would advance the cause of Moslems in Ethiopia. In the Eritrean case, though the independence struggle was started by a Moslem dominated movement, at the end the Christian dominated Eritrean People's Liberation

---

<sup>90</sup> Britain was also among those that abstained.

<sup>91</sup> For example, in 1975, under the military regime, Ethiopia abstained on resolution 3379 which declared Zionism to be a form of racism. When that resolution was revoked in December 1991 with another resolution 4686 Ethiopia again abstained, this time under the post-1991 regime.

Front (EPLF) won and formed the post-independence government. To the dismay of many Arab and Moslem states who, for thirty years supported the Eritrean struggle for independence, the first trip the Eritrean leader made abroad was to Israel.

### *Ethiopia and Egypt*

Ethiopian-Egyptian relations are influenced by two important factors: natural resources, and religion. As we have seen Ethiopia maintained historic ties with Egypt through the medium of the Orthodox church for over a millennium and a half. But, most importantly the two states have been linked by a vital resource, the Nile River. At the same time, particularly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, under the leadership of Ismail Pasha,<sup>92</sup> the Khedive of Egypt and Sudan (1863-1879), Egypt's expansionist designs clashed with those of Ethiopia. By an Ottoman decree of 1865, the Ottoman provinces of Habesh (Abyssinia), the Red Sea ports of Suakin (in today's Sudan) and Massawa (in today's Eritrea) and other inland towns, until then under direct Ottoman jurisdiction,<sup>93</sup> were ceded to Ismail. In 1872 the regions Barka and Keren (in today's western Eritrea) were annexed by the Ottoman governor of the 'province of Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Coast,' the German Werner Mutzinger Pasha.

Ismail carried out several reforms and increased the revenues of the state and he was also linked to the construction of the Suez Canal. By an Ottoman decree of 1873, Egypt had become virtually independent and Ismail embarked upon an expansionist campaign of his own. He

---

<sup>92</sup> Ismail Pasha was the grandson of the Mohammed Ali Pasha, the Albanian born Ottoman Viceroy of Egypt, who has been regarded as the founder of modern Egypt. Mohammed Ali established the dynasty that ruled Egypt until the revolution in 1952.

<sup>93</sup> These territories were peripheral to the Ottoman empire, and Ottomans hardly controlled most of these territories, but it was a sort of claiming title deeds to them, and hoping total control at some future date.

wanted to control all the lands that are sources of the Nile River, a vital and indispensable source of life for Egypt, as well as all the Red Sea coast of Africa. In 1874, he annexed Darfur, but his ambition of annexing Abyssinia was frustrated by repeated military defeats inflicted by the Abyssinians. In 1875 Ismail occupied Hamassein (in today's central highlands of Eritrea around the capital Asmara), but his forces were decisively defeated at the battles of Gundet and the Mereb River. In 1876, his forces were again defeated in Gura (between the Red Sea port of Massawa, and the highland).<sup>94</sup> However, the Egyptians successfully occupied the Red Sea coastal regions as far as Zeila, and also the hinterland as far as the Oromo inhabited regions of Harar, in today's eastern Ethiopia in 1875 (Hassen, 2008: 47). As Egyptian power declined and Egypt itself fell under British domination, with the Anglo-Egyptian-Ethiopian treaty of 1884, the regions of western Eritrea annexed by Mutzinger were returned to Abyssinian control, and Mutzinger's Red Sea coast was taken by the Italians later. The Egyptians also withdrew from Harar in June 1885 and the coastal port of Zeila towards the end of 1886 (Hassen, 2008: 53). As soon as the Egyptians withdrew, Emperor Menelik launched a massive military offensive and conquered the Oromo region of Harar in January 1887 in one of the bloodiest confrontations of the period (Dilebo, 1974: 89-90). Unlike most of the other principalities conquered by Menelik, the Moslem state of Harar which ruled over the surrounding Oromo population, also employed modern European weapons, and resisted fiercely, but Menelik's massive force and superior weaponry gave him the advantage, and the Moslem state was destroyed and the Emir escaped.

The point here is that the long standing ambitions of Egypt to be a regional power never ceased. After the revolution of 1952, these efforts gained a new ideological fervor, that of Arab

---

<sup>94</sup> In this battle Ismail's own son, Hassen was captured by the Abyssinians and was released only after significant amounts of ransom were paid.

nationalism. The Ethiopian state also rightly saw the Nasserite revolution as a serious threat. In the first place it overthrew a monarchy, and therefore was republican in its outlook, its ideology was pan-Arab, and pan-Islamic. After the revolution, militant Arab nationalism led by Gamal Abdel-Nasser reverberated beyond Egypt and engulfed the Middle East and North Africa. But the essential driving force behind Egyptian policy towards Ethiopia remained that of control over the sources of the Nile. Egypt therefore sought to undermine the Ethiopian state, by stirring the Moslem population from within and pressures from without. A propaganda war beamed from Cairo began against the Ethiopian state with radio broadcasts including in some of Ethiopia's languages.

As already noted, Egypt's interest in Ethiopia is centuries old, and historically it was based on two main factors. The first and most important emanates principally from the Nile River, Egypt's only source of water. More significantly over three quarters of the waters of the mighty river originates in the Ethiopian highlands. The Aswan Dam was apparently designed to make Egypt less dependent on the flow of water from Ethiopia, but this was a rather shortsighted idea, as the water that accumulates at Aswan would have to flow from Ethiopia any way. The second is the centuries old links through the medium of the Coptic Orthodox Church. But, Nasser had designs to weaken the Copts at home and therefore their links with Ethiopia also. To this effect he supported the Ethiopian Church's desire to become autocephalous from the Coptic Church, and despite the latter's reluctance Nasser put considerable pressure on the Coptic Church hierarchy to acquiesce to Ethiopian demands (Erllich, 2002: 138-41). Thus, the Ethiopian Church gained autonomy in 1956, after a millennium and half under the suzerainty of the

Egyptian church. Until then the Egyptian Church appointed the head of the Ethiopian Church and consecrated its bishops.

Under Nasser, Egypt also increasingly strengthened its Arab-Islamic Middle-Eastern identity, even uniting with Syria to form the United Arab Republic (UAR) and eliminating the name Egypt itself.<sup>95</sup> Nasser's pan-Arab ideal was seen as conflicting with Haile Sellassie's promotion of pan-African unity. Egypt actually wanted to play both roles, though its emphasis was on the Arab side. Egypt also established a strong presence not only in Sudan, but also in Somalia after the latter's independence in 1960. This and Somalia's close links with the other Arab states and its application to join the Arab League alarmed Ethiopia.<sup>96</sup> More alarming was Nasser's military intervention in Yemen in 1962 claiming invitation from the republican movement in their struggle with the monarchy.

Moreover, the first Eritrean independence movement, the Eritrean Liberation Front, also set up offices in Cairo. With the leadership based there, the move was designed undermine Ethiopian rule in Eritrea, and eventually weaken Ethiopia. Egypt also maintained considerable influence within Sudan. Thus, through its close ties with Sudan, Somalia, the Eritrean liberation movements, as well as propaganda campaigns on Ethiopia's Moslem population, Egypt had a considerable impact on the Ethiopian State. There was also a large Arab population, mostly engaged in trade, the majority of whom came from Yemen. They lived in Ethiopia for many years and mixed with the local population, Nasser's propaganda thus got a receptive audience

---

<sup>95</sup> The Arabic name of the state is of course *Masr*, and historically Egypt refers to and is preferred by the Copts. The state was officially called the UAR until Nasser's successor Anwar Sadat changed the country's name to Arab Republic of Egypt in the 1970s. This change came after Egypt was boycotted and expelled from the League of Arab States following Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in 1977 and the signing of a peace treaty with Israel in 1978.

<sup>96</sup> Somalia was admitted to the League of Arab States in February 1974.

among these and the remainder of Ethiopia's Moslem population, who were peripheral to the state and considered as second class subjects. As a result Nasser was very popular in Ethiopia, including among left wing elements.<sup>97</sup>

### *Ethiopia and Sudan*

The way the state perceives itself, and differences in the character of states, can be among factors contributing to conflict among states. But when we look at the character of the Ethiopian and Sudanese states, they share many similarities. They are both multiethnic and multi-religious in their composition. In fact the two states share many things in common. Even their names, Ethiopia and Sudan have the same meaning in two different languages (meaning black, the former in Greek and the latter in Arabic) and historically referred to the same geographical and cultural region. Both states also sought to impose cultural and religious homogeneity on the peoples under their rule. This ambition has eluded both states, though Sudan has fared better, as at least the northern Sudanese ruling elite shares the same religion, speaks Arabic and is relatively stable and has remained cohesive since independence, despite change in regimes. Yet the violent conflict in Darfur demonstrates how the goal of imposing homogeneity has been elusive.<sup>98</sup> Things began to change with the Islamic coup of 1989 and the subsequent imposition

---

<sup>97</sup> When Nasser suddenly died in 1971, to the complete amazement of the Ethiopian authorities, the outpouring of grief in Ethiopia was unprecedented. Hundreds of thousands of people converged on the Grand Mosque in Addis Ababa to express their respect for him. This was unprecedented and an indication that Nasser's propaganda was actually working.

<sup>98</sup> Darfur had a long established kingdom and was already Islamized when Anglo-Egyptian Sudan took control in early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and policy of Arabization was continued even more vigorously by successive Sudanese regimes after independence. More damning for the people of Darfur and others was the discovery of oil in southern and western regions of Sudan, including Darfur. As a result, the ruling elite in Khartoum became even more determined to erase all forms of differences by arming and deploying the nomadic Arab tribesmen on the local Moslem, but essentially unassimilated local African population of Darfur in a spree of ethnic cleansing.

of fundamentalist Islam on a population comfortable with the predominant practices of various Sufi orders.

Nevertheless, historically these similarities between Ethiopia and Sudan also meant that their expansionist ambitions have clashed. During its brief period of independence in late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the radical Islamist and nationalist movement led by Mohammed Ahmed ‘Al Mahdi’ had declared a *Jihad* against Ethiopia. Emperor Yohannes died in the battlefield while fighting against the Mahdist forces.<sup>99</sup>

After it became independent in 1956, Sudan immediately joined the Arab League firmly associating itself with the Middle East. Sudan has a very small fraction of its population that claims Arab descent, but the ruling elite is Moslem, and has adopted Arabic language and culture. Historically, it has also been closely tied with Egypt. In fact, though Egypt itself was under British domination beginning in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the British maintained the fiction that Sudan was jointly administered under an arrangement called the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium. Sudan is also a very large state, with 2.5 million square kilometers of land, the largest in Africa. It has the size of more than the whole of Western Europe put together. But it is sparsely populated; it is double the size of Ethiopia, with half of Ethiopia’s population. Controlling such a large state and projecting power from the capital Khartoum over thousands of kilometers is not easy with poor or nonexistent infrastructure for a poor and weak state at that. It posed considerable logistical, manpower and resource problems. Thus, for many years Sudan

---

<sup>99</sup> The ‘Mahdi’ died within six months of the seizure of Khartoum, but the Mahdist state under the Khalifa Abdullahi survived until the Anglo-Egyptian invasion of 1898 under the British commander of the Egyptian Army, Kitchener (who later became a Lord). He was appointed to the post by the British.

considered supporting rebellions against Ethiopia and most of its other neighbors, including Uganda and Chad, as part of its national security strategy.

Thus Sudan supported and facilitated for the rebellion in Eritrea from the beginning as noted already. The first units of the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) fighters that started guerilla operations against the Ethiopian government in 1961 were drawn from volunteers from within the Sudanese army.<sup>100</sup> But there is no evidence that there was consent of the Sudanese government. The volunteers had some ethnic links with the ethnic groups along the common border. Subsequently Sudan played a crucial role in providing supply routes for the rebellion in Eritrea. After the Ethiopian revolution, the Sudanese not only stepped up facilitating supplies and other support to the Eritrean rebel groups, but also the royalist Ethiopian Democratic Union. The latter was however ineffective and its resistance to the Dergue soon fizzled out. Another rebel group that benefited greatly from Sudanese goodwill was the Tigrean rebel movement TPLF. The Sudanese armed forces provided vital logistical support to both the Eritrean and Tigrean rebel movements, during the campaign to overthrow the Ethiopian government, leading to the two movements seizing power in May 1991. Even after the TPLF seized power with its help, in the 1990s, Sudan continued its policy of undermining and destabilizing the Ethiopian state by clandestinely supporting those forces opposed to the regime, even allowing them to train fighters within its own borders.

Sudan's position regarding Ethiopia is partly dictated by historical cultural factors, regional alliances, but most importantly, national security interests. Though Sudan culturally and politically identifies itself with the Arab World, with the exception of Egypt and Libya, all its

---

<sup>100</sup> Information gathered from a member of the ELF leadership in Mogadishu, Somalia in 1982.



other seven neighbors are African states. After the Islamist coup in 1989, Sudan also developed an ambition of spreading its version of Islamic revival and dominating the Horn of Africa. It was even talking about a Horn of Africa region without borders.<sup>101</sup> Ethiopia has also supported the Southern Sudanese rebel movement, from the time of the Emperor, and cooperated with Israel to train some of the rebels in Ethiopia (Wolde-Giyorgis, 1989: 8).

### *Ethiopia and the Somali Challenge*

By far the most significant and sustained challenge to the Ethiopian state came from the Somali state. Somalia challenged Ethiopia's legitimacy on its independence in 1960, accusing Ethiopia of being a colonialist power participating in the partition of the Somali nation. Even before independence the nationalist movement, the Somali Youth League (SYL) vowed to unite all "five" Somali territories under one state, to implement its project of "Greater Somalia." It sought to incorporate not only Italian and British Somali lands, but also the French territory of Djibouti, the Eastern region of Ethiopia and the Northern Frontier District of Kenya. The seed of the idea of Greater Somalia was partly sown by the British, when all these territories, except for the French territory of Djibouti came under British administration briefly after the collapse of the short lived Italian East Africa in 1941. The British even allowed the nationalist movement, the Somali Youth League (SYL) to establish its presence in Eastern Ethiopia, which they refused to return to Ethiopian administration until 1954.

---

<sup>101</sup> This was what I understood from my conversation with Dr. Hassen Abdalla Al Turabi in Khartoum, December 1991. Turabi was the main ideological force behind the regime at the time, but has since fallen out with General Bashir, the president, and has been in and out of prison.

Unlike the similarities between Ethiopia and the Sudan, the character of the state in Ethiopia and Somalia are not only different, but contradictory. In one sense they are similar, in their expansionist ambitions and grandiose dreams. Two scholars have described Somalia as “a nation in search of a state” in the very title of their book (Laitin and Samatar, 1987). Indeed this phrase characterizes the Somali state very well, as well as defining one of the factors that underlie its clash with that of Ethiopia. Somalia’s first president Adan Abdille Osman clearly put the ambitions and *raison d’ etre* for the existence of the new state declaring that the ‘reunification of all Somalis is the very reason of life for our nation’ (Somali Republic, 1965: 48). This principle was enshrined in the constitution and the flag of the new state.

This ambition came to clash not only with Ethiopia, but also with the rest of the continent. When the Organization of African Unity (OAU) met in Cairo in 1964 one of its most important decisions was for all African states to respect the territories they inherited from colonialism at the time of independence, implying that there will be no territorial adjustments, a policy intended to avoid territorial conflicts among the newly independent states. Somalia became the sole state that voted against the resolution. The OAU decision was not intended to question the merit of territorial changes and adjustments to reflect the wishes of the inhabitants, including Somali claims. The leaders of independent Africa were not oblivious to the fact that most of the colonially mapped territories did not respect natural or cultural boundaries, but the decision to respect existing boundaries was intended to avoid opening a Pandora’s Box of claims and counter claims, and thus the spread of anarchy and conflicts throughout the continent.<sup>102</sup>

---

<sup>102</sup> The background to the thinking of most of the leaders who assembled in Cairo in 1964 was the experience of Congo, which descended into chaos soon after independence from Belgium in 1960, which must have weighed

The new Somali state basically challenged the fundamental basis of the African state, including its own, as carved out by European colonialism. It challenged the 1897 treaty between Ethiopia and Britain on the grounds that Britain had no rights to represent Somalis, and since Somalis did not participate in the agreement nor consented to it, it could not be binding on them. It also laid claims to the Haud and Reserved Area, a semi desert area of eastern Ethiopia used by Somali pastoral groups for grazing. The claim was based on the fact that these territories were under Italian rule between 1936 and 1941, as well as British military administration during 1941-54. Italy administered the region with its Somalia colony during its short lived occupation of Ethiopia between 1936 and 1941. But Somali claims were not restricted to these territories, and went beyond the traditional Somali areas and included vast areas inhabited by the Oromo people. After the Italians were expelled, the British administered Somalia and the Haud and Reserved Area with the Somaliland protectorate. While British military administration of Ethiopia gradually ended with the Anglo-Ethiopian Agreements of 1942 and 1944, in the Haud and Reserved Area it only ended in 1954.

One argument of the Somalis was based on invoking the agreements entered into between Britain and Somali clans when the British Somaliland protectorate was established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was during that time that the Anglo-Ethiopian treaty concerning the border between the British protectorate and Ethiopia was signed. As noted before, Ethiopia's international boundaries were fixed by agreements with the neighboring colonial powers, Britain, France and Italy. Somalis rejected these, and they did not find a favorable reception for their claims. Since

---

heavily in their minds. The crisis in Congo was triggered by the Belgians who engineered the secession of the mineral rich province of Katanga, engulfing Congo into a crisis requiring UN intervention. It also became one of the theatres of competition among the rival powers of the cold war.

the international system deals with states, the 1897 Anglo-Ethiopian Treaty was considered as an international agreement (instrument) therefore taking precedence over agreements entered by Britain with various Somali clans. Somalia also challenged, on the same grounds, another agreement signed in the wake of the Italian defeat at the Battle of Adowa between Italy and Emperor Menelik of Ethiopia, concerning the boundaries between Ethiopia and Italian Somaliland ratified by the Italian government in September 1897.

Somalia also introduced another dimension to its challenge of the Ethiopian state, a religious factor. The Somali state positioned itself as a successor to the historic struggle between Moslem Sultanates and the Christian Kingdom. It claimed that the 16<sup>th</sup> century Moslem warrior, Imam Ahmed ibn Ibrahim (Gran) who fought a *Jihad* against the Christian kingdom of Abyssinia and briefly conquered it, as a Somali warrior and precursor to the modern Somali nationalism. The Somali state went as far as erecting a statue representing him in the capital, Mogadishu. They also called him Ahmed ‘Gurey’ (the left-handed in Somali, the same meaning as ‘Gran’ is in Amharic). However, Ahmed ibn Ibrahim’s origins are contested and there are conflicting interpretations about his identity (Ahmed, 1992: 24-25). Nevertheless the significance of the Somali claim and the representation was not lost to the Ethiopian leaders. Besides coating Somali nationalism with a religious character, this claim was designed to gain sympathy from a wider Arab and Islamic world for Somali irredentism raising the stakes to a Moslem-Christian conflict in the Horn of Africa. Somalia also applied to join the League of Arab States, though what links Somalis and most Arabs is only the Moslem faith. It was only admitted in 1974, many years after it posted its application.

Somalia thus built its existence as a state on irredentism, which became the rationale and ideology of the state. To fulfill this ambition Somalia went to war with Ethiopia within three years of its independence. It also followed a multifaceted strategy to fulfill its objectives. The Somalis first set up what they called a Somali Affairs Office, responsible for all Somalis outside the republic.<sup>103</sup> It was charged with carrying out political and propaganda work among them as well as conducting the regime's external diplomacy on their behalf, particularly in the Arab and Moslem world.

In the 1970s, the Somalis organized two front organizations to directly carry out sabotage, recruitment and operations inside Ethiopia. The first one of these was the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) for the eastern region of Ethiopia. Somalis policy was also aimed at assimilating non-Somalis in the territory they claimed. In the region they claimed as Western Somalia, Somalis constituted a minority, and the majority of the inhabitants are Oromo. The second outfit was called the Somali Abo Liberation Front (SALF) and claimed to represent three of Ethiopia's southern regions, the Oromo inhabited regions of Arsi, Bale, and Sidamo. Both outfits operated under the direction of Somalia's Ministry of Defense. SALF was nominally headed by Oromo individuals, who through enticement or coercion claimed Somali identity. The front also included ethnic Somalis in key positions. Under the direction of SALF between 1976 and 1978, it organized a large militia by arming about 80,000 people in these three regions alone, Somalis and Oromo as well. The militia organized under the name WSLF was even larger,

---

<sup>103</sup> This and the following information were collected by the author in Somalia between 1980 and 82. I returned to Somalia again in 1989 and 1990 and witnessed the collapse of the Somali state. The Somali constitution adopted at the time of independence and modified under one party military rule makes an interesting reading. According to the constitution, Somali citizenship was not only guaranteed to all Somalis irrespective of country of origin, but also all those individuals regarded as stateless, though it was not clear how this worked in practice.

estimated at about 200,000, almost the entire adult Somali population in Ethiopia, and those recruited and armed from among the Oromo.<sup>104</sup> This mobilization was probably for strategic reasons, as the region hosted the main Ethiopian military garrisons and the command center of the Third Ethiopian Army Division, as well as an air Regiment of the Ethiopian Air Force. The four regions constituted more than a third of Ethiopian territory.

The Somali regime was also engaged in systematically undermining the Ethiopian state in many other ways. It supported the Eritrean rebel movement from the beginning, and stepped up its support in the 1970s. It also began supporting the Tigrean rebel movement. Besides supplying weapons, it also gave specialist training in various fields to these rebel movements. The Somalis also provided vital diplomatic cover to the activities of the Eritrean and Tigrean rebel leaderships by providing them with Somali diplomatic passports and arranging their travels. Moreover, the Somali regime also supplied small arms to the urban networks of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) and greatly contributed to the urban terror of the 1970s.

The military regime was not oblivious to preparations the Somalis were making and owing to the disadvantaged position of Ethiopia in the military balance, it appealed to Washington for the supply of weapons. But, Washington was not forthcoming and the regime was forced to seek assistance in Moscow. However, the Soviets were also reluctant and not forthcoming at the beginning. Though they were following the revolutionary changes in Ethiopia with keen interest, they had a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Somalia, the first such agreement with an African state after Egypt, and thousands of military and other advisers were stationed in Somalia. For a while they attempted to reconcile Somalia and Ethiopia, putting

---

<sup>104</sup> In the 1970s Ethiopia's Somali population in the Ogaden region was estimated at about 500,000 (CSO, 1975).

forward an idea about setting up a Horn of Africa and Red Sea socialist confederation, that would include Ethiopia, Somalia, South Yemen, as well as an autonomous Eritrea and an autonomous Ogaden region (the Somali inhabited region of Ethiopia). A Soviet delegation headed by the President of the Soviet Union at the time Nikolai Podgorny, and the Cuban President Fidel Castro toured the region and in March 1977 they convened a meeting of the leaders of Ethiopia, Somalia, and Yemen, in the South Yemeni Capital. The Soviets offered massive aid and other support if such a confederation came to fruition. But, the United States was also working on Somalia to replace the Soviet Union as its patron, giving them some verbal indications of support for their territorial ambitions regarding Ethiopia if they cut ties with Moscow (Laitin, 1979). Somalia was also under considerable pressure from the conservative Arab states led by Saudi Arabia to cut ties to the Soviets, with promises of hundreds of millions of dollars to offset the loss of Soviet support. As a result, the Somali president refused the Soviet offer, and the attempt collapsed.

The Somalis were eager to take advantage of the revolutionary turmoil and the bloody power struggles between the military regime and the civilian left opposition, and the intense power struggle within the military regime itself. Thus, in early 1977 they launched an all out offensive by land and air, throwing in its regular military forces, in order to fulfill their long standing ambition. They also stepped up their support to the rebel forces in Eritrea. The Ethiopian state was weak at the time not only as the result of the turmoil of the revolution, but also due to the fact that its armed forces, except for the air force, was no match for the Somali army both in numbers and equipment. By 1977, almost half of the Ethiopian army was pinned down in Eritrea, and other units were deployed in the Northeast to counter a Sudanese army

supported takeover of border towns by the royalist opposition, the Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU). The Somalis were thus able to overrun Ethiopian positions within a few weeks of their offensive, occupying large swaths of territory. They penetrated about 700 kilometers from the common border, making repeated attempts to capture the two main cities, the old city of Harar, and the rail road city of Dire-Dawa, Ethiopia's third largest city. The Somalis failed to capture the two cities after several attempts, and it was only Ethiopia's air superiority that saved the two cities from falling into their hands.

Frustrated by American refusal and Soviet reluctance, the Ethiopian regime started procuring weapons on the open market and from other countries such as France and Yugoslavia. It also declared a general mobilization and called on the people to enlist to defend the country. Though the military regime used coercive methods to get people enlisted for training in later years, the initial call in 1977 was indeed answered by voluntary and genuine response from the people. Within a few weeks tens of thousands of peasants were assembled in a training camp near the capital, and by June 1977 about a hundred thousand newly trained and armed people's militia, as they were called were thrown into battle. In September 1977 Ethiopia also severed diplomatic relations with Somalia and ordered Somali diplomats to leave immediately. By the end of 1977, the Soviets also decided that their best bet lie in Ethiopia, and started sending arms to Ethiopia.

With Soviet support firmly with Ethiopia, the Somali attempt to wrest control of Eastern Ethiopia collapsed. The fulfillment of the ambition of Greater Somalia was the driving force of the state. Eventually the failure to achieve that ambition and the disastrous outcome of their invasion of Ethiopia, after initial successes, became the very cause for the collapse for the state



itself. Following the defeat, thousands of Somali troops and guerilla forces returned to Somalia in large numbers. The first signs of the consequence of the war and the debacle for the internal stability of Somalia became obvious immediately, as the regime was nearly overthrown in an attempted coup by some senior officers with the support of the returned troops (Laitin, 1979: 95-96). Several officers were summarily executed and some of the leaders of the failed coup attempt managed to escape and ended up in Ethiopia, establishing the first rebel movement, the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) against the regime of Siyad Barre. The SSDF was led by Abdullahi Yusuf,<sup>105</sup> one of the leaders of the failed coup whom the Ethiopians were more than ready to support.

### ***Ethiopia and Eritrea: From Federation to War***

Ethiopia and Eritrea have a long history of relations dating back centuries. Until the Italians carved out the colony of Eritrea in 1890, at least the Tigrinya speaking and Christian population of Eritrea was culturally as well as politically part of the Abyssinian polity. Historically, external encroachments on Ethiopia have often used Eritrea as a springboard to attack the rest of Ethiopia. We have seen how Italy used it as a staging ground for the conquest of the rest of Ethiopia in 1896 and in 1935. Therefore, the Ethiopian state came to the conclusion that it had to control Eritrea to forestall foreign designs on Ethiopia. Moreover Ethiopia and Eritrea also share a great deal in other respects. All of Eritrea's ethnic groups are represented in

---

<sup>105</sup> Abdullahi Yusuf later became president of the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia, established after three years of negotiations in 2004 in Nairobi. The Ethiopian army intervened in Somalia in December 2006 in his support, but after a disastrous occupation withdrew in February 2009, and Abdullahi also resigned as president after failing to establish his authority even with Ethiopian and African Union forces backing him.

Ethiopia, and the dominant highland population shares not only ethnicity, but also Orthodox Christianity with the politically dominant Amhara and Tigrean populations of Ethiopia.

After the end of the Second World War, the restored Ethiopian state, as an ally against Fascism participated in the Paris peace conference. At the conference Ethiopia tabled a claim to the two Italian colonies, Eritrea and Somalia. In a memorandum submitted to the conference, it based its claims on historical association, and migratory patterns of the population of these territories (Perham, 1948: 433-452). Besides history, cultural and religious affiliation, Ethiopia's claims were based on two major factors, strategic and economic. Ethiopia considered it as a means to break out of isolation and have access to the sea. One argument was that Ethiopia needed access to the sea to develop economically. The other arguments emanated from concerns that all threats to Ethiopia came through Eritrea throughout the history of the state, including the Ottoman Turks, the Egyptians, and the Italians. Therefore, in order to eliminate that threat in the future, Ethiopia needed to control Eritrea. Moreover, and related to this was the concern that if Eritrea became an independent entity, Moslems might become a dominant force and become attached to the Arab and Moslem World, a concern that was shared by the Christian population of Eritrea.

The Paris peace conference did not resolve the fate of the former Italian colonies, deferring it to the United Nations. Eventually, the claim over Somalia was not taken seriously, but in the case of Eritrea, the United Nations set up a commission to investigate and report on the wishes of the Eritrean people. Eritrea was administered between 1941 and 1952 by Britain, who had earlier put forward a plan to partition Eritrea, with the western lowlands mainly inhabited by Moslems going to British administered Sudan, and the highlands and the Red Sea coast going to

Ethiopia. The partition plan was rejected by Eritrean leaders and as well as Ethiopia. The UN commission travelled around Eritrea and gathered the opinions of the population. Views were divided, with some wanting the return of Italy, others mainly demanding independence. But the overwhelming majority of the Christian population, with some significant sectors of the Moslem population wanted to unite with Ethiopia.

The commission found that while opinions were divided, the majority of the population of the territory favored union with Ethiopia, and recommended a middle of the road solution, that of federation. On the basis of the report and recommendations of the commission, and as a compromise of the various and conflicting opinions within Eritrea, the United Nation General Assembly voted in 1950 to federate Eritrea with Ethiopia under the sovereignty of the Ethiopian crown. The outcome of the UN decision was not what Ethiopia wanted. The Unionist Party in Eritrea was also opposed to the very idea of federation. The federation came into effect in 1952, but lasted only ten years. The Ethiopian government was uncomfortable with the very idea of two systems of government, and sought to undermine it from the start. It was contrary to the centralizing zeal of the Emperor, and the government was also wary that it could set a bad example for other regions, that might put forward similar demands (Retta, 1998 [EC]).<sup>106</sup> Thus the federation only lasted ten years, and the Eritrean Assembly was enticed to abolish itself and the federation came to an end in 1962. It triggered the setting up of a liberation front by those who called for independence from the beginning, leading to an independence struggle lasting nearly thirty years. It was a fateful decision on the part of the Ethiopian state, its handling of the

---

<sup>106</sup> Here EC represents Ethiopian Calendar, which runs from September to August (to be exact from 11 September to 10 September the following year). It is eight years behind the Gregorian calendar from 1 January to September 10, and seven years behind from September 11 through December 31. Ethiopia still follows the Julian calendar.

federation was disastrous, with fateful consequences for the future of the state. Eritrea became the lynch pin of all opposition to the Ethiopian state. For three decades, the Ethiopian state tried to contain the rebellion and maintain Eritrea within its borders, but the war not only destabilized the state, but also absorbed greater share of the meager resources available. The Eritrean rebellion also opened a Pandora's Box of a host of other liberation movements, including the Tigrean rebellion.

The Eritrean war of independence lasted three decades, one of the longest in modern African history. It destabilized and weakened the Ethiopian state, eventually contributing to the overthrow of two successive regimes, the Monarchy in 1974, and its successor in 1991. Eritrea became independent *de facto* in 1991 and *de jure* in 1993. The regime that came to power in 1991 in Ethiopia, with the support of the Eritrean rebel movement, played a key role in the achievement of Eritrean independence. It supported the Eritrean rebellion with manpower and fighting alongside them against the revolutionary regime in Addis Ababa. After seizing power in 1991, on behalf of the Ethiopian state, it officially requested the United Nations to organize a referendum and facilitate Eritrea's independence. There was no involvement from the Ethiopian side in the referendum, and the regime made history by becoming the first African regime to organize and facilitate the dismemberment of its own state. The Ethiopian regime was also the first to recognize the State of Eritrea.

Eritrean independence was followed by a currency union, and a series of agreements aimed at facilitating security, political and economic cooperation. However, Eritrea went to war with Ethiopia within five years of its independence, and the two states fought a ferocious war between 1998 and 2000, with immense human and material costs. Casualties were very high on

both sides: in the two years between 1998 and 2000, no less than 100,000 people were killed and over one million displaced (Guardian, 2000, Gilkes and Plaut, 2000). The conflict also destabilizes both states as well as the region as a whole. Besides battle casualties, the military clashes between 1998 and 2000 resulted in severe human suffering, vitriolic exchanges in the war of words, serious violations of human rights and the deportation of tens of thousands of people from both states. The conflict has also exacerbated the internal political crisis in both states, splitting the two ruling parties. The two sides have supported not only each other's opposition, but also rival factions in the chaos in Somalia, thus threatening regional peace and security.

Following the 1998-2000 war between the newly independent Eritrea and Ethiopia, the two sides have supported each other's insurgent groups. A host of groups, among them, the Oromo Liberation Front, and the Ogaden National Liberation Front are hosted in the Eritrean capital Asmara, and are provided with training facilities and material and other support to conduct operations against the Ethiopian government. Likewise, a number of Eritrean opposition groups are hosted in Ethiopia to destabilize the regime in Asmara. Moreover, each of them supports rival groups in the conflict in Somalia, the Ethiopians supporting the so called Transitional Federal Government, and the Eritreans supporting the Islamist opposition.

Thus, when we look at Ethiopia's position in the region, is isolated, and its regional and foreign policy is influenced by the desire to break out of isolation. On the other hand, the attitudes of the various states in the region are influenced by resources, religious and ethnic affiliation, territorial claims, and external alliances. The point is Ethiopia is not alone in having hostile neighbors and facing regional isolation. There are other states in this position most

notably Israel. But Israel has been able to survive despite its regional isolation and several wars with its neighbors, because it is internally cohesive and has a strong state, besides having a strong and reliable alliance. Ethiopia is vulnerable is mainly because of its internal weaknesses, fragmentation and contested legitimacy.

### **The Ethiopian State and Its Global Alliances**

Ethiopia's foreign policy and its external alliance are therefore based on two important factors. The most important is state survival, and the second is breaking out of regional isolation. The Ethiopian state therefore sought to establish alliance with powerful global powers throughout its history. Thus, military support, and the procurement of weapons for the purposes of expansion and state survival have dominated Ethiopia's quest for alliance with global powers. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Abyssinian Christian Kingdom was saved by a Portuguese intervention. It has already been noted how in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the opening of the Suez Canal increased European interest in the region. Since then rival Ethiopian rulers have allied themselves with rival European powers, Tigrean rulers with the British, the Shewan ruler, Menelik, with Italy France, and Russia. Later on the Emperor Haile Sellassie befriended the British, and was helped by them to gain power in 1916. In 1941 Britain helped him to regain power against considerable internal opposition to his restoration. In the face of British intransigence during their military administration of Ethiopia after the Italian defeat, and as Britain's power began declining after the Second World War, the Emperor shifted towards the United States. In 1953, Ethiopia and the United States signed a Mutual Defense Agreement and Ethiopia leased a communication base in

Asmara and other facilities to the United States.<sup>107</sup> The communication facility, initially established by the Italians and later taken over by the British, was extremely vital for the worldwide communication of the United States because of its location and topography, until the development of satellite technology made it obsolete.

Following the creation up the State of Israel in 1948, the United States and Israel also pursued a policy of strengthening ties with a triangular alliance of non Arab states in the greater Middle East region to contain radical Arab nationalism and as a bulwark for the security of Israel and United States interests, especially the security of oil supplies. These included Turkey, to the north and on the Mediterranean, a NATO member and ally, Iran, on the Persian Gulf, and Ethiopia on the Red Sea. The 1974 revolution in Ethiopia and the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran radically altered these calculations and led to a realignment of forces. As we will see later, Ethiopia became a victim of the realignment of forces.

As we have seen, Ethiopia's close alliance with the United States and Israel, religious factors, and resources, put Ethiopia at odds with the general orientation of most of its neighbors. This fact made the Ethiopian state vulnerable to growing Arab nationalist and revolutionary support for rebellions inside Ethiopia. Thus when the Eritrean Liberation Front was born in 1961, it got a ready audience and support in radical Arab circles. The Eritrean insurgent groups were provided facilities in Sudan and other Arab states, and many rebel commanders were trained in Egyptian, Syrian, and Iraqi military academies. Various Palestinian groups also provided skills in sabotage and guerilla warfare in Jordan and Lebanon. Arms and other supplies were also

---

<sup>107</sup> The communication base, called Kagnew Station, was named after the Ethiopian Battalion that fought in Korea alongside the United States.

provided by these and other Arab states. Sudan and South Yemen provided safe havens and became important conduits for the transfer of weapons and other supplies.

Considerable pressure was also put on the Ethiopian state through diplomatic and other channels for Ethiopia to cut its ties to Israel. Thus in 1973, Ethiopia was forced to sever diplomatic, military and economic relations with Israel. There were always threats and also promises from the Arab states for some time for Ethiopia to take this action. However, the OAU decision for members to support Egypt in its struggle to reclaim the Israeli occupied Sinai Peninsula (an African territory belonging to Egypt) provided the pretext for Ethiopia to cut ties to Israel. This decision angered both the United States and Israel, the former refusing to honor its obligations to Ethiopia under the 1953 agreement to supply military hardware. The severing of ties with Israel was also prompted by a desire to quell the incessant campaign of the Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi to remove the headquarters of the Organization of African Unity from the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, a move designed to isolate Ethiopia.

The period was a critical time for the Ethiopian state, when it needed armaments most. The military balance had shifted in favor of Somalia as a result of the rebuilding of Somalia's armed forces with massive Arab and Soviet supplies following the military coup of 1969. The Emperor visited President Nixon in 1971, and again in 1973, and pleaded for the supply of arms to counter the growing military imbalance. Though Ethiopia had a mutual defense agreement with the US since 1953, the Nixon administration did not honor the Emperor's requests. At the time, Nixon was embroiled in the Watergate Scandal, and gave little attention to the problems of the Emperor. Additionally, with the advanced age of the Emperor, the administration was concerned about the succession and future stability of Ethiopia and as a result, it was trying to



pressure the Emperor to initiate some political and economic reforms. After a failed bid to convince the Nixon Administration, the disappointed Emperor did not even return home, and instead directly flew to Moscow. Despite the Emperor's close alliance with the United States, the Soviets were actually never hostile to the Emperor. They respected him as an anti-fascist leader. Beginning in the 1950s, they provided some interest free loans, built Ethiopia's only oil refinery, as well as a technical college, agricultural research facilities, and provided other valuable aid. Moreover, they continued to maintain a hospital in Addis Ababa, set up by the Russian Red Cross during Czarist times, and it remained one of the best hospitals in the country providing free services to the poor. When the Emperor made an extended two weeks long official visit to the Soviet Union in 1959, an agreement on a 100 million dollars interest free loan was signed, the largest such Soviet offer to any Third World state (Porter, 1984: 191). He visited the Soviet Union again in 1967, 1971, and 1973. After the visit in 1971, the Emperor returned home with some small arms and a few helicopters, but not enough to change the military balance with Somalia.

Alarmed by the increasing Soviet presence in the Horn of Africa and also concerned about the revolutionary developments in Ethiopia, the Ford administration was more forthcoming. Henry Kissinger recommended that despite change of regime the United States should not endanger its relations with a traditional friend like Ethiopia, and should actually increase its military supplies (Westad, 2007: 260). Therefore the administration reviewed its policy towards Ethiopia and offered arms sales credits for the sale of tanks and jet fighters, in substantial amounts, actually the highest ever in the 25 years relationship between Ethiopia and the United States (Westad, 2007: 260). When the Carter administration came to office in January

1977, it withdrew this offer and ignored Ethiopia's dire need in the face of Somali aggression. In fact within weeks it informed the Ethiopian government that it was suspending military supplies under the pretext of concern for human rights, and Carter's National Security Adviser Brezezinski recommended to the president, that instead the United States should arm Somalia (Westad, 2007: 260-61).

By the end of 1976, the *Dergue* was frustrated with the Soviet response as Moscow repeatedly rebuffed its requests. By then Somalia's preparations for war had reached an advanced stage, and the *Dergue* started procuring arms from Yugoslavia and France, on the open market. The US would frustrate the *Dergue* even further. It became increasingly helpless and frustrated in the face of the looming attack from Somalia, belligerence from Sudan and open support to the Eritrean and other opposition forces, the struggle inside the military regime also intensified. It was the outcome of this internal struggle that eventually persuaded the Soviet Union to throw its support behind the Ethiopian regime. Nevertheless, they were still cautious and did not want to upset their relations with Somalia. In May 1977 the Ethiopian leader, Mengistu flew to Moscow and pleaded with the Soviet Union explaining the radical nature of the revolution and that it was in the long term interests of the Soviets to support the revolution. The Soviet Union was initially very cautious during the initial years of the revolution. Besides, their close ties to Somalia, the Soviets also maintained ties with the left wing parties in Ethiopia, principally the All Ethiopian Socialist Movement and the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP), as well as the Eritrean movements through the medium of the Italian Communist Party. In the end Soviets could not maintain both relationships, and ended on Ethiopia's side, partly helped by the miscalculations of Somalia's leadership.

In the end shifting alliances only provided temporary relief for the Ethiopian state. Its alliance with the United States failed to yield the expected results at a crucial moment. Though it won Soviet support, in the end it was its domestic policies that provided the excuse for the Carter administration to suspend military supplies. Moreover, by the time the Ethiopian state shifted its alliance towards the Soviet Union, all its neighbors, Egypt, Sudan, Somalia, North Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and Kenya were allied with the United States. Only South Yemen was out of this equation. Ethiopia entered into the wrong alliance at the wrong time, with implications for its domestic policies. In the short term, Ethiopia was saved from the Somali invasion, but it eventually exposed itself to becoming a victim of the cold war rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union. Rebel groups that could have been contained, mushroomed, become formidable forces, with western 'humanitarian' assistance pouring to them. In attempt to break out of isolation, the Ethiopian state isolated itself even more.

### **The Ethiopian State and the Impact of Global Factors**

Since its emergence as a modern state and integration into the international system, the Ethiopian state has been affected by global events more than any other state in the region. This emanated from three main factors: its regional isolation, dependence on the international system, and its domestic vulnerability. In this section, we will be looking at three factors in Ethiopia's external policies and relations. The first one is the degree of impact of global factors on the Ethiopian state due to its dependence on global actors. Secondly, elite fragmentation has often played into the hands of external factors. In this, the personalized character of power has led different factions of the elite to align themselves with different global powers to gain support.

Thirdly, shifting alliances by Ethiopia and its neighbors have greatly affected Ethiopia's position in relation to its neighbors, more so than it was in a position to affect them.

It cannot be a mere coincidence that major political changes in Ethiopia took place during events of major global significance. In the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, major political upheavals took place in Ethiopia in 1916, 1974, and 1991, with minor ones in between. As we saw in the preceding chapter, the Shewan coup d'état of 1916 which brought Haile Selassie to power, first as regent and eventually as emperor, happened at a time of a major international conflict, the First World War. The coup in Ethiopia, which overthrew Menelik's successor, was directly related to the war and the alliance of forces among the major powers. Haile Selassie was a close local ally of Britain in particular, and also France. The three powers, Britain, France and Italy, already a tripartite agreement and were determined to sabotage the efforts of the young successor of Menelik from consolidating his power. This emanated from suspicions about some of his external contacts. All three feared that he might establish regional and global alliances not conducive to their interests. Before his death Menelik, in an apparent attempt to diversify his sources of support had initiated contacts with Germany and Austria. Iyyasu therefore sent delegations to Austria and Germany to follow up on that (Taffete, 1996). But this initiative took place at a very inopportune time and was fateful. The three powers, who were following every move of the Ethiopian ruler through their local allies became even more suspicious the intentions of Iyyasu.

Iyyasu was also already secretly supporting Mohammed Abdille Hassen (the man regarded as the founder of modern Somali nationalism) whom the British called the "Mad Mullah." The man led a two decades insurgency simultaneously against the British and Italian

forces. Iyyasu was also determined to reclaim Eritrea from the Italians. He was probably too ambitious and this partly contributed to his loss of power. There were also members of the aristocracy who feared being sidelined who were against Iyyasu. As a result, a combination of local forces and international efforts brought down the Iyyasu regime. The point here is that domestic elite fragmentation combined with the concerns of global powers ended up in changing the regime in Ethiopia, and altering the direction of its domestic and external policy. Consequently, Iyyasu's domestic reforms were abandoned and Ethiopia remained firmly within the orbit of the three powers, principally Britain.

The second major upheaval in Ethiopia's modern history is obviously the outbreak of the 1974 revolution. When we look at the background leading to the revolution, again we can observe how international events greatly contributed to the local dynamics of the revolution. The closure of the Suez Canal in 1967 following the Arab-Israeli war had a devastating impact on Ethiopia. In the 1960s Ethiopia started developing its food industry, particularly in Eritrea, where fruit, vegetables, meat, dairy products, food processing was growing with the involvement of Italians, Ethiopians and a few Israeli interests. Ethiopia had the opportunity to enter the European market, but this depended on exports through the Eritrean ports and efficient transportation using the canal to reach the European market (Erlich, 1983: 127). Because the new industry depended on the European market, and the domestic market for such products was small, the industry nearly collapsed, leading to increased unemployment, particularly in Eritrea. This collapse in turn increased support for the rebel movement among youth with limited opportunities for employment. At the same time, the closure of the canal led to increases in the prices of imported commodities with increased transportation costs. The consequences of yet another Arab-Israeli

war in 1973 further weakened the Ethiopian economy. Sky rocketing oil prices had a devastating impact on the already weak Ethiopian economy, contributing to the outbreak of popular unrest and the revolution in 1974. Rising import prices, coupled with falling commodity prices, as well as the outbreak of famine in Wollo province led to social unrest in the empire.

When the canal was reopened in 1975, Ethiopia was already in revolutionary turmoil, and the rebellion in Eritrea, supported by the radical Arab states, had become one of the most serious challenges facing the Ethiopian state. By the early 1970s, global capitalism had also entered one of its cyclical crises with the falling rate of profit in the industrialized centers, and consequently falling demand and decreased commodity prices. On top of these pressures the OPEC action on oil prices raised transport costs as well as the price of manufactured products. Ethiopia therefore got less and less for the commodities it was able to export, and paid more for the import of fuel as well as other imported products. Thus, though the underlying causes of the outbreak of the Ethiopian revolution in 1974 were internal, it was detonated by the economic hardships brought about by global developments.

The revolution brought about a shift in Ethiopia's external alliance. After the United States suspended supplies of all military equipment to Ethiopia at the end of 1977, the revolutionary government abrogated the 1953 Mutual Defense Agreement and requested all United States military personnel, except those marines guarding the embassy, to leave Ethiopia. It also expelled the military attaches of the United States, the major western powers and Sudan. It also closed the United States and Sudanese consulates in the Eritrean capital Asmara. The break with the United States was not just because the Americans refused to honor their agreements by supplying Ethiopia with the military supplies it needed. Relations with the United States were

considered unproductive despite the Ethiopian state's commitments and the sacrifices it was making due to its American association. During the 1974 mass uprising and the blossoming of press freedom, it was articulated in newspapers and leaflets that the United States was partly to blame for supporting an anachronistic oppressive feudal regime. With the break from the United States the military regime became increasingly allied with the Soviet Union and its allies. With a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation in November 1978, Ethiopia was firmly admitted into the Soviet camp.<sup>108</sup>

Sudan already shifted its position after a failed Communist-led coup against the regime of Ja'afar Numeiri in 1971. Numeiri initially came to power with the support of the Sudanese Communist Party (the only one in Africa, with the exception of South Africa). In 1971, officers organized by the Communist party attempted to unseat him after he reneged on some of their agreements. The coup failed, and he survived to carry out a brutal repression of the Left, including public lynching of the key leaders of the party. Moreover, Egypt also started shifting its position after Sadat succeeded Nasser, and began doing away with his leftist legacies. In May 1971, Sadat carried out what he called the "corrective revolution," which amounted to a coup against the institutions of the Nasserite state. Sadat established a personal autocracy, dismissing and putting under arrest the vice president, speaker of the National Assembly, the Minister of War and Commander of the Armed Forces, the ministers of Interior and Presidential affairs, and the other senior members of the political establishment, and began dismantling the ruling Arab Socialist Union (Beattie, 2000: 62-86). Egypt also partly recovered from the humiliation of the 1967 war, by its respectable performance in the 1973 war with Israel, with massive Soviet

---

<sup>108</sup> Historically, Ethiopia was the one African state that had relations with Russia dating back to Czarist times, and such Russian literary figures like Alexander Pushkin are said to have Ethiopian ancestry.

support. But it failed to score a decisive victory. In 1974, Sadat came up with his policy of *Infitah*, meaning open door, allowing some private enterprise and also a limited opening to multiparty politics. Most importantly, he started opening to the West, particularly the United States and cooling his relations with the Soviet Union. In 1977, he made a surprise visit to Jerusalem and by 1979 had signed a peace agreement with Israel brokered by the United States. Egypt's shift from the Soviet Union towards the United States as well as that of Sudan was a significant development in the realignment of forces in the region. Once again Ethiopia found itself isolated.

Thus when Ethiopia was allying with the Soviet Union, the region was shifting away from them and becoming closer with the United States. As a result Ethiopia became one of the two last theatres of the cold war in Africa along with Angola. Though the Angolan regime managed to survive, the Ethiopian regime could not. With the rise of Mikhail Gorbachev at the head of the Soviet Communist Party with his policies of Glasnost and Perestroika, Soviet support started dwindling. This happened at a time of deteriorating economic situation at home and high military spending due to stepped up rebel activity in Eritrea, Tigray, and the Oromo regions in the east and the west, and the confrontation with Somalia. As Soviet aid to the regime was diminishing, the support for Eritrean Tigrean rebels was growing. Western governments also started making massive infusions of support to the insurgent forces under the cover of humanitarian assistance in a cross border operation through the Sudan that lasted until the military regime was overthrown in 1991 (Duffield and Prendergast, 1994). In 1986 then US Vice President George H. Bush visited the Sudanese border town of Kassala in order to observe the refugee situation and the cross border humanitarian operation. This was a significant boost to the



insurgent groups in northern Ethiopia and the western agencies channeling assistance to the insurgent groups, and whose funding came directly from western governments. More interesting is the fact the Islamist regime that came to power in 1989, Western Church agencies and governments worked together closely to unseat the Ethiopian regime. Thus again the factors that led to the collapse of the revolutionary regime in 1991 were not only internal, but the interaction between the collapse of the Soviet Union and loss of support to the regime and increased western support to the insurgent groups.

In conclusion, the most important points we observe from this discussion is Ethiopia's regional isolation on the one hand, and its efforts and dependence on global powers to counter that on the other. At the same time, its internal fragmentation has only played into the schemes of both its regional adversaries and global powers. Moreover, as we said, Ethiopia's global alliances are aimed at countering its regional isolation. But, Ethiopia's shifting alliances and that of its neighbors have had far more detrimental impact on Ethiopia than on its neighbors. The lessons that Ethiopian state leaders should have drawn from these is that external alliances cannot make up for the internal weaknesses of a state. Internal cohesiveness of a state is far more important, and can allow it to withstand and adjust to regional isolation, external pressures, and major shifts in the global environment.

## Chapter VII

### Conclusion: Coercion and States with Contested Legitimacy

For some time the state declined as a subject of academic and political discourse, but there is now considerable interest in its role. Though there are arguments that the role of the modern state is declining (Ohmae, 1995; Robinson, 2004; Strange, 1996; van Creveld, 1999), the contemporary era is one which has seen its universalization as the most dominant and powerful form of social and political organization. It remains central to a whole range of issues, including security, economic and social development, and international cooperation. But, all states are not the same, and though the forms may look similar, they are substantially different in many ways. States possess a great deal of power and resources at their disposal, but very few have succeeded in employing their power and resources to translating societal policies and goals into successful social transformation. Many states exist because the international system needs states more than ever, sometimes more so than their societies need them, as states are also very expensive to maintain in material and human terms. Attempts have even been made to impose the modern particular form of state on unwilling societies as the case of Somalia has clearly demonstrated. As a result some states do not reflect the wishes and aspirations of their peoples and suffer from crisis of legitimacy. Their power is routinely contested. In such cases, since one of the primary concerns of states is survival, instead of broadening the basis of the state through societal consensus through legitimate processes of popular consent, they routinely resort to illegitimate methods of governance.

As we have seen, the Ethiopian state is among these states that have been unable to establish popular legitimacy and therefore survive through coercion. Over the past century, the Ethiopian state survived on the twin pillars of domestic coercion and external support. There are historical and political factors that can explain and help us understand Ethiopia's contemporary socioeconomic and political condition. Despite a long history of statehood, the legitimacy of the state remains contested. This is manifested through the persistence of civil wars and political conflict, elite fragmentation, personal rule, institutional instability, violent transitions of power, and the enduring use of coercion as the main method of social control. Besides, Ethiopia suffers from national, regional, ethnic and religious fragmentation. The conception of power is personal and absolute, and consequently the endurance of military autocracy throughout the modern history of the state. The use of coercion is a direct result of this conception of power and the state's crisis of legitimacy, and the military remains the fundamental basis of the state and political power. Violence, intimidation, and coercion are therefore the main methods of gaining and maintaining power, refined and perfected through time by all the regimes under discussion, and each has tried to be more efficient in the use of violence than its predecessor.

Consequently, two fundamental weaknesses have become the hallmarks of the Ethiopian state. In the first place there are no legal frameworks that define the relationship between the state and the population under its jurisdiction and the exercise of power. Since 1931, Ethiopia had four written constitutions, all of which have attempted to define these. But, the exercise of power remained arbitrary, and the provisions of these constitutions remained on paper. None of the regimes bothered to abide by their own written laws, and bypassed them when the laws did not suit them. Therefore, there are institutional weaknesses and instability manifested in state

institutions. The formal institutions of the state are facades, and personal authority through informal clientele networks are the main instruments of political power and decision making. Secondly, the political economy of the state is characterized by a stagnant agricultural system, with an overburdened peasantry, manifested in chronic food deficits and mass starvation. Moreover, regional isolation and dependence on global powers is another characteristic of the Ethiopian state. Therefore, by looking at the character of the state under three different regimes, we can conclude that the Ethiopian state exhibits the fundamental characteristics of neopatrimonial regimes with the five main features as analytical frames presented in chapter one.

### **Hybrid Structure and Personalized Power**

One basic feature of neopatrimonial rule is the hybrid structure of political authority (Chabal and Daloz, 1999; Medard, 1991). On the one hand there are rational/legal modern state structures like elections, federal structures, parliament, cabinet, courts, political parties, civil service and all the modern trappings of a state. But, on the other hand, actual power is exercised through different and informal mechanisms. The formal structures of the state serve two important functions. Firstly, they camouflage the real operations of power by giving the appearance of a rational/legal authority. This is important especially for the consumption of the donor agencies and governments. Secondly, the formal structures are employed to implement decisions arrived at by the networks of the ruling clique, and provide the appearance of legality. The real power groups operate outside the structures of the state and have no public accountability. In other words, efforts to bring about changes through the legal structures of the state become futile and meaningless. If such efforts undermine or attempt to change the actual

network of power, they are thwarted with the use of the coercive power of the state as witnessed in the aftermath of the 2005 elections.

The *Woyyane* regime in particular has perfected this hybridization of political power and decision making. Since the regime's legitimacy is questionable due to its narrow regional base, and it is challenged by significant and important sectors of the population, the regime created a façade of formal institutions which are designed to give the appearance of representing the major national groups of Ethiopia, and at the same time impress the external supporters of the regime. However, actual decision making and political power remains personalized, exercised and managed through a coterie of loyal operatives strategically placed throughout the formal institutions of the state, as well as individuals outside the formal structures. The formal structures not only serve to give the appearance of rational/legal authority, but are also used to implement and provide credence to decisions arrived at through the informal operations of power.

### **Institutional Instability**

One of the characteristics that define neopatrimonial systems of governance is institutional instability (Bratton and van de Walle, 1994; Chabal and Daloz 1999; Theobald 1982). This has become a permanent feature of the Ethiopian state, and among other factors, the hybridization and personalization of power greatly contributes to it. On the one hand the hybrid structure of political domination undermines and subverts institutional development and stability. Institutions tend to be rule based, and in personalized systems of rule, rulers are resistant to restrictions on their power from laws or institutions. Authority is personalized and shaped by the preferences of the ruler, instead of rules and procedures. No institution is tolerated if it

undermines personalized power and the informal power structures. Because of manipulation by informal networks, and inability to operate by set rules and procedures, institutions are inherently unstable. As corruption and nepotism become part of the operations of the hybrid structure of power, institutional effectiveness and stability are further eroded. In the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Emperor promulgated two constitutions, in 1931 and a revised version in 1955. When the popular uprising began in 1974, he constituted a Constitutional Commission and ordered another revision of the constitution with the aim of expanding political and civil rights. The draft constitution of 1974 thus included provisions for the right to form political associations, the government to be responsible to parliament, and a constitutional monarchy. However, though a draft was eventually presented to the public, the constitution remained on paper, as the *Dergue* disbanded the Constitutional Commission, suspended the constitution and parliament. Thus, the Emperor's constitution did not last him. The *Dergue* also issued a constitution in 1987, after thirteen years in power. It created elaborate state structures, but it did not affect the power structure already in place. It did not last more than two years, and after the 1989 coup, the regime did not even bother to respect its own constitution, as many of the coup leaders were summarily executed, and the regime also changed or suspended some of the provisions of the constitution in 1990, and the regime had collapsed by May 1991.

Under the *Woyyane* regime, a Transitional Period Charter was agreed upon in 1991 and a relatively broad based transitional government to last two years (and a maximum of two and half years) was established. The structure never worked however, as intended, since the TPLF exercised most powers of the government through coercion, as it controlled the coercive machinery, and as a result, the transitional government collapsed within a year. But, despite the

provisions of the transitional charter, the TPLF continued to rule in the name of the transitional government for three more years. In 1995, the party proclaimed a new constitution principally designed to entrench its dominant position. But, the constitution remains a public relations exercise, designed principally for external consumption than a legal document for governance of the state, as the government itself does not respect the provisions of its own constitution. For example, on paper, the constitution has incorporated all international human rights covenants as part of its provisions. However, there are widespread violations of human rights, and this has been well documented by international human rights groups and the United States Department of State (HRW, 2009; 2008; 2005; USDOS, 2009).

Following the serious crisis in the ruling party in 2001, the Prime Minister consolidated his personal authoritarian position within the armed forces, the party and the government, after dismissing senior members of the party and the top commanders of the armed forces. At the moment, the Prime Minister also enjoys external backing, and in the absence of serious threats regionally, except from Eritrea, his external position seems to be secure. In a sense the very victory of the prime minister during the crisis of 2001 may turn out to be a weakness for the regime, as it seriously undermined the core of the ruling party and its cohesiveness. This is one of the costs of personalized power. In the end what would determine his fate, as with both his predecessors would be the very machinery he employs to maintain power, the armed forces. In April 2009, the regime announced it foiled an attempted military coup, arresting several dozen serving and retired military officers, as well as civilians including from within the ruling party (BBC, 2009a; AI, 2009). This underscores my argument that in such power structures crisis accumulates over time and the periodic reappearance of internal dissensions are inevitable. A

neopatrimonial system of governance is inherently unstable, and behind the scenes rivalry, competition for positions and resources is inevitable (Willame, 1972: 79-81).

The Ethiopian regime promotes political fragmentation and ethnic rivalry as a method of survival within the regime and among its opponents, and this is bound to have adverse consequences for its own effectiveness. Moreover, there are serious social and economic problems. Unemployment is very high and the cost of living has sky rocketed with inflation running at 44 percent by April 2009 and is increasing every month, raising the stakes for social unrest, especially in the urban areas (EIU, 2009). Furthermore, corruption, nepotism, and inefficiency erode confidence in the system, and resentments to the corrupt and discriminatory practices of the regime and its authoritarian rule are widespread. Armed resistance to the regime has continued, especially in the Oromo and Somali regions. The internal crisis of 2001, the protests following the 2005 elections and the report of an attempted coup in April 2009 all attest to this. Since there are no public or open avenues for expressing dissent, dissatisfaction with the policies of the regime and opposition to its rule is pushed underground. As a result, public anger could erupt any time triggered by some unpopular action of the regime itself. That is the lesson of the 1974 revolution, which was triggered by a routine action of the regime to increase the price of petrol owing to increases in world oil prices at the time. The *Dergue* regime also collapsed from within as the result of the measures it took following the attempted military coup of 1989, which eventually crippled the armed forces.

One of the fundamental problems of the Ethiopian state has been the instability of institutions raising uncertainty and making transitions of power violent. All the institutions created by each of the regimes were impressive on paper and when seen from the outside. The



imperial regime did not bother about inclusiveness, and power rested in the hands of the Shewan aristocracy that surrounded the Shewan throne since the time of Menelik II. The *Dergue* attempted some cosmetic representations by putting individuals from various regions in visible positions. However, firstly, they did not reflect the actual power relations as they were not the main mechanisms through which power was exercised. Secondly, they were not designed to accommodate the national, linguistic, regional, and religious diversity of the state. The major challenge of the *Woyyane* regime remains the same. The regime has established a structure that conceals, as much as possible, the real power structure. The legal structures are only cosmetic, and in the end what matters is how they are perceived by the people.

### **Patron-Client Relations**

In any system with a hybrid structure of power, with inherent institutional weaknesses and instability, patron client relations are part and parcel of the operations of the system (Englebert, 2000: 5). Since the formal structures of the state are in place to conceal the actual networks of governance and decision making, patron-client relations take on added significance. It becomes the glue that stitches together the networks and interest groups with the power brokers. Political stability is viewed as emanating from the personal power of the ruler, who is seen as guaranteeing security through distributing favors and material benefits to loyal followers, the ruler's personal clients, instead of citizens of the state (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 61). The system of patronage therefore makes the state the instrument of a small group tied together through such relations. This works to further erode the legitimacy of the state in the eyes of the majority of the population. The state is seen as serving the interests of a small group who benefit from the state at the cost of the rest of the population. The *Woyyane* regime has brought this to a

new level. Since the regime is conscious of the fact that it represents a small minority, it is eager to give the appearance that the regime is broad based and as inclusive as possible. At the same time, it does not trust the very people it appoints to these structures. Consequently, the appointees are put under constant scrutiny and tight control. As some of my interviewees indicated, many of the appointees are also conscious of their position as a measure intended for public relations, and in the end performance is unsatisfactory.

### **The Role of Violence and Coercion**

The use of coercion and violence is inextricably linked with the history of states. After all, states are principally organized machineries of violence. But, according to both Weberian and Gramscian theories of the state, coercion and violence cannot be a permanent feature of governance (Migdal, 2001; Evans, 1995; Lange and Rueschemeyer, 2005; Gramsci, 1971; Buci-Glucksmann, 1980). For states to maintain credibility, coercion and violence must be used selectively and sparingly. In most cases coercion is used as a threat and last resort, when all other methods of social control fail. However, my study of the Ethiopian state indicates that coercion and violence have been the main instruments of governance for most of the modern history of the state. This phenomenon may not be specific to Ethiopia; it may be instead a general characteristic of states with contested legitimacy. Most colonial states fall in this category, and the dilemma has continued for many of them into the post independence period, as a wide gap continued to exist between the structures of the state and the population, and between the formal structures of the state and actual processes of decision making.

The inherent weaknesses and instability of institutions coupled with the limitations of maintaining order in a vast country like Ethiopia through personal rule forces the regime to depend on the coercive apparatus of the state to maintain its domination. Thus the very structure of neopatrimonial rule and the instrumentalization of the state by a small fraction of the population mean that the state is not seen as a neutral arbiter serving the interests of society as a whole. Looking at the operations of the state and its utilization for the personal gain of a privileged few, the people have lost confidence, as they are convinced that they will not get justice through the formal legal structures of the state. Consequently, the legitimacy of the state has been questioned and contested. Moreover, politics becomes a zero sum game, in which the winner gains everything and the loser loses everything. Therefore losing power is seen as and amounts to losing everything. Since the gains are not made legally, any attempt to institute and strengthen the legal mechanisms will be resisted, including by the resort to violence. Thus, coercion and the use of violence becomes the only means to maintain power and the privileges that come with it, and avoid justice.

### **External Factors**

In Chapter V we saw the hybrid structure of power, institutional weaknesses, level of patronage, and the exercise of coercion under three regimes in Ethiopia. In all of them the form and rhetoric might have changed, but the structures of power, patronage and coercion remained the same. We also examined the regional isolation of the state and its external dependence under all three regimes in Chapter VI. Emperor Haile Sellassie came to power as the result of the alliance of forces in the First World War, principally with the support of Britain. His close ties with Britain helped him to regain power in 1941 and quell regional rebellions following his

restoration, as there was considerable opposition to his restoration to power. After 1945, the Emperor turned to the United States for support, and the defense pact with the US was instrumental in sustaining his rule. For example the United States was actively involved in saving imperial rule during the 1960 coup attempt as obviously demonstrated by the activities of the US ambassador at the time and several of the officers in the United States Military Advisory Assistance Mission in Ethiopia (Greenfield, 1965: 412-14). But, by the beginning of the 1970s, with waning US support, the economic consequences of the closure of the Suez Canal in 1967, the Arab-Israeli War of 1973, and regional isolation exacerbated internal tensions. These and the ineptness of the regime to respond to growing social, economic and political crisis eventually led to the outbreak of the 1974 popular uprising and the collapse of the regime.

The *Dergue* regime suffered from a similar externally related situation. The emergence of Gorbachev in the Soviet Union with his policies of *Glasnost* and *Perestroika* brought about the waning of Soviet support. The Soviets supplied weapons to the Ethiopian armed forces worth billions of dollars and the economic support was also very substantial even as compared to their involvement in other parts of the world (Westad, 2007: 272-77). The Soviet alliance was however not without costs; it earned the *Dergue* the hostility of the United States and other Western states and their agencies, and they stepped up support for the insurgent groups. Whatever their ideology (and many espoused Marxism-Leninism) and merits of their cause, they were fighting a Soviet backed regime, and became eligible for propaganda, political, and material support. Eventually, the collapse of the USSR, Western and regional hostility, internal rebellions, economic problems, coupled with internal dissensions and the collapse of the armed

forces command following the 1989 coup attempt, coalesced to bring about the collapse of the revolutionary regime.

The *Woyyane* regime came to power on the heels of this collapse, but faces the same predicaments, though on an entirely different scale. Here again, while external patrons have changed, and there has been a realignment of forces, the state's isolation in the region and dependence on global powers remains the same. Its alliance with the United States has helped it to gain and maintain power. The George H. Bush administration helped it to legitimize its power in 1991, by becoming an early supporter and advising it on key issues. The Clinton administration became an enthusiastic supporter of the regime using it (along with Uganda and Eritrea) to destabilize the Islamist regime in Sudan. Since 2001, the George W. Bush administration has considered the *Woyyane* regime as a vital ally in the "War on Terrorism" and employed it in a proxy war in Somalia.

The regional position of Ethiopia has, however, not changed much. It appears even more isolated after Eritrea's independence, as it is now landlocked and has to depend on neighboring states, not only for its import-export business, but also to import armaments, without which it cannot maintain control. Moreover, Eritrea has become the main regional challenger to the Ethiopian regime, hosting and supporting the major armed insurgent groups. The one change is in the status of Somalia, as the Somali state collapsed in 1991, a few months before the *Woyyane* came to power in Ethiopia. Therefore, Somalia as a state does not pose the same problem for Ethiopia as in the past. However, the absence of a centralized authority in Somalia has become even more dangerous, as it is potentially a haven for many forces that can destabilize the Ethiopian regime. Remnants of the collapsed state also continue to harbor the dream of Greater

Somalia, principally at the expense of Ethiopia. The regime's 2006 invasion of Somalia was necessitated more by the presence of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) forces operating from Somalia at the time, than the excuse of rooting out Islamic extremists that the regime gave. The excuse was necessary for the consumption of the United States and the West, and has effectively worked in this regard.

The Islamist regime in Khartoum was very instrumental in helping the TPLF during the insurgency and in its assumption of state power in 1991, and at the beginning relations seemed to be very close. But, after an assassination attempt on the Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in the Ethiopian capital for an annual OAU meeting in June 1995, relations deteriorated. The attack was carried out by the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, and Sudan was implicated in organizing it, as some of the attackers are said to have fled to Sudan. Subsequently, the Ethiopia regime began openly supporting the Southern Sudanese rebel movement, the SPLA.<sup>109</sup> It also became very open about its collaboration with the United States efforts to destabilize the Khartoum regime. Nevertheless, Sudan remains a formidable regional adversary and competitor, and with its new status as an oil producer, it has more resources at its disposal to destabilize its neighbors. However, in the short term the Sudanese state has its own problems with the West, resulting from the Darfur crisis. At the same time it does not want to derail the peace process with the Southern Sudanese for now. Consequently, Sudan does not pose a serious threat as a destabilizing force in the short term, but given the regime's ideological orientation, for the medium and long term, it remains a threat to the Ethiopian state.

---

<sup>109</sup> In 1991, TPLF forces fought alongside Sudan's army against the SPLA in Southern Sudan, and suffered several hundred casualties. This was in gratitude for the support the Islamist regime in Khartoum provided to the TPLF over many years, especially in its assumption of power in 1991. The information was provided to the author by a senior officer in the TPLF at the time, whose name must remain anonymous.

I argue that in the absence of internal legitimacy, external factors become very important in sustaining neopatrimonial rule. Studies of post colonial regimes in North Africa and the Middle East have shown that external patronage from global powers helps client regimes to insulate themselves from domestic opposition, and has been critical in maintaining the continuity of authoritarian regimes (Yom, 2008; Yom and Al-Momani, 2008). The case of Ethiopia demonstrates that external patronage is critical for neopatrimonial rule to survive, despite narrow base and domestic opposition. Neopatrimonial rule also manipulates external factors to contain domestic opposition and for the survival of its domination. During the Cold War neopatrimonial regimes played the game of the superpowers in order to buttress their internal domination. Many neopatrimonial regimes collapsed when they were no longer needed after the end of the Cold War. The classic neopatrimonial and predatory state was Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) under Mobutu (Evans, 1989; Young; 1994; Willame, 1972). The regime collapsed after more than three and a half decades of plunder of the mineral rich state when the United States no longer needed its services, principally for the war in Angola, following the collapse of the Soviet Union. While the Haile Sellassie regime survived with the support of the United States despite domestic opposition, it collapsed when that support was no longer guaranteed. The *Dergue* regime survived sustained domestic and external challenges with Soviet support, and only collapsed when the Soviet Union itself disintegrated. The *Woyyane* regime survives partly due to continued United States support, and it has manipulated the United States led ‘War of Terrorism’ to its own advantage to maintain its neopatrimonial domination of Ethiopia. If the regime eventually loses through an Iranian style popular uprising, as in 1974, the United States may well lose another ally in a strategic region close to the Middle East.

The support of external powers is not limited to material and political benefits, in the form of diplomatic sponsorship, economic, military and security assistance. Most importantly, it includes political support and rationalizations for the structure of rule instituted by neopatrimonial domination. One good example is the role of the United States in Ethiopia, especially in its support of the post 1991 regime. I will present this in some detail, because it helps us understand how global powers justify neopatrimonial domination. One year after the United States supported transitional government collapsed, with the withdrawal and expulsion of the major parties, and the militarily dominant TPLF remaining as the sole party in the government, the United States government (the Clinton Administration) commissioned and sent one of its eminent political scientists, Harvard professor Samuel Huntington to Ethiopia, to advise the government and the Constitutional Commission on the form and structure of state to emerge from the constitution being drafted at the time. He spent about a week in Ethiopia, talking with the leader of the TPLF and President of the Transitional Government, and a few other members of the government and the Constitution Drafting Commission and made an interesting recommendation.

By his own admission, his knowledge of Ethiopia was limited, but from his few days of study, and discussions with these officials, he arrived at the conclusion that Ethiopia lacks the economic, social and other characteristics that are necessary for democracy. Some of the factors he mentioned were poverty, religion, lack of democratic experience, ethnic heterogeneity, and absence of civil society. In fact he argued that these characteristics are actually obstacles to democratization, and since ‘a constitutional system has to reflect the nature of society’ it is not desirable for Ethiopia to have a democratic order (Huntington, 1993: 1-3). He argued that if a



democratic system is created, maintaining it would be extremely difficult (Huntington, 1993: 2). Therefore, he recommended a dominant-party system (specifying out the ruling EPRDF) as having several advantages for Ethiopia. Such a party, he noted, maintains electoral control, wins elections continuously, providing continuity. Opposition parties would be allowed to represent certain regional and ethnic interests, and their main task would be to lobby the EPRDF so that those interests are not neglected. They would be allowed to campaign for elections ‘to meet international standards for democratic legitimacy and hence facilitate foreign aid,’ but will not win elections (Huntington, 1993: 3). A major task of the dominant party would be to contain urban opposition, which, he admitted, in developing countries tend to oppose governments, and such opposition ‘may be reflected through votes, demonstrations, riots, and even coups’ (Huntington, 1993: 3). In short, he recommended that Meles Zenawi and his party, the EPRDF should continue to rule Ethiopia for an indefinite period of time (Huntington, 1993: 8).

The report was translated into Amharic and distributed to members of the Constitution Drafting Commission for guidance. The more damaging aspect of Huntington’s recommendations were not that he provided a respectable academic rationale and endorsement for what the regime in Ethiopia intended to do anyway, but that it became the basis for United States policy on Ethiopia and support for the regime in its stifling of freedom and democracy, and continued and widespread violations of human rights. Based on such recommendations, the United States government characterized the narrowly based dictatorship in Ethiopia as a democratizing, enlightened, progressive regime, and belonging to a “new breed of African leadership” (Ottaway, 1999: 1-2).

What this example shows, and the point I am making here is that external support, not just material and diplomatic, but also political justifications are very critical in rationalizing neopatrimonial rule and its durability. Very often global powers have rationalized their support to dubious regimes in terms of democracy, socialism, stability, fighting terrorism and many other excuses, sometimes to placate their own populations and deflect criticisms at home. It also helps to mobilize support for these regimes from allies and international organizations. These powers also do so not for charity, but for their own short term tactical interests. One consequence of external patronage to neopatrimonial and authoritarian regimes is that it emboldens them to be unresponsive to and ignore domestic political pressures.

Studies of authoritarian regimes in North Africa and the Middle East have clearly demonstrated that external support increases the autonomy of the neopatrimonial regimes from domestic mass opposition and helps them survive internal political and economic crises by focusing their attention not on pacifying mass political opposition, but, on the loyalty of the small circle of elite supporters (Yom, 2008; Yom and Al-Momani, 2008). In fact, external patronage tends to have a negative impact on the pace of reforms, democracy and human rights. In Jordan, the political reforms that began in 1989 not only stalled, but repression of the political opposition and civil society increased with stepped up United States economic and political support following the country's peace agreement with Israel in 1994 (Yom and Al-Momani, 2008). Likewise, the history of several neopatrimonial autocracies that became victims of violent revolutions as in Iran, the Philippines and Nicaragua indicate that these regimes failed either as the result of sudden drops in external support, or the failure of these regimes to incorporate external patronage into maintaining the domestic coalitions of neopatrimonial domination (Yom,

2008; Booth, 1982). In other words, the endurance of neopatrimonial domination rests on the twin pillars of domestic and international patronage and a careful balance between them.

### **Some Theoretical Conclusions**

From the discussions of the Ethiopian state some important theoretical observations can be made. There are two important theoretical implications that can be drawn and these constitute the most important contributions of this study. The first one is the capacity of some states to continue to survive despite illegitimate methods of governance. Both the Weberian and Gramscian theories of the state emphasize that states cannot survive by coercion alone. In fact, both assert that the state's use of coercion is a threat or at best a last resort rather than a permanent feature or the main method of social control. The neo Weberian literature contends that for a state to be legitimate, survive and succeed, it requires dense ties between the state and society (Migdal, 2001; Evans, 1995; Lange and Rueschemeyer, 2005). State society relations are reciprocal, and one needs the other's cooperation and a harmonious relationship to succeed. In other words, society accepts the legitimacy of the state provided that it perceives that it acts in its best interests for the general good of society.

On the other hand, the Gramscian theory of the state asserts that for the modern state to maintain a stable order, it must establish the ideological ascendancy of the dominant classes over the popular masses. Unlike its medieval counterpart, the modern state is able to fuse together a number of social forces into an organic bloc in order to establish and exercise active hegemony over society (Buci-Glucksmann, 1980: 274). This is achieved through influencing behavior and molding convictions by the organic intellectuals of the dominant classes working within the

cultural and ideological institutions of the state (Gramsci, 1971: 12). In other words, the popular masses are swayed by this hegemony, or ideological ascendancy of the ruling classes, and accept the state and its actions as legitimate. The intellectuals succeed in creating hegemony to the extent that they extend the worldview of the rulers to the ruled, and thereby secure the free consent of the masses to the law and order of the land (Gramsci, 1971: 57-59). It is only when the intellectuals fail to create such hegemony that the ruling class falls back on the state's coercive apparatus, which disciplines those who do not consent (Bates, 1975: 353). Therefore, the state does not require coercive means to maintain social control; but needs it in reserve in case, and as a threat as well as a last resort, when all other means of maintaining control and legitimacy have been exhausted.

However, the case I have presented in the preceding discussions in this dissertation suggests that this is not necessarily true for all states. Coercion and violence are rather permanent features of the state as the principal method of social control for many modern states, especially those states with loose or little ties to their own populations. In the case of Ethiopia, this is a result of the state's narrow basis, lack of embeddedness in the society, and hence contested legitimacy and consistent challenges internally and externally. Thus, the modern Ethiopian state has survived as the result of its use of coercion and violence, as well as support from global powers, throughout its existence. It is an undeniable fact that the use of the coercive apparatus of the state, violence, terror and fear has been a characteristic feature of most states throughout history. Though the degree of the use of these methods has varied historically, and from state to state, modern states are not expected to survive by continuously relying on coercion to govern their own peoples.

The Ethiopian state is not an exceptional case, and there are states that have survived by employing coercion as the principal means of social control. Ethiopia may not be alone, and however few they may be, there are states in this category, which have imposed their authority by mere force and continued to survive by coercion. Though violence has its ups and downs, and there are periods of high and low intensity, it is never absent at any one time. Nicaragua and Iran before their 1979 revolutions, South Africa before the end of apartheid, Sudan, Iraq, Afghanistan, Angola, and many similar cases support my argument that states can survive without the tacit acceptance of their populations by employing the coercive apparatus of the state to maintain control. As noted already, in most cases, it was only when the combination of failures in the domestic coercive apparatus and external support that such states became unable to maintain control.

The second important contribution of this study concerns the state's claim to monopoly over the use of violence. Weber has asserted that the state is the only institution with the monopoly over the legitimate use of violence within its jurisdiction, and that other actors could use violence only to the extent the state permits (Weber, [1922] 1978: 908). In the Ethiopian case however, as we have seen, for most of its history, there were rare moments when the Ethiopian state maintained this monopoly, and when it has not been challenged violently by other organized actors from within. The armed movements in Ethiopia's long history, particularly in the 20<sup>th</sup> century could operate and even succeed because they evoked and gained a certain measure of legitimacy for their actions from the people, or sector of society they claimed to represent, without which they could never survive. Ethiopia's case, and that of Sudan, and many similar states support my argument that many states do not have the monopoly of the use of

coercion. The claim to the monopoly of force is challenged in the case of Ethiopia and many similar states. But, in spite of the monopoly they claim as states, they continue to survive by the mere fact of having nominal jurisdiction over a certain territory, even when large swaths of territory was under the control of insurgent groups. Thus, very often, they may not even control most of the territory. Another example is Afghanistan, which has survived as a state under several regimes and even defeated several foreign invaders, but has never been able to establish total control over its territory. In short, states with contested legitimacy do not possess the monopoly to the use of violence.

In general, what can be said is that the monopoly is relative, and in most cases the state possesses the dominant force, rather than the monopoly. When that dominance is gradually eroded so much that it fails in its responsibilities of providing security and maintaining social control, we can assume state failure. This process can gradually reach a stage when the coercive apparatus of the state disintegrates resulting in state collapse. That was what happened in Somalia in 1991. However, the collapse did not happen suddenly; it was a gradual and a protracted process. Looking at the trajectory of some of the states in a similar situation with contested legitimacy and internal challenges, there are many candidates on that path unless they make conscious efforts to restructure and transform.

Finally, I draw three basic conclusions from this discussion of neopatrimonial domination in Ethiopia and these theoretical contributions. This concerns the methods such states employ to survive, and how changes take place in neopatrimonial states. The first is the enduring ability of states to survive despite contested legitimacy. They do so through coercion, and the Ethiopian state is a clear case. Since its emergence as a modern state, it has never attempted and needed to

legitimize itself by embedding the state in society. Because, if it does that, it threatens the narrow self interests of the neopatrimonial cliques that have dominated the state at various times since its formation. In effect, the state has been a predatory state, and the impoverished peasantry periodically lapsing to famine is a clear testimony to this. Secondly, because it is internally illegitimate, neopatrimonial rule cannot survive without external support. While all of the Ethiopian regimes have manipulated external factors for their domination, global actors have supplied the state with the means of violence and political support, thus helping to maintain neopatrimonial domination. Thirdly, and related to this is how political changes have taken place in Ethiopia. External dependence has its own costs, and major internal political upheavals and changes in Ethiopia have been influenced by changes in the global environment. In other words, internal factors have not been able to bring about the changes by themselves, and it is only when the external support structure of the neopatrimonial regimes becomes weak that changes in the political order take place. In other words, it is when internal resistance and fundamental changes in the global environment coalesce with implications for eroding the external support structure of the ruling elites that changes have taken place in Ethiopia. The success of the Nicaraguan Revolution of 1979, the collapse of the Somali State in 1991, and the end of the apartheid state in South Africa all support this argument (Booth, 1982; Issa-Salwe, 2000; Eades, 1999).

### **The Future of States with Contested Legitimacy**

The literature based on Marxist or neo Marxist perspectives, especially among the dependency school and world systems approaches, has emphasized the disadvantaged role of the developing world in the world economy as a determining factor for the crisis of development in Africa and other developing states (Amin, 1976; Wallerstein, 1986). The traditional

modernization perspective emphasizes the role of cultural factors (Harrison and Huntington, 2000). The neoliberal perspective is fundamentally not different from the modernization school, but puts more emphasis on the underdeveloped structure of market forces and restrictions placed on free trade by states as factors responsible for the crisis of development (Bhagwati, 2002). In the latter case, the already weak states have been called upon not to interfere with market forces, and in fact even become weaker and unable to influence developments in the face of growing social and economic crisis.

These theories have been around for some time and they pose valid arguments, especially those arguments emphasizing the role of the developing states in the global system, and the impact of these external factors. Consequently, the legitimacy, capacity, internal autonomy, and societal relations of states have not been given sufficient attention. However, recent studies have renewed attention on internal factors as well, particularly the structure and role of social, political and economic institutions. These have important roles in shaping responses to external factors as well. The state in particular, and its relations to society, its methods of governance, cohesiveness, societal embeddedness, and many other factors can have serious implications in propelling or impeding a society's movement towards development. There are several cases of comparisons to make to enable us to address why some states succeeded and why others have failed. There is now a growing body of literature emerging from the studies of Japan and the newly industrializing states of Asia as well as the few success stories in Africa that the internal organization and relative autonomy of states have important implications for mobilizing internal resources for development (Kohli, 2004; Evans, 1995; Weiss and Hobson, 1995; Johnson, 1982; Chang, 2002, 1994; Chang and Rowthorn; 1995; Woo-Cumings, 1999; Samatar, 1999).



Not all former colonial territories have fared badly also. A few have managed to create stability and economic progress by reforming the structures and systems they have inherited from colonialism. One of the best examples is India, where even before independence the nationalist leaders began a constitutional process of what to make out of such a vast and heterogeneous sub continent, and how it should be governed as an independent polity (Sudarshan, 1994). In this process, the contributions of the nationalist party, the Indian National Congress, and the leaders must not be overlooked, as Gandhi and Nehru played critical roles in laying down the vision of forging an inclusive and stable democratic state (Brown, 2003). In Africa, states like Botswana managed to fuse together traditional authority of the society with that of the modern state, a factor that has contributed to political stability and economic progress (Samatar, 1999). In some states, like Korea, Taiwan, and Mauritius the structures established and the institutions built by colonial rule have even been credited for some of the economic successes of these states (Kohli, 1994; Amsden, 1985; Lange, 2003).

However, where a few have succeeded many have a history of crisis of legitimacy, characterized by brutal dictatorships, civil wars and economic crisis. As a result their method of survival has been coercion at home and external patronage, and the latter has greatly facilitated the former. The crisis has been most visible in Africa, where external destabilizing interventions have a longer history, but African states have not been the only ones suffering from political and economic crisis. The history of colonial domination and the manner of the creation of colonial states is not the same in all parts of the world, and there are several variations with different outcomes. Nicaragua was in a similar situation before the 1979 revolution, with a brutal dictatorship supported by the United States (Booth, 1982). Another example from Latin America

is El Salvador which was gripped by civil war for years, under United States supported right wing dictatorships, ruling with brutal methods, and death squads murdering critics of the regime, which only ended with the peace agreement of 1992 (Wood, 2003). South Africa before the end of Apartheid in 1994 was in the same situation. Supported by the Western powers for parochial reasons as well as considering the apartheid regime as a bulwark against Soviet expansion, apartheid survived through massive repression at home and aggression against the neighboring African states.

I argue that the crisis of the Ethiopian state can be explained by the interplay between external and internal factors. Its external problems, including its regional isolation and dependence on external patronage can also be partly explained as consequences of its internal lack of sufficient embeddedness. Since the state is internally alienated from the majority of the population it is vulnerable to regional meddling, and dependent on global patronage for the provision of the means to state survival and to counteract its regional isolation. Thus, the two factors have coalesced to reinforce each other, weakening the authority and effectiveness of the state and creating a vicious cycle of crisis. On the one hand, the state's internal weaknesses have forced the Ethiopian state to depend on external forces for its survival. On the other, external support has exempted it from seeking internal legitimacy by broadening its internal base. The external dependence led the state not to address internal pressures and demands for inclusions. In other words, the state has no incentive to broaden its legitimacy by accommodating various social and political forces. The state leaders did not see any need for political accommodation as so long as they maintained external support. In turn, the weaknesses in the internal societal embeddedness weakened the state to such an extent that it crippled its ability to face external

challenges, and withstand shocks from without, a situation that has been observed at various historical junctures. As every regime has been preoccupied with survival, it has been unable to organize economic and social development and create a stable political order.

Therefore, Ethiopia and states in similar situations need to make a closer look at home and do their homework first. Historically, violent revolutions have been the medium through which societies have attempted to transform in the face of state ineptness. Ethiopia has had its fair share of this historical phenomenon, but the outcome has been disastrous. But, social transformation can be effected through non violent revolutions, but requires concerted and organized actions by the popular masses, and conscious and determined efforts on the part of popular leaderships. There are a few states that have taken the vital steps necessary to bring about social, political and economic transformation without resorting to violent revolutions.

Though it is too early to make a definite case, Bolivia could well turn out to be such an example. A statement made by Bolivia's President Evo Morales (elected in 2005), after winning a referendum on constitutional changes for his country on January 25, 2009, is worth mentioning in this context. In that speech he declared that the constitutional changes he introduced signaled the "end of the colonial state" (BBC, 2009b). What is a colonial state and how is it different from other states? I argue that what matters is the substance of the relationship between the state and the people, in which case a colonial state may not be not be necessarily tied to colonialism, though most colonial states have colonial origins. There are also others that have not been established through the colonial process, but perform the same or similar functions. A colonial state is a specific type of state that has emerged at specific places and under specific historical circumstances. It is a state with a specific type of relationship with its own population and a

specific role and relationship in the international system. A colonial state exists between the people it governs and the international system. It exists to facilitate the extraction of resources and control of the population, not to the benefit the population, but principally external interests. Those who manage the state are rewarded with a share of the benefits of the resources extracted and they are also occasionally punished if they do not toe the line set for them, or if they no longer serve the external interests of transnational capital.

This type of state neither represents nor serves the interests of the people under its jurisdiction. It is not embedded in them. It is embedded in the international system that requires that some order is maintained in all territories for facilitating the flow of natural resources vital for the consumption of capitalist industry. Congo, with its rich mineral deposits, has been the prototype of such states since its independence in 1960. Angola, with its rich oil and other mineral deposits, is another case. Since its independence from Portugal in 1975, Angola has been engulfed in civil war, initially due to the rivalry between two liberation movements. Later, the civil war was exacerbated by the Cold War when rival players backed different sides. But, throughout the civil war and the suffering in Angola, the flow of oil and other mineral resources never stopped. Even after the civil war was over, the regime in Angola does not even see it necessary to hold the ritual of elections that have become so necessary and common for many of these states. The regime's hold over the state has been contested from the beginning. Since it neither represents society nor works in their interests, the legitimacy of such states is contested and challenged. Rebellions by disaffected sectors of the population are not uncommon, and civil wars of one form or another are fought at various times in many of these states. But the state has

to maintain itself and some order, and the only way it can do so on an unwilling population is through force and violence.

Bolivia has been independent for nearly two centuries and in theory colonialism ended in 1824 (Hudson and Hanratty 1991: 15-17). But, that independence had no meaning for the majority of the people of Bolivia and the colonial state endured. The essence of the statement made by Morales is that the Bolivian state has been alien to the majority of the people, and that in order to reflect and be relevant to society and play a meaningful role, it has to be transformed. Only then can it be perceived as legitimate and hence become effective. The effort Morales and his associates are making is to transform the Bolivian state from its colonial legacy and embed it in the real society, from being an instrument for external interests and the remnants of the colonial elite to that which can serve the interests of society at large. Thus, for the people of Bolivia, nearly three centuries of Spanish rule followed by nearly two centuries of independence were all the same. It was nominally independent but remained an illegitimate state, with no meaningful role in the life of the majority of the population, except in exploiting their resources and coercing them. But, the question we may ask is how did such a state survive for nearly two centuries?

If Bolivia, after nearly two centuries of independence, still talks about the existence of the colonial state, it is an indication of the enduring legacy of this phenomenon. Most African states have now been independent for half a century; but they do not have to wait another century and a half to realize the endurance of the colonial state. Ethiopia managed to escape colonialism; this was not a small achievement, and the people paid dearly to resist colonialism and maintain independence. Regardless of this achievement, the modern Ethiopian state has the same role in

the international system as other states formed out of colonial territories, and a similar relationship with the population within its boundaries. Therefore, in order to fundamentally alter the relationship between the state and the people and play a meaningful role in the international system on their behalf, and not the other way round as it has been, the state has to be transformed, and as Morales has said, it must be 're-founded'(BBC, 2009b).

The example of the Bolivian process is one way of achieving the goal of societal embeddedness and social transformation, but each society has its own unique experiences and ways of achieving its aims. In Ethiopia, the 1974 revolution was indeed a historic moment that provided a historic, but missed, opportunity. It was a popular uprising in which all sectors of society took part. Peasants, workers, students, the urban unemployed, traders, taxi drivers, artisans, soldiers, oppressed nationalities and social groups, Moslems, Christians, the clergy, women, all took part. It was a movement of all those who were excluded from the state demanding inclusion, it was a demand for a new kind of state that represents them and serves their interests. Even the movement of soldiers that came to dominate the revolution, and took power when it found a vacuum with the collapse of the old order, was unlike any other military putsch. Many had difficulties characterizing it, and at the time some called it a 'creeping coup' (Ottaway and Ottaway, 1978: 6). The armed forces mutiny was a grass roots movement of the ordinary soldiers, non commissioned officers and other ranks, as well as some junior officers. There was no political organization, party or any particular sector leading the mass movement. One of the most important aspects of the popular uprising was also the absence of violence. Violence was introduced only after the military took over power. In the regions, provinces and

districts, in towns and villages, the people came together to form popular committees to run their affairs, after expelling unpopular governors, and administrators.

This trend, however, alarmed some groups who wanted change, but without altering the historical hierarchical basis of the state. There was a fear among certain sectors that the revolution was going too far, and could fundamentally alter the historic legacy and character of the Ethiopian state (that marginalized the majority) if the revolution was allowed to continue. It was as a result of this that such elements, both civilian and those within the armed forces, coalesced to conspire to curtail the democratic revolution. The offensive that the military subsequently carried out against the working class and peasant organizations and their leaders, students, the urban left wing opposition and other democratic elements, as well as the military campaigns against oppressed nationalities was designed to preserve the historical hierarchically built basis of the state, as well as the position of those who have dominated the state since its emergence as a modern state.

What the statement of Evo Morales demonstrates is that the states in the former European colonies, in Latin America as in Africa were all constructed by Europeans to safeguard their interests. Even those that escaped direct colonialism like Ethiopia, and there are others in this category, did not escape from the consequences of foreign domination. In Latin America independence only meant the transfer of power to the European settlers. In Africa it was attempted in the settler colonies of South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Namibia, but it faltered as the result of considerable resistance. South Africa became the last to be liberated. Though formally independent since 1910 the majority of the population of South Africa remained excluded from the state. Despite its illegitimate status however, the apartheid state survived through repression

at home and aggression abroad for a considerable period of time. If not for the global changes that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union and the economic interests of South African and global capital to negotiate a political settlement, the apartheid state had the capacity to continue to exist with violence as the main method of social control for a longer time. By 1990 the ANC (formed in 1912) was never closer to toppling the apartheid state, though the internal resistance in particular has had considerable impact on the apartheid regime and its external image.

The 2005 elections in Ethiopia and the ensuing dispute underline the general crisis of the Ethiopian state that I have discussed throughout this dissertation. One issue that has been glaringly obvious as the result has been the lack of a basic consensus among the political elite on the very character of the state, even among the dominant Amhara-Tigrean elite that have dominated the modern Ethiopian state. The fundamental difference within the elite is not how the state should be ruled, or the structures of government and policies pursued, but the very basis and organization of the state. The positions of the dominant elite and that of the Oromo and other peoples of the South are even far apart, and hinges on whether the state maintains its historic hierarchical centralization or whether it should reflect all peoples within the territorial jurisdiction of the state. Thus, without a common framework of the character of the state among the contending forces, there can be neither political, nor economic and social progress.

The political framework in Ethiopia has been such that power, ideology and material interests have coalesced into a structure impenetrable for the popular classes. The entire structure inhibits transparency, accountability, and democratization. In particular the dominant role of the ruling party and the intricate political-military-economic power structure that has been established makes it impossible for the inclusion and consultation of the people. In fact, popular



participation and transparency are viewed not only as unnecessary and irrelevant, but subversive and dangerous to the structure of power. They are viewed as diluting and/or subverting the established power structure. As a result of this intricate system and precarious legitimacy, the post 1991 regime in particular finds it unnecessary to interact with the people, and consequently, the distance between the rulers and the ruled has increased to remarkable proportions even when compared to all previous regimes (Abbink, 2006: 197). The Emperor was actually more accessible to the population, and he made a point of touring the provinces from time to time. The military ruler who came to power after the revolution was less accessible than the Emperor, but still managed to tour provinces, military barracks, and talk with local officials. The post 1991 ruler however hardly ventures to the public, whereas he seems to be easily accessible to foreigners. This indicates, the only legitimacy he cares about is that of his external patrons, and so long as they supply him with the material means to buttress his regime, he believes he can coerce the people into submission and continue to rule them without any need of popular consultation.

The tragedy of such methods of rule is that such systems are inherently unstable. On the one hand popular resistance is always present, and on the other, conflicts over allocation of power and resources within the ruling elites are not uncommon. There are also conflicts between the formal structures of power and the informal networks. The 2005 elections and the aftermath highlight such conflicts. In situations of contested legitimacy, and especially where states are heterogeneous and elites are fragmented, it can result in the collapse of the state. The divisive methods of rule employed by the regime of Siad Barre and elite fragmentation on the basis of clan loyalties are responsible for the collapse of the Somali state. In Congo, Mobutu's predatory rule, destruction of institutions and highly personalized rule, coupled with the divide and rule

policy brought about the disintegration of the elite, are responsible for Congo's descent into anarchy, and becoming an easy prey for tiny states and non state actors among its neighbors to destabilize such a large populous state. In all these the role of external patronage has had a negative role for long term stability in these states. In other words, any state under neopatrimonial domination has the potential of descending into chaos and anarchy when such regimes become unable to maintain control with disastrous consequences. In Ethiopia, in the past one neopatrimonial regime was replaced by another through violent means, but without a total breakdown. In the past this was possible due two factors: a stable self providing peasant majority at home and a favorable international situation abroad, in which various actors could appeal for support from one or the other of the contending forces in the international arena. However, given the dynamics of internal social, economic, political, demographic, and environmental developments, and considering the present international situation, this may no longer be possible.

## LIST OF REFERENCES

- Abbink, Jan. 2006. "Discomfiture of Democracy? The 2005 Election Crisis in Ethiopia and its Aftermath," *African Affairs* 105, 419: 173-199.
- . 1995. "Transformations of Violence in Twentieth Century Ethiopia: Cultural Roots, Political Conjunctures," *Focaal* 25: 57-77.
- Abir, Mordechai. 1968. *Ethiopia: The Era of the Princes: The Challenge of Islam and the Reunification of the Christian Empire 1769-1855*, New York, Frederick A. Praeger Publishers.
- Afanasyev, Victor G. 1972. *Socialism and Communism*, Moscow: Progress Publishers.
- Ahmed, Hussein. 1992. "The Historiography of Islam in Ethiopia," *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 3:1, pp. 14-46.
- Amin, Samir. 1976. *Unequal Development: An Essay on the Social Formations of Peripheral Capitalism*, translated by Brian Pearce, New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Amnesty International, 2009. "Ethiopia: Government Must Reveal Fate of Political Prisoners." [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org), 05 May 2009.
- Amsden, Alice H. 1985. "The State and Taiwan's Economic Development," in, Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (eds.), *Bringing the State Back In*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 78-106.
- Anbasse, Gennet Ayele. 1994 EC. *Ye Letena Kolonel Mengistu Haile-Mariam Tizitawoch* (Reminiscences of Lt. Colonel Mengistu Haile-Mariam), Amharic. Addis Ababa: Megga Printing Press.
- Anonymous, 2006. "From Bullets to Bank Account: Report on the Economic Empire of the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front: A Preliminary Assessment." Mimeograph.
- Arrighi, Giovanni. 2002. "The African Crisis: World Systemic and Regional Aspects." *New Left Review* 15: 5-36.
- . 1978. "Towards a Theory of Capitalist Crisis" *New Left Review* I, 111: 3-24.
- Asante, Molefi Kete. 2007. *A History of Africa: The Quest for Eternal Harmony*. New York: Routledge.
- Augustine, Saint. *City of God (De Civitate Dei), Volume I*, translated by John Healy in 1610, 1945. London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd.
- Bassi, Marco. 2005. *Decisions in the Shade: Political and Juridical Processes among the Oromo-Borana*. Trenton NJ: Red Sea Press.
- Bates, Thomas R. 1975. "Gramsci and the Theory of Hegemony," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 36, No.2: 351-366.
- BBC News. 2009a. "Ethiopia Arrests 'Coup Plotters.'" <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/>. 25 April 2009.

- . 2009b. “Bolivians ‘back new constitution.’” <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/americas>. 26 January 2009.
- Baxter, Paul T. W. and Uri Almagor, 1978. *Age, Generation and Time: Some Features of East African Age Organizations*. New York: St. Martin’s Press.
- Bayart, Jean-Francois, Stephen Ellis, and Beatrice Hibou. 1999. *The Criminalization of the State in Africa*. Oxford: James Currey.
- Beattie, Kirk J., 2000. *Egypt During the Sadat Years*, New York: Palgrave.
- Belete, Pawlos. 2009. “Azeb Mesfin Pushes out TPLF boss Sebhat Nega.” [www.ethiopianreview.com](http://www.ethiopianreview.com), March 30.
- Bernal, Martin. 1987. *Black Athena: The Afro-Asiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*. New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Bhagwati, Jagdish, 2004. *In Defense of Globalization*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- . 2002. *Free Trade Today*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Bhagwati, Jagdish and M. Hirsh (eds.), 1998, *The Uruguay Round and Beyond Essays in Honor of Arthur Dunkel*, Ann Arbor MI: The University of Michigan Press.
- Booth, John A. 1982. *The End and the Beginning: The Nicaraguan Revolution*. Boulder CO: Westview Press.
- Bratton, Michael and Nicholas van de Walle, 1997. *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 1994. “Neopatrimonial Regimes and Political Transitions in Africa,” *World Politics* 46: 453-489.
- Braukaemper, Ulrich. 1983. *Die Kambata: Geschichte und Gesellschaft eines Suedathiopischen Bauernvolkes*. Wiesbaden: F. Steiner.
- . 1980. *Geschichte der Hadiya Suedathiopiens: Von die Anfängen bis Revolution 1974*. Wiesbaden: F. Steiner.
- Brautigam, Deborah. 1999. “The ‘Mauritius Miracle:’ Democracy, Institutions, and Economic Policy.” Pp137-162 in *State, Conflict, and Democracy in Africa*, edited by Richard Joseph. Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Brown, Judith M. 2003. *Nehru: A Political Life*. New Haven CT: Yale University Press.
- Brown, Michael Barratt, 1995. *Africa’s Choices: After Thirty Years of World Bank*, Boulder Co: Westview press.
- Bruce, James. 1813. *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile 1768-1773*, 8 Volumes, Third Edition, Edinburgh.
- . 1791. *Voyages en Abyssinie*, 5 volumes, translated by J. H. Castera. Paris.

- Buci-Glucksmann, Christine. 1980. *Gramsci and the State*. Translated from the French by David Fernbach. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Budge, W. A. Wallis, [1928] 1966. *A History of Ethiopia: Nubia and Abyssinia*, in 2 Volumes. Oosterhout, The Netherlands: Anthropological Publications.
- Callaghy, Thomas M. 1984. *The State-Society Struggle: Zaire in Comparative Perspective*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Campbell, Bonnie K. and John Loxley, eds. 1989. *Structural Adjustment in Africa*. Houndmills: Macmillan
- Central Intelligence Agency, 2009. *World Fact Book*, [www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/](http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/) Accessed April 2009.
- Central Statistical Authority, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 1999. *The 1994 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia: Results at Country Level, Volume II Analytical Report*, Addis Ababa: Central Statistical Authority.
- Central Statistical Office. 1975. *Statistical Abstract of Ethiopia*. Addis Ababa.
- Cerulli, Enrico. 1933. *Etiopia Occidentale*, Vol. 1. Rome: Sindacato Italiano Arti Grafiche.
- . 1922. "Folk Literature of the Galla of Southern Abyssinia." *Harvard African Studies*, Volume 3: 1-228, edited by E. A. Hooton
- Chabal, Patrick and J. P. Daloz, 1999. *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Chang, Ha-Joon, 2008. *Bad Samaritans: The Myth of Free Trade and the Secret History of Capitalism*. New York: Bloomsbury Press.
- . 2002. *Kicking Away the Ladder: Development Strategy in Historical*
- . 1994. *The Political Economy of Industrial Policy*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Chang, Ha-Joon, and Robert Rowthorn. eds. 1995. *The Role of the State in Economic Change*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Chanie, Paulos, 2007. Clientelism and Ethiopia's post-1991 Decentralization," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 45 (3): 355-384.
- Clapham, Christopher. 1998. "Degrees of Statehood," *Review of International Studies*, 24: 143-157.
- . 1996. *Africa and the International System: The Politics of State Survival*, Cambridge: Cambridge University press.
- . 1988. *Transformation and Continuity in Revolutionary Ethiopia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 1969. *Haile Sellassie's Government*, New York: Praeger
- . (ed.), 1982. *Private Patronage and Public Power*, New York: St. Martin's Press.

- Clay, Jason W., Sandra Steingraber, and Peter Niggli. 1988. *The Spoils of Famine: Ethiopian Famine Policy and Peasant Agriculture*. Cambridge MA: Cultural Survival Inc.
- Collins, Robert O. 2006. *Africa: A Short History*. Princeton NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers.
- Dahl, Robert, 1998. *On Democracy*, New haven CT: Yale University Press.
- Darkwah, R. H. Kofi. 1975. *Shewa, Menelik, and the Ethiopian Empire, 1813-1889*. London: Heinemann
- Davidow, Jeffrey. 1984. *A Peace in Southern Africa: The Lancaster House Conference on Rhodesia, 1979*. Boulder CO: Westview Press.
- Davidson, Basil. 1992. *The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State*. New York: Times Books
- Dilebo, Getahun. 1974. "Emperor Menelik's Ethiopia, 1865-1916: National Unification or Amhara Communal Domination?" PhD Dissertation, Department of History, Howard University, Washington, DC.
- Diop, Cheikh Anta. 1974. *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*. Translated from the French by Mercer Cook. New York: Lawrence Hill.
- Donham, Donald L. 1999. *Marxist Modern: An Ethnographic History of the Ethiopian Revolution*. Berkeley CA: University of California Press.
- Du Bois. W. E. B., [1903] 1989. *The Souls of the Black Folk*, New York: Penguin Books.
- Duffield, Mark, and John Prendergast, 1994. *Without Troops and Tanks: The Emergency Relief Desk and the Cross Border Operation into Eritrea and Tigray*, Lawrenceville NJ: Red Sea Press.
- Eades, Lindsay Michie. 1999. *The End of Apartheid in South Africa*. Westport CT: Greenwood Press.
- Easterly, William. 2006. "Growth in Ethiopia: Retrospect and Prospect" (Mimeograph). New York: Center for Global Development, New York University.
- Englebert, Pierre. 2000. *State Legitimacy and Development in Africa*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- . 1997. "The Contemporary African State: neither African nor State." *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No. 4: 767-775.
- Erlich, Haggai, 1994. *Ethiopia and the Middle East*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Esman, Milton J. and Norman T, Uphoff, 1984. *Local Organizations: Intermediaries in Rural Development*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Evans, Peter B. 1995. *Embedded Autonomy: States and Industrial Transformation*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

- . 1989. “Predatory, Developmental, and Other Apparatuses: A Comparative Political Economy Perspective on the Third World State,” *Sociological Forum*, Vol. 4. No. 4, pp. 561-587.
- Evans, Peter B., Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (eds.), 1985. *Bringing the State Back In*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Faulks, Keith. 1999. *Political Sociology: A Critical Introduction*, New York: New York University Press.
- . 1998. *Citizenship in Modern Britain*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Gabra-Sellassie, Zewde, 1975. *Yohannes IV of Ethiopia: A Political Biography*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Gebreab, Tesfaye. 2009. *Ye Gazetenyaw Mastawesha* (The Reporter’s Notebook, in Amharic). Pretoria.
- Ghani, Ashraf and Claire Lockhart, 2008. *Fixing Failed States: A framework for Rebuilding a Fractured World*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gilkes, Patrick, 1975. *The Dying Lion: Feudalism and Modernization in Ethiopia*, New York: St. Martin’s Press.
- Gilkes, Patrick, and Martin Plaut, 2000. “The War Between Ethiopia and Eritrea,” *Foreign Policy in Focus*, Vol. 5, No. 25.
- Graeme, Gill, 2003. *The Nature and Development of the Modern State*, New York: Palgrave Macmillian.
- Gramsci, Antonio, 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, New York: International Publishers.
- Guardian Newspaper, 2000. “Special Report, Ethiopia,” December 13.
- Guebre-Sellase, 1930. *Chronique du regne de Menelik II, roi des ros d’Ethiopie*. Translated and edited by Maurice de Coppet and Tesfa Sellase. Paris: Maisonneuve Ferers.
- Guillaume, Alfred, 1955. *The Life of Muhammad*, A Translation of Ishaq’s *Sirat Rasul Allah*, London: Oxford University Press.
- Habeeb, William Mark. 2007. *Civil Wars in Africa*. Philadelphia PA: Mason Crest Publishers.
- Haberland, Eike. 1963. *Galla Sued Ethiopiens*. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer.
- Habermas, Juergen. 1973. *Legitimation Crisis*. Translated by Thomas McCarthy, Boston MA: Beacon Press.
- Haberson, John W. 1988. *The Ethiopian Transformation: The Quest for a Post-Imperial State*. Boulder CO: Westview Press.
- Haile-Sellassie I, 1973. *My Life and Ethiopia’s Progress, Volume I*, Addis Ababa: Berhanena Selam Printing Press.



- . 1936. “Appeal to the League of Nations to Stop Aggression,” in, William Safire (ed.), 1997. *Lend Me Your Ears: Great Speeches in History*, New York: W.W. Norton and Company, pp 297-300.
- Haile-Sellassie, Teferra. 1997. *The Ethiopian Revolution: 1974-1991: From Monarchical Autocracy to Military Oligarchy*. London: Kegan Paul International.
- Haji, Abbas, 1993. *L’etat et les crises d’integration nationale en Ethiopie contemporaine*, Talence: Universite de Bourdeaux, Institut des Etudes Politiques.
- Halliday, Fred, and Maxine Molyneux. 1981. *The Ethiopian Revolution*. London: Verso.
- Hansen, Ketil Fred, 2003. “The Politics of Personal Relations: Beyond Neopatrimonial Practices in Northern Cameroon,” *Africa* 73 (2): 202-225.
- Harsch, Ernest. 1997. “African States in Social and Historical Context.” *Sociological Forum*, 12, No4: 671-679.
- Harper, Douglas, 1992. “Small N’s and Community Case Studies,” in, Charles C. Ragin and Howard S. Becker (eds.), 1992. *What is a Case? Exploring the Foundations of Social Inquiry*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Harrison, Lawrence E., and Samuel P. Huntington (eds.), 2000. *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress*, New York: Basic Books.
- Harvey, David, 2005. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hassen, Mohammed. 2008. “The Egyptian Occupation of Harer and its Impact on the Oromo of Harerge.” *Journal of Oromo Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 2: 33-60.
- Hay, Colin, and Michael Lister, 2006. “Introduction: Theories of State,” in Colin Hay, Michael Lister, and David Marsh (eds.), 2006. *The State: Theories and Issues*, Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Held, David. 2006. *Models of Democracy*, Stanford CA: Stanford University Press.
- . 1991. “Democracy, the Nation State and the Global System,,” in David Held (ed.), *Political Theory Today*, Oxford: Polity Press.
- Held, David, and Anthony McGrew, 2007. *Globalization/Anti-Globalization: Beyond the Great Divide*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Henze, Paul. 2000. *Layers of Time: A History of Ethiopia*, New York: St. Martin’s press.
- . 1991. *The Horn of Africa: from War to Peace*, New York: St. Martin’s press.
- Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*, edited by Marshall Missner, 2007. New York: Pearson Longman.
- Hudson, Rex A., and Dennis M. Hanratty. eds. *Bolivia: A Country Study*. Washington DC: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress.
- Human Rights Watch. 2009. *New Law Ratchets up Repression*. New York: Human Rights Watch, January 8.

- . 2008. *Collective Punishment: War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity in the Ogaden area of Ethiopia's Somali Region*. New York: Human Rights Watch, June 12.
- . 2005. *Suppressing Dissent: Human Rights Abuses and Political Repression in Ethiopia's Oromia Region*. New York: Human Rights Watch, May 9.
- . 1991. *Evil Days: 30 Years of War and Famine in Ethiopia*, New York: Human Rights Watch, Africa.
- Huntingford, George W. B. 1955. *The Galla of Ethiopia: The Kingdoms of Kafa and Janjero*. London: International African Institute.
- Huntington, Samuel P. 1968. *Political Order in Changing Societies*, New Haven CT: Yale University Press.
- . 1993. "Political Development in Ethiopia: A Peasant-Based Dominant-Party Democracy?" *Report to USAID/Ethiopia on Consultations with the Constitution Commission* 28 March-3 April. Washington DC: USAID
- Hyden, Goran. 1983. *No Shortcuts to Progress: African Development Management in Perspective*. London: Heinemann.
- Imperial Ethiopian Government. 1968. *Third Five Year Development Plan 1968-73*. Addis Ababa: Ministry of Planning and Development.
- . 1964. *Draft Proclamation on Agricultural Tenancy*. Addis Ababa: Ministry of Land Reform and Administration.
- . 1955. "Revised Constitution of the Empire of Ethiopia." *Negarit Gazeta*, Proclamation No. 149 of 1955.
- . 1960. *Civil Code of the Empire of Ethiopia*. Addis Ababa.
- Issa-Salwe, Abdisalam M. 2000. *Cold War Fallout: Boundary Politics and Conflict in the Horn of Africa*. London: HAAN Associates Publishing.
- Jackson, Robert H. 1990. *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Third World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jardine, Douglas, [1923] 1969. *The Mad Mullah of Somaliland*, New York: Negro University Press.
- Johanson, Donald, and Maitland Edey, 1981. *Lucy: The Beginnings of Humankind*, New York: Warner Books.
- Johnson, Chalmers A. 1982. *MITI and the Japanese Miracle: The Growth of Industrial Policy, 1925-1975*, Stanford CA: Stanford University Press.
- Joseph, Richard A. 1987. *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: The Rise and Fall of the Second Republic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 1999. *State, Conflict, and Democracy in Africa*. Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

- Keller, Edmond J. 1988. *Revolutionary Ethiopia: From Empire to People's Republic*. Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press.
- . 2005. "Making and Remaking State and Nation in Ethiopia," in, Ricardo Rene Laremont (ed.). *Borders Nationalism and the African State*, Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, pp87-134.
- Kohli, Atul, 2004. *State-Directed Development: Political Power and Industrialization in the Global Periphery*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 1994. "Where Do High Growth Political Economies Come From? The Japanese Lineage of Korea's 'Developmental State'," *World Development*, Vol. 22, No. 9: 1269-1293.
- Laitin, David, 1979. "The War in the Ogaden: Implications for Siyad's Role in Somali History," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 17, 1, pp. 95-115.
- Laitin, David, and Said S. Samatar, 1987. *Somalia: A Nation in Search of a State*, Boulder CO: Westview Press.
- Lange, Matthew, 2003. "Structural Holes and Structural Synergies: A Comparative Historical Analysis of State-Society Relations and Development in Colonial Sierra Leone and Mauritius," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 44: 372-347.
- Lange, Matthew, and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, 2005. *States and Development: Historical Antecedents of Stagnation and Advance*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- League of Nations, 1935. *Report C. 340, M. 171 Volume VII*. Geneva: UN Archives.
- Lefort, Rene. 1983. *Ethiopia: A Heretical Revolution?* Translated by A. M. Barrett. London: Zed Press.
- Legesse, Asmarom. 2006. *Oromo Democracy: An Indigenous African Political System*. Lawrenceville NJ: Red Sea Press.
- . 1973. *Gada: Three Approaches to the Study of African Society*. New York: Free Press
- Lemarchand, Rene, and Keith Legg, 1972. "Political Clientelism and Development: A Preliminary Analysis," *Comparative Politics* 4, 2: 149-178.
- Levine, Donald N. [1974] 2000. *Greater Ethiopia: The Evolution of a Multiethnic Society*. Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press.
- . 1965. *Wax and Gold: Tradition and Innovation in Ethiopian Culture*. Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Le Vine, Victor T., 1980. "African Patrimonial Regimes in Comparative Perspective," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 18, 4: 657-673.
- Lewis, Herbert S. 1965. *A Galla Monarchy: Jimma Abba Jifar, Ethiopia 1830-1932*. Madison WI: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Luttwak, Edward N. "Give War a Chance." *Foreign Affairs* 78, 4: 36-44.

- Machiavelli, Niccolò, *The Prince*, translated and edited by Ngelo M. Cordevilla, 1997. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Mamdani, Mahmood. 2001. *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism and the Genocide in Rwanda*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.
- . 1996. *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Mandela, Nelson, 1994. *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*, Boston MA: Little Brown.
- Medard, Jean Francois, 1991. “L’Etats neopatrimonialisme en Afrique noire,” in Jean Francois Medard (ed.). *Etats d’Afrique noire: Formation, mecanismes et crise* (collection Hommes et Societes), Paris: Karthala.
- Meinardus, Otto Friedrich August, 1970. *Christian Egypt: Faith and Life*, Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press.
- Migdal, Joel S. 2001. *State and Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 1988. *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Mika’el, Kebede. 1999 (EC). *Japan Endemin Selettenech? (How Did Japan Develop? Amharic)*. Addis Ababa: Mega Publishing and Distribution PLC.
- Mockler, Anthony, 1984. *Haile Selassie’s War: The Italian-Ethiopian Campaign 1935-1941*, New York: Random House.
- Myatt, Frederick, 1970. *The March to Magdala: The Abyssinian War of 1868*, London: Leo Cooper.
- Nkrumah, Kwame. 1970. *Africa Must Unite*. New York: International Publishers.
- Nyerere, Julius K. 1968. *Ujamaa: Essays on Socialism*. London: Oxford university Press.
- . 1967. *Freedom and Unity: A Selection from Writings and Speeches 1952-65*, London: Oxford University Press.
- O’Connor, James. 1984. *Accumulation Crisis*. New York: Basil Blackwell.
- Ohmae, Kenichi, 1995. *The End of the Nation State: The Rise of Regional Economies*, New York: The Free Press.
- O’Leary, Brendan, 2001. “An Iron Law of Nationalism and Federations? A (neo-Diceyan) theory of the necessity of a federal *Staatsvolk*, and consociational rescue,” *Nations and Nationalism* 7(3): 273-296.
- Opello, Walter C. and Stephen J. Rostow, 2004. *The Nation-State and Global Order: A Historical Introduction to Contemporary Politics*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

- Ottaway, Marina, 1999. *Africa's New Leaders: Democracy or State Reconstruction?* Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- Ottaway, Marina and David. 1978. *Ethiopia: Empire in Revolution*. New York: Africana Pub. Co.
- Pankhurst, Richard, 1968. *Economic History of Ethiopia 1800-1935*, Addis Ababa: Haile Sellassie I University Press.
- Perham, Margery, 1969. *The Government of Ethiopia*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Philpott, Daniel, 2001. *Revolutions in Sovereignty: How Ideas Shaped Modern International Relations*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Porter, Bruce D., 1984. *The USSR in Third World Conflicts: Soviet Arms and Diplomacy in Local Wars 1945-1980*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Provisional Military Administration Council (PMAC), 1978. *PMAC Chairman and the World Press*, Addis Ababa: Ministry of Information and National Guidance.
- Provisional Military Government of Ethiopia, 1975. *Statistical Abstract of Ethiopia*, Addis Ababa: Central Statistical Office.
- Prouty, Chris, 1986. *Empress Taytu and Menelik II: Ethiopia 1883-1910*, Trenton NJ: The Red Sea Press.
- Pankhurst, Alula, 1992. *Resettlement and Famine in Ethiopia: The Villagers' Experience*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Pankhurst, Richard, 1968. *Economic History of Ethiopia*, Addis Ababa: Haile Sellassie I University Press.
- Putman, Robert, 1993. *Making Democracy Work*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Ragin, Charles C. and Howard S. Becker (eds.), 1992. *What is a Case? Exploring the Foundations of Social Inquiry*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Retta, Zewde. 1998 EC, *Ye Ertra Guday* (Amharic), Addis Ababa: Central Printing Press.
- . n. d. *Tafari Makonin: Rejimu Ye Siltan Guzo (Tafari Makonin: The Long Walk to Power)*, Addis Ababa: Central Printing Press.
- Robinson, William, 2004. *A Theory of Global Capitalism: Production, Class, State in a Transnational World*, Baltimore MD: The John Hopkins University Press
- Rostow, Walt W., 1960. *The Stages of Economic Growth: a non-Communist Manifesto*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rothchild, Donald and Naomi Chazan, eds. 1988. *The Precarious Balance: State and Society in Africa*. Boulder CO: Westview Press.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. [1762] 1997. *The Social Contract and other later Political Writings*. Edited and translated by Victor Gourevitch. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Rubenson, Sven, 1976. *The Survival of Ethiopian Independence*, London: Heinemann
- Rueschemeyer, Dietrich, and Peter Evans, 1985. "The State and Economic Transformation: Toward an Analysis of the Conditions Underlying Effective Intervention," in, Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (eds.), 1985. *Bringing the State Back In*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 44-77.
- Saad, Elias N. 1983. *Social History of Timbuktu: The Role of Muslim Scholars and Notables 1400-1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sachs, Jeffrey, and A. Werner, 1995. "Economic Reform and the Process of Global Integration," *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity*, 1995, No. 1, Washington DC: Brookings Institution.
- Sahn, David E., Paul A. Dorosh, and Stephen D. Younger. 1997. *Structural Adjustment Reconsidered: Economic Policy and Poverty in Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Samatar, Abdi Ismail. 1999. *An African Miracle: State and Class Leadership in Botswana Development*. Portsmouth NH: Heinemann.
- Sbacchi, Alberto. 1997. *The Legacy of Bitterness: Ethiopia and Fascist Italy, 1935-1941*, Lawrenceville NJ: The Red Sea Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1985. *Ethiopia Under Mussolini: Fascism and the Colonial Experience*, London: Zed Books.
- Schulze, Hagen, 1994. *States, Nations and Nationalism: From the Middle Ages to the Present*, translated from the German by William E. Yuill, Cambridge MA: Balckwell Publishers
- Scott, James C., 1998. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, New Haven CT: Yale University Press.
- Shack, William. 1966. *The Gurage: A People of the Ensete Culture*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Sheehan, Michael, 1996. *The Balance of Power: History and Theory*, New York: Routledge.
- Simon, David Wim van Spengen, Chris Dixon, and Andreas Naerman, eds. 1995. *Structurally Adjusted Africa: Poverty, Debt and Basic Needs*. London: Pluto Press.
- Slade, Ruth. 1962. *King Leopold's Congo: Aspects of the Development of Race Relations in the Congo Independent State*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Smith, Lahra. 2007. "Political Violence and Democratic Uncertainty in Ethiopia." *United States Institute of Peace Special Report*, Washington DC: USIP
- Somali Republic, 1965. *Somalia: A Divided Nation Seeking Reunification*, Mogadishu: Ministry of Information.
- Spencer, John H., 1984. *Ethiopia at Bay: A Personal Account of the Haile Sellassie Years*, Algonac MI: Reference Publications, Inc.

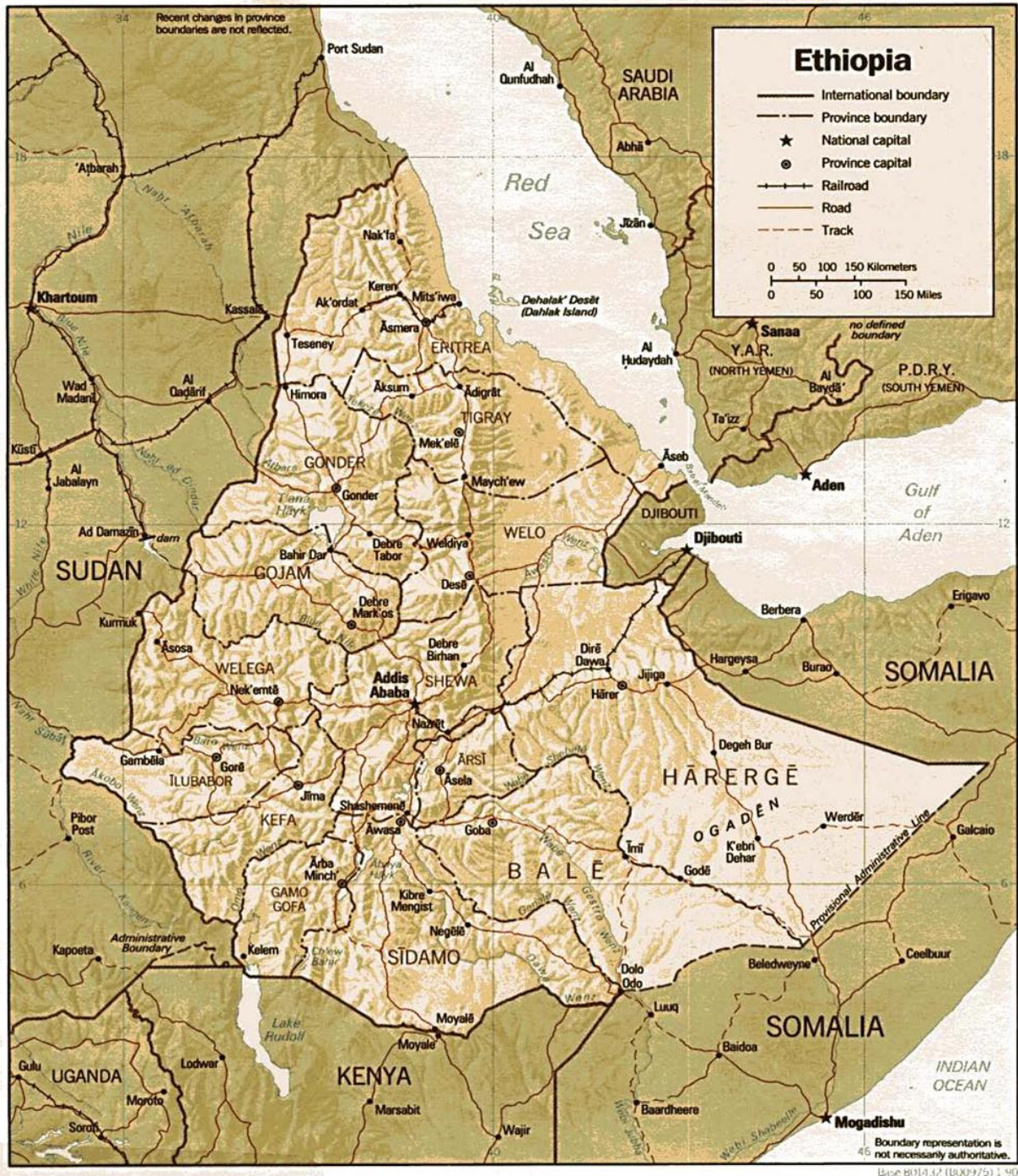
- Strange, Susan, 1996. *The Retreat of the State: The Diffusion of Power in the World Economy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sudarhsan, R. 1994. "The Political Consequences of Constitutional Discourse." Pp. 55-86, *Social Change and Political Discourse in India: Structures of Power, Movements of Resistance, Volume 1: State and Nation in the Context of Change*, edited by T.V. Sathyamurthy. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Taffete, Gobeze, 1996. *Abba Tiena Iyyasu* (Amharic). Addis-Ababa: Bulletin No. 6 de la Maison des Etudes Ethiopiennes.
- Theobald, Robin, 1982. "Patrimonialism," *World Politics* 34, 4: 548-559.
- Tiruneh, Andargachew 1993. *The Ethiopian Revolution, 1974-1987: From an Aristocratic to a Totalitarian Autocracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tilly, Charles. 1990. *Coercion, Capital and European States AD 990-1990*, Cambridge MA: Blackwell.
- . 1984. *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons*, New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Trimingham, J. Spencer, 1952: *Islam in Ethiopia*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Tsoukalas, Constantine, 2002. "Relative Autonomy and its Changing Forms," pp. 221-244, in, Stanley Aronowitz and Peter Bratsis (eds.). *Paradigm Lost: State Theory Reconsidered*, Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Ullendorf, Edward. 1960. *The Ethiopians: An Introduction to Country and People*. London: Oxford University Press.
- United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). 2008. *The Least Developed Countries Report 2007: Knowledge, Technological Learning and Innovation for Development*. New York: United Nations.
- United Nations, 2009. [www.un.org/Overview/growth.htm](http://www.un.org/Overview/growth.htm).
- United Nations General Assembly. 1947. *Official Records*, Second Session, Resolution 181(II), November 29.
- . 1975. *Official Records*, 30<sup>th</sup> Session, Resolution 3379, November 10.
- . 1991. *Official Records*, 46<sup>th</sup> Session, Resolution 46/86, December 16.
- United States Bureau of Census, 2009. [www.census.gov/cgi-bin/ipc/idbrank.pdf](http://www.census.gov/cgi-bin/ipc/idbrank.pdf).
- United States Department of State. 2009. *2008 Human Rights Reports: Ethiopia*. Washington DC: Bureau of Democracy Human Rights and Labor.
- Valfort, Marie-Anne. 2006. "Ethical Altruistic Voting in a Multi-Ethnic Developing Country: Evidence from Ethiopia." Memeograph. Paris: Laboratoire d'Econometrie d'Ecole Polytechnique.

- Van Creveld, Martin L., 1999. *The Rise and Decline of the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Vanderheyem, J. G. 1896. *Une expedition avec le Negus Menelik – Vingt mois en Abyssinie*, Paris: Hachette.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel, 1986. *Africa and the Modern World*, Trenton NJ: Africa World Press.
- Watkins, Kevin. 1995. *The Oxfam Poverty Report*. Oxford: Oxfam
- Weber, Max, [1922] 1978. *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, Berkeley CA: University of California Press.
- Weiss, Linda, and John M. Hobson. 1995. *States and Economic Development: A Comparative Historical Analysis*. Cambridge MA: Polity Press.
- Westad, Odd Arne. 2007. *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Willame, Jean-Claude. 1972. *Patrimonialism and Political Change in the Congo*. Stanford CA: Stanford University Press.
- Witte, Ludo de. 2001. *The Assassination of Lumumba*. Translated by Ann Wright and renee Fenby. London: Verso
- Wolde-Giyorgis, Dawit, 1989. *Red Tears: War, Famine and Revolution in Ethiopia*, Trenton NJ: Red Sea Press.
- Wolde-Sellassie, Hiruy, [1928] 1999 EC. *Ye Itiyopiya Tarik: Ke Nigist Saba Eske Tallaqu Adowa Dil* (Amharic), [History of Ethiopia: From Queen Sheba to the Great Adowa Victory] Addis Ababa: Central Printing Press.
- Woo-Cumings, Meredith, ed. 1999. *The Developmental State*, Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press.
- Wood, Elisabeth Jean. 2003. *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- World Bank. 2000. *World Development Report*, Washington DC: World Bank.
- . 2008. [http://devdata.worldbank.org/AAG/eth\\_aag.pdf](http://devdata.worldbank.org/AAG/eth_aag.pdf).
- Yerom, Major Getachew, 1995 EC. *Firej Ethiopia: Hagerina Serawit* (Justice Ethiopia: Nation and Army, Amharic). Addis Ababa: Artistic Printing Press.
- Yin, Robert, 2009. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, Fourth Edition, Los Angeles CA: Sage Publications.
- Yom, Sean L. 2008. "Towards a Theory of Cliency: The International Dimension of Regime Survival in the Middle East." Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the ISA's 49<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention, Bridging the Multiple Divides, Hilton San Francisco, San Francisco CA, USA, March 26, 2008.



- Yom, Sean L and Ahammed H. Al-Momani. 2008. "The International Dimensions of Authoritarian Regime Stability: Jordan in the Post-Cold War Era." *Arab Studies Quarterly* Volume 30, No. 1: 39-60.
- Young, Crawford. 1994. *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective*, New Haven CT: Yale University Press.
- Zewde, Bahru. 2002. *Pioneers of Change in Ethiopia: The Reformist Intellectuals of the Early Twentieth Century*, Oxford: James Currey
- . 2001. *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855-1991, Second Edition*, 2001. Oxford: James Currey.

## APPENDIX



**Note:** This map does not reflect current political and administrative structures in the Horn of Africa and Ethiopia. The purpose is only for references to place names cited in the text.

## VITA

Dima Noggo Sarbo was born and raised in Ethiopia, and went through primary and secondary education in Gore, in the Southwest of the country. He subsequently attended Haile Sellassie I University in Addis Ababa, and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science and Government. He then joined Ethiopian government service working in rural development with the ministries of Community Development and Social Affairs, Land Reform, and Agriculture. In 1977 he joined the United Nations African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP) in Dakar, Senegal, and earned a Post-Graduate diploma in Economic Development and Planning. He briefly worked as a Research Associate for the United Nations Environment Training Program (ENDA) and the Council for the Development of Economic and Social Research in Africa (CODESRIA) in Dakar, Senegal.

In the 1980s, he was involved in relief work among refugees and internally displaced persons in Ethiopia, Sudan and Somalia. He also took part in the resistance against the military regime in Ethiopia. When the regime collapsed in 1991, he joined the Transitional Government, as a member of the transitional legislature and a cabinet minister. He resigned in 1992 when the coalition government collapsed, due to disagreements over the process of democratization.

Between 1993 and 2003, he worked as a consultant for non-governmental organizations, on development, conflict and peace issues. In August 2003, he joined the University of Tennessee to pursue a PhD in Sociology. In 2009, he accepted a two years fellowship as a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Oxford-Princeton Global Leaders Fellowship Program. He earned his Doctor of Philosophy degree in Sociology from the University of Tennessee the same year.