State Crises, Globalisation and National Movements in North-East Africa

Edited by Asafa Jalata

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State Crises, Globalisation and National Movements in North-East Africa

By identifying the critical central contradictions that are built into the politics of the Horn of Africa, this book demonstrates that the crises of the Horn states stem from their political behaviour and structural issues, such as internal social forces, and global influences that have become involved on the sides of these states without requiring accountability, the rule of law or the implementation of, at least, 'limited democracy'.

Acute political, social, cultural and economic crises in the Horn states, and the policy response to them, have contributed to social unrest, state conflicts and national movements. The Horn states have drastically failed to solve these crises and conflicts, and cannot provide protection and basic social services to the majority of the respective peoples they rule. Consequently, the peoples of the region have been exposed to recurrent wars and famines, absolute poverty, disastrous diseases, genocide, continued subjugation and suffering due to state-terrorism and global tyranny.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the disintegration of the Somali state, and the failures of the Ethiopian, Sudanese and Djibouti states to fulfil their governmental obligations, raise serious theoretical and practical problems for academics, policy analysts and policy makers on regional and global levels. The contributors provide a deep understanding of structural and conjunctural forces that have interacted in the processes of state power; the role of intervention of global powers; and the consequent failure to build the state as a public domain. The book also enriches our social scientific knowledge that is essential to develop pragmatic policy measures to address these problems.

This book will be of great interest to policy makers and international organisations as well as researchers and students of politics and international relations.

Asafa Jalata is Professor of Sociology, Global Studies, and African and African American Studies at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. He is the author of *Oromia & Ethiopia* (1993) and *Fighting Against the Injustice of the State and Globalization: Comparing the African American and Oromo Movements* (2001), and the editor of *Oromo Nationalism and the Ethiopian Discourse: The Search for Freedom & Democracy* (1998).

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Asafa Jalata is Professor of Sociology, Global studies, and African and African American Studies at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. He is the author of *Oromia & Ethiopia* (1993) and *Fighting Against the Injustice of the State and Globalization: Comparing the African American and Oromo Movements* (2001), and the editor of *Oromo Nationalism and the Ethiopian Discourse: The Search for Freedom & Democracy* (1998). He has also published several scholarly articles and book chapters on Oromo and African studies and African American studies. He was the president of the Oromo Studies Association and the editor of the *Journal of Oromo Studies*.

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William I. Robinson is Associate Professor of Sociology, Global Studies, and Latin American and Iberian Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and the author of numerous books and articles on globalisation, international affairs, development, political economy, Latin America, and social theory, including his award-winning *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, U.S. Intervention, and Hegemony* (1996). His most recent work is *Transnational Conflicts: Central America, Social Change, and Globalization* (2003).

Foreword

After the events of 9/11 the contemporary political world has come to assume that the concept of nation/state has lost some of its importance and that a globalised community should respond to international crises, be they economic, political or related to concerted terrorist threats. Such a paradigm of centralisation is not very different from the colonial paradigm of centralised administration that aims to control the minds of their subjects. As a result some European nations have expressed concern about their role within the international community and many indigenous groups within Asia, Latin America and Africa have joined those voices of concern and protest.

This timely collection of essays provides exciting and serious reading for scholars and politicians across the globe. These essays explore state formation in the Horn of Africa, particularly Ethiopia, the Sudan, Eritrea and Somalia by using a historical reading of past and contemporary developments. Its authors argue that centralisation crushed important indigenous institutions and peoples that otherwise were managing their affairs in the midst of inter-ethnonational warfare and changing political systems. Indeed, the authors suggest that the Horn governments have shown contempt for cultural resources associated with ethnonational groups and political factions by discarding federal systems of government based on indigenous models that could be highly successful today.

While these essays relate to the troubled Horn of Africa they express a social and political reality that is contemporarily manifested by indigenous protests for land and cultural rights in Latin America and Asia. It is this kind of historical and political reflection that would allow citizens of the twenty-first century to plan and hope for a world where corporations and governments with strong economic interests do not repeat the mistakes of the colonial period in Africa, that is the non-inclusion of indigenous systems of life, conservation and education. Instead they allow for the self-determination of peoples within an orderly international community that plays by the same explicit rules.

One hopes that this kind of serious reflection on indigenous institutions

and contemporary federalism triggers other scholars, political scientists and ultimately politicians to follow this same path of learning from the past in their nations, constituencies, universities and communities in the Third and Fourth Worlds, as well as in Europe and in the United States.

Mario I. Aguilar
University of St Andrews
Scotland, UK
Summer, 2003

Preface

State Crises, Globalisation and National Movements in Northeast Africa explores the political, economic and cultural messes of the region because of the failure of states in the region, and the dilemma that various population groups face to deal with these messes. Each contributor to this volume examines the relationship between the crises of the state and national movements in the Horn of Africa. Specifically, the nine chapters examine the process of state formation, the impact of globalisation, the feature of state crises, and the role of national movements in the Horn of Africa and suggest appropriate policy measures which would assist in dealing with these political and social problems. The acute cultural, political and economic crises in the region, and the policy response to them by Horn states, have contributed to social unrest, and ethnocultural and social movements. Since these crises and conflicts are grounded in specific historical and structural features built into the Horn states, their understanding and resolution need to address and eliminate the conditions of war and hostilities among various ethnonations or community groups that are locked in conflict and mutual cultural destruction within each state, or within the region. The critical understanding and resolution of these political problems help in finding a way to re-channel and unleash the creative and productive capacities of the peoples in the region for positive social change and development.

The book aims at facilitating a deep understanding of structural forces (for example, global, local and regional structures) and conjunctural factors (such as state behaviour, conflict and ethnonational movements) that have interacted and led to state crises. It also attempts to enrich our social scientific knowledge that is essential to develop pragmatic policy measures to address these problems. Some studies of the region have focused on the internal problems of these states and their respective societies while others have focused on global forces. Many of these studies have emphasised historical factors or contemporary issues without examining the connection between the past and present, and the interplay of the regional and global forces. This book elucidates the origins of the political problems by overcoming the shortcomings of these studies and by

exploring the connection between the past and the present, and the dynamic relationship between the local, regional and global structures to suggest appropriate policy measures which could help resolve existing crises and contradictions.

In the Horn of Africa, where subjugated ethnonations, oppressed groups and classes have been forced to live under some rigid ethnoclass hierarchy, the state itself is an instrument of destruction, exploitation and oppression used by one group against others. The penetration of the capitalist world economy into the region through colonialism and the interstate system, the intensification of social stratification and globalisation, and the collective grievances of the colonised nations have facilitated the development of various forms of nationalisms. At the current global historical juncture, the intensification of globalisation and the proliferation of ethnonationalisms are two main global social processes shaping world history. The features and role of the state are being challenged and changed by the globalising structures, such as transnational elites, multinational corporations, technological transformation, the revolution in international communication and transformation of information, and by forces of ethnonational diversity and multiculturalism. Since the Horn states have failed to cope with such regional and global changes, they are increasingly becoming either authoritarian-terrorist states or disintegrating.

The disintegration of the Somali state and the failures of the Ethiopian, Sudanese and Djibouti states to fulfil their state obligations in the twenty-first century motivates us to raise serious theoretical and practical questions for academics, policy analysts and policy makers. Global forces have also failed to correct the problems of these states. The US involvement in restoring Somalia and its attempt to promote elite democracy in Ethiopia failed, and in the latter a minority authoritarian-terrorist regime emerged under the guise of democracy. Focusing on the state crises, internal social forces such as ethnoclass, together with the global forces (the world economy and its institutions) that have jointly produced these crises, this book can help political actors, policy makers, international organisations, and major powers to understand the nature and extent of the political problems and the consequences of their own actions, an understanding which is crucial to develop informed policies for dealing with the region.

The book demonstrates that the crises of the Horn states stem from their political behaviour and structural factors, such as internal social forces and global forces that have become involved on the side of these states without requiring accountability, the rule of law, or the implementation of at least 'limited democracy'. The lack of accountability and democracy has prevented the construction of legitimate states that reflect the interests of multinational or multicultural societies in the region. Since the social and cultural systems of the Horn's peoples that traditionally provided social and material needs have been broken up by the penetration of

the world economy and the development of authoritarian-terrorist governments, and since these peoples have not yet established states responsive to their needs, existing states and their external counterparts cannot promote meaningful social changes. As a result, these peoples are confronted with recurrent war, disaster, devastating famine, ignorance, poverty and underdevelopment.

The policy measures suggested in this volume promote fundamental political changes which would help in uprooting authoritarian-terrorist states or racialised/ethnicised Horn states through implementing national self-determination and multicultural democracy. Also considered are some aspects of past indigenous political practices (such as Oromo democracy) that traditionally satisfied the material, cultural and political needs of the peoples of the Horn to show that some of these traditions can be the foundation of genuine self-determination and democracy. Since the racialised/ethnicised Horn states are against national self-determination and multicultural democracy they are on a path to disintegration like the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia while practicing systematic genocide like in Rwanda, Bosnia, Kosovo and other places. Some of the contributors to this book emphasise that progressive and democratic political actors and intellectuals need to recognise their moral responsibility by challenging false assumptions about the colonised peoples and their movements and inform the world community about the danger of allowing the existence of double standards for humanity based on the criterion of race/ethnicity before it is too late.

The contributors demonstrate that the movements of the indigenous social and political groups and the process of globalisation have challenged the actual existence of the Horn states. Asafa Jalata, in Chapter 1, explains how chains of factors such as various social formations, migration, colonisation, religious and racial/ethnonational factors and the interaction of local, regional and international markets dynamically and cumulatively contributed to the process of state formation. Further, Jalata systematically explores how the processes of Abyssinisation/ Christianisation and Arabisation/Islamisation with the help of global capitalism undermined the process of indigenous state formation and crushed indigenous social and political models and perpetuated underdevelopment in the Horn of Africa. He amply demonstrates that some of the racialised/ethnicised states of the Horn draw their political legitimacy from the imperial interstate system and survive by practicing political violence or state-terrorism. He proposes that the replacement of this state by multinational democratic states through combining the processes of national self-determination and decolonisation will help in bringing durable peace and meaningful development.

In Chapter 2, Amir Idris examines the nature of the racialised and Islamicised Sudanese state and its evolution in relation to the Southern Sudanese peoples. He argues that the racialisation of African and Arab

identities led to contradictions that have perpetuated the domination of Northern Sudanese over Southern Sudanese through exclusion and marginalisation. In these processes, the racialised and Islamicised state of the Sudan has spread racial violence in the Southern Sudan in the form of slavery, political domination, repression and war. Idris shows that these historical and contemporary contradictions have undermined the legitimacy of the postcolonial Sudanese state. He further asserts that the creation of a multicultural democratic state in the Sudan requires the de-racialisation and de-Isalmicisation of the state.

William I. Robinson explains the complex problem of the Oromo national struggle in the relation to the foreign policy of the United States and the process of globalisation. He asserts that the United States developed the new policy of 'democracy promotion' for ideological legitimisation of intervening and controlling political crises and transitions in peripheral countries like Ethiopia to influence their outcomes for the interest of the capitalist world order and its collaborators at the cost of the struggling and suffering population groups such as the Oromo. Robinson argues that the United States and other Western countries supported the emergence of Tigrayan colonial dictatorship under the guise of 'democracy' to suppress the popular Oromo national struggle and to intensify the exploitation and oppression of the Oromo majority. He suggests that although Western countries use Tigrayan authoritarianism to suppress the Oromo movement for self-determination and democracy, at the same time they continue to seek to establish 'elite democracy' in case the Oromo struggle goes out of their control. Robinson predicts that the Oromo national struggle can achieve its national political project in one of two possible ways: the first one is the creation of an independent republic, Oromia. The second is capturing control of state power and transforming the Ethiopian empire into a multinational democratic state through establishing Oromo majority rule.

Asafa Jalata, in Chapter 4, compares and contrasts the Southern Sudanese and Oromo national liberation movements through identifying and explaining the chains of historical and sociological factors that facilitated the emergence and development of these movements. He also identifies the similarities and differences of the movements, by explaining how these two movements developed in opposition to colonialism, economic exploitation, political repression and violation of human civil rights. Jalata persuasively explains why the principle of national self-determination is applicable to the Oromo and Southern Sudanese movements.

Lemmu Baissa, in Chapter 5, explains how Oromo democracy helped the Oromo in creating the *Gada* republican system of government before they were colonised by Abyssinians, and how this system of government worked on the national, regional and local levels in Oromia. Baissa emphasises that the *Gada* republican system of government functioned based on cardinal principles, such as the rule of law, the transfer of power

from one ruling group to another in the period of right years, balanced opposition within the government, personal liberty, freedom, social justice, and so forth. This system of government started to face a problem in the mid-seventeenth century, when Oromo regional and local republics became more autonomous and responsible for self-government. Despite the fact that these regional and local republics followed *Gada* laws and practices, the Oromo society, without the central power, was exposed to internal contradictions and external manipulation by neighbouring societies. Baissa expounds the theory that these conditions encouraged the emergence of autocratic and hereditary chiefs in the Oromo society. Some elements of these war chiefs later joined the Abyssinian camp to defeat their competitors and maintain their class interests. During the nineteenth century, Abyssinian warlords, Baissa notes, began to receive massive modern firearms from Europe that enabled them to colonise Oromos and terminate Oromo sovereignty.

Once the Oromos were colonised, Baissa argues that Abyssinians imposed on the Oromos their monarchical, tyrannical and autocratic political culture by replacing the Oromo democratic culture of *Gada*. By replacing the Oromo rule of law by the rule of Abyssinian warlords, Abyssinians practiced genocide on Oromos and robbed Oromo cultural and economic resources and established colonial institutions that have perpetuated continued subjugation. Baissa further explains that the Habasha political culture was and is the complete opposite of the Oromo democratic culture, and Abyssinian warlords or kings wielded supreme and unquestionable legislative, executive, judicial and even ecclesiastical powers. He demonstrates how the Abyssinian rulers have been above their own laws and practiced absolutism and considered the country and their subjects as their own personal property. The embracing of such political culture has prevented successive Ethiopian governments, including the Tigrayan-dominated government, from establishing a legitimate state. Baissa recommends that Oromo democracy and the democratic traditions of other societies in the Horn can be a viable alternative political model to end authoritarianism, colonialism and underdevelopment and to establish self-determination and multicultural democracy in this troubled region.

Bonnie K. Holcomb identifies and examines the consequences of the encounter between US-sponsored Ethiopian ‘democracy’ and indigenous Oromo democracy, and demonstrates how the former lacked democratic elements in form and content and was implemented to suppress Oromo nationalism and its democratic manifestation in violation of Oromo human rights. She explains the main characteristics of Oromo democracy known as *Gada* and shows how the Oromo people compared the standards of their democratic heritage with that of the US-sponsored Ethiopian ‘democracy’ and discovered that the US government and the Tigrayan-led regime collaborated to renew the dependent colonial relationship between Oromia and Ethiopia. Holcomb exposes the racist assumptions of the

Tigrayan elite and the US political operatives and theorists, who convinced themselves that the Oromo people do not understand the authentic meaning of democracy. These state elites and political operatives and theorists think that they could impose the Tigrayan colonial dictatorship on the Oromo in the guise of democracy, and establish consensual domination. Consequently, the Oromo Liberation Front has been forced to take up arms against the Tigrayan-led regime and to continue armed struggle. Holcomb asserts that the repression of the Oromo by the US-allied, Tigrayan-led regime sharpened the development of Oromo nationalism and intensified conflict and political instability.

Seyoum Hameso, in Chapter 7, explains how the Sidama people have been underdeveloped by successive colonial Ethiopian governments like other colonised nations in the Ethiopian empire. He briefly introduces the history and culture of the Sidama nation, and explains how its history was erased and its culture was repressed systematically by the Ethiopian ethnocratic state and the Habasha intellectual elites. Hameso identifies the problems of the colonised nations in Ethiopia and suggests some steps the colonised nations must take to end their sufferings. He introduces the perspective of the Sidama people for creating and building a coalition among the colonised nations to challenge and overthrow Ethiopian settler colonialism and its institutions. Hameso argues that these colonised nations have similar historical and contemporary grievances of exploitation, oppression and dehumanisation, and similar hopes for national self-determination and human dignity that motivate them to form a coalition against Amhara–Tigray domination. Because of the futility of attempting to democratise and rehabilitate the Ethiopian empire, he suggests that the colonised nations must develop a collaborative political agenda to build a better future based on consensus, human respect, democracy and self-determination.

Alice B. Hashim, in Chapter 8, discusses the process of the evolution of the modern Somali state and its rise and demise. She explains how chains of historical and sociological factors, such as colonial legacy, the deepening of clan politics, political fragmentation, authoritarianism, the illusion of a Greater Somalia, the war between Somalia and Ethiopia, economic collapse and civil war gradually led to the demise of the Somali state. Hashim also demonstrates how these problems have become obstacles for reconstructing a democratic federal Somali state. She argues that the Somali people can use their indigenous cultural traditions and institutions, such as *diya* and *heen*, *reer* and the practical tradition of the drought response mechanism, as a basis for democratic governance and federalism.

Leenco Lata, in Chapter 9, reconsiders the principle of national self-determination and the question of the state in general and in the Horn of Africa in particular. He argues that, because of the change in the global system, re-articulating the principle of self-determination and reformulating the essence of the state are becoming essential. Explaining the erosion

of the exclusive sovereignty of the state in terms of the development of ethnonational movements and transnational political structures, he demonstrates the multidimensionality of the principle of self-determination. He recommends that the failure of nation-building and endemic inter- and intrastate conflicts and wars in the Horn of Africa must force us to re-define sovereignty and reformulate the theory and practice of the state in order to ensure the public ownership of the state on local and regional levels.

Finally, I really appreciate and thank these contributors for sharing with us insights, experiences and knowledge, and making this book exciting and profound. I also thank the staff of Frank Cass and Routledge publishers for their diligent work. I also dearly appreciate the commitment and support I received from my wife, Zeituna Kalil, my son, Beka, and my daughter, Kulani.

Asafa Jalata
Knoxville
September 2003

1 The process of state formation in the Horn of Africa in comparative perspective

Asafa Jalata

This introductory chapter[1] examines the process of state formation in the Horn of Africa in a comparative perspective through looking at large-scale and long-term social changes in relation to precolonial social formations, various forms of migration, colonisation, religious and racial/ethnonational factors, and the development of markets in regional and international contexts. A critical and comprehensive understanding of state formation processes in this region requires that these chains of factors be explored in relation to the larger world. First, the chapter focuses on precolonial state formation processes and political identities, and explains how the processes of Abyssinianisation/Christianisation, Arabisation/Islamisation, and Africanisation/marginalisation affected the processes. Second, it comparatively explores the features of these states and their policies. Third, it examines the impact of international trade and capitalist penetration on these states and political identities. Fourth, it identifies and addresses the major reasons why 'modern' Horn states have failed to resolve fundamental contradictions both within the respective societies they control and among themselves. Through exploring the dynamic interplay of social structures and human agencies that facilitated the process of state formation and political identities in the regional context, the work employs interdisciplinary, multidimensional, historical and comparative methods, and critical approaches.

Premodern state formation process

A regional discussion on the process of state formation in the Horn of Africa demonstrates the multiplicity of migrations and conflicts, colonisation, cultural formations and interactions among various population groups through religion and local, regional and international trade. Regional, religious and trade connections, migrations and colonisation gradually resulted in the development of racialised cultural identities and politicised religions that have international dimensions. Various population groups in the region did not have clearly defined geopolitical boundaries prior to the last decades of the nineteenth centuries, when the

European colonial forces, by competing among themselves with regional collaborators, created geopolitical boundaries among the countries that are called today the Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, British, Italian, and French Somaliland, and other east African countries, Egypt and Kenya. However, various peoples had some territorial claims without well-established boundaries, and there were fluid cultural and trade contacts that led to conflict or cooperation depending on the given situation. In particular, chains of migration from Arabia since ancient times led to a series of conflicts between indigenous African population groups and the Africanised Arab descendants on issues of religion, identity and power.

The origin of racialised Horn states: the confluence of identity, religion, and power

The Horn of Africa is the home of 'Africans of Two Worlds'.[2] In this region, contact between the original Africans and Arab immigrants date from ancient times. As original Africans Africanised the Arab immigrants, the Africanised immigrants influenced the culture, religion and identity of the original Africans through trade, marriage, conflict, war, selective cultural borrowing and cooperation. The geography of the Red Sea and the shores of the Mediterranean played a central role in connecting various populations groups from Arabia, Asia, Europe and the Horn of Africa. Arabia and the Horn of Africa had contact from ancient times through trade in aromatic gums, ivory and gold, and merchants from both sides played a central role in this contact.[3] Arab merchants started to settle on the African coast in ancient times, and later infiltrated as far as the Nile by colonising original Africans. Some scholars estimate that Arab elements began to immigrate into the African coast of the Red Sea in the first half of the first millennium BC.[4] However, MacMichael notes that 'in the second millennium BC south-west Arabia was beginning to colonize the highlands of Abyssinia, and those cross-currents of migration had begun to flow which reached their height during the hegemony of Ma'in and Saba (*c*. 1500–300 BC)'.[5]

The Axumite kingdom was formed in the first century AD by the Africanised descendants of Arab settlers.[6] This kingdom and its civilisation developed through commerce, migration, colonisation and assimilation of some African and Arab cultural elements. Further, the commercial connection of the coast of Africa with others, such as the Indians, Greeks, Romans and ancient Egyptians had also contributed to the development of the kingdom that covered the present areas of Tigray and southern Eritrea. The Axumite kingdom accepted Orthodox Christianity in the fourth century through the commercial relationship it developed with the Greco-Romans. The kingdom had two principal ports, namely Adulis and Massawa. Adulis was its main port during antiquity. According to Richard Pankhurst,

> Aksumite exports, of ivory, rhinoceros horn, gold, slaves and other commodities originating in the interior, were transported across the coastal area . . . before being shipped from the port of Adulis. Most of the region's imports, of textiles, raw metals, manufactured goods and luxury articles, from Egypt, India and elsewhere, similarly entered through the port, and were then taken to many destinations inland. The export–import of Avalites and Malao was broadly similar to that of Adulis.[7]

The other main Red Sea port in early medieval times was Massawa. Axum traded with India, Arabia and ancient Egypt and imported cloth, linen mantles, articles of glass, ornament, sheets of soft copper used for making cooking utensils and bracelets and anklets for women, and iron used for making spears (Pankhurst, 1997: 18). The kingdom exterminated or enslaved some of the Beja, Agao and other peoples and expropriated their possessions.[8]

There were three areas that mainly contributed to the commercial life of Axum. These were 'the salt-producing Afar depression in the north-east, the gold producing country of Sasu in the south-west, and slave-yielding lands of the Bareyas in the northeast . . .'.[9] The Axumites, Africanised Arab descendants, and Himyarites of Yemen had gained ascendancy in trade, and the 'two peoples, closely connected by race, were united by the bond of a common religion. Axum had been finally converted to Christianity by Frumentius about 330 AD . . . The Yemen had been converted half a century earlier and remained nominally Christian until about 500 AD when the king, Dhu Nawas . . . adopted Judaism'.[10] The Axumites were later challenged from two directions. The Arab immigrants that arrived after the rise of Islam in the seventh century spread this new religion in African coastal towns, such as Massawa, Suuakin, Dahlak, Zeila, Berber, Mogadisho and Brava. As soon as Islamic influence increased, the commerce of the Axumite kingdom started to decline. However, the final death blow was given to the deteriorating kingdom by the colonised Beja and Agao peoples who revolted in the tenth century and occupied the northern trade routes to the Mediterranean world.[11]

After a long struggle, about the middle of the eleventh century, the previously colonised Agao people established a kingdom known as the Zagwe dynasty. This kingdom lived until 1270, when it was overthrown by one of the groups that descended from the remnants of the Axumites and developed a separate identity known as Amhara. The Amhara ethnonational group and another group known as Tigre are collectively called Habashas or Abyssinians; the Habashas developed a common religion, traditions and customs, but different languages. The Abyssinians, who later called themselves Ethiopians, recognised the political significance of the name Ethiopia, Black World, although they developed a racialised identity that differentiated them from the original Africans whom they

saw as real Blacks. The Habashas, by using their state power, imposed their Christian religion, and their languages, Amhara or Tigragna, and their customs on the peoples they colonised. This colonial project resulted in 'Abyssinization [that] meant a complete destruction of the identity of the colonized population groups' by claiming racial and/or cultural superiority.[12]

The colonisation and destruction of various population groups in their homeland (that Habashas later called Abyssinia) and the expropriation of their lands and other economic resources, the establishment of military colonies, the evangelisation of the remnants of the colonised population groups, and their cultural assimilation were the continuous process of marginalisation and Abyssinisation. The Abyssinian monarchical kingdom and the Orthodox Church played leading roles in the process of colonisation, Abyssinisation/Christianisation and marginalisation or destruction of indigenous peoples. The Abyssinian monarchy created its mythical claims of 3,000 years of existence, and it linked itself genealogically to the ancient king of Israel, Solomon, and considered itself an extension of a Solomonic dynasty. The successive kings of the so-called Solomonic dynasty claimed that they were elected by God and placed themselves at the top of the secular and religious hierarchies, and had the absolute power to appoint or dismiss their administrators and church officials.[13] Arab immigrants also influenced the culture and politics of the region that later became Somalia.

Since time immemorial, the coastal areas of the Horn of Africa known as the Land of Punt played a major commercial role by linking the Axumite Kingdom and east African interior with the Red Sea and the coast of the Gulf of Aden. According to Pankhurst,

> Contacts between the coast and the hinterland facilitated the export of myrrh, gold, animal skins, ostrich feathers and other articles. Some of these commodities came from the coastal belt, but others must have originated far in the interior. In return for such goods the region as a whole received a wide range of imports from Egypt and elsewhere. These included hatchets, daggers, necklaces and other manufactured goods.[14]

The Land of Punt included Somali coastal ports, such as Berbera and Brava. In antiquity, these two ports 'were known to the classical world long before Arabian colonization, and Islamic merchants . . . did no more than re-establish or develop trading centers'.[15] Somalis and Arabs had ancient connections, and this relationship was intensified with the emergence of Islam in Arabia and its expansion to the Horn of Africa.[16] 'Many centuries of trade relation with Arabia began with the establishment of commercial colonies along the coast by the Himmyarite Kingdom and these eventually developed into the two small states of Zeila or Adal in the north and Mogadishu in the south, gradually local dynasties of Somal-

ized Arabs or Arabized Somali ruled'.[17] These commercial colonies developed into city-states.

These city-states were important for their commercial activities and the introduction of Islam. As Lewis states, 'As an Arab trading colony comprising a federation of settled Arab tribes Mogadishu flourished from the beginning of the 10th century until half-way through the 13th, with a short period of prosperity in the 14th century and then declined fairly rapidly under pressure from the nomads of the interior, and the influence of external colonization'.[18] Gradually both Zeila and Mogadishu became under the influence of Arabia in the middle of the seventeenth century, and in 1870 Egypt colonised the Somali coast from Zeila to Cape Guardafui. Before Somali was partitioned and colonised by Great Britain, France, Italy and Ethiopia during the last decades of the nineteenth century, 'Zeila and Mogadishu were the two main centers with some degree of centralized government and some, though irregular, tradition of authority more formalized' than other parts of pastoral Somali society.[19] With the assimilation to Arab culture through religion, as we shall see, Somalis racialised their identity by referring to descent, real or putative, from Arab immigrants. Because of their commercial knowledge, military superiority, and their organised religion, Islam, Arab immigrants started to influence and modify the political behaviour of the Somali people. According to Lewis,

> Along the coast and at some points on the inter-section of caravan routes in the interior, small trading states were established, in association with which nomadic tribes gained ascendancy over more isolated neighbouring tribes. The authority and prestige attached to such relations depended mainly upon the superior military organization of the Arabs, upon their wealth as traders of Somali goods, and, above all, within Islam upon the superior grade of Mohammedan knowledge which they possessed.[20]

Arab immigrants and their Africanised descendants reorganised trading ports, such as Zeila in the north and Mogadishu in the south as city-states.[21] The coastal towns, Zeila and Berbera along the Gulf of Aden coast, and Mogadishu, Marka and Baraawee along the Indian Ocean were outlets for the incense, aromatic woods, ivory, ambergris and other commodities.[22] The trade networks of the Indian Ocean, the Gulf of Aden, and Somalia's Benaadir coastal ports, such as Brava, Baraawe, Marka and Mogadishu brought together peoples from the Arabian Peninsula, the Persian Gulf, the Indian subcontinent and Africa. Consequently, in the tenth century, immigrants from the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf settled the coastal ports of Somalia and intermarried with Somalis and produced Arabised Somalis who reorganised these ports as 'the foundation of Muslim expansion in North East Africa'.[23] When Arabised Somalis started to export cloth, they expanded their textile industries by

using the labour of enslaved non-Somali Africans.[24] During the nineteenth century, when the Indian Ocean trade became more lucrative and attracted Arab, Portugese, French, Indian, Asian and American merchants, and when Zanzibar emerged as an international trade emporium, enslaved Africans became one of the important commodities of trade (Besteman, 1999: 50–1). According to Catherine Besteman,

> Slave traders and raiders moved throughout eastern and central Africa to meet the rising demand for enslaved men, women, and children. Somalia did not supply slaves – as part of the Islamic world Somalis were at least nominally protected by the religious tenet that free Muslims cannot be enslaved – but Arab dhows loaded with human cargo continually visited Somali ports.

The labour of enslaved non-Somali Africans transformed Somalia's Benaadir coast by developing a plantation economy and producing commodities that were essential to reestablish regional trading links between Somalia and the Zanzibar-based Indian Ocean trade. Further, the involvement

> in regional trade and access to slave labor encouraged coastal Somalis to develop a plantation economy in the Shabeelle River valley … Agricultural products from the Shabeelle were easily accessible to urban coastal populations and merchants, and the apparently large demand for grain and oil in Arabia as well as for competitively priced domestic cotton fueled the rise of commodity production in the fertile Shabeelle valley, where there was abundant land.[25]

The labour of enslaved Africans made the Benaadir coast 'the grain coast for the supply of Southern Arabia'.[26] The foundation of modern Somali society was laid by the growing involvement of Somalis in regional trade and by the arrival of voluntary immigrants (mainly merchants) and by nonvoluntary immigrants (enslaved non-Somali Africans), and by continuing colonisation and enslavement of non-Somali Africans. The Somalis colonised non-Somali Africans who settled and cultivated the Shabeelle river valley; they dispossessed and enslaved these indigenous Africans. Similarly, they victimised and enslaved the members of some Oromo groups such as the Orma and Borana.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the Orma Oromo group, who lived in the areas west of the Jubba River were colonised, killed or enslaved or expelled from their homelands by a Somali clan, the Darood. Besteman asserts that:

> Somali Darood pastoralists began crossing the Jubba River in small numbers as clients and allies of the Orma in the 1800s. Gradually, the

> number of Darood living under Orma leadership increased to the point that they were able to take the advantage of a smallpox epidemic among the Orma in 1865, attacking their former overlords. The Darood insurgency was so strong that most of the surviving Orma fled beyond the Tana River … The Orma conquered by the Somali in some cases remained as clients and in others slaves.[27]

Despite the fact that the enslaved non-Somali Africans were culturally assimilated to Somali society, they still live 'in bondage to Somali masters'.[28] Assimilating to Somali culture, speaking only Somali dialects, and professing Islam did stop Somalis from continuing to marginalise these racialised population groups. The confluence of power, identity and religion is manifested through the claiming of racial superiority and kinship systems in Somali society. Some Somalis claim that they are descended from Arabs who brought Islam to the infidels. Arab immigrants and their Africanised descendants also culturally, politically and religiously marked the country that is called the Sudan.

The famous indigenous kingdom of Nubia was weakened and destroyed by the descendants of Arab immigrants. Nubians had trade connection with the Arabs prior to the emergence of Islam. With the decline of the Nubian civilisation and with the division of its kingdom, the number of Muslim Arab immigrants increased in Nubia or what we call today Northern Sudan. MacMichael asserts that 'the fact that the Muhamadan settlement in the Sudan caused a profound modification of the pre-existing native stock is apt to obscure the other equally important fact that long before the Islamic period Arabian races had been crossing over into Egypt and the Sudan'.[29] Arab immigrants from al-Yaman and Hadramawt reached Nubia in the second century. According to Hayder Ibrahim,

> There was a continuous migration from Arabia to the neighbouring regions, because the Arabian peninsula was overpopulated and lacked resources and periodic drought drove the people out of the region. Most Arab immigrants came to the Sudan across the Red Sea and Sinai Desert through Egypt. The overflow of migration accelerated during the Islamic expansion and the advent of Islam can be regarded as the real beginning of the arabization and Islamization of the country.[30]

The Arabs led by 'Amr ibn al-'As colonised Egypt in AD 640 and raided Christian Nubians, and the treaty that the latter signed with the invaders facilitated the peaceful migration of more Arabs into Nubia. Arabs gradually infiltrated Nubia and colonised it. There were four immigration waves from Arabia to this region: The first immigrants arrived in Nubia in the seventh and eight centuries through Egypt.[31] The second immigrants came in the eighteenth century through Abyssinia across the Red Sea from

Arabia. The third immigration wave occurred in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. MacMichael notes that 'in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the conquest of the Mamluk Sultans broke down the barrier which had been for so long presented by the Christian Kingdom of Dongola and opened the way for a fresh inflow of Arabs into the Sudan.[32] The emerging forces of Arab immigrants inspired by the new religion of Islam and the deteriorating Christian Nubian kingdom existed side by side until the end of the fourteenth century, when the kingdom was finally overthrown.[33] The fourth immigration wave followed the emergence of the Fung kingdom. This kingdom was founded about AD 1504 by the descendants of Arab immigrants by overthrowing the kingdom of Christian Nubia.[34] For the Arab immigrants and their descendants this kingdom 'became a guarantee of peace and order',[35] and for the original Africans it became the tool of destruction.

Gradually some Nubians were converted to Islam, although the majority of them remained Christian until the fifteenth or sixteenth century.[36] The newcomers introduced their system of racialised politics and religion and established the Funj kingdom. Between 1504 and 1820, this kingdom 'institutionalized Islam and it developed into the official religion in the sultanate. The period witnessed the ascendancy of religious orders and Sufism.[37] Generally speaking, Arab immigrants and their Africanised descendants developed racialised identities and introduced to the Horn of Africa politicised religions – Orthodox Christianity and Islam – that proved to be problematic for the construction of legitimate and multicultural democratic societies. In order to have a more complete picture of the processes of state formation in this region, we also need to look at the social formations of a few of the original Africans, and how they were affected by the processes of Abyssinisation/Christianisation or Arabisation/Islamisation prior to and after the European colonisation of Africa.

The process of state formation in indigenous African societies

The indigenous Africans have had various social and cultural formations. There were different forms of state formation processes in different ethnonational communities although most scholars did not pay adequate attention to these processes by regarding them as primitive and archaic. There were kingdoms, democracies, and lineage and kinship political systems of various peoples in this region, the histories of which it is beyond the limit of this chapter to examine. Therefore, let us focus on a few of these societies and try to understand their political institutions before they were colonised. One important indigenous African kingdom in this region was Nubia.

The Nubian kingdom had glorious history; this kingdom was located in the Sudan and it had two successive capitals known as Napata and

Meroe.[38] Nubia and Kemet, or ancient Egypt, had influenced one another through political domination, trade and cultural contacts. In the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries BC, Egyptian dynasties dominated Nubia to capture slaves and to exploit Nubian mines of gold, and within '550 years the colonization of Nubia made steady progress, and trade in slaves, ivory and spices was developed, and the mines of the eastern desert were worked for gold and emeralds. Nubia was divided, for administrative purposes, into two viceroyalties, that of Wawat in the north and that of the Kush'.[39]

The Egyptianised Nubia later dominated Egypt. Kashata (751 BC), the first Kushite king, achieved power over upper Egypt, and his brother, Shabako (707–696 BC) established the Nubian administration over the whole of Egypt. From 688–663 BC, Taharqa extended his sphere of influence to western Asia Minor and his army assisted the Syrians, Palestinians and Phoenicians against the Assyrians. The kingdom 'became a world power; at the same time the Egyptian civilization dominated and influenced most aspects of the Nubian culture, e.g., temples, architecture, art, court ceremonies, death rituals etc. This Egyptian was unable to eradicate or efface the Nubian identity.'[40] In 660 BC Kush was defeated by the Assyrians and lost Egypt and moved its city to Meroe from Napata. This city emerged as the centre of Nubian renaissance and civilisation because

> it was a suitable position for a capital: a fertile plain and trade center at the junction of routes to the north and the west with easy access to the Red Sea ports and to the south, and later a center of iron-working industry, as it had a large deposit of ore and well-wood to smelt it. With the decline of Egypt, trade routes with Napata were less important than before, and Napata gradually lost its importance.[41]

Meroe had established connections with the Greeks, Indians and the Romans, and her commercial glory started to decline when she was cut off from the outside world. The occupation of Egypt by the Romans who penetrated as far as Napata from 54–58 BC, and later the emergence of Axum, a new rival kingdom, threatened the survivability of this city. Axum and Meroe engaged in wars 'for commercial or political reasons and ended with the spread of Christianity. Ezana, the King of Axum, marched into Kush which came to an end with the fall of Meroe in 350 AD.'[42]

The Nubian civilization became obscure until the sixth century AD, when three kingdoms emerged. The first one was Nubia or Nobatia, established between the First Cataract and Say region, the second was Maqurra or Makuria with Dongola as its capital and the third was Alwa or Alodia with its capital in Soba.[43] Nubia was converted to Coptic Christianity in the sixth century, and in the next century Christianity became the religion of the state. Since Christian missionaries were mainly interested in the court and the elite, Christianity could not penetrate the conscience of the

masses. The Nubian kingdom was overthrown at the turn of the sixteenth century by the descendants of Africanised Arab immigrants who founded the Funj kingdom. According to MacMichael, 'The power of the FUNJ king became a guarantee of peace and order throughout the northern Sudan, and his court the meeting-place of all who had any pretensions of learning.'[44] In addition to Nubia, there were other indigenous African societies that had kingdoms. For instance, the Shilluk country was ruled by a king who was the supreme temporal and spiritual head and represented the nation.[45]

The Shilluk Kingdom

The Shilluk Kingdom claimed that it was a direct descendants of Nyikang, the first Shilluk king and successive kings claimed to rule by divine rights. This divine kingship is called Nyikang; 'Nyikang is . . . a mythological personification of the timeless kingship which itself symbolizes the national structure, a changeless moral order.'[46] According to Shilluk tradition, Nyikang was the founder of the country 'who led the Shilluk into their territory, conquered it, and established the social order. The spirit of Nyikang is thought to reside in every *reth* [king] and to be passed from one to another down line of his successors.'[47] Some scholars have suggested that the *reth* was powerful and selected his chiefs and hamlet heads while others have asserted that he was not so powerful since he only confirmed the chiefs and heads of communities after they were elected by their respective communities.[48]

When the British colonial government later installed Fadiet, the twenty-eighth king, the Shilluk people did not accept him as a legitimate king, and hence he remained an unpopular and inefficient king under the British colonial system.[49] The internationally recognised Fashoda was the royal city of the king. The royal houses, descendants of the king, and his chiefs form a privileged ruling class. The Shilluk people were divided into four groups or classes: the *Kwareth (*the royal clan), the *Ororo* (descendants of a disinherited clan), the *Bang reth* (attendants of the king), and the *Colo* (the main body of Shilluk clans).[50] The royal clan included the king, his sons and daughters and his grandchildren. His clan was more numerous than commoners in some regions 'because the members of the royal clan are richer and tend to marry more wives, and also because of the system whereby the offspring of a *reith* are planted out in various settlements away from Fashoda'.[51] Similarly, the Azande people had an empire that was divided into kingdoms that was destroyed by European colonialism.

The Zande kingdoms

'The Zande kingdoms,' Seligman and Seligman write, 'although extremely heterogenous in origin and split into numerous kingdoms, yet possesses a

common language and common political institutions.'[52] Azandeland was created through the conquest and political assimilation of various peoples; the ethnonational composition of Zande society and the linguistic diversity and the larger geographical area of the empire indicate the complexity of the Azande empire:

> It is remarkable that, without any technological superiority, those who built this empire were able to conquer such vast territories and to weld their inhabitants into a single people. That they succeeded was certainly due in the main to their greatly superior political organisation. It was only when they came up against peoples, the Abandiya and the Mangbetu, who had a political organisation comparable to their own that they were unable to make headway.[53]

Azande society clearly manifested ethnonational and class stratification. It was organised into three stratification systems: nobles, commoners who were considered to be true Zande, and commoners who were considered to be of foreign origin.[54] The noble group was called Avongara, the commoners Zande was called Ambomu, and those who were considered foreigners were called Auro, the numerical majority and political minority.

The Avongara was the ruling aristocracy that provided kings, queens, princes and governors; this group had a superior political organisation that emerged in the course of war, migration and settlements, and it imposed its political institutions and language on a heterogeneous conquered peoples. The Azande empire, according to Evans-Pritchard,

> [was] the result of a long process of development which started when the Avongara consolidated the Ambomu clans and the Avongara-Ambomu began their migrations and conquests, a process shaped by wars, movements into new ecological zones, colonization, ethnic admixture, and cultural borrowings in each new area of dispersal. . . . Their political system with its ruling class, court etiquette, a regimental organization, and administrative establishment, political control of judicial procedure, and inequality of wealth started from humble beginnings and slowly developed.[55]

The Azande empire was governed by a king, and he 'ruled personally over a central province and appointed governors, his eldest sons being the most important of them, to rule over the surrounding provinces of his kingdom.'[56]

The Azande kingdoms, particularly the kingdom of Grudwe, established friendly trade relations with Africanised Arab traders. But gradually these traders started to plunder and humiliate these kingdoms by demanding a regular supply of ivory and other products and by taking some Azande hostages to enslave them.[57] This course of action, of course,

led to conflicts and retaliations. The Arab traders and their caravans were defeated by the Azande: 'Eager though they were to acquire ivory and slaves, the campaigns of 1870 taught the Arabs that it was not profitable to make war on the Zande kingdoms nor easy to persuade their soldiers to escort caravans.'[58] However, the less organised indigenous populations of the Bahr al-Ghazal were devastated by Africanised Arab slavers who were interested in gaining wealth in ivory and slaves; these slavers established their garrisons and trading stations to enslave indigenous Africans and sell them in Northern Sudan and Arabia.

When some regions were controlled by the Africanised Arab merchants, the Azande empire was 'too powerful to be raided with impunity and, at any rate so far as those in what is now the Sudan were concerned, both they and government troops kept away ....'[59] The Azande empire maintained its independence until the last decades of the nineteenth century when it was partitioned and colonised by three European powers – the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, Belgian Congo, and French Equatorial Africa. There have been several societies that have been organised in clan, lineage and kinship political institutions in which decisions were made mainly by consensus. There were also societies that practiced indigenous popular democracies in the Horn of Africa. These societies attempted to protect their respective homelands and peoples from invaders collectively. One of the peoples that practiced an indigenous popular democratic system was the Oromo.

The Oromo form of indigenous government and democracy

The Oromo political system is called *Gada* or Oromo democracy.[60] We do not know when and how this system emerged; however, we know that it existed as a full-fledged system at the beginning of the sixteenth century. During this century, the Oromos were under one *Gada* administration.[61] Bonnie Holcomb notes that the *Gada* system 'organized the Oromo people in an all-encompassing democratic republic even before the few European pilgrims arrived from England on the shores of North America and only later built a democracy'.[62] Between 1522 and 1618, with their increased population and territories, different Oromo groups began to have autonomous *Gada* systems.[63] The *Gada* system has the principles of checks and balances (such as periodic transference of power every eight years and division of power among executive, legislative and judiciary branches), balanced opposition (among five parties), and power sharing between higher and lower administrative organs to prevent power from falling into the hands of despots.[64]

Other principles of the system included balanced representation of all clans, lineages, regions and confederacies, accountability of leaders, the settlement of disputes through reconciliation, and the respect for basic rights and liberties.[65] There are five *miseensas* (parties) in *Gada*; these parties

have different names in different parts of Oromia (the Oromo country) as the result of the expansion of the Oromos and their establishment of different autonomous administrative systems.[66] The rule of law is the key element of the *Gada* system; those leaders who have violated the law or whose families could not maintain the required standard of the system were recalled before the end of their tenure in the office.[67] *Gada* leaders implemented the laws that were made by the representatives of the people; Oromo democracy allowed the Oromo people to make, change or amend laws and rules every eight years. The *Gada* system accepted Oromos as the ultimate source of authority and nobody was above the rule of law. *Gada* as an integrative social system combined political and civil culture in this society; it organised male Oromos according to *hirya* (age sets) and *Luba* (generation sets) for social and political reasons.[68] Therefore, it is difficult to draw a clear boundary between civil and political culture in the *Gada* system. Asmarom Legesse explains *Gada* as 'a system of classes (*luba*) that succeed each other every eight years in assuming military, economic, political, and ritual responsibilities. Each *Gada* class remains in power during a specific term (*Gada)* which begins and ends with a formal transfer ceremony.'[69] The concept *Gada* has three related meanings: it is a period of eight years during which elected officials take power from the previous ones; it is the grade during which a class of people are in power by having politico-ritual leadership; it is the institution of Oromo society.[70]

All *Gada* officials were elected for eight years by universal adult male suffrage; the main criteria for election to office included bravery, knowledge, honesty, demonstrated ability, and so forth. According to Legessee,

> There is a general understanding among the electors and among the men competing for office that *personal qualities, achievements, mystical attributes*, and *public service* are the most important factors … it should be stressed that it is not the candidate himself who is being judged but rather his whole lineage and in particular, his lineal ancestors. Specifically, the candidate's father is the one most closely scrutinized.[71]

Despite the fact that kinship, *Gada* grades, and age sets are the foundation of political and ritual behaviour in Oromo society, those who are elected to office 'are expected to serve … without regard to kinship ties. Custom prescribes that they abandon their paternal settlements and establish a new band consisting of the councilors and their assistants.'[72] Since nobody is above the rule of law in Oromo democracy, those elected leaders who could not fulfill their duties would be recalled before their tenure is completed. Baissa Lemmu mentions that the *Gada* system 'as a whole provided … the machinery for democratic rule and enjoyment of maximum liberty for the people. It was the suppression of the system … that dehumanized the Oromo for the past hundred years.'[73]

The value system of Oromo society has been influenced by the *Gada* and *siiqqee* institutions. In the precolonial Oromo society, Oromo women had the *siiqqee* institution, a parallel institution to the *Gada* system, that 'functioned hand in hand with *Gadaa* [*sic*] system as one of its built-in mechanisms of checks and balances.'[74] These two institutions helped to maintain *saffu* (Oromo moral codes) in Oromo society by enabling Oromo women to have control over resources and private spaces, social status and respect, and sisterhood and solidarity by deterring men from infringing upon their individual and collective rights.[75] 'The principles enshrined in the *Gada* protect a balance between the men's domain of mobile resources and the women's domain of stationary resources', Qabbanee Waqayyo writes.[76] If the balance between men and women was broken, a *siiqqee* rebellion was initiated to restore the law of God and the moral and ethical order of society. When there were violations of their rights, women leave their homes, children and resources and travelled to a place where there was a big tree called *qilxxu* and assembled there until the problems were solved through negotiation by elders of men and women.[77]

In the Borana Oromo community, where some elements of the *Gada* system still exist, the assembly known as *Gumi Gayo* (the assembly of multitudes) brings together almost every important leader, such as living *Abba Gaddas*, the *qaallus*, age set councilors, clan leaders and *Gada* councilors, and other concerned individuals to make or amend or change laws and rules every eight years. The *Gumi Gayo* assembly has a higher degree of ritual and political authority than the *Gada* and other assemblies because it 'assembled representatives of the entire society in conjunction with any individual who has the initiative to come to the ceremonial grounds', and 'What *gumi* decides cannot be reversed by any other assembly'.[78] The 37th *Gumi Gayo* Assembly was held in the August of 1996 to make or amend or change three kinds of laws that the Borana Oromo classify as cardinal, customary and supplementary laws.[79] Since the Borana Oromos are under Ethiopian colonialism like other Oromos most of these laws cannot be implemented.

With the colonisation of the Oromo people by Ethiopians who were supported by European Powers and the destruction of *Gada* and *siiqqee* institutions Oromo society has been subjected to three levels of oppression: racial/ethnonational, class and gender. The development of class and external factors, such as Turko-Egyptian colonialism, European and Ethiopian colonialism, the emergence of an Oromo collaborative class, and the spread of Islam and Christianity undermined the political and military roles of the *Gada* system in the nineteenth century.[80] These changes did not totally uproot Oromo values and traditions. Some elements of Oromo democratic values still exist in areas where the *Gada* system was suppressed. Nevertheless, in its modified form, the system is still in practice in southern Oromia, such as in the Boran and Guji regions, under Ethiopian colonialism; *Gada* still helps to maintain peace, exchange know-

ledge and practice rituals among some moieties and groups in southern Oromia and in other parts of Oromia.[81] Today Oromo nationalism incorporates these cultural and political values. Some Oromo democratic principles with other democratic values of other societies can be a starting point towards creating and building a legitimate multicultural democratic state in the region.

Global imperialism, peripheral capitalism and the consolidation of racialised states

For the last five centuries, conflicts and wars have been well recorded in this region. Because of religious and economic connections, these conflicts and wars have had international dimensions.[82] Successive regional and global powers dominated this region. Both the Arabs and the Ottoman empire dominated the commercial activities of the Horn until European imperialism expanded to the region in the second half of the nineteenth century. With the Turko-Egyptian forced withdrawal from the Horn 'European imperialism became more active, and the three western powers already involved in the Horn of Africa strove to fill the vacuum. The British occupied the ports of Zeila and Berbera, the French made treaties with the sultans of Tadjoura and Gobaad for cessions of their territory, and Italians asserted their claims to the Assab area.'[83] The capitalist penetration of the last decades of nineteenth century laid the foundation of the modern Horn states.

Britain occupied Aden between 1839 and 1840 on the Arabian side of the Red Sea for 'the strategic necessity of assuring imperial communication to India.'[84] France was interested in the Horn and sent two scientific expeditions to the Amhara Kingdom of Manz in 1839 and 1842–43; in 1857 it started trade with this kingdom and colonised Obock in 1862, an important commercial centre on the Red Sea and the Tajura Gulf. France began the colonisation of the Horn through establishing businesses and creating an intermediate class that would collaborate in colonising practices. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 directly linked the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea and further intensified commercial and political activities and colonisation in the region. When Britain needed to secure a dominant position on both sides of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, France continued its commerce and colonisation in the Horn. Another European power, Italy, also began to play an important role after 1879 on both the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean coasts of Africa. During this period, the Turko-Egyptian position was weakened in the region because of the Mahdist revolt in the Sudan. As a result, the Turko-Egyptian forces abandoned their garrison towns of the Somali coast, Harar and eastern Oromia.

When Oromia was partitioned between Britain and Ethiopia, Somaliland was divided among Britain, France, Italy and Abyssinia. The Afar

country was partitioned between France, Italy and Abyssinia. The French occupied the Ambado and Djibouti areas between 1885 and 1892. Djibouti became the capital of French Somaliland in 1896. On 20 March 1897, the French commandant, Lagarde, signed treaties with Menelik (the Abyssinian warlord) and defined the boundary between the French colony and the Ethiopian colony of Somaliland. France allowed Abyssinia to use Djibouti as its official port for commerce; and later a railway was constructed between Finfinee (Addis Ababa) and Djibouti. The commerce 'between Djibouti and Ethiopia grew with the progress of the railroad, while camel caravans continued to carry merchandise between the port and Harar and Shoa'.[85] When Britain, Germany and Italy blocked the arms trade in east Africa in the late nineteenth century, Djibouti became a most active centre of the underground arms trade.

When other Africans were forbidden to buy firearms for fear that they would use them against Europeans, because of their collaboration with the European imperialists, the Habasha (Ethiopian) rulers were allowed to buy firearms and participate in the scramble for Africa. According to R.W. Beachey, 'This port, the terminus of the Jibuti–Addis Ababa Railway commenced in 1896, was the entry-point for thousands of guns for Menelik, Emperor of Abyssinia, and the French were arming him against their colonial competitior, Italy.'[86] Italy occupied the Red Sea coast in 1869 and gradually carved out Eritrea and Italian Somaliland. British occupation of the part of Somaliland was not limited to the coast but extended to the hinterland that was later called British Somaliland. M. El asserts that 'different European states were pressing their colonial claims in eastern and western Africa and had encircled the Mahdist state from the south, the east and the south west.'[87] Britain also occupied the area presently known as Kenya. After colonising Egypt in 1882, it also occupied the Sudan in 1899. Ethiopia also colonised various independent peoples with the assistance of the European imperialist powers.

The creation of the modern racialised Ethiopian state and the emergence of the Ethiopian empire occurred within the expansion of the European-dominated capitalist world economy. This state was the continuation of the previous Abyssinian racialised state. Bonnie Holcomb and Sisai Ibssa note that '"Ethiopia" is the name that was eventually given to the geographic unit created when Abyssinia, a cluster of small kingdoms in northeast Africa, expanded in the mid-1800s by conquering independent nations in the region using firearms provided by European power.'[88] The main reason for this colonial expansion was to obtain commodities such as gold, ivory, coffee, musk, hides and skins, slaves and agricultural products that were valued in the international market. Since the creation of the Ethiopian empire, the Ethiopian state has been the domain of the Amhara–Tigrayan ruling classes; successive Ethiopian ruling classes with the collaboration of Euro-American allies have effectively excluded the colonised peoples and the Ethiopian masses from a decision-making posi-

tion. The racialised Ethiopian state controlled the colonised peoples through establishing the local colonial administration in garrison towns that were built in various strategic places; it also created local intermediaries that served between the colonialists and the local population. The stationed settlers and the collaborative class protected Abyssinian power and played an important role in transferring the resources of the colonised peoples to the colonisers.

The garrisons gradually developed into urban areas where Habashas used Oromo, Sidama, Afar, Somali and other labour and resources to build offices, prisons, churches and later schools. These regulatory and service institutions were established to assure the continuation of Ethiopian colonial dominance and the extraction of produce. The colonialists created the *nafxanya-gabbar* system (semi-slavery), the collaborative class, the colonial landholding system and intensified slavery. The colonised farmers who lost control of their lives, children and resources were forced to work for their colonial masters, intermediaries and the state for a certain number of days each week. Some of the colonised populations were enslaved to be sold or work for the colonialists; for instance, Menelik and his wife had 70,000 slaves at one time.[89] The Ethiopian state claimed absolute rights over three-quarters of the lands of the colonised populations and provided portions for its officials, collaborators and mercenaries in lieu of salary. Until colonial capitalism emerged in the 1930s, the *nafxanya-gabbar* system and slavery existed as two main coercive labour recruitment systems. The intermarriage of Ethiopian colonialism and global hegemonism later facilitated the development of agricultural capitalism, sharecropping and tenancy that gradually replaced slavery and the *nafxanya-gabbar* system. Holcomb and Ibssa depict the true nature of the Ethiopian state when they assert that 'By officially recognizing the initial infrastructure of [the] Abyssinian/Ethiopian state, the imperial powers of Europe [and later North America] were able to legitimize it as a dependent colonial state, a test case for the kind of model for the control by finance capital (usually referred to as neocolonialism) that was to flourish later throughout Africa.'[90]

The racialised/ethnicised modern states of the Sudan, Somalia and Djibouti also emerged through the expansion of the European-dominated capitalist world economy. However, the Turko-Egyptian conquest initially laid the foundation of a central state in Northern Sudan on the wreckage of the regional governments. The Turko-Egyptians introduced modern innovations such as schools, telegraph and a railway to the Sudan; they enslaved original Africans and used their labour on cotton plantations and irrigation schemes. Opposing foreign domination and the exploitation of Northern Sudanese resources, a Sudanese movement known as the Madia dismantled the Turko-Egyptian rule. Madism 'was both a religious and a political movement which aimed at a return to the Orthodox Islamic constitution in government, culture, and religion, it was bound to conflict with

the existing government'.[91] The Mahdist state ruled the Northern Sudan until 1898, when Britian colonised the Sudan. The British colonial government began to lay the foundations of the administrative, economic and social services of the Sudan.

Colonial capitalist development was encouraged in agriculture, commerce and transportation. The colonial government also developed service and regulatory institutions, such as schools, the police, army and legal machinery. Fatima Mahmoud comments that

> British imperialism through the colonial state, subjected the country to both an economic and socio-economic transformation. Colonial rule established the colonial state apparatus and introduced an education and administrative system geared to serving the objectives of the state. Transport and communications were established to link areas where export commodities were produced for foreign markets. Import commodities were introduced including various levels of integration in the money economy.[92]

The colonial state intensified capital accumulation through organising capitalist enterprises and linking subsistence and pastoral economies into the capitalist world economy. While some of the accumulated capital was siphoned off to a foreign country, its remaining was invested in large capitalist businesses that had little relevance to the condition of the majority. This condition created economic disarticulation that negatively affected the Sudanese masses. Let us now turn to Somalia.

Before the colonisation and partition of Somaliland by Ethiopia, Britain, Italy and France, there was no centralised Somali state except 'on the coast that any degree of centralized government was established and maintained.'[93] The sultans of Mijerteyn and Obbia on the coast maintained their autonomous governments until the mid-1920s through signing treaties with Britain and Italy.[94] Breaking these treaties, Britain and Italy gradually established their direct colonial rules. In 1920, Britain established direct colonial rule in northern Somaliland and renamed it British Somaliland; and Italy established direct rule over the Sultanate of Obbia in 1925 and over the Sultanate of Mijerteyn in 1927. Italy encouraged colonial agricultural capitalism in her colony through subsdising the influx of Italian farmers so that they would start modern farms on some of the lands along the Shabeelle river. The Italian farmers developed sugar and banana plantations; and these farmers 'were unable to secure an adequate supply of farm workers, except through a system of forced labor.'[95] After the 1930s, banana plantations became the main area of concession agriculture, and bananas were the chief export product. Italy, Great Britain, and France did not encourage industrial development in their parts of Somaliland, but they intensified commercial activities that linked the products of agriculturalists and pastoralists with the capitalist world economy in

order to siphon off the surplus produce without a fundamental change in productive forces.

Surrounded by the Italian, French and British colonies, the Ethiopian empire remained landlocked. Without commercial routes from the interior, these colonies were economically useless. To maintain their commercial interests and avoid war among themselves, the European imperialist powers preferred that the Ethiopian empire stay under the technologically backward and dependent Ethiopian ruling class. When Menelik fell ill in the first decade of the twentieth century, Italy, France and Britain, suspecting that the empire might disintegrate with his death or that one among them might directly colonise the empire, signed a tripartite treaty in 1906 agreeing to respect and maintain their respective spheres of influence should the empire collapse.[96] The creation of the centralised state dependent on European weapons, trade, expertise and investments tied the economic resources of the Ethiopian empire to European interests.[97] The practice of creating and supporting a neocolonial state in accordance with the interests of the imperial interstate system started with the emergence of the modern Ethiopian state in the Horn of Africa.

Because of Christian ideology and the willingness of the Ethiopian ruling class to collaborate with the European imperialist powers, successive Ethiopian rulers acquired access to European technology, weapons, administrative and military expertise and other skills that were needed for the construction of the modern state. Although the other Horn states evolved through different routes, after decolonisation they achieved neocolonial status similar to that of the Ethiopian state. In order to provide cheap skilled labour for their businesses and create a collaborative class, the European colonial states opened a few technical and vocational schools, and sent a few African children to Europe for education. These educated elements gradually organised themselves and African workers and farmers in their respective countries to challenge the European colonial states; these organised forces eventually emerged as political forces that could manipulate the existing crisis to their advantage.

The favourable global political condition, the emergence of educated leadership, and the dissatisfaction of the colonised peoples with colonial domination and exploitation created a conducive atmosphere in the Horn through which the local forces could take over state power from the European colonial states. However, the peoples who were incorporated into the Ethiopian empire and the Sudan, although some of them began their national struggles during this period, did not get this opportunity.

When various Sudanese political forces demanded their rights of national self-determination, the British colonial government announced its intention of decolonising the Sudan. The British colonial government relinquished its power on 1 January 1956 to the Sudanese nationalist government. Similarly, the educated Somalis who acquired modern

organisational and technical skills organised themselves and their people into political forces and demanded the independence of Somalia from foreign domination. As a result, British and Italian Somaliland obtained their independence and joined together to form the Somali national state in 1960. Similarly, Djibouti obtained its independence in the referendum of 8 May 1977. Eritrea became independent in 1991 after 30 years of armed struggle. As one can observe from the ongoing national liberation struggles of the Oromo, Ogaden-Somalis, Afar, Sidama and the Southern Sudanese peoples, the process of decolonisation is not yet complete in the Horn of Africa.

Successive racialised/ethnicised Horn regimes – colonial, civil or military – have imposed their political authorities through repression in order to have absolute control over the means of compulsion (the state) and the means of consumption (productive resources). Effectively, the majority of African peoples have been denied representation in the governments that rule them. Particularly, the colonised peoples have become powerless victims. Besteman explains how 'global racial categories elaborated during the colonial period reinforced preexisting local ethnic construction, ensuring a national hierarchization of ethnicities and their accompanying privileges, statuses, rights, and meaning within the political community condensed into being by postcolonial state power.'[98]

Those classes and ethnonations that collaborated with the imperial interstate system gained from their incorporation into the capitalist world economy and continued to benefit from it. But those classes, groups and ethnonations that have been denied access to state power within the imperial interstate system have become poor and powerless. According to E.A. Brett,

> Structurally the nature of the distribution of the social product is critical because it exerts a fundamental influence upon the process of social and political change. A process of cumulative causation can be shown to operate in these matters, those classes [and ethnonations] which are able to appropriate the bulk of the surplus will, by so doing, increase their ability to influence the future structure of production and the institutions of social and political control; those who cannot will find their influence progressively reduced.[99]

Because of the lack of accountability by successive Horn governments, the produce of the people is not properly channeled toward development. It is just used for conspicuous consumption and the consolidation of the position of the state elites and their ethnonational bases. Because of the backwardness of African economies, the economic surplus is very limited. Hence there is a life-and-death struggle on its appropriation. The accessibility to state power is the major channel through which the surplus is siphoned off from actual producers. That is why there is no peaceful trans-

ference of power, and the struggle for political power is violent. Since they are organs of local and international capital,[100] Horn states are supported by foreign powers including international and regional organisations. The Horn of Africa is probably the first region in the world where ideologies of the West and the East have drastically failed and resulted in human tragedies. The successive state elites and their international counterparts are mainly interested in wealth and capital accumulation that can be achieved through having control over the means of compulsion, the state. This required the hierarchical organisation of peoples both socially and racially/ethnonationally in order to intensify looting, enslavement, coercive labour recruitment systems, tenancy, sharecropping and so on. The racialised state practices violence and terror to maintain the logic of exploitation and oppression.

The state elites of certain ethnonational groups or certain clans have used their ethnonational or clan power bases to dominate and exploit other peoples. T.M. Shaw notes that 'whilst officially denying and decrying "ethnicity", ruling classes tend to use it in practice to maintain personal networks: The construction of power. The articulation of "factionalism" has in fact been ubiquitous on the continent as ethnic connections have become the hard-core of any support nexus.'[101] Racialisation/ethnicisation/clanisation of state power in the Horn has prevented the construction of a legitimate democratic state that can reflect a multicultural society. The evolutions and practices of the Amhara–Tigrayan, the Northern Sudanese, the Marehan and Issa ruling classes and their respective states in Ethiopia, the Sudan, Somalia and Djibouti reflect this reality. Further, the radicalisation of these states through ideologies, such as Islam, Christianity, 'revolution', 'democracy', 'Marxism', and 'socialism', has intensified the existing contradictions. Ethiopia has used Christianity, 'revolution' and 'democracy' to maintain Habasha state power in the Ethiopian empire. The Ethiopian state has been Abyssianised and Christianised to exclude non-Habashas and non-Christians from decision-making power. In addition to his clan power base, Siad Barre tried to use Islam, Arab identity, and 'socialism' to consolidate his state power and expand his territory and incorporate some parts of Oromia into Somalia. Of course, these attempts gradually led to the disintegration of his regime. Similarly, the Sudanese state has intensified the Islamisation/Arabisation of state power by excluding indigenous Africans and non-Muslims from it.

Prior to their colonisation the peoples in the Horn of Africa had diverse political institutions with different trajectories of state formation processes. The social histories of the racialised political minorities, such as the Afars, Oromos, Ogaden-Somalis, Goshas, Sidamas, Walayitas, Kambatas, Dinka, Nuer, Shilluk, Anuak, Beja and Nubians, show that these peoples have complex social and political institutions that laid the foundations of state formation in some of these societies. As the racialised Horn

states have excluded these colonised indigenous Africans from access to state power and decision-making processes, they also have degraded the histories and cultures of these peoples by using racist and 'modernist' ideological and intellectual discourses. Similarly, their social and political organisations were considered useless and ready to be replaced by the organisations of 'superior races' that had their roots in Arabia or Europe. 'Blacknness' has been associated with *adoon* in Somalia, *Bariya* or *Galla* or *Shanqilla* in Ethiopia, and *abd* in the Sudan. Since Blackness is the metaphor of powerlessness in these countries, it does not matter if the skin colour of politically dominant and subjugated peoples are black today. Although the indigenous Africans phenotypically transformed the descendants of Arab immigrants, the Africanised ethnonations have racialised the indigenous Africans by converging religion, identity and power in order to dominate and exploit them. Embracing Orthodox Christianity or Islam did not help to change the status of original Africans who are racialised and marginalised.

Conclusion

European colonialism and the imperial interstate system have created or consolidated racialised/ethnicised states or 'authoritarian-terrorist' regimes in the Horn of Africa. The Horn racialised states substantially invest the meager economic surplus in destructive weaponry and unproductive civilian and military bureaucracies to protect themselves from opposition political forces and ethnonational liberation fronts. Due to the priorities that these states and the imperial interstate system maintain, peaceful redefinition of social and ethnonational relations are impossible. Under such conditions, the state is an instrument of the ruling class and the politically dominant ethnonations because it denies the masses and the subordinated ethnonations political representation in decision-making processes. Under such conditions, the subordinated classes, groups and ethnonations are denied democracy, self-determination, and freedoms that include political and economic rights. The results of these situations are conflicts, wars, massive human rights violations, economic crises and underdevelopment. Ethiopia, Somalia and the Sudan even 'fell below the African average in absolute and *per capita* GNP growth during the 1970s'. The average *per capita* GNP for this decade for all Africa, Ethiopia, Somalia and the Sudan was US$712, US$121, US$344 and US$425 respectively. Recently this condition has been deteriorating. In 1987, the *per capita* GNP for all Africa, Ethiopia, Somalia and the Sudan was US$611, US$112, US$199 and US$369 respectively.[102]

The state elites and ethnonations that dominate the means of compulsion and the means of consumption are engaged in plunder and accumulation of wealth and capital with the help of the imperial interstate system. According to M. Mamdani

> state connection is a necessary precondition for membership in the African bourgeoisie [and] gives a life-and-death character to the political struggle within it. A political position does not simply reinforce a pre-existing economic position or open up new opportunities where old ones already existed, it is in fact the very foundation of wealth.[103]

The governments' failure to invest effectively the available surplus in development of productive forces has left the peoples of this region culturally, technically, economically and politically backward. Failure to invest in the development of productive forces, internal and external wars, farmers' discouragement due to expropriation of their grains and animals, and conspicuous consumption of the ruling classes slowed the introduction of technical innovation in the agricultural production system.

Recognising the serious effect of the relationship in the imperial interstate system, M. Lofchie and S.K. Commins blame the collaboration of governments from developed countries with corrupt African regimes: 'Government-to-government assistance runs a very great risk of supporting corrupt and venal regimes and, to this degree, can be held partly accountable for the growing mood of cynicism and disillusionment with African leaders.'[104] Since the Horn states and the imperial interstate system, spearheaded by the United States, have refused to recognise and provide an alternative solution to the complex processes of decolonisation and state formation, today we witness conflicts, wars, social dislocation and crises in Djibouti, Somalia, Ethiopia and the Sudan. The old policy of building a state on the basis of one ethnonational hegemony in a multinational society, the practice of promoting 'cultural universalism' at the cost of cultural particularism, the blind acceptance of the sovereignty of racialised states without recognising the rights of the subjugated peoples, the idea of promoting the politics of order at the cost of democracy and the lack of vision to build a multicultural democracy based on ethnocultures and universal values of humanism, democracy, self-determination, equality, social justice and progress are all contributing to the intensification of political conflicts, state disintegration, underdevelopment and social problems in the Horn of Africa.

The Horn states have different policies within their respective countries or empires. They are authoritarian regimes to their respective ethnonations from which they emerged and terrorists to the racialised political minorities that they suppress and exploit. Therefore, Horn states can be characterised as authoritarian-terrorist regimes. The heads of Horn states have the power to kill their subjects without any repercussions, and they are above their own laws.[105] These authoritarian-terrorist regimes are highly militarised and repressive, and they tightly control information and resources in the form of foreign aid, domestic financial resources and political appointments. They also directly own and control all aspects of state power including the security and military institutions, judiciary and other public bodies, and financial institutions.[106] The only way to bring just,

durable peace, and development in the Horn is to replace these authoritarian-terrorist regimes by legitimate multicultural democratic states; only then it will be possible to build a regional community or government in this age of globalisation.

Without a new democratic paradigm that will allow the dominated classes, social groups and ethnonations to have genuine representation within state power that they can form and change, the existing states, regional, continental and international political structures are inadequate to address and provide a solution for the complex problems in the region. The majority of the peoples of the Horn are at a political crossroads. Their social and cultural systems that traditionally satisfied social and material needs have been broken up, and they cannot yet establish states that can respond to their social and economic needs. The world community, non-governmental and regional organisations, apart from intervening during a famine disaster and feeding those populations who are starving, could not help the peoples of the region. They take no preventive action. They only respond when the media start to report the existence of famine, genocide and massive human rights violations, even these problems do not yet receive full attention in the Horn Africa, which is why peoples like the Oromo and Southern Sudanese are suffering today under authoritarian-terrorist regimes that practice hidden genocide.

The authoritarian-terrorist Horn regimes are still supported by the major powers and the imperial interstate system. This kind of irresponsible assistance could not prevent the disintegration of the Somali state. The Ethiopian and Sudanese states are on the verge of collapse. They survive by practicing terrorism and hidden genocide on the colonised populations. The intensification of globalisation and the struggles of subjugated ethnonations are challenging and changing the role of states both externally and internally.[107] Like other states, the Horn states are being challenged and changed by the globalisation structures, such as transnational elites, multinational corporations, technological transformation and the revolution in international communication and information transmission, and by the forces of ethnonational diversity. Crawford Young notes that

> the world enters a period of exceptional fluidity – of the sort which historically has usually come about through the dislocation of a major war. Nation and state, as we have known them, are interrogated by history and alternative visions of the future. In this process, the politics of cultural pluralism will influence the outcomes in many important ways. In turn, the prospective impact of cultural pluralism beckons us to continue our quest for a more complete understanding of its inner workings.[108]

The critical and complete understanding of the rising tide of multiculturalism, the intensification of globalisation, and the need to build a legitimate

multicultural democratic state require the replacement of the knowledge of domination with that of liberation.

Introducing participatory research methods is necessary to enable the subjugated population groups to acquire the knowledge of liberation. Those scholars who believe that the racialisation/ethnicisation of state power produces authoritarian-terrorist regimes that practice destruction, genocide, exploitation and instability must allow the subjugated peoples to actively participate in their research activities since the experiences of these peoples are more valuable than any numbers of learned speculations. Further, humanitarian organisations need to build people-to-people relations in order to help build a civil society which is the foundation of democracy. They have a moral responsibility to feed the hungry, to support the process of democratisation of economic and political life, to work to empower the poor, women and dominated ethnonations, and to promote a series of research activities that can provide alternative sources of information, and resist serving as the tools of dictatorial and racialised regimes and their international counterparts. All humanist and progressive religious organisations and democratic individuals need to support the implementation of such strategies and assist these dominated groups and peoples to empower themselves culturally, politically and economically if they are interested in durable peace, social justice and multicultural democracy. In these processes, some elements of indigenous democracies, such as Oromo democracy, can assist in laying an important political foundation. World powers also need to recognise that political stability that is maintained temporarily by state terrorism and massive human rights violations in the Horn of Africa is not durable, and history proves that durable peace can be achieved through self-determination and democracy.

Notes

1 The original draft of this essay was presented at the conference of 'State Formation and Political Identities in the Horn of Africa', Columbia University, New York, 6 April 2001.
2 I borrow this word from Francis Mading Deng. In explaining the contradictions between Arabised Northern Sudanese and the Dinka ethnonational group, he used the phrase, 'Africans of Two Worlds'. This phrase also can be expanded to explain the contradictions between different racialised ethnonational groups in the Horn of Africa. See Francis Mading Deng, *Africans of Two Worlds: The Dinka in Afro-Arab Sudan* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1978).
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28 Ibid., p. 59.
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2 The racialised and Islamicised Sudanese state and the question of Southern Sudan

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In the Horn of Africa, much of the discussion on democracy remains especially focused on the transformation of political systems, on regime change, and electoral competition as preconditions for Western-style democracy. This discussion is usually based on inadequate knowledge of histories, identities and the dynamics of state formations in the region. In the Sudan, the legacy of slavery is particularly significant in understanding the interplay between state formation, nation building and the crisis of democratic citizenship and violence. The racialised and Islamicised state in the Sudan, historically, has had a crucial historical role in spreading violence in Southern Sudan.

This chapter attempts to understand how an ideology of hierarchy, which assigned a subordinate status for the Southern Sudanese, was historically constructed and politically legitimised. It challenges the conventional explanation that the violent conflict in the Sudan is a conflict between an 'Arab' Muslim North and an 'African' Christian or 'animist' South. Rather, it argues that 'African' and 'Arab' can be understood as political identities that produced particular historical forms of power, exclusion and subjection. These racialised identities, therefore, are political manifestations of a particular form of the state. The chapter begins by discussing the construction of 'Southern Sudanese identity' within the processes of state formation during the precolonial, colonial and postcolonial periods, analysing the integration of precolonial process of enslavement, colonial policies of racialised institutions, and a descent-driven nationalist movement during the 1930s. The second part will show how these historical circumstances have become a source of political conflict and violence that has undermined the legitimacy of the postcolonial state in the Sudan.

Slavery, race and state formation

Despite the long history of slavery and slave trading in the Arab world and in other Muslim societies, slavery in Arab societies has been given less attention by scholars.[1] Muslim scholars in particular have written relatively

little about this human tragedy. A conspiracy of silence has prevailed and blocked out much-needed light on this sensitive subject. Some Muslim scholars have simply rejected the claim of slavery in a Muslim society.[2] However, little discussion has been focused on the relationship between the process of state formation and the practice of slavery in Africa. Contemporary debate on state, political identities and conflict has also ignored the legacy of slavery and the slave trade on complicating the process of nation building in Africa. The current civil war and the spread of violence in Southern Sudan cannot be understood without acknowledging the legacy of slavery in shaping the relationship between the racialised and Islamicised state and the marginalised groups.

With the Arabisation and Islamisation of Northern and Central Sudan in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, many Northern Sudanese tended to produce genealogies that linked them to Arab origins.[3] Between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries the Islamicised Funj and the Fur kingdoms ruled the northern regions of the Sudan. Their societies were divided into three social groups of nobility and subjects and a category of slaves.[4] Relations between the nobility and the subjects were based on subordination. This kind of social hierarchy was maintained by customary laws and was reflected in property ownership, legal rights and marriage forms. While the noble group controlled political and economic power, the subjects provided labour and paid tribute.[5] The activities performed by slaves in both kingdoms included agricultural labour as well as the tending of herds and the provision of domestic services.

Slave institutions, however, were more effective among riverian Muslim societies of Northern Sudan than among others such as Fur. Arabic-speaking riverian Muslims of the Sudan, who have had a recorded history for centuries, considered their cultural norms and values superior to those of the non-Muslims. Landlords, religious and political leaders presided over a class structure based on various forms of slave, serf and tenant workers. While agriculture as such was an honourable pursuit for these people, the actual performance of farm labour was not. According to McLoughlin, in Northern and Central Sudan, to own land was a prerequisite of independence, integrity and social status, but to perform menial labour precluded all three. The route to higher social status was to relieve oneself of performing menial labour even on one's own land. Performing agricultural labour for someone else was socially humiliating.[6] Consequently, slaves became crucial in performing agricultural activities.

The status of slaves in these Islamicised kingdoms and their daily lives therefore was determined by the socio-economic reality more than religious norms. Being a Muslim in these societies did not protect many Muslims from being enslaved. The majority of slaves in Northern Sudan were acquired through raiding and purchase.[7] Captives included many Muslim peoples such as west Africans and western Sudanese. Indeed, a racialised society like Northern Sudan provided a justification for those

who practised slavery. According to Islam, the only legal way for enslaving a person was that he or she was a non-Muslim who was captured in the course of *Jihad* – holy war.[8] Slaves were generally obtained through organised raids on the non-Muslim/non-Arab population in Southern Sudan and the Nuba Mountains.

The eighteenth century was crucial in the history of both the Fur and Funj kingdoms in the Sudan. The Funj kingdom underwent profound political and social changes, which led to the increased use of slaves. These changes included increased commercial contacts with Europe and the Middle East, the arrival of a large number of Muslim merchants and *fikies* – holymen, increased use of currency and the emergence of an indigenous class.[9] Members of the new middle class dominated external trade and adopted an Arab identity by constructing genealogies tracing their origins to Arab ancestors. With the increased demand for slaves in the late eighteenth century, the southern regions of these states were transformed into slave-raiding regions with a complex pattern of racialised interactions between Arab and non-Arab groups. A constructed perception of ideological and ethnic categories emerged along these frontiers.

With some marginal exceptions, all of the Sudanese peoples north of the thirteenth parallel had, by the nineteenth century, become Muslims or at least preferred to identify themselves as Muslims. Even those groups that did not speak Arabic as their first language nevertheless regarded Arabic as the language of 'civilisation' and religion.[10] Consequently, Muslims in the north claimed for themselves patrilineal descent from distinguished Arab ancestors. This 'conventional acceptance of the claim to be "Arab" was of crucial importance'.[11] It demarcated and racialised the people of the Sudan. Colour in itself became quite irrelevant; many 'Arab' Sudanese were and are darker than some southerners. But descent did and does matter; even conversion to Islam could not fully compensate for the absence of accepted Arab ancestry. Southerners converted to Islam and their immediate descendants were not fully accepted into Northern Sudanese society. They were never quite regarded as equals either politically or socially.

In 1821, Mohammed Ali, the ruler of Egypt, conquered Northern Sudan. He decided to invade the Sudan in search of slaves, ivory and gold in order to finance his project of Egyptian modernisation.[12] From the beginning, the Turko-Egyptian state had embarked on a process of consolidating a centralised state. From 1821–31, the Turko-Egyptian rule began slave raids, which were first directed towards people on the border with Oromia (Ethiopia) and those who lived in the Nuba Mountains. Slaves became the most common commodity in the region, and slavery began to permeate every aspect of the economic, political and social life of Turko-Egyptian Sudan. This process laid the foundation for the rise of a centralised state in the Sudan. The negative consequences of this process on politics and society were profound. But as the number of the slaves

obtained from these regions began to decline, the Turko-Egyptian rule decided to invade Southern Sudan.

By 1840, Turko-Egyptian rule began moving toward Southern Sudan. This was not achieved without considerable resistance from the Shilluk in particular. At first, attempts were made to penetrate deeply into Nilotic areas. Then, in 1842, Turko-Egyptian rule had entered the south and established a station at Gondokoro. The opening of the White Nile was a turning point in the history of Southern Sudan, for it brought the people of the south for the first time into close contact with the north. The Northern Sudanese merchants eventually became the most active slave traders. Notable among these was Zubeir Pasha who was in control of the slave trade in Bahr al-Ghazal.[13] These slave traders regarded the slave trade as fully justified by their Islamic faith. The opening of Southern Sudan to economic exploitation in the 1840s brought the slave trade in its wake. The collapse of the ivory market and the practical difficulties of establishing a stable trading system in other commodities encouraged many merchants to turn to the slave trade as the only viable economic activity.[14] As a result, slaves were turned into a means of payment for the local agents and soldiers of the merchants or the slave hunters. Although the majority of slaves, over time, were assimilated into the culture of Northern Sudan, learned to speak Arabic and became Muslims, they were still considered inferior.

The process of state formation during the Turko-Egyptian rule thus became characterised by slave raiding, corruption and exploitation. These circumstances allowed the Mahdist movement (1883–98) to gain popular support and finally to defeat Turko-Egyptian rule. The Mahdists constituted a religious movement with a political project, which endorsed the freedom of the people of the Sudan from Turko-Egyptian rule. This message attracted numerous supporters for religious and economic reasons while some groups in the south supported the movement mainly because of their brutal experience with Turko-Egyptian rule.[15] When the Mahdists entered the south, they regarded victory as a means of securing their own political power and their legacy of superiority over the people of Southern Sudan. The Mahdists believed that southerners were simply poor, black, non-Muslim people with an 'inferior' cultural background and no history of their own. Therefore, they were to be dominated by those who were Muslims–Arabs and who saw themselves as belonging to a 'superior' race. Firm in this perception, the Mahdist state began to intensify the slave raiding and took thousands of southerners to the north. This period witnessed one of the worst experiences of slave raiding known in the history of the Sudan.[16]

Under the Mahdist state slavery was widely accepted and perceived within an Islamic context. It would be wrong, however, simply to see enslavement in terms of Islamic jurisprudence rather than in terms of brutal force and economic exploitation. To paraphrase Cooper,[17] slaves might become Muslims, but they could never be considered as good at

being Muslim as their Muslim masters; 'conversion after conquest was no sanctuary from the servile condition'.[18] Therefore, conversion to Islam did not lessen the distance between the non-Arab Islamicised slaves and the Muslim Arabicised northerners. From the point of view of the 'freeborn', Islamicised slaves were bound to be perceived as 'inauthentic' and assumed savages in their sub-human essence. In this respect, then, people of Southern Sudan were considered to be enslaveable by the Islamicised and racialised Mahdist state because they were perceived as 'pagan', not because they were African. But this was just the first step in the process. Even when southerners converted to Islam, they were still considered to be second-class Muslims because they were not 'Arab', based on their race and descent. Consequently, the importance of race, or as I would put it of the racialised self in the Sudan is inextricably linked with the construction of Arab origin. At the ideological level, the slaving area was constructed by those involved in the slave trade in terms of Islamic vs. non-Islamic, Arab *vs* non-Arab descent, brown *vs*. black colour, with each category giving meaning and representation to its opposite.

After the outbreak of the Mahdist revolt, the majority of Turkish, European and other foreign merchants and slave traders were forced to leave the south in the hands of Northern Sudanese traders, the so-called *jallaba*. Although these slave traders came from a number of distinct Arabicised groups, such as the *Ja'aliyyun*, *Danaqla*, *Bidayriyya* and *Sh'iqiyya*, they described themselves as members of an imagined single Arab community. This community dates its origins back to the time of the Prophet and claims an Islamic Arabian heritage. In the postcolonial period, the descendants of these *jallabas* would come to constitute an Arab elite that would run the Islamicised and Arabicised state. The adoption of an Arab identity, however, required the construction of certain representations about 'others'. Arabicised Northern Sudanese invented derogatory ethnic and racial categories to refer to non-Arab groups in the south. These invented derogatory categories included terms such as '*Ibd*' or slave for a southerner or *Fallata* for western Africans. Thus, with the creation of these categories the people of Southern Sudan, the Nuba Mountains and the Upper Blue Nile became prey to the process of state formation which was linked with the practice of slavery and the slave trade in the Sudan. Janet J. Ewald argued that: 'Muslim masters referred to all local people who did not practice Islam as *abid* (slaves) even if these southerners had not been enslaved by force. Flags bearing Quranic verses flew over traders, soldiers, and slaves when they marched in caravans.'[19]

The result of the slave trade during the Mahdist period was a clash of racialised identities out of which emerged a violent political regime in which the social and cultural heritages of Southern Sudan were confronted by the hegemony of the Arabicised groups. This sharp distinction between freemen and enslaveable peoples in the Sudan, and the political ideology that was articulated around it, were deeply embedded into the structure of

the society. These precolonial processes of enslavement imposed social meanings on social, cultural and religious differences among the people of the Sudan and served as the basis for the structuring of society.

Colonialism and the legacy of slavery (1898–1947)

Indeed, the Christian missionaries, British colonial administrators, and northern-based nationalist groups institutionalised the racial construction of the population in the Sudan through political, economic and legal practices. When the British colonised the Sudan in 1898, the colonial state was occupied by two fundamental concerns: the problem of slavery and the need for law and order in Southern Sudan. Influenced by the colonial discourse on Africa, the British administrators introduced new policies for labour control and indirect rule in the Southern Sudan.

Labour Policies

McLoughlin has estimated that between 20 and 30 per cent of the population in Northern Sudan at the time of the Anglo-Egyptian conquest in 1898 were slaves.[20] The British administrators had to face the reality of the social and economic foundations of society in the north. Since the nineteenth century, the cultural fabric of the society was imagined by the dominant ruling groups to be an Arab-Islamic one. Those who did not belong to this imagined identity were considered to be enslaveable. In order to avoid a renewal of Mahdism, the British administration tolerated existing practices of domination. By reason of this policy a particular version of political identities was reproduced and institutionalised in which people of the Sudan were divided into two categories: enslaveable and freemen, non-Arab and Arab.[21]

The defeat of the Mahdist state by the British colonial powers in 1898, therefore, did not challenge and delegitimise the practice of slavery and the slave trade in the Sudan. Rather, the process of consolidating the colonial state formation forced the British administrators to tolerate it for several decades. Despite the British discourse of anti-slavery, slavery continued in the Sudan. In a memorandum on slavery, the colonial government in the Sudan stated that its policy was to do

> nothing that will delay the natural ending of slavery, but it was not desirable and would not have been fair to other classes of the people of the Sudan to take active steps to produce that result in too short a time. This natural end will be brought about by the decision of the government that no person born after the reoccupation of the country in 1898 is otherwise than free and by the recognition of the principle that no master has the right to retain Sudanese servants against their will.[22]

British colonial policy, then, was to end slavery in the Sudan, but in such a way as not to challenge the power of Northern Sudanese slave owners. Lord Kitchener, the first Governor-General of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, declared the policy of his government regarding slavery as follows:

> Slavery is not recognized in the Sudan, but as long as service is willingly rendered by servants to master it is unnecessary to interfere in the conditions existing between them. Where, however, any individual is subjected to cruel treatment and his or her liberty interfered with, the accused can be tried on such charges, which are offences against the law, and in serious cases of cruelty the severest sentences should be imposed.[23]

One of the main factors which contributed to the continuation of slavery was British administrators' attitude towards Sudanese slavery.[24] They perceived that sudden abolition of slavery would lead to 'moral' decay and to social problems such as vagrancy and prostitution. The views of those administrators were in harmony with the three main religious leaders of Northern Sudan: Sayyid Ali al-Mirghani, Sharif Yusuf al-Hindi, and Sayyid abd al-Rahman al-Mahdi. These religious leaders appealed in their petition of 1925 to the Director of Intelligence for caution with regard to abolition. They emphasised the 'benign' nature of Sudanese slavery, arguing that 'those who work for master were actually partners to the landowners and have many privileges and rights and cannot be called slaves . . . Slaves were treated as members of their masters' family'.[25] The three leaders cautioned the government about the social consequences of sudden emancipation. In their view, male slaves would become 'useless for any work' while their female counterparts would turn to prostitution.[26]

This image of non-Arabs as 'morally' weak was not only rooted in prejudice and racism, but also in the economic realities of the Sudan. The 'slow death of slavery' only occurred when wage labour became available in the 1920s. The majority of this cheap labour came from non-Arab groups such as west African immigrants. The British government was convinced that a sudden death of slavery would lead to economic collapse. During this period, the government embarked on several economic projects that required labour. The extension of the railway system, road construction and the building of a new harbour at Port Sudan, all required labour.[27] For the purpose of securing labour for the colonial economic projects, the British administration divided the peoples of the Sudan into three distinct racial categories, namely, 'Arabs', 'Sudanese' for ex-slaves, and *Fallata* for western African. These categories, on the one hand, were based on the anthropological assumption that each had certain qualities in regard to labour, on the other hand, they were informed by the legacy of slavery.

The policy of indirect rule

Faced with the failure of direct administration, indirect rule was adopted by the British administration in the Sudan as a strategy for 'tribal' administration and development. That is, governing through existing political and social structures and the use of 'tribal' chiefs or *sheikh* as agents of the colonial power. This policy, coupled with the Milner Commission policy of decentralised rule in the Sudan, separated 'Africans' from 'Arabs' and provided the means to pursue a policy of legalising two different political identities in the Sudan. In the Sudan, the chief advocate of indirect rule was Sir John Maffey, Governor General from 1926–33. In his view, indirect rule was a desirable system of governing because it would carve up the Sudan into 'a number of traditionally based polities, which would . . . function as protective glands against the infection of the rural population by the septic germs of democracy and nationalism'.[28] The experience of indirect rule in Southern Sudan was different. According to G.N. Sanderson, 'most southern societies were quite incapable of developing into the Indian-style native states . . . southern chiefs who could be groomed for an effective administrative role were very hard to find'.[29]

The method used in the selection of chiefs, however, was contrary to existing practice according to which the chief must first be a spiritual leader and second a strong and respectable person. Instead, the British administrators chose common men 'white chiefs'. Evans-Pritchard pointed out the opposition between the government chiefs and the traditional ones:

> The functions of a native chief are to represent the unity of the tribe, maintained and expressed by warfare which he initiates; to store and distribute wealth, generally food, which he receives as tribute and dispenses in gifts and hospitality; to embody in his person the sanctity of law and custom, which are exacted in his name; and to be the symbol of his people's purpose and the pivot of their system of values . . . A government chief, by contrast, acts as the bureaucratic agent of an alien administration . . . He derives his authority not from tradition and the moral backing of his people, but the support of the government . . .[30]

According to this new policy, each 'tribe' was to have its own 'tribal' entity and territory. The Dinka for instance were to live with Dinka, and Nuer with Nuer, rather than live together.[31] They were to be governed by their own 'chiefs' whether created, as with some of the Dinka, or reduced in power, as with some of the Nuer. They were also to be ruled according to their own customs, which, whether invented or reproduced, were to be free from external influences.

As a consequence of this invented institution, from the pacification period 1900–20 on, British administrators were concerned with 'tribal purity' in Southern Sudan. The first step the government took was to cut

off the south from the north through the promulgation of the Passports and Permits Ordinance in October 1922, which empowered the Governor-General to declare any part of the Sudan a Closed District. The Closed District Ordinance was designed to stop the slave trade in the south. The new policy of the Closed District in the south required the elimination of all the administrative officers who spoke Arabic in favour of local recruits from the missionary school. British administrators were to avoid speaking Arabic and were to use local languages, and if impossible to do so, use English. Greek and Syrian merchants were to be encouraged in place of northern merchants. Accordingly, Southern Sudan became a closed region that outsiders from other parts of the Sudan were not allowed to enter without permission. British administrators in the south were no longer required to attend the meeting of the Governor held annually in Khartoum. Instead, they held their meetings in Kenya and Uganda. The purpose of this policy was to eradicate Arab-Islamic influences, and to preserve the 'African identity' of the south. By 'African identity' here I refer to the way that the British colonial administration defined or perceived the identity of Southern Sudan. This African identity, of course, did not necessarily reflect the reality of Southern Sudan societies.[32]

The institutionalisation of 'African' identity in Southern Sudan (1930–47)

Southern Sudan was often represented by the colonial discourse as a mysterious, unknown region, to be occupied by others who perceived themselves 'superior'. This colonial representation was based on the notion that people in the south lacked history and perhaps even a sense of humanity. In this discourse, the British consistently perceived the north as more 'civilised' than the south. Arabism and Islam were defined as sources of 'civility' and 'progress'. For example, Nalder argued that:

> The culture of the north is one which is easily comprehensible to ourselves . . . the political organization of the tribe and its sections under the Nazir and his subordinate sheikhs is to us a normal and logical one, similar to that under which our ancestors may well have lived. Moreover, the Arab mentality is not so far removed from our own . . . His general ideas of right and wrong are broadly similar to our own.[33]

It was not until 1930 that southerners were finally forced to accept British rule in the south. It was at this time that the British reviewed the pacification policy towards Southern Sudan. The Civil Secretary H.A. MacMichael and other senior officials recommended a review of the policy of the administration in the south to John L. Maffey, the Governor-General of the Sudan. Accordingly, on 25 January 1930, the Civil Secretary issued a directive to the governors of the three Southern Provinces of

Upper Nile, Mongalla and Bahr al-Ghazal, with an accompanying memorandum. The directive stated that:

> The policy of the government in the southern Sudan is to build up series of self-contained racial or tribal units with structures and organization based to whatever extent the requirement of equity and good government permits, upon indigenous customs, traditional usage and beliefs.[34]

The British policy of the 1930s was to develop Southern Sudan, then, on 'indigenous and African lines'. This meant a return to 'tribal' law and customs, 'tribal' family life and indigenous languages. For instance, the Rajaf Language Conference of 1928 recommended the adoption of some indigenous languages in schools, namely Bari, Dinka, Moro, Ndogo, Nuer, and so on. This policy certainly legitimised the idea of Southern Sudan as a 'tribal-African' society. Accordingly, the mode of life of indigenous people was considered to be tied to these 'tribal' and racial institutions.

Northern Sudanese elites, however, forced the British government to accelerate the process of unification between the north and the south. They accused the British of either planning to divide the Sudan into two states or planning to attach the south, or part of it, to Uganda. Consequently, the Northern Sudanese Graduate Congress in Khartoum exerted strong pressure for self-rule and independence of the Sudan including the south. In December 1946, the Civil Secretary, Sir James W. Robertson, without consulting the people of Southern Sudan, decided that it was the future of Southern Sudan to be bound to Northern Sudan.

A descent-driven nationalism (1930–56)

Since the 1930s the emergent Northern Sudanese elites have supported a specific vision of history and identity based on Arabism and Islamism. Nationalism in the Sudan was socially constructed, with distinct regional, ethnic, class and gender orientations. In the Sudan, for example, there were regions, ethnic groups and social classes which were excluded. These groups and regions were later subjected to many years of violence during the postcolonial period. The conflict over history and identity also raised the question of which kind of social groups inside the Sudan were entitled to speak on behalf of the Sudanese people. As I have argued elsewhere,[35] as in the case of Ethiopia, the Sudan is and has been a space of a conflict between nationalist groups that have constructed competing visions and narratives of history and identity. Above all, the nationalist period reproduced the precolonial racial hierarchy and the colonially institutionalised racialised identities. Like the Amhara kings and their Solomonic dynastic claims, the Northern Sudanese nationalist narrative of the 1930s created

for itself a genealogy that stretched far into the Islamic-Arab past. It suggested an essential identity shared by all those who lived in the north regardless of their particular historical experiences and cultural orientations. Race and descent then became the two criteria for defining who should or should not lead the emerging imagined nation.

In 1922, for example, a group of junior government officials led by Ali Abd al-Latif, a Muslim Dinka military officer, formed the League of Sudan Union. The goal of the League of Sudan Union was to oppose the British proposal of separation between Egypt and the Sudan. The League of Sudan Union, however, was splintered in the latter half of 1923. The cause of this split was a disagreement about the nature of Sudanese identity. Different members of the Union had competing visions and interpretations of history and identity.[36] During this period, the question of race and descent became very significant in determining the course of Sudanese nationalism and the nature of the postcolonial state. Being an Arab became a criterion for the leadership in Sudanese nationalism. As a Dinka Muslim, Ali Abd al-Latif was considered by Northern religious leaders such as Abd al-Rahman al-Mahdi to speak for no one. The perception of the Sudan as an Arab and Islamic nation was proposed strongly by some nationalists from the north. Most of them agreed that 'tribal' and religious leaders were the real representatives of the Sudanese people; others such as Ali Abd al-Latif insisted that modern social forces such as government officials and military officers should represent the Sudanese people.

Ali Abd al-Latif's slave descent and his opposition to the religious leaders' collaboration with the British alienated these leaders and their supporters from his vision of the nationalist project. The split in the Sudanese nationalist movement in the early 1920s was over matters of race and class rather than ideology (1995). Abd al-Latif's vision of political identity reflected his social background in that he belonged to those who were originally from the south or the Nuba Mountains but had settled inside Northern Sudan. Thus, Abd al-Latif believed that Arab 'tribal' leaders and Islamic religious leaders in the north could represent neither the regions like the south and the Nuba Mountains nor the people from these regions who were living in Northern Sudan.

The transition towards independence had institutionalised the hegemony of the north and marginalised the south. The leaders of the Arab-oriented nationalist movement were able to take advantage of the economic opportunities that colonial government policies opened up for them. At independence, the structure of the Sudanese state, its organic law, its institutions and basic divisions of power remained as before. The Sudan came to be seen as an independent entity with an Arab-Islamic identity. Consequently, the people of Southern Sudan realised that this institutionalised racism would constitute a threat to their identities and future.

State, political identities and violence

In the Sudan, the dominant ruling group sought political legitimacy through the mechanism of nation building in the first two decades of political independence. Informed by the nationalist exclusive vision of history and identity, the postcolonial state discourses on nation and nation building have been associated with Arabisation and Islamisation. This discourse on nation and state has always equated membership in the state with being Arab and Muslim. Since the political independence in 1956, successive military and civilian regimes have exercised power within the notion that only a Muslim state can legitimately exercise power over a Muslim majority. In the process of carrying this single vision of nation and state, the acts of terror and brutal violence have become a driving force of the nation-building project in the Sudan. These racist interpretations of history and identity were translated into public policies during the 1956 debate regarding the constitution. For example, the head of the Sharia Division of the judiciary argued that 'the Sudan constitution must reflect the Islamic and Arab tradition of the Sudan'.[37] Since then, Arabism and Islamism have been consistent themes in all postcolonial governments.

Given the hostilities that had been built up over centuries, civil war in the Sudan was predictable. The revolt of 1955 inaugurated the first phase of a civil war, which was to last for seventeen years. Despite Southern Sudanese efforts of demanding federalism to stop northern invasions, the government in Khartoum decided to send northern troops to the south in August 1955.[38] About 300 southerners were executed and about 2,000 transported to northern prisons for hard labour without fair trial.[39] In 1958, Abboud's military regime had put an end to civilian politics after only two years of independence. Political independence was seen by the military regime as a means of maintaining the Sudan's territorial 'integrity' and removing an 'artificial' barrier to the progress of Islam and Arab culture in Southern Sudan. The regime's approach to 'national unity' was based on the assimilation of southerners to Northern Sudanese cultural fabric. As a result, the rise of Southern Sudanese nationalism in the 1960s and its military activities were viewed by northern politicians as part of 'an external plan' against the Sudan, of a Christian–Zionist strategy against Islam. With increasing cultural and physical violence, the Anya-Nya, the military wing of Sudan African National Union (SANU), intensified the fight for the right of self-determination for the south, with independence as an option. The cycle of violence and terror was intensified during the civilian government of Mohammed Ahmed Mahjoub (1966–68), who was known for his open racism towards the people of Southern Sudan. He claimed that the 'only language southerners understand is force'.[40]

Mahjoub's era saw one of the bloodiest campaigns in the south. Villages were burned and thousands of people fled to neighbouring countries. One of the most ruthless massacres took place at Juba on 8–9 July 1965, when

an estimated 1,400 people were killed. The total number of southerners killed between 1963 and 1966 by the government's army was estimated at more than 500,000.[41] The acts of violence and racial discrimination towards the people of Southern Sudan increased when the Nimeri government (1969–85) unilaterally divided the south into three regions, and implemented Islamic law in 1983, in violation of the 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement that had ended the first phase of the civil war. As a result, the south reacted with a revolt and the formation of what has become the Sudan People's Liberation Army and its movement (SPLA/M).

The state-sponsored violence against the south, however, has been given increasingly religious justification after the implementation of the Sharia in 1983 by the Nimeri regime. For instance, the period of Sadiq el-Mahdi rule (1986–89) witnessed the increased use of Arab militia-*Murahalin* against the people of Southern Sudan. These forces attacked mainly civilians and looted their cattle. As a result of Sadiq's militia policy, southern civilians were massacred in Al-Da'ein in South Darfur on 27–28 March 1987.[42] Local militias killed more than 1,000 Dinka civilians. Consequently, many Southern Sudanese children were taken and sold into slavery. As revenge for the SPLA victories over the army, the army and the militias also killed thousands of Southern Sudanese civilians in Wau, most of them educated.

Since 1989, the government of the National Islamic Front has begun to set the social and political foundation of the Islamic state in the Sudan through the policy of a *jihad*. Since then, racist policies have been dramatically increased in the Sudan. The Islamic regime has pursued a *jihad* against the south and the civil war has escalated. The government has systematically encouraged slavery and the slave trade. Militias organised by the government have sold many non-Muslim groups from Southern Sudan and the Nuba Mountains into slavery. Discrimination in the north by the government against several million displaced southerners in the north has been common. The government forces routinely steal women and children. Some women and girls are forcefully kept as wives; others are shipped north where they perform forced labour on farms or are exported to other Arab countries. By 1999, the total number of people who had died in Southern Sudan as a result of the postcolonial state acts of violence and discrimination exceeded 2 million. 'At least one in every five Southern Sudanese has died' in the current cycle of state-sponsored terror.[43]

Conclusion

Experiences of civilian regimes in the Sudan suggest that political democracy does not necessarily guarantee the civil rights of citizenship or sustain a democratic regime of law in multicultural and multiethnic societies. Contemporary political history of the Sudan has shown that no sustainable democracy and stability can be founded on a refusal to address

the legacy of the past. In the Sudan, the form of state that emerged in the eighteenth century created groups of people with inferior status in relation to the state. The precolonial legacy of enslavement laid the seeds for the creation of two competing political identities, which were strengthened by British colonial policy towards Southern Sudan. These racial categories were created in the Sudan to assign some groups perpetual inferior status, while others were permitted access to privilege, power and wealth. In the end, their political creation produced particular forms of power, self-identity and exclusion. The implication of these historical and political processes is felt in the present civil war. The experience of slavery continues to mark southerners because the constructed ideological perceptions of difference and hierarchy created by slavery have been maintained by the racialised and Islamicised state. Race and descent, not citizenship, became the two criteria for defining who should or should not be included. Given this legacy, any attempt to create democratic citizenship and to end the civil war and the cycle of violence in the Sudan, has to de-legitimise the racialised and Islamicised state in the Sudan.

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3 Global capitalism and the Oromo liberation struggle

Theoretical notes on US policy towards the Ethiopian empire*

William I. Robinson

The end of the Cold War in the early 1990s led some scholars and partisans of progressive social change in the Third World to believe that new opportunities had emerged to advance agendas of social justice, national liberation and democratisation locally and in the global system. This optimism was based on the view that with the collapse of the Soviet bloc, the Third World would no longer be a staging ground for East–West rivalries. Specifically, the United States, as the dominant world power, had supported dictatorships and authoritarian regimes, and the exploitative socioeconomic orders these regimes defended, as part of its competition with the Soviet Union. Some scholars and revolutionary groups assumed that the core capitalist powers would no longer have any reason to block aspirations for authentic democratisation, for structural change in Third World countries in favour of popular majorities, and for the liberation of oppressed groups and nationalities. Particularly, since East–West rivalry would no longer dictate US action, it was expected that the United States could become an ally of human rights and social justice in Africa and around the world. 'The end of the Cold War', stated Randall Robinson,[1] the head of the pro-Africa US lobby 'Transafrica' in expressing this view, 'has stripped America of the fundamental cornerstone that motivated U.S. policy toward Africa since the end of World War II.'

This view, however, was rooted in a set of erroneous assumptions about the global system and the dominant social forces operating within it. Given these erroneous assumptions, disappointment was very great among Oromos when the United States, following the May 1991 collapse of the Mengistu regime, facilitated the seizure of power by, and threw its support behind, a new and equally repressive Tigrayan regime that has continued to deny the Oromo majority their fundamental human rights and freedoms. A more precise and historically grounded understanding of what drives US policy and of the nature of the current world order would have led to no such illusions about US intentions, and would have provided a more realistic interpretation of the real constraints and opportunities for Oromo liberation. This chapter challenges the assumptions behind which it was expected that the United States would contribute to authentic

democratisation and social justice in Ethiopia, in Africa, and elsewhere. It examines the three-way relation between US policy, the current global capitalist order, and Oromia, and focuses in particular on the self-proclaimed US policy of 'democracy promotion'. Before proceeding, I should emphasise as a caveat that this article does *not* attempt to analyse the labyrinthine situation internal to the Ethiopian empire, or the complex social forces and political dynamics therein. Rather, it is a discursive exposition of the global backdrop to that situation, with a special focus on US foreign policy and how it has intersected with internal Ethiopian dynamics.[2]

Democracy and US foreign policy

The US role in Ethiopia since 1991 should not have come as any surprise. That it did surprise some reflects the following assumptions: 1) the United States is a force that supports democracy; 2) US foreign policy was driven in the post-Second World War period by Cold War rivalry, which explains its support in this period for repressive political systems and exploitative socio-economic arrangements. 'The [current Ethiopian government] ... has abandoned any attempt at negotiation, peace or democracy. It is following the traditional path of Ethiopian dictators of one party, one tribe, dictatorship', noted a 1994 report by the London-based Oromia Support Group. 'The mystery is not this is happening but the American government and press supporting it'.[3]

There is no mystery here, but simply the disjuncture between legitimising discourse and the actual content of US foreign policy. Support for 'justice, freedom, equality, and democracy' around the world has been central to the public discourse of US state managers since the founding of the US Republic, and the emphasis on 'democracy' in US foreign policy has taken on heightened ideological importance in the wake of the demise of the former Soviet bloc. But analysis of state policies and class practices must be based on the actual content of these policies and practices, and not on what their agents claim them to be. The practices of all ruling classes require ideological legitimation, and the specific legitimising discourse will depend on particular historical circumstances. It should be recalled that the legitimising discourse of the Mengistu regime was popular revolution and socialism, although in reality the regime was antithetical to both. As the historic record shows, the United States promoted and supported a global political network of civilian–military regimes, repressive authoritarian states, and outright dictatorships in Latin America, Africa and Asia throughout the post-Second World War period, including in Ethiopia. Now, was this promotion of authoritarianism and dictatorship a consequence of rivalry with the Soviet Union, as some have assumed?

Speaking in 1948, one of the most important architects of post-Second

World War United States foreign policy, George Kennan asserted, 'We have 50 per cent of the world's wealth, but only 6.3 per cent of its population … In this situation we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our real task in the coming period, is to devise a pattern of relationships which will allow us to maintain this position of disparity.' The then-Director of Policy Planning of the Department of State stated, 'We should cease to talk about the raising of the living standards, human rights, and democratization. The day is not far off when we are going to have to deal in straight power concepts. The less we are then hampered by idealistic slogans, the better.'[4] Kennan's candid statement, contained in a top-secret document which discussed US strategy in the aftermath of the Second Word War, underscores that the strategic objective of US foreign policy during the Cold War was less battling a 'communist menace' than defending gross inequalities in the international order (inequalities which were seen as under challenge by the spread of socialism) and the tremendous privilege and power this global disparity of wealth brought for the United States as the dominant world power.

Perceived competition from the former Soviet Union, while significant, was never the driving force behind foreign policy. Behind the 'communist threat' was always another, more fundamental threat: any challenge by subordinate classes and groups in the Third World to reorient local social and economic structures in favour of popular majorities, and/or to withdraw from the capitalist world economy. National Security Council (NSC) Memorandum 68, perhaps the key US foreign policy document of the post-Second World War era, stated in 1947 that post-Second World War policy embraced 'two subsidiary policies'. One was to foster 'a world environment in which the American system can survive and flourish', and the other was 'containment of the Soviet Union, which seeks to foster the seeds of destruction within the Soviet system'. The Memorandum went on: 'Even if there was no Soviet Union we would face the great problem [of achieving global] order and security'.[5] Revealingly, a major focus of NSC-68 was not on containing the Soviet Union at all, but on securing US and Western access to the raw materials, markets and labour power of the Third World, and on assuring a political environment propitious to the operation of an increasingly international capital. Behind East–West relations, therefore, North–South relations were always intrinsic and central to the whole Cold War era. Authoritarian political and social arrangements were judged to be the most expedient form of assuring stability and social control in the Third World required for the free operation of international capital.

As the United States replaced waning European colonial powers in Africa as the dominant core capitalist state, its objective was to assure a smooth transition from colonialism to neo-colonialism, such that the socio-economic structures that integrated Africa into the capitalist world would not become severed or altered through this transition. The natural

resources, labour force, and markets of Africa were to remain open to international capitalism at all costs. It was in this context that the United States backed the Haile Selassie dictatorship. And the United States opposed the Mengistu regime not out of any principled opposition to its authoritarian character, but because the *Dergue* chose to ally itself with the Soviet Union as an alternative international linkage that served the interests of the then-dominant faction of the Ethiopian elite, and in doing so, it threatened the interests of world capitalism in the Horn of Africa.[6]

The East–West prism in which US public discourse cast the North–South divide in foreign policy dictates evaporated with the end of the Cold War. Yet the fundamental objective of maintaining international asymmetries in an unjust global system did not change with the collapse of the Soviet system. What *has* changed are the methods and strategies for securing this objective. What US policy makers term 'democracy promotion', and the ideological dimensions it entails, has been developed as an effective instrument in contrast to – or more often, alongside – force in protecting the collective interests of dominant groups in the new global order. A US 'democracy promotion' apparatus was created from the late 1970s to the early 1990s, including new governmental and quasi-governmental agencies and bureaus, policy studies and conferences by government and private policy planning institutes to draft and implement 'democracy promotion' programmes.[7] Where earlier it supported dictatorships in Chile, Nicaragua, Haiti, the Philippines, Panama, Southern Africa and elsewhere, the United States turned to 'promoting democracy'. The State Department now defines 'democracy promotion' as one of the three basic planks of US foreign policy, along with the promotion of 'free markets' and the maintenance of a US military capacity around the world.

Under the rubric of 'promoting democracy', the United States intervened in the crises, transitions and power vacuums resulting from the breakup of the old order to try to reshape political and economic structures as a 'new world order' emerged. The impulse to 'promote democracy' is the rearrangement of national political systems so as to maintain elite-based status quos in an unjust international system and to suppress mass aspirations for more thorough-going democratisation of social life in the new world order. This change in US policy has dramatic implications for the struggles of popular classes around the world for progressive social change, yet it has been largely misunderstood. The general misunderstanding of 'democracy promotion' reflects the failure to appreciate the profound changes at every level that are accompanying the rise of global capitalism, which is a *new* stage in world capitalism. This includes changes in international political relations and transnational class formation. I will return to globalisation below; let us first discuss *democracy*.

What US policy makers mean when they use the term democracy is actually what political scientist Robert Dahl (1971) has termed *polyarchy*, a system in which a small group actually rules and mass participation in

decision-making is confined to leadership choice in elections that are carefully managed by competing elites. The polyarchic definition of democracy, building on early twentieth-century elitism theorists such as Gaetano Mosca and Vilfredo Pareto, developed in US academic circles closely tied to the policy-making community in the United States in the post-Second World War years. According to Samuel Huntington, this 'redefinition' of the classical definition of democracy as rule, or power (*cratos*) of the people (*demos*) to make it more 'realistic' and 'compatible' with 'modern society', culminated in Dahl's 1971 study, entitled *polyarchy*.[8] By the time the United States rose to world power after the Second World War, the polyarchic definition of democracy had become established in Western academia. When US officials speak of 'promoting democracy', what they really mean, therefore, is the promotion of polyarchy, or what I have alternatively called 'low-intensity democracy'.[9]

As an 'essentially contested concept',[10] the polyarchic conception of democracy competes with the concept of *popular democracy*. The various views on popular democracy are traceable to the original Greek definition of democracy and rooted in Rousseauian-Marxist traditions. Popular democracy posits a disbursal throughout society of political power through the participation of broad majorities in decision making or forms of participatory, or direct, democracy, linked to representative forms of government and formal elections. Popular democracy is seen as an emancipatory project at whose heart is the construction of a democratic socio-economic order. Democratic participation, in order to be truly effective, requires that democracy be a tool for changing unjust social and economic structures. In sharp distinction to polyarchy, popular democracy is concerned with both process and outcome. Elitism theories claim that democracy rests exclusively on process, so that there is no contradiction between a 'democratic' process and an anti-democratic social order punctured by sharp social inequalities and minority monopolization of society's material and cultural resources. Thus, under the polyarchic definition, a system can acquire a democratic form without a democratic content or outcome. Popular democracy, in contrast, posits democracy as both a process and as a means to an end – a tool for change, for the resolution of such material problems as housing, health, education, land ownership, social inequalities, racism, ethnic domination, gender subordination, and so forth. It thus involves *mass empowerment* to change unjust social and economic structures, *in opposition to minority elites who benefit from such structures*.

The polyarchic definition of democracy has achieved hegemonic status, in the discourse and analysis of scholars, journalists and the international community, including among many popular and revolutionary movements around the world. The implications of substituting the literal (or classic) definition of democracy with the institutional definition embodied in polyarchy are vast. It means that such issues as who controls the material and cultural resources of society, in whose interests is society organised, and so

forth, become irrelevant to the discussion of democracy. What is relevant is simply political contestation among elite factions through procedurally free elections. It means that asymmetries and inequalities both among groups within a single country and among nation-states within the international order bear no relation to democracy. The notion that there may be a veritable contradiction in terms between elite or class rule, in which wealth and power is monopolised by tiny minorities, on the one hand, and democracy, on the other hand, a contradiction which would flow from the original Greek definition of power of the people, does not enter – by theoretical–definitional fiat – into the polyarchic definition.

Struggles for popular democracy around the world are profound threats to the privileges of dominant groups in global society. Yet the methods and policies pursued during the Cold War years to confront these challenges have proved increasingly ineffective and untenable. This process has led US policy makers to initiate a shift from promoting authoritarian arrangements to promoting 'democratic' political and social arrangements in Third World countries. Both polyarchy and authoritarianism/dictatorship, as distinct forms of elite rule and social control, stand opposed to popular democracy. The shift from backing authoritarianism to promoting polyarchy may be conceived theoretically, in the Gramscian sense, as signalling new forms of transnational control accompanying the rise of global capitalism. Specifically, behind this shift is an effort to replace coercive means of social control in the south with consensual ones within a highly stratified international system. This shift corresponds to the emergence of the global economy since the 1970s. It constitutes a political exigency of macroeconomic restructuring on a world scale, in the context of the transnationalisation of the economy, political processes and civil societies. These propositions require that we deepen the theoretical discussion and link the issue of globalisation to that of 'democracy promotion' in US policy.

Global capitalism and the transnational elite

Recent events in the Ethiopian empire have unfolded within the world-historic dynamic of our epoch: globalisation. Capitalism has spread around the world as a social system for 500 years and progressively conquered and incorporated peoples and regions, creating in the process complex webs of domination and subordination both within and between nation-states and regions. But globalisation is a qualitatively new stage in this 'modern world system', involving the transition over the past several decades from linkage of nation-states via commodity exchange and capital flows in an integrated international market, in which different modes of production were 'articulated' within broader social formations, to the globalisation of the process of production itself. Globalisation denotes a transition from the linkage of nation-state societies predicated on a *world economy* to an

emergent transnational or global society predicated on a *global capitalism*.[11] The essence of globalisation is global capitalism, which has superseded the nation-state stage of capitalism. Economic globalisation brings with it the material basis for the emergence of a singular global society, including the transnationalisation of civil society and of political processes. Nation-states are no longer linked 'externally' to a broader system but 'internally' to a singular global social formation. The old units of analysis – nation-states – are inappropriate for understanding the dynamics of our epoch, not only in terms of economic processes, but also social relations and political systems. To understand what goes on in any part of the world, or in any single nation-state, we must understand what is occurring on the level of the global system. No single nation-state can remain insulated from the global economy or prevent the penetration of the social, political and cultural superstructure of global capitalism. The breakup of national economic, political and social structures around the world is reciprocal to the gradual breakup, starting 30 years ago, of a pre-globalisation nation-state-based world order.

What is the import of globalisation to the Ethiopian empire? Each of the stages in the development of capitalism as a world system has had direct and discernible effects on different regions and peoples around the world. The first stage in the world system, the 'mercantile' era, which lasted approximately from the 1500s to the 1800s, saw the process of Ethiopia's subordinate incorporation into world capitalism. This incorporation in the late 1800s, Holcomb and Ibssa argue, made possible Ethiopia's own imperial expansion: Ethiopian incorporation became superimposed on its colonisation and domination of the Oromo (along with other ethnonational groups), and the latters' own incipient process of internal class differentiation and state formation became arrested, in a process referred to by Holcomb and Ibssa[12] and by Jalata[13] as 'dependent colonialism'. The next stage in world capitalism, from the late 1800s until the eve of globalisation in the 1960s, established a more unified global system which linked nation-states and regions via the trade and financial flows into an integrated world market. For reasons analysed elsewhere in considerable detail,[14] Ethiopia was not directly colonised by European powers despite the 1935–40 interlude of Italian annexation. However, the world capitalist system made possible the *creation* of the Ethiopian state, *and also* made possible Abyssinian conquest of Oromia and other groups.[15] The socio-economic and class structure in Abyssinia was reoriented towards integration into world capitalism. In this stage Oromia was captured by world capitalism as a subordinate segment of the Ethiopian social formation. Oromia provided the labour and resources for the rapid transformation of Ethiopia's socio-economic and productive structure to feed the needs of an intermediary Ethiopian ruling class and dominant groups in the core of world capitalism. The creation of Ethiopia and conquest of Oromia are creatures of European colonialism. What concerns us

in this article is the third and current stage, globalisation, which dates back to the 1960s and whose consolidation inside the Ethiopian empire began with the collapse of the Mengistu regime in 1991.

The core of globalisation, theoretically conceived, is the near culmination of the spread of capitalist production relations around the world and its displacement of (rather than articulation with) pre-capitalist relations. This involves a whole set of corresponding 'superstructural' changes in polities (and politics), in the composition of social forces, and in class and group relations. Globalisation involves technological advances that have allowed capital to achieve total mobility around the globe in search of the cheapest labour and the most congenial conditions for different circuits in the process of production and distribution, without regard for national borders. In this reorganised world economy, a new international division of labour has emerged, in which the rich countries of the north are increasingly based on control of technology, information and services in a 'global factory', whereas the labour-intensive phase of international production is shifted to the south through the 'comparative advantage' of abundant, cheap labour, along with changes in zones of mineral extraction and agricultural production through new forms of integration into transnationalised circuits. Above all, transnational capital requires that conditions are established in each nation-state propitious to its unfettered operation, not just *within* nation-states, but *between* nation-states. Thus the globalisation of production, which involves a hitherto unseen integration of national economies, brings with it a tendency towards uniformity, not just in the conditions of production, but in the civil and political superstructure in which social relations of production unfold.[16]

The agent of the global economy is transnational capital, organised institutionally in global corporations and in supranational economic planning agencies and political forums, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Trilateral Commission, and the G7 forum. At its apex, the global economy is managed by a class-conscious *transnational elite* based in the centres of world capitalism, and led by the United States.[17] The accelerated concentration of capital and economic power around this transnational elite in centre countries has profound effects on arrangements between existing social groups, class constellations and political systems in every country of the world system, including a redistribution of quotas of accumulated political and economic power towards new groups linked to transnational capital and the global economy. In every region of the world, states, economies and political processes are becoming transnationalised and integrated under the guidance of this new elite.

This transnational elite has its exact counterpart in each nation of the south, in a new breed of 'technocratic' elite and bureaucrats in Latin America, Africa and Asia who are the local counterparts to the global elite. The source of social privilege that accrues through participation in relations of domination and exploitation is now incorporation into the

hegemonic project of transnational capital. The new elites of global capitalism may be local transnationalised factions of the bourgeoisie, state managers and bureaucratic administrators, or diverse professional and intellectual strata, who are willing to act as local transmission belts for transnational elite interests. Later I will discuss this point further as it pertains to Ethiopia and Oromia.

The agenda of this transnational elite is to promote diverse economic and political conditions in all corners of the world that will allow transnational capital to operate unfettered. The economic component of this agenda is 'neo-liberalism', a model which seeks to achieve conditions which permit the total mobility of capital. This model includes elimination of state intervention in the economy and the regulation of individual nation-states over the activities of capital in their territories. The neoliberal Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) currently sweeping the south seek macroeconomic stability (price and exchange rate stability, and so forth), and the lifting of all state regulations over the free operation of capital, as essential requisites for the activity of transnational capital, which must harmonise a wide range of fiscal, monetary and industrial policies among multiple countries if it is to be able to function simultaneously among numerous national borders.

If this economic component is to make the world available and 'inviting' to capital, the political component is to 'make the world safe for capital'. This requires developing social control systems and political institutions necessary for the establishment of a stable world environment. The turn to promoting polyarchy in US foreign policy is precisely an effort to develop political systems in each country incorporated into global structures that operate through consensual, rather than through direct, coercive domination, as I have analysed and documented at length elsewhere.[18] The imperative for 'democracy' as far as transnational elite interests are concerned, lies in the view that polyarchy is a more effective means of assuring stability. Polyarchy is seen as the preferred means of confronting, or at least controlling, popular sectors and their demands. Supported upon the foundations of what Gramsci referred to as ideological hegemony, consensual arrangements are at play for the resolution of conflicts within the parameters of a given social order. *Formal* democratic structures are therefore seen as more disposed to diffusing the sharpest social tensions and to incorporating sufficient social bases with which to sustain more stable environments under the conflict-ridden and fluid conditions of emergent global society. While mediating inter-class relations, polyarchy is also a more propitious institutional arrangement for the resolution of conflicts among dominant groups. It encourages the exercise of effective self-control in intragroup affairs, and achieves, in its ideal-type functioning, intra-elite stability via compromise and accommodation. It is thus a more effective means of achieving the political and social stability that global capitalism requires. Through inculcating polyarchic political systems, the

transnational elite hopes that the demands, grievances and aspirations of the popular classes will become neutralised less through direct repression than through ideological mechanisms, political cooptation, and the limits imposed by the global economy and the legitimising parameters of polyarchy. Consensual mechanisms of social control thus tend to replace the dictatorships, authoritarianism and repressive colonial systems that characterised much of the world's formal political authority structures right up to the post-Cold War period.

The penetration and influence of globalising pressures is a complex process that generates local social forces who come to assume the role of 'in-country' agents and 'junior partners' of the transnational elite. These forces include: economic elites tied to globalised circuits of production, distribution, and finances set up in their own countries; political elites such as state managers and administrative bureaucrats; and charismatic leaders of the organs of civil society. These elites clustered in both political and civil society are expected to develop an outlook and identity of interests with the transnational elite that is their 'senior partner', to gain hegemony over the internal (national) social order, and to integrate their respective nation-states into the global order. As a result, these local transnationalised factions find that their own interests rest in the reproduction of that global order in the local environment. One notes a process here in which local elites assume new roles as intermediaries between the 'local' and the 'global', such that they become, in effect, 'pimps', offering their nation's labouring masses and resources to transnational capital in exchange for incorporation into the junior ranks of an emergent hegemonic transnational elite.

In the 1970s and 1980s incipient transnationalised factions of ruling classes in the core capitalist countries of the north competed with national-based factions in an effort to capture the 'commanding heights' of state policy making.[19] By the late 1980s, these factions were largely in command of northern state apparatuses and began active promotion of the transnational agenda of neo-liberalism and polyarchy. From the 1980s into the 1990s, similar transnational pools became ascendant in the south. They began to vie for, and in many countries, to capture, state apparatuses and to promote the transnational agenda in their own nation-states.[20] This transnational agenda – and its agent, the transnationalised faction within local elite structures – is embryonic in some countries and regions (for example, much of sub-Saharan Africa). It has incubated and is now ascendant in others regions (for example, the Philippines, India, major portions of Asia). It has become fully consolidated elsewhere (for example, in Chile, Mexico and much of Latin America). Transnationalised factions in the south have overseen on a local level, under the tutelage of the north, sweeping economic, political, social and cultural changes involved in globalisation, including free-market reform, the fomenting of polyarchic systems in place of dictatorships, and the dissemination of capitalism's culture/ideology of consumerism and individualism.

Social forces, social control and global capitalism

How can we catalogue the configuration of *social forces* engendered by and drawn into globalisation? Classes are restructured by the globalisation process. Pre-capitalist classes and autonomous domestic producers, such as peasantries, small-scale artisans and capitalist factions oriented towards domestic markets, tend to disappear. New urban and rural working classes linked to transnational production processes appear. In highly simplified terms, there are, on the one hand, diverse class factions, strata and groups in each country and region which have been – or aspire to become – incorporated into the hegemonic project of global capitalism. On the other hand, there are those factions, strata and groups objectively opposed to, or resisting the process of capitalist globalisation for diverse reasons. These oppositional elements often constitute oppressed and potentially revolutionary classes and groups, as well as factions of dominant classes and assorted elites, who are adversely affected by the structural and institutional changes wrought by globalisation. There are also sundry groups who face a fluid and indeterminate situation vis-à-vis the process.

In sum, antagonistic social forces are thrown together in highly complex milieus, and do battle to shape emergent social, economic, political and cultural institutions as each country integrates into global society. *These struggles become superimposed on, and interwoven with, pre-existing social contradictions and struggles, modifying their context and character*, a point which we should bear in mind as regards Ethiopia and Oromia. Just as all good social science should be concerned with both the general in the particular and the particular in the general, analysis requires an understanding of how particular national and local histories interface with globalising dynamics and become reshaped in the process. Struggles between dominant and subordinate groups – such as between the Oromo people and the Ethiopian state, or *among* distinct Oromo social groups and classes – need to be conceptualised in a manner that links particular national circumstances to the broader world-historic conjuncture of globalisation.

If one side of 'making the world safe for global capital' involves the development of local agents of the transnational elite, the flip side, equally if not more importantly, involves the *suppression* of those social forces and their political expressions that represent an actual or potential challenge to the structure of global capitalism and its local reproduction. Thus local contingents of the transnational elite are expected to utilise their states to implement neo-liberal structural adjustment, *and also* to maintain local social control and political stability. In focusing on the suppression of popular classes, we need to emphasise the *mode of social control* in the new transnational environment. The political component of this transnational elite agenda is the consolidation of political systems which function through consensual mechanisms of social control, that is, of polyarchic

political systems. It is precisely the new elites in the south who have entered into alliances to promote polyarchy, or to develop 'democratic' consensual forms of social control in their countries in contrast to the earlier forms of authoritarian or dictatorial control.

As has been well documented elsewhere,[21] promoting polyarchy as a new modality of US intervention is conducted through a transnationalised 'democracy promotion' apparatus within the United States. This apparatus includes the Agency for International Development (AID)'s Center for Democracy and Governance, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), and new agencies in the Departments of Justice and Defense, among others. It involves the use of 'political aid' in conjunction with the panoply of established US foreign policy instruments, including economic and military aid, traditional diplomacy, and so forth. The policy seeks to foment functioning polyarchic political systems in peripheral countries and targets civil societies as the locus of hegemonic order and social control, in tandem with efforts to influence states. US 'democracy promotion', sets about not just to secure and stabilise polyarchy but to have the United States and local elites thoroughly penetrate not just the state, but civil society as the locus of a Gramscian hegemony, and *from therein* assure control over popular mobilisation and mass movements. Gramsci stressed the distinction and unity of political and civil society. *Social control* takes place on two levels: in civil society and through the state (political society), which are fused into what Gramsci called the *extended state*. 'These two levels correspond on the one hand to the function of hegemony which the dominant group exercises throughout society and on the other hand to that of "direct domination" or command exercised through the State and "juridical" government'.[22] The hegemony of a ruling class or faction is exercised in civil society, as distinct from its coercive power exercised through the state. Civil society is the arena of social relationships based on consent – political parties, trade unions, civil (voluntary) associations, religious institutions, the family, and so forth.

Seen through the lens of the promotion of polyarchy, the composition and balance of power in civil society in a given Third World country is now just as important to global elite interests as who controls the governments of those countries. This is a shift from social control 'from above' to social control 'from below' (and within), for the purpose of managing change and reform so as to preempt any elemental challenge to the social order. This explains why the new forms of US political intervention, conducted by diverse US 'democracy promotion' agencies, such as the NED, target groups in civil society itself – trade unions, political parties, the mass media, professional guilds, peasant associations, women's, youth, student and other mass organisations.

The president of the NED, Carl Gershman, has categorized US political intervention programmes into those aimed at 'long-term democratic political development', and those aimed at securing a 'democratic transition',

that is, a change of regime.[23] The first category signifies programmes to stabilise and consolidate polyarchic political systems in societies already considered 'democratic' by bolstering elite forces in political and civil society, and by inculcating what the operatives and theoreticians of 'democracy promotion' consider to be the 'political culture' of polyarchy. These programmes in the 1990s included most Latin American nations, as well as the former Soviet bloc countries, all of which were considered 'democratic'. Regarding the second category, 'transitions to democracy', US policy makers identified two types of transitions: from authoritarian or right-wing dictatorships, to elitist civilian regimes; and from left-wing, popular, nationalist or socialist regimes considered adversaries, to elitist regimes allied with the US-led transnational elite. Chile, Haiti, Paraguay and the Philippines fell under the first type in the 1980s, and in the 1990s, many African and several Asian nations fell under this type. Nicaragua under the Sandinistas fell under the second, as did programmes in Haiti under President Jean Bertrand Aristide and programmes in Cuba.

A number of countries, however, do not fall into either of these categories indicated by Gershman, and represent very challenging and complex 'deviant cases' for US officials who would rather downplay these embarrassing cases. These are authoritarian regimes, such as Burma and Indonesia, and many Asian and Africa countries, including Ethiopia. In these countries, US plans for a quick transition to polyarchy met with limited success, and in some instances completely failed. Because there are no ready alternatives to authoritarian social control in these cases, the United States pursues a *two-track strategy*. The first track is to continue to work with existing regimes that are often authoritarian and even antithetical to polyarchy. These regimes nevertheless push through other aspects of the transnational agenda, such as neo-liberal reform, and maintain a minimal amount of social control. The second track is to continue to foment the conditions for a transition to polyarchy in a modified, long-term timetable. Efforts in the second track include the gradual cultivation of transnational elite pools, the creation of programmes in civil society to inculcate a polyarchic political culture, the establishment of programmes in political society to bring together diverse elites into consensus-building forums – 'national dialogues', 'reconciliation conferences', and so on.

Promoting polyarchy is a very problematic enterprise, as are all projects of domination. The endeavour often becomes bogged down in conflicting interests and fierce competition among local dominant groups. It also runs up against social contradictions that are structural in origin; consequently their resolution involves structural transformations that contravene the political and economic agenda of the transnational elite. This elite finds itself dependent on local forces to implement some aspects of their agenda (for example, making the particular country available for transnational capital), yet these same forces block the attainment of other aspects of that agenda (for example, stability through polyarchy). Polyarchy is a

superior mode of elite domination *when it can be successfully implemented*. But intent is not ability. The transnational elite should not be seen as impotent, and diverse local groups are active and autonomous collective subjects with their own agendas that intersect in complex, often highly contradictory and conflictive ways with the transnational agenda. Later I will discuss these paradoxes as they apply to the Ethiopian empire.

It is of analytical import, beyond a mere moral denunciation, to note that emergent global society is profoundly undemocratic. 'Poverty amidst plenty' and 'global social apartheid', or the dramatic growth under globalisation of socio-economic inequalities and of human misery in nearly every country and region of the world, a consequence of the unbridled operation of transnational capital, is worldwide and generalised. The dual tendency is for the concentration of wealth among a privileged strata encompassing some 20 per cent of humanity, in which the gap between rich and poor is widening *within* each country, north and south alike, simultaneous to a sharp increase of the inequalities *between* the north and the south. According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) annual report for 1994, *Human Development* 1994, 1.3 billion people live in *absolute* poverty – literally on the verge of life and death. A third of the south's population 'lives in state of abject poverty', stated the report, 'at such a margin of human existence that words simply fail to describe it'. One billion are without access to health services, 1.3 billion have no access to safe water, and 1.9 billion are without access to sanitation.[24]

A comparison of recent reports reveals the *tendency* for the chasm between a shrinking minority of haves and a vast majority of have-nots to widen ever-further. The 1992 report indicated that the wealthiest 20 per cent of humanity received 82.7 per cent of the world's wealth. Its 1994 report places that figure at 84.7 per cent. The comparison also reveals that the abyss between the rich and poor nations continues to widen. In 1960, the wealthiest 20 of the world's nations was 30 times richer than the poorest 20 per cent. Thirty years later, in 1990, it was 60 times richer. Just one year later, in 1991, the latest year for which figures were available, it was 61:1, according to the 1994 report. However, the report noted: 'these figures conceal the true scale of injustice since they are based on comparisons of the average *per capita* incomes of rich and poor *countries*. In reality, of course, there are wide disparities within each country between rich and poor *people*'.[25] ([emphasis in original]). Adding the maldistribution within countries, the richest 20 per cent of the world's *people* got at least 150 times more than the poorest 20 per cent. In other words, the ratio of inequality between the global rich and the global poor in a highly stratified world system was 1:150.

The north–south divide is growing and should not be understated. However, humanity is increasingly stratified along transnational class lines, given the accelerated creation under globalisation of lakes of wealth in Third World countries and seas of poverty in First World countries, and it

makes more sense to see the world as increasingly divided along class lines than along nation-state lines. This is crucial if we are to accurately discern the *social basis* of global capitalism.[26] Dominant minorities in the south find new and expanded opportunities for all sorts of social privilege and are becoming wealthy and powerful as they integrate their states into global society. In doing so, they strengthen their relation and identity of interests with the elite of the global system, and in this way we see movement from class alliances across nation-states to the emergence of an organic transnational elite that incorporates contingents from each country and region of global society.

Thus the SAPs and related free-market economic reform policies of the transnational elite result in mass impoverishment, but these policies find an objective social base in those countries to which they are applied, among factions of dominant groups tied to global capital and related strata (for example, state bureaucracies). We cannot talk about inequality in global society without also talking about *power*. Wealth and power are not dichotomous but are inextricably interconnected. Reproduction of social privilege and of the inequality upon which it is based requires the application of power by dominant groups over subordinate groups. In this regard, Antonio Gramsci noted, domination is both coercive and consensual. All political authority is derived in the last instance from the use or the threat of the use of force. But social formations based on domination combine both consensual and coercive mechanisms of social control, and one or the other usually constitutes the most salient feature of social control in a given social order. Social forces in the Ethiopian empire and Oromia that could constitute the internal linkage with global capitalism need to be identified. But analysis also requires how the changing character of the global system changes the composition of internal social forces in Ethiopia and Oromia.

US policy and Oromo liberation

Salient events in recent years in the Horn of Africa have included the disintegration of the state in Somalia, the ascent of fundamentalist Islamic forces in the Sudan, and above all, the collapse of the Mengistu regime in Ethiopia and a reconfiguration of the political landscape in the Ethiopian empire. These dramatic events have led the United States to assume a highly visible profile in the region. A pliable regime in Ethiopia became a valuable asset in pressing the economic and political interests of the US-led transnational elite throughout north and east Africa. 'The advent of the TGE [Transitional Government of Ethiopia] in 1991 marked a major change in the state of relationships between the U.S. and Ethiopia', stated US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, George Moose, in 1994. The TGE 'has maintained a strongly pro-Western foreign policy since its inception. As a result, good working relationships have been

established that have been of great value on numerous regional concerns, including Sudan, Somalia, and Rwanda. These relationships have also given the [US] Embassy excellent access within the TGE, making it an effective advocate for U.S. policy'.[27] Advancing the transnational agenda of polyarchy and neo-liberalism in Ethiopia thus came to be seen by US officials as pivotal for that agenda in the entire region. 'Given Ethiopia's population of 54 million, including ethnic groups that share ties with Djibouti [*sic*], Eritrea, Sudan and Somalia, Ethiopia can profoundly impact its neighbors', noted John Hicks, US Assistant Administrator of the Bureau for Africa of the AID. 'If Ethiopia can successfully make the transition to democracy and a free market economy, it could become a model of peace and stability in a troubled region'.[28]

The incursion of capitalism into the Ethiopian social formation in the post-Second Word War period, and particularly from the 1960s and on, precisely as the global economy began to emerge, created a host of new social groups and classes, exacerbated internal social contradictions, hastened polarisation, and laid the structural basis for the 1974 popular uprising against the Haile Selassie dictatorship. This uprising, however, for reasons analysed elsewhere,[29] resulted not in a popular or revolutionary outcome but in the takeover by the Mengistu regime. Jalata has noted that the Mengistu regime received military support from the former Soviet Union and economic support from the Western capitalist powers during much of its time in power.[30] According to Jalata, this regime's discourse was one of socialism and revolution, but its actual model was one in which state enterprises kept the empire inserted into the world capitalist economy, precisely as the global economy was emerging, and despite reliance on the Soviet bloc for political and military support. State enterprises sustained a ruling group and elite strata tied to the state rather than to private Ethiopian capital (precisely, in part, because the latter remained severely underdeveloped). Oromos provided much of the labour and resources, including the land, for this socio-economic structure. Global capitalism thus came to be filtered through a very unusual national structure: a disjuncture between the political superstructure of a self-proclaimed revolutionary regime aligned with the Soviet bloc and an economic base which linked the empire to world capitalism. This arrangement owed to the empire's particular history. The Amharan feudal and monarchial structures never permitted 'modernising' capitalist, professional and bureaucratic strata – which had begun to emerge with the post-Second World War incursion of capitalist production relations into the empire – to develop into a coherent political bloc that could assume the reins of an organic capitalist state.

The praetorian Mengistu state, seen in structural perspective, was the intermediary between global capitalism and a chaotic, poorly organised and constantly shifting Ethiopian ruling class. Taking power under highly fluid circumstances, as a Bonapartist expression of the inability of either

emerging dominant or subordinate classes to gain any hegemony, the Mengistu regime represented the complete disarticulation of the economic and political spheres of the Ethiopian social order, with no stabilising linkage between the state and a coherent bloc of social forces in civil society. This model – both in its exploitative socio-economic dimension and in its brutally repressive political dimension – accelerated social contradictions within the empire. As these contradictions heightened – particularly as ethnonational struggles among the Eritrean, Tigrayan, Oromo and other groups escalated – the particular disjunctures between the empire's social forces, political superstructure and economic structure were bound to result in the collapse of the regime, with or without the demise of the Soviet Union.

By the late 1980s, the regime was in deep crisis and it became clear that its days were numbered. A very familiar US pattern elsewhere in the Third World was put into practice in Ethiopia: the United States intervened. The objective was to gain as much influence as possible over the resolution of emerging crises and to assure an outcome that would be most favourable to specific conjunctural US-transnational interests and, more importantly, to the long-term interests of global capitalism. In Ethiopia, there was a complex confluence of global and local events, notably the irreversible crisis of the Mengistu regime just when this regime's principal external sponsor, the Soviet Union, was itself crumbling, that allowed the United States to regain decisive influence over Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa, and to play a pivotal role in the outcome of the crisis and demise of the Mengistu regime.[31] The familiar pattern of intervention involved three phases.

In the first phase, US operatives negotiated the fleeing of Mengistu, providing the dictator with ample financial incentives and a safe haven in exile.[32] This is consistent with the recent pattern of US intervention elsewhere: just as it did with Mengistu, the United States facilitated the departure into comfortable exile of dictators in Iran (the Shah in 1979), Nicaragua (Somoza in 1979), the Philippines (Marcos in 1995), Haiti (Duvalier in 1985), Paraguay (Stroessner in 1989), and so on.

In the second phase, the United States attempted to gain maximum influence over the breakup of the Mengistu regime and impose an orderly transition to capitalist polyarchy. US strategists assessed the actual direction of change, the character of the crisis, and the social groups and classes that could best be organised, supported, or coopted as part of a strategy for a transition. On the basis of this assessment, the United States chose to support the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the independence of Eritrea. The conditions imposed on the TPLF in exchange for this support, as well as new opportunities opened up to the TPLF leadership to attain their own goals of ruling a reconfigured Ethiopian empire, in exchange for following the US script, preempted any popular democratic or radical outcome to the breakup of the Mengistu regime. The US plan

was to facilitate the rapid installation into power of the TPLF-led Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), in order to avoid a vacuum of power and assure as predictable an environment and a governing apparatus as possible during a transition period.[33] This phase was successfully achieved, in what US policy makers have sometimes referred to as 'preventative diplomacy and preemptive reform'.[34]

In the third phase, US policy makers and on-the-ground operatives then attempted to launch and control a gradual 'transition to democracy', for which Washington spent at least $11.5 million between 1991 and 1994 under its 'Democracy and Governance Support' programme.[35] Through the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and other agencies from the 'democracy promotion' apparatus of the US state, US officials were deeply involved in this 'transition to democracy'. A number of Ethiopian civic and political associations were funded and advised by NED-affiliated organisations that set up operations in the empire, including the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the National Republican Institute for International Relations (IRI), of the US Democratic and Republican parties, respectively, the International Foundation for Electoral Assistance (IFES), the America's Development Foundation, the Free Trade Union Institute (FTUI), the Fund for Peace, and several other agencies tied to the US state.[36] Most of these organisations, which handled over half a million dollars between 1991 and 1995, are themselves linked to the covert and intelligence apparatus of the US state.

The NED is not an impartial and benevolent agency seeking to promote 'democracy', but an organ that grew out of the covert operations and intelligence apparatuses of the US state in the 1980s, and it functions as a foreign policy branch of the US state, as I have documented and analysed in depth elsewhere.[37] My own research on the NED in other countries indicates that the NED and its associated groups play an important role in identifying and grooming local leaders who are to be tapped for incorporation into US-crafted hegemonic projects. Researchers of Ethiopian and Oromo studies would do well to investigate the programmes conducted by the NED, the individuals involved, the agendas that NED-supported groups propose, the alliances they develop, and so forth. It is to be expected that the NED-supported groups will attempt to compete with, and try to eclipse, genuine popular grassroots and mass organisations, among the Oromo and other groups in the empire, and to work towards elite consensus and popular class incorporation into elite hegemony. The NED, as a semi-clandestine organ of the US intervention and intelligence apparatus, does not readily provide information to researchers. Research into its activities in Ethiopia will probably require filing Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. According to the NED Annual Reports for 1991–95, the following organisations were funded and guided by NED-linked US agencies: Ethiopian Community Development Council, Inc., Center for Human Rights and Democracy in

Ethiopia, Ethiopian Human Rights and Peace Center (of the Law Faculty of the University of Addis Ababa), Ethiopian Congress for Democracy, Ethiopian Human Rights Council Ad Hoc Peace and Development Committee, Inter-Africa Group (Ethiopia branch). The analytical point is that groups linked to the NED (and the AID) are fomented by the US state as organs of civil and political society with the precise intention of cohering national elites and of advancing the transnational elite agenda in the intervened country.

Through this process, US officials hoped that the leadership of the Tigrayans, the Eritreans, the Amhara, the Oromo and other ethnonational groups in the Ethiopian empire, would develop a working consensus among themselves around implementing the transnational agenda in Ethiopia: 1) structural adjustment and the opening of the empire to free market global capitalism; 2) the installation of a functioning polyarchic ('democratic') political system, in which elites from the different groups would peacefully compete with and accommodate one another, thus assuring stability as the empire opened up to transnational capital. This third phase failed due to profound social contradictions internal to the Ethiopian empire that US officials could not hope to overcome *and at the same time* achieve their (the transnational elite's) goals, as I discuss briefly below. But this failure should not obscure the *intent* of US policy during this period, which was never to bring democracy and social justice to Ethiopia.

The 'transition to democracy' in Ethiopia was to involve the creation of a new governmental and state administrative structure, the drafting of a new constitution, and the holding of elections.[38] These were to take place alongside ongoing US programmes to penetrate Ethiopian civil society and develop associations therein, including the media and professional groups,[39] that could act as an anchor within the population for a stable hegemonic order. A July 1991 conference, convened under US auspices to 'reach agreement on a transition process which could lead to a democratic outcome',[40] was successful in bringing together the leadership of the different groups in Ethiopia, and was to have been followed by the June 1992 elections. But these failed when the EPRDF essentially coopted the process to install its own supporters and representatives throughout the empire. Instead of serving as a mechanism for helping to forge a working accommodation among elites, 'the elections eroded the legitimacy of the transitional government rather than increasing it, and narrowed its political base'.[41] Despite the 1992 electoral charade, the EPRDF set up the Constitution Drafting Commission in 1993 with US approval, and scheduled elections for 1994 for a new national assembly that would, among other things, review and ratify a permanent constitution. These elections were held in June 1994 with $2.5 million in US technical and financial support. Although some voiced disapproval, they were certified as 'satisfactory' by the international community, including US and European

observers, and represented, in the words of one US official, 'progress in the democratic development of the country'.[42] This certification occurred despite widespread irregularities, mass repression of the Oromo during the electoral process by the Ethiopian state and by its agent the Oromo People's Democratic Organisation (OPDO), and the non-participation of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and key actors and organisations from other ethnonational groups.[43]

Despite this deeply troubled transition to polyarchy, US policy makers retained the expectation that they could work with the EPRDF government to create functioning polyarchic political structures. The conduct of the EPRDF (for example, its monopolisation of power, corruption, ongoing human rights violations, and so forth) hampered the transnational elite project in Ethiopia and strained relations between some US policy makers and the Ethiopian regime. But the EPRDF was still the transnational elite's 'best option'. It was the hope of the transnational elite that capitalist development inside Ethiopia through free-market integration of the empire into global capitalism would help bring together diverse political, economic and bureaucratic elites from all of the empire's ethnonational groups into a process of national class formation. The elite leaderships of Ethiopia's principal groups and movements, namely the Amhara, the Tigrayan and the Oromo, were to be continuously nudged, coaxed and prodded to achieve compromise and a working accommodation among themselves, and in this way cohere into a *national elite*. Seen in analytic perspective, this was the intent behind the spate of diplomatic initiatives undertaken by diverse representatives of the transnational elite, such as the Contract Group in 1992, and Paris initiative in 1993, Jimmy Carter's mediation in 1994, the US Congressional Task Force meeting in 1995, and so on. The US hope was that these elites would begin to identify more with each other than with their own popular bases and to identify more with a transnational capitalist project for the Ethiopian social formation as a whole than with any popular project in the interests of their own mass bases. This is the model the United States has pursued throughout the Third World in its new policy of promoting polyarchy. That this effort has proved to date a dismal failure in Ethiopia attests to the gap between intent and ability in US policy, and to the deep-rooted contradictions within the Ethiopian empire and within the transnational agenda.

The failure of the 1990–94 attempt to effect a transition to polyarchy in Ethiopia also points to the ignorance of local realities and histories, often bordering on self-delusion, that US officials generally bring with them in their foreign policy undertakings. Policy considerations among US state managers, as well as theoretical reflections and academic musings among Western intellectuals in general regarding Ethiopia, have historically been coloured by perceptions of Oromo inferiority.[44] Such perceptions were consciously propagated by the Habasha elite for centuries as part of the ideological dimensions of its own class development. They took root easily

among mainstream Western perceptions, given that Western support for Habasha domination became the central condition for the subordinate incorporation of the Ethiopian social formation into world capitalism. Nonetheless, it would be a mistake to see the failure of US policy to bring about a polyarchy as a consequence of racist attitudes among Western state managers and organic intellectuals, rather than as a consequence of structural contradictions within the Ethiopian empire which simply do not lend themselves to resolution within the framework of the transnational elite project. US policy makers and organic intellectuals have never been able to grasp the nature and extent of ethnonational domination, especially of the Oromo. This is, in turn, a consequence of the character of Ethiopia as an empire based on ethnonational domination with little organic historical basis for a viable multiethnic national formation and for a polyarchic system of consensual domination.

It must be recalled that a functioning polyarchic system involves two dimensions. One is intra-elite accommodation and consensus. The other is consensual mechanisms of elite domination over popular majorities. One considerable constraint to a pan-Ethiopian intra-elite consensus that the United States would like to foment is disdainfulness among the Habasha elite of the Oromo, which precludes the former from embracing an Oromo elite as its equal. The principal constraint to consensual domination over the Oromo masses within an Ethiopian social formation is the latter's own steadfast refusal to accept their subordinate status, which also makes any would-be Oromo elite reluctant to reach an accommodation with Habasha elites for fear of losing credibility with its popular base. Another major constraint is the Habasha elite's fear of the numerical strength of the Oromo as an ethnonational majority within the empire (the Oromo comprise about half of the empire's 70 million inhabitants). These dual constraints to a polyarchy in Ethiopia – intra-elite constraints and elite-mass constraints – should not be particularised, just as all ethnic group identity itself should not be reified as an attribute that is primordial, but rather one of historical and social construction. The general can be distilled from the particular, and the general in the present discussion is the complex relation between ethnic/racial and class domination. Processes analogous to Ethiopia's were also at work in South Africa, for instance, until conditions particular to that country facilitated a polyarchic resolution to apartheid, which did not, as a matter of course, resolve other underlying social contradictions. Among many other cases we could cite, these processes are still at work in Guatemala, between the Creollo/Ladino ruling elite and the oppressed Mayan ethnonational majority, and whose resolution is not clear at this time. This is *not* to say that a polyarchy within a unified Ethiopian empire is viable or desirable. The point is that the Ethiopian case, theoretically speaking, is not one of exceptionalism.

So whither US-transnational elite strategy toward the Ethiopian empire? Analysis requires that we separate what the United States will

pursue in a long-term strategy as an ideal-type outcome (a perfectly functioning polyarchy and robust free-market economy), with what policy makers will attempt to achieve as short-term objectives. An analysis of the deep structural impediments to US success must be combined with an understanding of the dialectical interplay of these impediments with the real constraints to, as well as the opportunities for, Oromo liberation under the current historic conjuncture. It would be a complete misreading of the US strategy to assume that the United States is content to try to stabilise the current arrangement. Seen from the logic of the US policy-making community and organic intellectuals, the fact that the Tigrayan government is weak and powerless, and completely dependent on US support for its continued survival, is a fundamentally unstable and problematic arrangement in the long-term, despite the immediate benefit it brings Washington of having a very pliant government in Finfinnee (Addis Ababa). Tigrayan domination is a tenuous and fragile way of reproducing social order and social control, an obstacle to constructing a solid and self-reproducing system of domination based on consensual (hegemonic) arrangements. The US-transnational elite objective is precisely to avoid reliance on regimes that enjoy little internal legitimacy and that are not solidly rooted in a constituted civil society, and must therefore resort to state repression rather than to mechanisms of hegemony, consensus-building, and cooptation.

In the Ethiopian empire as elsewhere, the failure to install polyarchic regimes does not lead the United States to abandon intervention. Rather, Washington pushes on with its effort, and in the meantime, chooses the best policy option for assuring continued elite rule and political stability in what policy makers hope will be an interim period during which time the conditions will gradually be incubated for an effective long-term transition to polyarchy. If this means supporting a resurgent authoritarianism or even a dictatorial regime during a very long interim, or 'transition period', US policy makers do not hesitate to do so, such as happened in Haiti during the 1991–94 military dictatorship, and in many other places.[45] The overall US objective, it must be recalled, is not to support *democracy*, but to stabilise elite rule. Whether the stabilization of elite rule can be achieved through consensual modes of social control (polyarchy) or must rest on coercive domination is a matter of conjunctural analysis of concrete situations. In Haiti, Burma, South Korea and elsewhere in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the United States did not hesitate to back repressive regimes even as it pushed forward its efforts to implant systems of consensual domination. This is the two-track strategy discussed above.

Coercive domination, outright force and repression, have historically moved to centre stage when ruling groups face a crisis of authority, and when they face a breakdown in the socio-economic structure or the impossibility of establishing a viable pattern of capital accumulation. The Habasha ruling class, given the nature of the Ethiopian empire, has never

been able to establish its domination through consensual means or to organise a viable economic system that could meet the minimum needs of the empire's subjects. Hence, mass repression of the super-exploited segment of the empire – the Oromo people – and others, has been an institutionalised, indeed structural, feature of the empire. Thus it should have come as no surprise that the United States has continued to support the EPRDF regime while it attempts to chart a more long-term strategy for developing polyarchy in Ethiopia, or that this policy involves *ignoring* (and even supporting) the systematic repression of the Oromo and other groups.

Repression of the Oromo has continued – and indeed escalated – under the current Ethiopian regime.[46] Nonetheless, and despite formal statements of 'concern', the US government continued to work closely with the regime. It should be recalled that the US concern is not with the violation of human rights, but with how human rights violations in countries around the world may disrupt the transnational agenda, either by the political blemish and moral objection among the international community that human rights violations provoke, and/or because human rights violations are an obstacle to the development of polyarchic political systems. To the extent that these violations are symptomatic of deeper social conflicts, they indicate a threat to social stability, which is the condition required for making a country 'safe' for transnational capital. Thus, stated Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, George Moose, in explaining why the US government continued to support and work closely with the EPRDF regime despite its systematic human rights violations: 'In assessing the human rights situation, we should recall that the TGE, for the first time in decades, has brought general peace and stability to Ethiopia'.[47]

The transnational agenda involves, in respective order of priority, making the world accessible to global capital, and making it safe for global capital. The former involves capitalist free markets and neo-liberal SAP's, and the latter, stability. Although the Tigrayan government has become just as authoritarian as its predecessor, it has also moved forward with neo-liberal reform. It has worked out a broad-ranging neo-liberal reform and structural adjustment programme with the World Bank and the IMF, and has created conditions for the large-scale entrance of transnational capital. The Tigrayan regime has been the recipient of nearly US$1 billion in financing from bilateral and multilateral agencies, a good portion of these funds destined to rebuilding the infrastructure which will allow for the entrance of the transnational corporations (TNCs) that are driving the global economy. Moreover, bilateral US aid remained high in the early 1990s ($150 million in 1994 alone), all of it made conditional on continued neo-liberal structural adjustment.[48] The economic reforms required for the operation of transnational capital in Ethiopia have been applauded by the transnational elite.

Despite the regime's repressive and anti-democratic character, foreign

aid has not been made conditional on any improvement in human rights or even on movement towards *polyarchisation*. 'Foreign assistance should probably not be saddled with political conditionality at this point', counselled one expert to the US Congress. 'Despite the shortcomings of the political process, economic transformation seems to be on track and deserves support in and of itself'.[49] One Western intelligence analysis unit predicted that US, European and Japanese capital would be able to take advantage of the guarantees, social stability and infrastuctural services that the EPRDF government could provide, and that 'private investments will play a major role in the Ethiopian economy in the 1990s'.[50] The SAP has included a process of privatising state-sector holdings to transnational capital and to Ethiopians. Albeit, as elsewhere, privatisation becomes a cookie jar for those elites who have access to the state, and not surprisingly the EPRDF and its supporters have privatised to themselves many state properties. In early 1994, the World Bank commended the EPRDF regime for substantial progress in neo-liberal structural adjustment, including lifting constraints on foreign investment and the liberalisation of the domestic financial market, which allowed the opening of several private banks and insurance companies.[51] And former US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Herman Cohen, noted that 'the TGE has really taken to structural adjustment with gusto'.[52]

It should also be noted that Mengistu's policies of removing millions of Oromos from their land, the most fertile agricultural lands in the empire, to make way for state farms, ironically created the perfect structural conditions for the eventual introduction of agri-business and cash-crop production destined for the world market: the concentration of small-holdings, an emerging market in land, and a dispossessed Oromo labouring population. The northern region of Ethiopia is no longer fertile due to decades of over-exploitation, soil erosion and war, while Oromo lands remain fertile and well-watered. Moreover, Oromia contained Ethiopia's famed coffee wealth, as well as significant deposits of natural gas, gold and other resources coveted by transnational corporations. The relationship between class and ethnicity is too complex for discussion here.[53] Suffice it to note, as regards Ethiopia and Oromia, that there has been a close affinity, for historic reasons, between class exploitation and ethnic oppression in the Ethiopian social formation, in which the Oromo have made up the exploited classes, as serfs and slaves dating back to King Menilek's creation of the Ethiopian empire, and later as expropriated and coerced labour under the empire's twentieth-century semi-capitalist structures. The point to emphasise here is two-fold, and underscores complex contradictions.

First, as Cappelli has noted, 'It may be that historic Abyssinia's only hope of escaping recurrent famine and retaining economic viability lies in maintaining control over the Oromo areas it conquered a century ago'.[54] In turn, such continued class–ethnic subjugation of the Oromo on the basis of capitalist penetration and development of Oromo land, resources and

labour, could well become the formula for the Ethiopian social formation's insertion into the global economy and the linkage of an Ethiopian elite to the transnational elite, such that Habasha internal domination becomes the internal Ethiopian political condition for the operation of transnational capital in the empire. In such a hypothetical scenario, Oromo emancipation would run up against the full weight of the forces of global capitalism, including the structural power of transnational capital, as well as the myriad forms of state power exercised by core states in the global order, in conjunction with Habasha local domination.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, class and ethnicity have historically been closely intermeshed in Ethiopia, particularly as regards Oromia. It should be expected that the US-transnational project will try to foment an Oromo elite that privileges its own class identity, and intra-elite class alliances, over the oppressed ethnonational status of the Oromo. A viable formula for internal hegemonic order in Ethiopia that links the social formation to transnational hegemonic order – indeed, one that would objectively provide a much more solid and long-term base for stability (making Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa 'safe' for global capitalism) – is the fomentation and incorporation of an Oromo elite. Such an elite would be intermediaries between the Oromo labouring mass and Oromo resources, on the one hand, and on the other hand would be integrated into a pan-Ethiopian transnationalised elite drawn from diverse ethnic groups.[55] Such an Oromo elite, in essence would be 'invited' to join a ruling bloc in the empire, which would entitle it to the privileges of domination, including entitlement to enjoy the spoils of the exploitation of Oromia's wealth, state sinecures, and so forth. If this scenario, hypothesised in the logic of US-transnational strategy, were to materialise, it would help resolve *intra*-elite contradictions impeding the inculcation of a polyarchy, as discussed earlier, and would shift the terms of the dialectics between dominant and subordinate groups.[56]

What are those forces that might form the potential social base for an Oromo elite tied to the transnational elite and the global capitalist order, and what are the countervailing forces? The search to identify these social forces, to liaison with them, and so forth, will be an integral part of US policy, and, consistent with similar US operations in other countries, this search will take place within Oromo civil society, among Oromo intellectuals, in the Oromo diaspora, and within the Oromo liberation movement itself (one should look to AID and NED-funded groups as key transnational elite recruitment grounds). Inevitably, tensions with the Oromo liberation movement reflect multiple dynamics that interact with each other, one of which is the Oromo national question, and another of which is class formation and elite aspirations *within* Oromia. There are no facile answers, but the national/class dialectic beckons elaboration, and is addressed here in some concluding remarks placed in historic and theoretical context.

Conclusion: the hour of Oromo liberation

It is the job of good social analysis to identify those forces (classes, strata and groups) that form the historic social base of, and therefore have objective interests in, a given order, including those who aspire to join these dominant groups, and to distinguish those forces whose objective interests lie in fundamental change. Superimposed upon all anti-colonial national struggles are class and group contradictions latent in the social coalitions that engage in such struggles. Opportunism and betrayal in political struggles often have objective coordinates in real or potential class and group interests. The transition from the colonial to the neo-colonial order in Africa involved a definite set of international class alliances, between new dominant classes in post-independence Africa that were to assume the direct administration of state power in their respective countries and the ruling classes in the core of the world capitalist system. That these regimes did not protect and promote the interests of broad popular majorities should not have been surprising. Local ruling groups were intermediaries between the world capitalist system and national populations, and their objective interests were not in liberation from this system but precisely its defence and reproduction within each national formation. The multifarious conflicts and contradictions within local ruling classes, and between these and their counterparts in the core of world capitalism, attest to the extreme difficulty of stabilising capitalist social order in Africa, but do nothing to negate the class character of post-independence African regimes. It should also be recalled that aspiring elites used discourse ranging from cultural nationalism to African socialism to Marxism, and that discourse and practice do not necessarily correspond.

It would be wrong to assume that the same class relations of earlier decolonisation in the rest of Africa are not latent within the movement for the decolonisation of Oromia, with the dual exceptions that the colonising agents are also African in the Ethiopian empire, and that the struggle for Oromo emancipation takes place with the new epoch of globalisation as the backdrop. In a hypothetical scenario, an Oromo elite would seek to decolonise Oromia so as to become the 'legitimate' local dominant group, with full 'rights' as an Oromo elite as other Third World elites enjoy in the new environment of global capitalism. This group would have as its objective the incorporation of the Oromo struggle for decolonisation and liberation into the broad agenda of the transnational elite. It would not be surprising to find this group puts forth a discourse and a practical political agenda that reflects the aspirations of a potential Oromo elite to become the in-country Oromo counterparts to the transnational elite, and that these elements become enmeshed with the diverse 'democracy promotion' and related US political, diplomatic and economic undertakings in the region. Because the mass of oppressed Oromo and their struggle are sources of the legitimacy of a potential Oromo elite, and its 'bargaining

chip' with the Habasha and the transnational elite in Ethiopia, the discourse and the conduct of a potential elite would be unstable and contradictory.

As in all national democratisation and anti-colonial struggles, there is both a national and a class contradiction at play. Under globalisation and the changes involved therein, the class contradiction tends to take on a greater quota of importance vis-à-vis the national contradiction. This is clearly not the case at the time of writing (early 1997) as regards Oromia and Ethiopia. The circumstances attendant on the struggle for Oromo liberation makes it exceedingly difficult for an Oromo intermediary elite to emerge. But the class contradiction is a condition latent in the structure of the social forces at play. What keeps the national contradiction in the forefront is the 'wild card' in the Ethiopian equation: the Oromo masses. So long as the Oromo masses retain the vibrant political protagonism they have displayed in recent years, it will be exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, for the transnational elite to pry an Oromo elite far enough away from its mass base to incorporate it into any hegemonic elite bloc. Since the early 1990s, Oromo nationalism has blossomed under the conscious protagonism of the Oromo masses,[57] and 'the Oromo national movement has been transformed from an elite to a mass movement'.[58] The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) emerged as the most advanced and organised expression of Oromo nationalism, and the *popular* national struggle of the Oromo masses has kept the OLF anchored in its mass popular base. The resistance of the popular classes in Oromia – their armed struggle, political mobilisation, cultural awakening – is the principal monkey-wrench in the US-transnational project for Ethiopia. It makes the empire inherently unstable and renders inviable the aspirations of any would-be Oromo elite. The failure to resolve the Oromo question – to end Oromo ethnonational oppression – will only intensify the crisis of the Ethiopian empire, and this crisis will aggravate the already explosive situation throughout the Horn of Africa. There is a paradox in the dialectic between the oppressor and the oppressed. If global capitalism has the power to undermine any project of popular democracy and social emancipation in Oromia, the popular Oromo masses also have the power to undermine the viability of global capitalism in the Horn of Africa.

What is to be done as regards the Oromo liberation struggle? This is, as a matter of course, a decision for the Oromo people. But it is a decision that must be taken within the real constraints to social change and emancipation that global capitalism places on each nation and people. In the complex relation between national liberation and social emancipation, there are two distinct processes that become interwoven under historically determined *conjunctures*. The interests of multiple classes and social groups converge *in these conjunctures* around national liberation since national oppression holds back all members of the particular socially constructed national community. The convergence of distinct classes and

groups around national liberation conceals real contradictions between these classes and groups, and these contradictions become inextricably intermeshed with the process of integration into emergent global capitalist society, leading to highly complex scenarios. For aspiring elites, 'national liberation' means removing those barriers that impede these elites from full participation in structure of domination, the preservation of which is a requisite for their status as elites. For popular classes, 'national liberation' is a precondition for social emancipation. As regards Oromia, what needs to be explored is the extent of organic unity among diverse classes, elites and social groups around a project of Oromo liberation, *as well as* the limits to such unity, the objective contradictions between these classes and groups, and the distinct interests of each vis-à-vis global capitalism.

We should be aware of the constraints that global capitalism places on popular democracy, and with it, Oromo freedom in Ethiopia. Revolution, liberation and popular democracy mean that people win through struggle the power to shape their life circumstances, and to use that power to improve their life conditions and collective cultural realisation. Revolution conceived as the seizure of state power by popular forces, or the creation of a new state, may not mean much in the era of globalisation, in which *real* power is located in the global system. The structural power of capital can be superimposed with ease on the direct power of peripheral states. The 'operational' power of the transnational elite as the agent of transnational capital is such that it does not take much to have (nation-) states conform to the dictates of global capitalism and its agenda. In the process, those that come to power are thrust by powerful structural pressures, and tempting opportunities opened up to them by their new location, to synchronise local states with global capitalism.

This is less a pessimistic assessment than a realistic one. It in no way implies that Oromo freedom (and the project of human emancipation in general) is foreclosed; to the contrary, facile solutions are foreclosed in a more realistic appraisal of constraints and opportunities. I do not know whether Oromo liberation can be achieved within an Ethiopian nation-state, or if achieving such liberation requires the establishment of an independent Oromia. It seems to me that there are two possible 'paths' to the abolition of Oromo ethnonational oppression: one is the establishment of an independent Oromia, and the other is the seizing of state power within the Ethiopian empire by the Oromo and the establishment of majority rule therein. What is progressive at any historic conjuncture is what advances the interests of popular majorities – their control over the conditions of their existence and their prospects for social emancipation. Under the current historic conjuncture, the liberation of the Oromo from Ethiopian colonialism, even though it does not result in popular democracy and social justice given constraints imposed by global capitalism, is an attainable goal, in and of itself. *And attaining this goal – indeed, any outcome to the current situation in Ethiopia and Oromia results in an end to*

the systematic ethnonational oppression of the Oromo – would be a victory of historic proportions for the Oromo, and a tremendous advance for democratic forces in Africa and worldwide. It is incumbent upon scholars, activists, democrats and humanitarians the world over to support the Oromo in their just struggle. To do anything less is to betray the most elemental principles of human dignity and justice.

Notes

* Reprinted from *The Journal of Oromo Studies*, vol. 4, 1 and 2, July 1997, pp. 1–46.

1 Randall Robinson, 'U.S. Africa Policy: Building a Democratic Peace', *TransAfrica Forum*, 9, 2, (Summer 1992), p. 39.

2 A biographical note of sorts is in order. As a scholar and also a partisan of popular social change around the world, my work in recent years has led me to theoretical inquiry into the nature of constraints to such change in Central America, a region in which I lived during the formative years of my academic and political development. Following an examination of the failure of revolutionary movements in Central America in the 1980s and early 1990s, I moved to broader theoretical enquiry into the nature of the current world order as the ultimate causal factor constraining such change around the world. I concluded that capitalist globalisation, as the qualitatively new historic dynamic of our epoch, has fundamentally altered the terrain on which dominant and subordinate groups face each other and do battle in every corner of the world. The findings of six years of my research was published in a volume entitled *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, U.S. Intervention, and Hegemony* (Cambridge, Cambridge Uniervsity Press, 1996), and readers interested in a more complete exposition of the theoretical propositions advanced in this article are referred to that volume. See also *U.S. Intervention in the Nicaraguan Elections and American Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992); 'Globalisation: Nine Theses of Our Epoch', *Race and Class*, 38, 2 (1996), pp. 13–31; and 'Globalization, the World System, and "Democracy Promotion" in U.S. Foreign Policy', *Theory and Society*, 25 (1996), pp. 615–65, by the present author. While I spent several years as a student in east and west Africa in the late 1970s, I do not claim expertise per se on Africa, and consider myself a beginning student of Oromo studies. Nevertheless, what I have found in my initial investigation is that the same patterns of US foreign policy, and more broadly, the same social forces and dynamics bound up with the current period of capitalist globalisation that I have analysed and documented elsewhere, are at work in Ethiopia, and are of vital importance to understanding the future of the Oromo struggle for freedom.

3 *Oromia Support Group*, September 1994, p. 6.

4 Department of State, 'Policy Planning Study (PPS)' 23, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (hereafter *FRUS*), 1948, vol. I, 2, 24 February 1948, p. 194.

5 National Security Council Memorandum NSC-68, 7 April 1950, in *FRUS*, 1950, vol. I, pp. 252, 263, 272.

6 I state this herein admittedly simplified terms due to space constraints. The point is that social analysis of policy and specific conjunctures requires that we see beyond the immediate concerns and perceptions of policy makers and the conjunctural circumstances in which they are grounded (for example, geopolitical rivalries), and focus on the deeper structural processes and relations at work. For more detailed discussion readers are referred to Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*,

esp. chapters one and two. For some discussion of the Soviet role in Ethiopia, see Asafa Jalata, 'The Imperial Interstate System in Action: U.S. and Soviet Policies Towards Ethiopia Compared', paper presented to the 37th Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association, Toronto, Canada, 3–6 November 1994; James Petras and M. Morley, 'Empire of Famine: Famine Through Empire Crises of the Ethiopian Military Regime', *Waldhaansso: Journal of the Union of Oromo in North America* (July 1987), pp. 5–29; and Bonnie, K. Holcomb and Sisai Ibssa, *The Invention of Ethiopia: The Making of a Dependent Colonial State in Northeast Africa* (Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 1990), esp. chapter 9).

7 See for example, Robinson, 'U.S. Africa Policy'; idem, *Promoting Polyarchy*; Tony Smith, *America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994); Council on Hemispheric Affairs, *National Endowment for Democracy (NED): A Foreign Policy Branch Gone Awry* (Washigton, DC: NED, 1990); General Accounting Office (GAO), *Promoting Democracy: Foreign Affairs and Defense Agencies Funds and Activities –1991 to 1993* (Washington, DC: GAO, 1994).

8 Samuel P. Huntington, 'The Modest Meaning of Democracy', in Robert A. Pastor, *Democracy in the Americas: Stopping the Pendulum* (New York: Basic Books, 1989), pp. 12–13.

9 Robinson, 'U.S. Africa Policy'; idem, *Promoting Polyarchy*.

10 W.B. Gallie, 'Essentially Contested Concepts', *Aristotelian Society*, 56 (1956).

11 There is a long-standing debate on modes of production and the world system relevant to discussion of globalisation. In this debate, one side (for example, the dependency perspective of economist Andre Gunder Frank and world-system framework advanced by sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein) argues that the 'modern world system' (*c.* 1500 to date) has always been 'capitalist' since production was undertaken to market for a profit. The other side rejects this definition of capitalism as an exchange relation, and argues that a broader capitalist world economy 'articulated' diverse modes of production under the hegemony of the capitalist mode, and that capitalism is in essence a production relation (for a summary of the debate see Aidan Foster-Carter, 'The Modes of Production Controversy', *New Left Review*, 107 (January–February 1978). This is not mere semantics. The former position leads to a view that globalisation denotes only a quantitative intensification of a 500-year process, whereas the latter sees quantitative change giving way now to qualitative change, with important implications for macrosocial analysis. My own position is that globalisation is displacing all hitherto pre-capitalist production relations around the world (see Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*; idem, 'Globalisation: Nine Theses of Our Epoch'; idem, 'Globalization, the World System'). When I refer in this essay and elsewhere to 'emergent global capitalism', therefore, I am referring to a qualitatively new worldwide situation, in which capitalism is becoming the only production relation on a global scale.

12 Holcomb and Ibssa, *The Invention of Ethiopia*, pp. 22–6.

13 Asafa Jalata, *Oromia and Ethiopia: State Formation and Ethnonational Conflict, 1868–1992* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1993), esp. ch. 3.

14 See for example, Holcomb and Ibssa, *The Invention of Ethiopia*, pp. 1–11; Jalata, *Oromia and Ethiopia*, esp. chs 3 and 4.

15 Holcomb and Ibssa, *The Invention of Ethiopia*; Jalata, *Oromia and Ethiopia*.

16 In Hans-Henrik Holm and Georg Sorensen (eds), *Whose World Order?: Uneven Globalization and the End of the Cold War* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), it is implied that the essential economic process has lagged in certain regions (for example, a good portion of Africa). But the pressures

emanating from the substructural process are felt around the world, including as they are 'filtered out' through policies, such as US foreign policy, and these superstructural changes are at work in every region, including in the Horn of Africa. This is crucial, because most world industrial production is not shifting to Africa, but largely to Latin America, Asia and eastern Europe. But the general process of macroeconomic restructuring associated with globalisation and a new international division of labour has affected virtually every country and region of the world (witness, for instance, the application of 'structural adjustment programmes', or SAPs, in every country of Africa). The sets of policies developed by the centres of world power in response to globalising pressures, such as polyarchy promotion, are applied throughout the world. Also, see the discussion of a 'transnational capitalist class' and of global capitalist forces in Africa in Leslie Sklair, *Sociology of the Global System* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2nd edn 1995), pp. 138–42).

17 For discussion on this transnational elite, see Robert W. Cox, *Power, Production, and World Order; Social Forces in the Making of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987); Sklair, *Sociology of the Global System*; Stephen Gill, *American Hegemony and the Trilateal Commission* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*; idem, 'Globalisation: Nine Theses of Our Epoch'; and idem, 'Globalization, the World System').

18 Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*; idem, 'Globalisation: Nine Theses of Our Epoch'.

19 Cox, *Power, Production, and World Order*; Gill, *American Hegemony*.

20 Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*; idem, 'Globalisation: Nine Theses of Our Epoch'.

21 Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*; idem, 'Globalisation: Nine Theses of Our Epoch'; idem, 'Globalization, the World System'.

22 Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers, 1971). p. 12.

23 Carl Gershman, 'The United States and the World Democratic Revolution', *Washington Quarterly*, (Winter 1989).

24 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development 1994* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

25 UNDP 1992, p. 34 (emphasis in the original).

26 The emergent system of global stratification is punctuated by multiple hierarchies among labour, often along racial and ethnic lines. Super-exploited ethnic groups, such as the Oromo, should be seen in analytic perspective, as subordinate segments of local and global class structures. Discussion is beyond the scope of this essay.

27 George E. Moose. Testimony before the HouseForeign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Africa, 27 July 1994.

28 John F. Hicks, 'President Clinton's Initiative on the Horn of Africa'. Prepared Statement Before the Subcommittee on Africa, House Foreign Affairs Committee (Washington, DC, 27 July 1994).

29 See for example, Jalata, *Oromia and Ethiopia*, pp. 115–25.

30 Ibid., pp. 126–30.

31 For discussion, see Jalata, *Oromia and Ethiopia*. esp. pp. 178–86.

32 Jalata, 'The Imperial Interstate System in Action'.

33 PRA Consultants, 'Rising Opportunities and Lingering Risks in Post-Mengistu Ethiopia', (PRA Constants Ltd., report dated October 1991), p. 18.

34 Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*.

35 Hicks, 'President Clinton's Initiative on the Horn of Africa'; Marina Ottaway, 'Ethiopia and Eritrea; An Update on the Democratization Process'. Testimony prepared for presentation to the House Foreign Relations Subcommittee on

African Affairs hearing 'U.S. Foreign Assistance and Policy Issues Towards Central and Eastern Africa', 5 May 1993.
36 NED Annual Reports, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995.
37 Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*.
38 Herman, J. Cohen. Testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Africa Subcommittee, 17 September 1994.
39 Hicks, 'President Clinton's Initiative on the Horn of Africa'.
40 Ottaway, 'Ethiopia and Eritrea', p. 2.
41 Ibid., p. 3.
42 Moose, Testimony before the HouseForeign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Africa.
43 For discussion of these events as told by an insider, see Leenco Lata, 'The Making and Unmaking of Ethiopia's Transitional Charter', in A. Jalata (ed.), *Oromo Nationalism and the Ethiopian Colonial Discourse: The Search For Freedom and Democracy* (Lawrenceville, NJ: Red Sea Press, 1998). Lata is Deputy Secretary of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF).
44 See for example, discussion by Jalata in A. Jalata, 'Nationalism and Liberation Politics in Oromia', Paper presented at the Tenth Annual Conference of the Oromo Association, Howard University, Washington, DC, 3–4 August 1996; and Lata, 'Making and Unmaking'; Lata, 'The Making and Unmaking of Ethiopia's Transitional Charter'.
45 See for example, Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*.
46 See for example, Sue Pollock, 'Ethiopia: Human Tragedy in the Making', *Oromo Commentary*, 6, 1 (1996), pp. 5–16; Africa Watch, 'Ethiopia: Waiting for Justice', *Africa Watch*, 7, (May 1992); and Abdulahi An-Na'im, (Executive Director, Human Rights/Africa Watch. Testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Africa (Washington, DC, 27 July 1994).
47 Moose, 27 July 1994. Testimony before the HouseForeign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Africa.
48 Ibid.
49 Ottaway, 'Ethiopia and Eritrea', p. 8.
50 PRA Consultants, 'Rising Opportunities', p. 41.
51 Moose, Testimony before the HouseForeign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Africa.
52 Cohen, Testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Africa Subcommittee.
53 I will stress, however, that nations/ethnicities are historically variable and socially constructed. What creates an ethnic or national group and defines its membership are never innate or primordial. The material and ideational processes of historical construction of a nation/ethnicity are inseparable from class formation and class dynamics arising from the same historical process. These class dynamics, theoretically conceived, are generally antecedent, and therefore causal, to ethnic or national dynamics, even though the latter is not reducible to the former. Applied to the Ethiopian empire, we cannot conceive of an Oromo ethnonation apart from its subjugation to the Ethiopian empire, and this subjugation was an historic process grounded in the economic (material) interests and objectives of a Habasha ruling class and a Habasha class structure that temporally anteceded Habasha conquest of the Oromo.
54 Vanni Cappelli, 'The Oromia of Ethiopia', *African Link*, 2 (1992), p. 20.
55 There are, of course, deep historic continuities apart from the discontinuities brought about by globalisation whose exploration is not possible here. Suffice it not note that the hypothetical 'game plan' depicted here from the viewpoint of the transnational elite would update, under new conditions of globalisation, the nineteenth-century Oromo elite that mediated Abyssinian conquest (see, for

example Jalata, *Oromia and Ethiopia*; Lemmu Baissa, 'The Oromo and the Quest for Peace in Ethiopia', *TransAfrica Forum*, 9 (1992); Holcomb and Ibssa, *The Invention of Ethiopia*).

56 The transition would be from a Habasha class structure, and interests therein, integrated into a transnational class structure and the global economy, to the conformation of an internal pan-Ethiopian class structure externalised, in turn, by linkage with emergent global class structures. This would shift the principal contradiction in the Ethiopian empire from the ethno-national to the class terrain. Such issues cannot be explored here. But note the issue of 'competing political vision' among Oromo nationalists as discussed, among others, by Asafa Jalata in 'Nationalism and Liberation. I suggest here that behind competing visions are real, perceived, or potential competing interests.

57 A. Jalata, 'The Emergence of Oromo Nationalism and Ethiopian Reaction', *Social Justice*, 22, 3 (1995).

58 Jalata in 'Nationalism and Liberation', p. 105.

4 Two national liberation movements compared

Oromia and Southern Sudan*

Asafa Jalata

The national liberation movements of the Oromos and Southern Sudanese are new types of anticolonial struggles in the postindependent peripheral states of Ethiopia and Sudan, and they aim at facilitating the national self-determination of Oromia and Southern Sudan respectively. As Oromo nationalism emerged in opposition to Ethiopian colonialism, Southern Sudanese nationalism developed to fight against Northern Sudanese domination. These two movements emerged in opposition to colonial domination, economic exploitation, cultural destruction and repression, and the denial of individual and national rights. Since these nationalisms are modern phenomena and an integral part of the modern world, this comparative analysis is done in the context of the global system.

There have been two major historical waves in the capitalist world system. The first historical wave was characterised by slavery, conquest, colonisation, ethnocide or genocide and continued subjugation; it extended approximately from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries. The emergence and expansion of the industrial revolution in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in western Europe increased the need for raw materials, free or cheap labour, expanded markets and the intensification of global colonial expansion during this historical wave.

The second historical wave was a turning point and emerged after the First World War in the form of national liberation movements and revolutions. Wallerstein notes that 'the war marked the opening skirmishes of a worldwide struggle of movements of national liberation against Europe's world political hegemony, which had been based on the latter's temporary technological advantages and deep-rooted racism.' The objective long-term economic crisis plus objective evidence of the ability of the oppressed to organise successfully made those who held power and privilege lose the bloom of arrogant and smug self-confidence, and face their future with anxiety and hatred.[1] The first phase of this second global historical wave was mainly manifested as a form of territorial nationalism. This nationalism opposed colonialism which had been grounded on metropolitan–satellite relations. The second phase of this wave has been characterised

mainly by ethnonationalism within established states. The ongoing national struggles of the Palestinians, Bosnians, Kurds, Northern Irish, Chechens, Sahrawi, Sidamas, Afars, Oromos, Southern Sudanese and others indicate the significance of the second phase of this second historical wave.

Initially, Oromos and Southern Sudanese resisted conquest and colonisation without systematically organising themselves; their cultural and political resistances have continued after their colonisation because these two peoples were assigned to the status of colonial subjects and second-class citizens by the Ethiopian and Sudanese states respectively. Although the national struggles of these two peoples are the continuation and culmination of previous resistances, they emerged from certain historical and sociological factors. This comparative essay historically situates the emergence and development of these nationalisms, and explains how the resistance to colonial domination was transformed into the Oromo and Southern Sudanese national movements. It also assesses whether the principle of national self-determination is applicable to the conditions of Oromia and Southern Sudan.

Similarities and differences between the two movements

Oromos and Southern Sudanese are under colonial domination and neither has respective national sovereignty; hence they have been engaged in national liberation struggles. They are under the total control of Ethiopian and Northern Sudanese states respectively. Habashas and Northern Sudanese manifest cultural arrogance and racist beliefs claiming that they are Semitic. The Amhara and Tigrayan peoples are descendants of some Arab elements and Africans; these Arab elements probably immigrated to African coasts early in the first millennium BC;[2] they call themselves Habashas and Semitic to emphasise their linkage to the Middle East rather than to Africa. According to Baxter,[3] Habashas

> used to stress their Middle Eastern rather than African cultural roots, as is so obvious in the reiteration of the Solomonic legend, taught in schools as history and justification of imperial rule. Just as the expansion of the European empire in Africa coincided with that of the Abyssinian, so the latter took on some of the same sanctimonious assumption of bringing civilization to the savages. Menelik and his courtiers became honorary, if second-class, bearers of the 'white man's burden' in Africa.

Similarly, a few Arab elements moved to Sudan from North Africa, Egypt, and Arabia 600 years ago and intermarried with the original peoples of Sudan; ignoring their African side, their descendants identify themselves as Arabs.[4] Because of this racist tendency and religious arrogance, they

despise Southern Sudanese. Woldemikael comments that 'many northerners use the derogatory term "abd", which means slave, in private conversation, and sometimes in public, in reference to southerners. Southerners are reminded that in the past the southern region was a source of slaves to be sold in the north and the Middle East'.[5]

Despite the fact that their ancestors were Africanised and they are also black, Habasha and Northern Sudanese elites reject blackness and African-ness and despise the respective African peoples that they control. As Habashas used to call Oromos 'Galla', a derogatory name that characterised them as slaves, pagan, backward, Northern Sudanese call Southern Sudanese 'abd' to imply racial and cultural inferiority. The 'ethnocratic'[6] nature of the Ethiopian and Sudanese states and their racist ideologies have prevented them from transforming themselves into multinational civic states that can protect the interests of all peoples regardless of their ethnic or racial origins. Oromos and Southern Sudanese have been economically exploited, culturally repressed and denied their individual and group rights. Since the movements of these peoples seek political freedom and cultural and economic development, they have social and national characters.

In the capitalist world economy, those peoples who have state sovereignty enjoy relatively various advantages. They are recognised internationally and regionally by the imperial interstate system, and by multinational organisations and corporations. State elites who get resources from these linkages and who control domestic resources attempt to suppress the liberation of the colonised peoples. Explaining the impact of the imperial interstate system on ethnic and racial relations, Enloe points that

> the state institutions of internal and external defense are explicitly and tightly linked to the international system. Because virtually all militaries and police forces in multiethnic societies are designed by states with an eye to their ethnic makeup, the ethnic stratification that underpins state police and military institutions are also integrated into the international system. The internalization of arms transfers, weaponry research and development, military and police training, military and police funding, and exchange of information all point in that direction.[7]

The Ethiopian and Sudanese states have other advantages. As Christians, the Habashas enjoy the sympathy of the West; because they are Muslims, the Northern Sudanese get assistance from most other Muslim states. Their dependence on the imperial interstate system has increased the centralisation, militarisation and authoritarianism of the Ethiopian and Sudanese ethnocratic states.

Successive Sudanese authoritarian regimes have used different ideo-

logies, like 'democracy', 'socialism', and Islam to dominate the Southern Sudanese. In much the same way the British colonial government used the native administration system to control and dominate the south, successive Sudanese governments have attempted to control the south by incorporating Southern Sudanese traditional, business and intellectual elites using various political and religious ideologies. Although 'independence itself resulted from an act of the Constituent Assembly, freely and fairly elected in 1953 by any reasonable standard',[8] the new Sudanese government 'sought to impose Arabization and Islamization on the south in an attempt to achieve national unity through uniformity'.[9] The Southern Sudanese movement began in opposition to the imposition of northern colonial domination, Arabisation and Islamisation. Except for the period of regional autonomy that extended from 1972–83, there has been an ongoing serious political conflict between the north and the south. President Numaryi adopted the rhetoric of socialism and regional autonomy and established a temporary peace with the south. Although he won the confidence of the south during this period and established what Gramsci calls *consensual domination* over the south,[10] in 1983 he returned to coercive domination by reintroducing the policy of Islamisation. According to Fluehr-Lobban,

> Sudan has offered one of the more provocative cases of state-supported Islamization in recent years because the government's swiftness and readiness to apply the *hudad* punishment after *sharia* was decreed to be national law in September 1983. This Islamization, using the coercive apparatus of the state, must be distinguished from the socio-cultural process of conversion to Islam that has been a major part of Sudanese history for the past five centuries.[11]

The policies of Arabisation and Islamisation threaten the identity, culture and religion and survival of Southern Sudan. In much the same way, successive Ethiopian regimes have used the ideologies of Christianity, 'socialism' and 'democracy' to legitimate colonial domination and exploitation. Referring to these problems, Markakis asserts that 'the language of the Amhara and Christianity became the salient features of Ethiopian nationalism, and Arab language and Islam of Sudanese nationalism. Consequently, integration was premised on assimilation into what was presented as the superior culture of the ruling ethnic group'.[12] Ethiopian colonial kings claimed that their political power was given to them by God and that their laws were God's law. According to the *Fetha Nagast* (the law of the kings),[13] 'God has appointed all these rulers and given them authority; one who opposes the ruler and be against him, rebels against the ordinance of God, his creator. Those who rebel against the rulers secure their condemnation.' When Emperor Haile Selassie was overthrown in 1974 by various revolutionary forces, there was no revolutionary

organisation to lead the 'revolution'. In the absence of a revolutionary organisation the radical wing of the Ethiopian military took political power and claimed that it was a socialist regime.

The new regime used socialist rhetoric to consolidate the Ethiopian state and suppress the divergent revolutionary forces some of which were national movements. When structural crises and the struggle of the Oromo, Eritrean and Tigrayan movements led to the overthrow of this military government, the Tigrayan movement emerged as a dominant political force in the reconfigurated Ethiopia. The new regime began to use the rhetoric of democracy to suppress the Oromo and other national movements. Since the colonisation of Oromia, the Ethiopian colonial ruling class has consistently used the Oromo collaborative class it created against the interest of the Oromo people.[14] Recently both the Sudanese and Ethiopian governments have respectively failed to establish their consensual domination on the Southern Sudanese and Oromos. Instead they use brutal military forces to keep these struggling peoples under their control.

Both the Ethiopian and Sudanese authoritarian states have been in general crisis since the 1960s because of the emergence of regional and ethnonational movements and some structural problems. Explaining the crisis of the hegemony of the ruling class and its state, Gramsci argues that 'the content is the crisis of the ruling class's hegemony, which occurs either because the ruling class has failed in some major political undertaking . . . or because huge masses (especially peasants and petit-bourgeois intellectuals) have passed suddenly from a state of political passivity to a certain activity, and put forward demands which taken together, albeit not organically formulated, add up to a revolution'.[15] Peripheral capitalism has produced new class forces in social groups, such as workers, the army, bureaucracy, intellectuals, students, and so forth both in Oromia and Southern Sudan. Some revolutionary and nationalist elements from these social forces had transformed peaceful opposition movements to peasant-based, guerrilla-armed struggles through creating and building the Oromo and Southern Sudanese national movements respectively.

The Ethiopian and Sudanese governments have effectively excluded these emerging social forces from equal access to political power and cultural and economic gains respectively. Goodwin and Skocpol assert in reference to the impact of colonialism and its exclusionary measures:

> Direct colonial rule cannot easily give way to a stable, non revolutionary political system led by either military or civilian elements for a number of interrelated reasons . . . direct colonial rule – authoritarian by definition and typically quite repressive – also radicalizes its political opponents . . . Direct colonial rule also tends to create more indigenous elite and middle-class opposition than indirect rule. Important business and professional opportunities, as well as upper-level administrative positions, are reserved by and for the colonialists.

> That exclusion from such positions is based on an explicitly racial criterion, and not education or ability more generally, can only heighten the alienation of indigenous upper-class and middle-class elements from the colonialists.[16]

This correctly captures the conditions in Oromia and the Southern Sudan. Colonial domination, political disfranchisement and exclusion, repression and war, and massive human rights violations in Oromia and Southern Sudan foster the development of Oromo and Southern Sudanese nationalisms.

The Oromo and Southern Sudanese national movements had survived and moved beyond their first stages. After fighting for 17 years, the Southern Sudanese movement settled its difference with the north by accepting regional autonomy in 1972. Because this peace agreement was reached without resolving the question of state power, it did not survive for more than a decade. Similarly, the agreement that the Oromo movement, after fighting for 17 years, made with the new Ethiopian government survived less than a year because the question of state power was not settled. The dominance of the Tigrayan bloc and its army and the assistance the bloc got from the West and Eritrea completely undermined the democratic transition. As a result, the Oromo movement was forced to abandon its peaceful approach and resume guerrilla-armed struggle. However, this transition had contributed one positive thing for the Oromo struggle – the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) has gained wide recognition and acceptance from the Oromo people during and following the transition.

Like the previous Southern Sudanese movement (the Anya-Nya), the OLF made a serious mistake during the transition; it trusted the new Habasha government and its supporters, Eritrea and the West, particularly the United States, and encamped its army.[17] For this it paid a heavy military price. The Anya-Nya integrated its army into the Sudanese army and then lost its political leverage. Just as the first stage of the Southern Sudanese national struggle was hidden from the world between 1955 and 1972, the Oromo armed struggle was not widely known between 1974 and 1991. Because of the suppression of information on these liberation movements, these periods of the two struggles were called 'the secret war' and 'the hidden war' respectively.[18]

Because of the disintegration of its army, Southern Sudan had to start a new movement in 1983. With its army weakened temporarily by the encampment and violent war initiated by the Tigrayan regime, it took a few years for the OLF to reorganise and reconsolidate its army. Comparatively, the Southern Sudanese struggle enjoys more international support and recognition than the Oromo movement. For instance, recently the United States openly provided nearly US$20 million in surplus US military equipment to Ethiopia, Eritrea and Uganda to consolidate their support of rebel forces in the Southern Sudan and to help overthrow the Sudanese

government.[19] The Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) gets support from radical Arab countries, the West, Israel and some African countries. According to Lesch, during the Mengistu regime

> Ethiopia provided territorial sanctuary for the SPLA [Sudan People's Liberation Army]. Under Colonel John Garang, the SPLM/SPLA opened political offices in Addis Ababa, received training and arms from Ethiopian forces, and broadcast political messages using a powerful radio transmitter in Ethiopia. Libya sent weapons and cash to the SPLM, and Kenya and Uganda provided sanctuary for SPLA forces.[20]

Because of the short-lived friendship between the new Ethiopian regime and the Sudanese government, the SPLA temporarily lost its sanctuary in Ethiopia; however, recently the SPLM/SPLA has regained its support from Ethiopia.

The OLF got no such support from its neighbours, Arab countries and the West. It was only Sudan that allowed the OLF until 1991 to have office there and have access to western Oromia. After the Sudanese-supported Tigrayan regime came to power, Sudan stopped its limited assistance for the OLF and allowed the Habasha army to pass through its territory and in 1992 attack the OLF in western Oromia.[21] The OLF is mainly self-reliant, and that is why its growth is slow and its recognition is limited. Unfortunately, the Mengistu regime used the SPLA against the OLF and slowed its growth in western Oromia.[22] One can only hope that such political mistakes will not be repeated in the future since these two movements have similar interests.

The inclination of the Sudanese government to promote Islamic fundamentalism is turning the West and some Arab countries against the country. This creates international conditions more favourable for the SPLM. This is not the case for the OLF. Both radical and moderate Arabs are still more comfortable with their Christian Habasha cousins even though some Oromos are Muslims. As the Soviet Union was committed to help the Mengistu regime, the West, particularly the United States, along with some Arab countries are committed to keeping the Meles regime in power. At present, the only hope for the success of the OLF is the Oromo people.

The lack of freedom, the attempt of the Tigrayans to suppress Oromo nationalism and use of Oromian resources for the development of Tigray and the commitment of the West to support the Meles regime have all intensified the development of Oromo nationalism. Despite the slowness of military success and a few political divisions among Oromos, the OLF is enjoying the support of the majority of the Oromo people. This is a phenomenon that has emerged in the 1990s which indicates that despite the fact that the national struggle of the Oromos and the Southern

Sudanese people started in the 1960s, development of Oromo nationalism and mass mobilization is recent. Oromo ethnonationalism is developing more slowly than Southern Sudanese regional nationalism. Southern Sudan consists of different ethnic groups that have been united against their northern oppressors. The size of the Oromo population is greater than that of the whole Sudanese population, which is currently estimated to be 25 million.

The objectives of the SPLM and the OLF are some what different. The SPLM is striving to establish a New United Socialist Sudan while the OLF's objective is to create a People's Republic of Oromia. However, the OLF also endorses the principle of the voluntary association of nations. Oromos have also tried repeatedly to reform the Ethiopian political system. When it joined the transitional government of Ethiopia, the OLF de-emphasised its goal of independence in order to avoid war and give peace and democracy a chance. However, because the OLF maintained its position of creating an Oromo national power the essence of the Oromo struggle has remained the same. Whether Oromia joins a multinational state within a federal or confederal arrangement or creates an independent republic of Oromia, the OLF recognises that the creation of Oromo national power is absolutely necessary to ensure protection of Oromo national interest. The programme of the OLF is revolutionary, but not socialist. In its rhetoric, the OLF asserts that its political philosophy reflects the Oromo concept of democracy known as *Gada* (pre-class egalitarian popular democracy). In the *Gada* system of Oromo democracy, leaders were elected every eight years; the system had *miseens* (parties), balanced opposition, decentralisation and centralisation of power, division of power and term limit and periodic succession.[23]

The revival of some elements of Oromo democracy and its symbolism has mobilised the majority of Oromos to support the OLF. However, the way the Oromo democratic tradition is going to be used in the construction of an Oromian state is not yet articulated in the OLF political programme. Realising how *Gada* has become an ideological expression of Oromo nationalism, Holcomb explains that

> it represented an ideological basis for the expression of Oromo nationalism. This expression empowered the Oromo to resist oppression, become self-conscious as a nation in the twentieth century in the face of intense subjugation . . . *Gada* represents a repository, a storehouse of concepts, values, beliefs and practices that are accessible to all Oromo. The challenge the Oromo face now is the serious one of fashioning elements of the heritage into an ideology which empowers the nation to achieve the self-determination that the people aspire to.[24]

Salih comments that 'the SPLM is perceived by its leaders as a national, that is all-Sudanese, movement. While the political wing of Anya-nya II is

called the Southern Sudan People's Liberation Movement, that of the SPLA is called the Sudan People's Liberation Movement'.[25] Changing the position of its predecessor, the Anya-Nya I, and in opposition to the objective of the Anya-Nya II and other organisations, the SPLM aims at liberating the entire Sudan and establishing a New United Socialist Sudan. It has a radical and socialist programme. Because the SPLA was divided into two factions, the SPLA-Mainstream, and the SPLA-United, it is not clear whether they follow the same programme. It is possible that the attempt to liberate the Sudan as a whole by the SPLM is too ambitious. According to Deng,

> Although the leadership of the SPLM/SPLA has consistently stood for the unity of the country, and their commitment appears to be strategic, there is little doubt that separatism evokes deep-rooted sympathy if not open support in southern circles. The north, too, has become less certain about the value of unity under the conditions of chronic military confrontation and its political, economic, and moral impact on the nation as a whole.[26]

Further understanding of the national movements of the Oromos and Southern Sudanese requires exploration of the historical roots of the Oromo nationalism and the Southern Sudanese national struggle.

Oromo nationalism: its essence and evolution

Oromo nationalism emerged from historical and contemporary contradictions between Oromos and Habashas (Amharas and Tigrayans).[27] The current conflict between Oromos and Habashas was continued from these previous historical contradictions. As discussed in detail elsewhere, between the sixteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries, Oromos and Habashas fought each other over resources, power and religion without one establishing colonial domination over the other.[28] The balance of power between Oromos and Habashas was changed in the second half of the nineteenth century, when Britain, Italy and France assisted the latter in colonising the Oromos and other peoples in the Horn of Africa.[29] Italy tried twice directly to colonise the Ethiopian empire; however, in March 1896 the Ethiopian emperor, Menelik, defeated the Italians with the modern weaponry these three Western powers had provided. The Italians directly colonised Ethiopia in 1935–36, but in 1941 Ethiopia, with the assistance of the British, forced them out.

With incorporation into Abyssinia/Ethiopia, the Oromos not only lost their freedom and autonomy, but they also lost their cultural and economic resources. Oromos had their unique historical, cultural, religious, linguistic, geographical and civilisational foundations before they were colonised by Ethiopians.[30] They had a pre-class constitutional government

known as *Gada*, as we mentioned above, in some areas, and the *Moti* system or the tributary system in other areas; since even the *Moti* system was influenced by *Gada* culture, the *Gada* system was seen as the pillar of Oromo culture and civilisation on which the Oromo political, economic, social and religious institutions were grounded.[31] While *Gada* was an egalitarian and democratic form of government, *Moti* was a form kingdom based on tribute collection.

Because of the serious resistance by various Oromo groups, the effective occupation of Oromia took some four decades (1860s–1900s), and during this time, Martial de Salviac estimated that war, war induced-famine and disease, and slavery reduced the population of the Oromo from about 10 million to 5 million.[32] The surviving Oromos became colonial subjects, much of their land was expropriated, millions were sold into slavery, and others were reduced to semi-slaves or *gabbars*.[33] In other words, while millions of them were enslaved and sold on regional and international markets, most of the remaining Oromo peasants and pastoralists were reduced to the status of semi-slaves through a system known as the *nafxanya-gabbar* system. This was a system in which the colonised populations were divided among the colonial settlers to produce commodities for local consumption and the international market, and also forced to provide free labour to build houses, roads, schools and other infrastructures for the settlers. Whenever the *gabbar* failed to provide labour service or pay taxes and tribute, their children or wives were sold into slavery. The system was abolished by the Italians when they occupied Ethiopia in the mid-1930s.

Some Habashas settled in Oromia, creating garrison towns and an Oromo collaborative class that helped to maintain Ethiopian colonialism. As semi-slaves or *gabbars*, most Oromos were forced to work without wages for colonial settlers and their collaborators. Oromo products and wealth were expropriated in the form of taxes, tithes, gifts, bribes, and so forth. With the emergence of peripheral capitalism the form of expropriation changed. The gradual development of peripheral capitalism in Oromia, has been discussed elsewhere in considerable detail.[34] With that development, the Habasha settlers introduced tenancy and wage labour which intensified capital and wealth accumulation. Since these relations failed to work, the military regime that replaced the Haile Selassie government in 1974 confiscated all lands and properties and forced the Oromo farmers into government-controlled associations, villages and cooperatives, thus allowing the Ethiopian state elites control over Oromo labour, lives and properties.[35] Successive Ethiopian colonial regimes have introduced different policies to extract more and more surplus from Oromos and enrich Habasha elites. These include tenancy, collectivisation, state ownership, state-controlled trade, and so on. In the 1970s and 1980s, the military regime, under the guise of socialism, funded by the West and assisted by the East expropriated

all Oromo properties through the programmes of settlement, villagisation, collectivisation and state farms. This left Oromia a propertyless nation.

> These new colonial schemes were designed to extend garrison centers into village levels in Oromia through hierarchical and militarized bureaucratic structures. Ethiopian local government officials and cadres had absolute power in implementing these centrally formulated colonial programs, and they used farmer leaders and development workers in their practices. They particularly used new Ethiopian settlers in policing, disciplining, and spying; sometimes Oromo farmers were forced into security villages at a gunpoint. The Oromo farmers were directed to implement the colonialists' schemes; they did not participate in decision making. Generally, these colonial programs were designed for political pacification, social control, forced Ethiopianization, and extraction of more produce. By denying basic democratic rights and self-determination to the Oromo and others, the regime intensified colonial policies and contributed to the stagnation of the empire and the famine crisis.[36]

Oromo cultural, political and religious institutions were destroyed or distorted and replaced by that of Habashas.[37] Cultural dislocation, economic exploitation and denial of education arrested Oromo social development. At the same time, Ethiopian educational policies intentionally limited the access of Oromos to education and positions of authority and teaching in university, business and government.[38] Despite all these problems, Oromos continued to militarily, culturally and diplomatically resist Ethiopian colonial domination.

These efforts and various peasant revolts indicate the continuation of Oromo resistance to Habasha colonial domination during the first half of the twentieth century and after.[39] As discussed elsewhere, the emergence in the mid-twentieth century of professional and intellectual elements in Oromo society played an important role in transforming the scattered, localised and cultural resistance of Oromos into organised movements.[40] That Oromo consciousness and pan-Oromo nationalism 'were slower to develop, and may become stronger still in affirmation, could well be because Abyssinian imperialism in its degree of oppression apparently surpassed European imperialism'.[41] The migration of some Oromos to urban areas also facilitated the emergence of nascent Oromo nationalism in the early 1960s. As more Oromos flowed from rural areas into towns to seek educational and employment opportunities, Oromo consciousness developed further.

The coming together of Oromos from different regions in urban areas helped them understand the plight of their people and potential of their nation. They learned that although Oromos are the majority in the

Ethiopian empire their resources are abused, their history is distorted and their culture is destroyed and repressed by the minority Habashas.[42] The nascent Oromo nationalism had begun to have urban and rural bases during the 1960s. The Bale Oromo armed struggle and the Macha-Tulama Self-Help Association of the 1960s had laid the foundations of the Oromo national struggle for self-determination. Although unsuccessful, the Bale Oromo struggle attempted to banish Habasha colonial settlers from the region. Recognising that the Ethiopian government was not interested in the welfare of Oromos, the Macha-Tulama Association tried to expand schools and health clinics in Oromia, to build churches and mosques, and to help the poor, unemployed and disabled Oromos. These social programmes were opposed by the Ethiopian regime because it assumed that such programmes would facilitate the development of Oromo nationalism.

Suspecting that the Macha-Tulama Association would engage in political struggle, the government banned it, assassinating some of its leaders and imprisoning others. Bulcha (1993: 1–2) considers the Bale farmer movement and this self-help association as the 'two important landmarks in the history of the Oromo'.[43]

> The suppression of the Oromo cultural, social, and political movements in the 1960s and 1970s and the hanging or imprisonment of some of the top leaders of these movements forced politically conscious Oromo individuals either to engage in Oromo politics secretly or to flee to foreign countries. Those who secretly participated in politics formed a political nucleus that could and did produce pamphlets and organize different study groups among students, professionals, workers, farmers, and soldiers; a few who fled to foreign countries received military training in order to return to Oromia and initiate armed struggle. The OLF was born as a result of these accumulated political processes.[44]

The birth of the OLF in the early 1970s and its survival under very difficult conditions has given Oromos the hope of freedom, and enabled them to rebuild their national identity by developing Oromo nationalism and recapturing their heritage. Despite attempts by successive Ethiopian regimes, with the help of the Western powers, the Soviet Union and some Arabs countries, to destroy Oromo nationalism, the Oromo national movement had slowly but fundamentally evolved and spread among the Oromo people. However, the Somali government's opposition to the OLF and lack of sanctuary and access to supplies and resources abroad seriously limited the growth of the OLF.[45]

When structural crisis and the intensification of liberation wars by Oromos, Tigrayans and Eritreans led to the overthrow of the military regime in 1991, the OLF supported the idea of a peaceful democratic transition. It then participated in formulating and adopting of a charter

that would guarantee basic human rights, freedom of association and expression, the right of the ethnonation to self-determination, and the formation of a federal multinational democratic state.[46] Although the Eritrean People's Liberation Front theoretically supported this democratic transition, after successfully liberating Eritrea it sided with the Tigrayan-regime that dominated the transition and aborted the democratic process.[47] When this regime violated the transitional period charter by passing repressive decrees, by intimidating, killing, imprisoning and torturing Oromos[48] for supporting the Oromo national movement, and by preventing democratic elections, the OLF withdrew from the coalition government in 1992 and resumed its guerrilla-armed struggle. Whether it is under the control of Amhara or Tigray, the Ethiopian government has opposed both democracy and Oromian self-determination. The Tigrayan state elites and their collaborators have proved that they are colonial aggressors much like the Amharas, although they too had been oppressed by the Amhara-dominated Ethiopian state before their rise to power in 1991.

Today the Oromo national movement mobilises the Oromo majority politically and culturally against the Tigrayan-led regime that receives massive support from the West, particularly the United States.[49] Although the OLF is self-reliant, it is expanding its guerrilla movement in rural Oromia with the support of the Oromo farmers. Markakis witnesses that the new political change and increased following made the OLF 'one of the most important political movements in Ethiopia'.[50] With the help of Eritrea and the West, the Meles regime attempted to destroy the Oromo national movement;[51] it is engaged in mass arrests and killings, genocidal war, assassination of Oromo political and economic elites, economic expropriation and robbery, and expansion of hidden concentration camps.[52] (In 1998 Eritrea and Ethiopia turned against each other.) In response to these violations of human and national rights, Oromo nationalism is blossoming and the Oromo struggle for liberation is rapidly expanding. Let us now briefly consider the essence and evolution of Southern Sudanese Nationalism.

The rise of Southern Sudanese nationalism

The Southern Sudanese problems and issues are similar to those of the Oromos. The problem between Northern and Southern Sudan began to emerge in the early nineteenth century. In 1820, when the Turko-Egyptian conquest overthrew the Funji kingdom of the Sennar, the foundations were laid for a central state in the Sudan and the destruction of the regional government.[53] The Turko-Egyptian rule extended to the south in 1840 in search of ivory and slaves.[54] Arab slave traders from the northern Sudan and other countries settled in the south and intensified slave trade and social destruction with the help of the state. According to Fluehr-

Lobban, 'slavery was conducted for both military and commercial purposes. The Turko-Egyptian armies depended on regular slave raiding, and the demand for domestic slaves in Egypt, the Ottoman Empire, and Arabia was continuous'.[55] Southern Sudanese people were abused by Arab slavers who sold about 2 million of them during the nineteenth century.[56] Northern Sudanese 'merchants went south demanding huge deliveries of slaves, ivory and feathers and in doing so devastated the area, burning villages and farms, encouraging intertribal wars so that one tribe made deliveries at the expense of the other. This situation which lasted for … [more than] 50 years made stable life and progress impossible in the south'.[57]

Slavery created historical contradictions between the south and the north. Fluehr-Lobban argues that 'the complex role that the nineteenth-century slave trade played in laying the foundation for the fear of the foreigner and the trader from the north, together with a belief that the trade was Muslim and condoned by Islam, laid the basis and set the agenda for north–south suspicions and divisions that have continued to define relations from the nineteenth century to present'.[58] While slavery was destroying the south, modern innovations such as schools, telegraph, a railway and agricultural innovations were introduced in the north. The Northern Sudanese nationalist movement known as the Mahdia dismantled the Turko-Egyptian rule in 1881, and occasionally raided the south[59] although they did not occupy it.[60] O'Ballance mentions that 'Wherever possible the Mahdi attempted to force the Islamic religion on the southerners, which caused hostility, and also legalized slavery'.[61] During the Turko-Egyptian and Mahdist regimes 'social progress was arrested in the south, for the same reasons trade flourished in the north, towns appeared along the Nile, and on the Red Sea. This was the beginning of uneven development between the two parts of the country'.[62]

Further, the Anglo-Egyptian condominium that ruled Sudan from 1899 to 1956 widened the inequality between the north and the south. Although the British administration abolished slavery, its policies favoured the north, where peripheral capitalist development expanded, and several schools and colleges were opened. But in the south, development issues were ignored, and there were only five university graduates and one secondary school in the south when Sudan gained its independence in 1956. Thus the south was not only economically exploited, but denied education by the British. When Britain was forced to leave the Sudan by anticolonial forces, the south came under the control of the north. These anticolonial forces included the National Unionist Party, the Umma Party, the People's Democratic Party, and other groups that formed the Constituent Assembly and took power from the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium. According to Garang 'the British official in the south was replaced by a northern official because Britain had not trained southerners for the job. The southern market fell to northern merchants who bought food and other crops

cheaply from the southerners and sold them expensive European goods'.[64] When the Sudan gained its independence, demands in the south for a federation were ignored and a unitary state was imposed; the system of southern education was changed, Arabic became the official language, and the north practically occupied state power.[65]

The Southern Sudanese resisted both Turko-Egyptian and Northern Sudanese colonialism in the nineteenth century. They fiercely resisted the Mahdist army and forced it to withdraw from the south in 1897.[66] Similarly, they opposed British colonialism and its policy of creating a hereditary chief; different revolts occurred during the first half of the twentieth century. In the early 1920s, the south began to create proto-nationalist organisations, such as the Sudanese United Tribes Society and the White Flag League. The south had also continued its resistance to northern domination after the Sudanese state emerged. Nevertheless, northern politicians ignored the interests of the south. O'Ballance states that 'the increasing pace of Sudanization (which to the southerner means northernization) caused unrest and discontent in the south . . . To the southerners it appeared as if they were being colonized for the second time. Both the army and the police in the south . . . were now heavily officered by northerners'.[67]

Grievances, such as the increasing of northern troops in the south and the attempt to transfer southern soldiers to the north led to mutiny. Deng comments that 'the conflict erupted in August 1955 when a mutiny by one southern battalion was triggered by a widely shared fear in the south that independence was going to mean a change of masters – from the British to the Arabs – and could entail the return of the slave trade in which blacks were the victims of the Arab north'.[68] The mutineers, who escaped from execution and imprisonment by fleeing into the forest, began to initiate guerrilla warfare against the Sudanese government. The continued government repression of the south and indiscriminate killing of civilians because, it was claimed, they harboured guerrilla fighters, facilitated the development of Southern nationalism. To curb that impulse, the government intensified its Arabisation and Islamisation policies: it nationalised private schools, banned missionary schools in 1957, and in 1960 abolished the Sunday weekly holiday replacing it with the Muslim Friday.

With the emergence of a guerrilla-type force in the forest, the general disturbances of 1961 and 1962, and the continuation of the demand for independence or federation, the government increased its repression on the south.[69] As a result, many southern leaders and their sympathisers sought refuge in neighbouring countries. These leaders created the Sudan African Closed District National Union in Kinshasa in 1962, which in 1963 was renamed the Sudan African National Union. The objective of this organisation was to demand independence for the south by diplomatic and political means'.[70] According to O'Ballance, 'while southern politicians in exile were quarreling among themselves, inside the south an embryo guer-

rilla army was slowly being knocked into shape by its own military leaders, and without the aid or interference of southern politicians, who since 1960 were divorced from it'.[71] In 1963, several military leaders merged their forces and formed the Land Freedom Army; later this name was changed to the Anya-Nya (snake poison). This period marked an era of particularly intense national struggle.

Because of brutal repression, many government employees and soldiers deserted the government and joined the Anya-Nya.[72] This movement faced serious problems from the beginning; it lacked clear vision and centralised leadership; it was infested by local conflicts; the fighters were not disciplined and politically motivated; some of the fighters were engaged in the theft of cattle, goods and produce, and the abduction of women; and they destroyed some villages by arson. According to O'Ballance, 'revolutionary momentum in the south was developing, but it was moving in a confused and fumbling way because it did not have a strong, clear-sighted leadership'.[73] Although the Anya-Nya became a recognisable guerrilla force between 1965 and 1970, it was decentralised, and regional commanders were autonomous. Joseph Lagu emerged as the leader of this guerrilla movement because of the creation of the Anya-Nya High Command Council which provided centralised leadership. Lagu's 'success was such that he was able to call a meeting in August 1971 of military and political leaders, at which he announced the formation of the Southern Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM), of which he became head'.[74] After strengthening its leadership, this movement began its peace negotiations with the Numayri government in 1972. As a result, it accepted regional autonomy of the Addis Ababa peace agreement.

The movement abandoned its demand for a separate army and dismantled the Anya-Nya fighters and incorporated them into the Sudanese army. That this was a mistake became clear in 1983 when the earlier problems of the south reappeared. Numayri changed his strategy and violated the 1972 Addis Ababa peace agreement. Explaining the reemergence and nature of this conflict, Deng asserts that

> the current civil war was touched off by the September 1983 decree, by former President Gaafar Numayri, of the rule of Sharia, or Islamic law. The government then divided the south into three regions, in violation of the 1972 Addis Ababa agreement that had ended the first phase of the north-south conflict, which had lasted for 17 years. The south reacted with a wave of violence, led by John Garang and what has become the Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement and its Army (SPLM/SPLA).[75]

Of course, the Addis Ababa peace agreement did not resolve the fundamental contradictions between the north and the south since the nature of the Sudenese state remained unchanged and southerners did not become

equal partners in sharing state power. 'The current cleavages between north and south in the Sudan', Deng notes, 'is the outcome of centuries of the stratification and grading of races, ethnicities, cultures, and religions in favour of Arabism and Islam'.[76] Since the Oromos and Southern Sudanese have been struggling to determine their respective national destinies, let us see if the principle of national self-determination is applicable to their conditions.

The principle of self-determination and its application

Global historical evidence shows that those states that have absolute power over their subjects are ruthlessly violent and deny them economic, cultural and political rights. These states include colonial powers, monarchies, dictatorial regimes and all other undemocratic regimes. Whenever there have been favourable socio-cultural conditions, the oppressed or colonised people have struggled to gain freedom from autocratic control or alien rule. For instance, in 1789, the French people initiated the French Revolution to change their political status from subjects of the monarch to citizens of their nation and to transfer sovereignty from the French monarchy to the French nation; as a result, the French people or nation theoretically became the sources of all sovereignty and introduced to the world the principles of national self-determination and popular sovereignty.[77] Heater argues that to implement the principle of national self-determination 'the idea of a people as a nation had to be embraced; the concept of popular sovereignty had to be adopted; and techniques of mobilizing the popular national will and giving it expression had to be devised. Each of these requirements was fulfilled in some measure during the French Revolution'.[78] Practically, however, the principles of national self-determination and popular sovereignty were not even fully implemented in France itself.

Today there are many ethnonational groups, such as Basques, Catalonians, Occitanians, Corsicans that are reappearing and challenging the myths forged by the French Revolution in France.[79] These historical problems are also not solved in Great Britain, Spain and other industrialised countries. But theoretically the notion that it is not the state but the people or the nation that is sovereign has become an important political principle in the modern world system since the French Revolution. The Constituent Assembly that came to power as the result of that revolution declared that 'the sources of all sovereignty reside essentially in the nation'.[80] The national question of whether it manifests itself in Marxist or liberal clothing reflects the political objective of the French Revolution. All dictatorial regimes have been opposed by their subjects and most colonial governments have been challenged by the colonised peoples.

Similarly, the Oromos and Southern Sudanese are engaged in national liberation struggles in order to establish their own sovereignties and

decide their destinies as nations or peoples. Claiming that nationalism and the struggle for national self-determination are 'necessary foundations of social and economic progress'[81] and political emancipation, the Oromo and Southern Sudanese elites have mobilized their respective masses for these objectives. As Heater asserts,

> national self-determination is a belief, which became a principle of international justice, that a people should have the right and opportunity to determine their own government. Since the implementation of the principle has most frequently been barred by the existence of a foreign government ruling over a given people and territory, self-determination has usually expressed itself in demands for independence or secession.[82]

With the declining of the influence of European colonial powers and the emergence of two global hegemonic powers, the Soviet Union and the United States, the issue of national self-determination in theory became an international political principle. When different colonised peoples in the modern world developed nationalist identities and demanded liberation, the question of national self-determination became political reality. The emergence of various national movements and the crisis of the capitalist world economy in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s led to the birth of many new states. Similarly, the emergence of ethnonational movements within established states, the continued crises of the capitalist and socialist systems, and the inability of various states to transform themselves into multinational civic states have been facilitating the creation of more states in the modern world system. The breakdown of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia into several states, the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa, the division of Czechoslovakia into Czechs and Slovaks, and the liberation of Eritrea in this decade have proved the further relevance of the principle of national self-determination. History proves that if any nation is determined and fights for its self-determination, the so-called sovereignty of the state and the imperial interstate system cannot stop this political demand.

With the demise of the Soviet bloc and the further crisis of the capitalist world system, some of the peoples or ethnonations that do not have national power are intensifying their struggles for national autonomy or independence in order to gain equal access to power, economic and cultural resources. The policies of racial/ethnic stratification and the ethnicisation of the division of labour by the imperial interstate system which exclude colonised peoples from development, education and professional jobs have been constantly challenged. The struggle of the Oromos and Southern Sudanese must be seen within this larger context. It seems clear that when the Oromo and Southern Sudanese movements destabilize the Ethiopian and Sudanese states respectively and make the Horn of Africa

unsafe for the imperial interstate system, their voices will be heard in international politics. Several Western countries, led by the United States, are committed to supporting the Southern Sudanese national movement and overthrowing the Islamic regime of Sudan.[83] However, since these countries are allied with the Ethiopian regime, they still oppose or ignore the Oromo liberation struggle.

The Oromo and Southern Sudanese peoples are struggling to create national power that will permit a fundamental transformation of their respective multinational civic states or to create their own independent states. The SPLM claims that it will liberate the entire Sudan; there is a faction within the movement that opposes this view and seeks independence for the south. The OLF demands the liberation of Oromia, and at the same time it is willing to create a multinational civic state voluntarily.[84] However, the Habasha and Northern Sudanese political cultures do not accept the principles of democratisation and national self-determination, or the transformation of the state to a multinational civic state. Therefore, these two peoples need to create their respective national powers in order to dismantle colonial structures that Habashas and the Northern Sudanese built for oppression and exploitation. This is the essence of national self-determination. By creating their respective national power, Oromos and Southern Sudanese can establish their national sovereignties, and possibly discuss cooperation, unity, federation or confederation as equal partners after decolonisation. While these states remain in power, because of their cultural backgrounds and racist doctrines, it is impossible to bring just or durable peace either to Ethiopia or Sudan.

Discussion and conclusion

The Ethiopian and Sudanese states have negatively affected their colonial subjects. The groups that benefit from these kinds of political arrangements are state elites, their collaborators who live on the resources of others, and their international and regional backers. As a result, the Oromos and Southern Sudanese have been exposed to mass poverty, economic and cultural dislocation, unemployment, recurring famine and disaster, war and political repression; this political repression manifests itself in the form of summary executions, assassinations, mass imprisonments, forced dislocation into concentration camps, constant destruction of farms and villages, robbery and theft, and militarisation of rural communities.[85] These political atrocities and repressions contribute to the blossoming of Oromo and Southern Sudanese nationalisms.

The domestic, regional and international supporters of these states contribute to serious human tragedies that are having significant consequences on the Horn of Africa. The temporary power and arrogance of Tigray and Northern Sudanese state elites can only lead to the further destruction of the region; this will also have serious repercussions on the

Northern Sudan and Tigray. The policies of Arabisation, Islamisation, Ethiopianisation and colonisation are dangerous for peaceful coexistence of the people. The experiences of Rwanda, Burundi and former Yugoslavia provide lessons that can help ensure that such human tragedies will not be repeated in the Horn of Africa. The international community has a moral responsibility to prevent such human tragedies rather than trying to deal with such problems after they have happened.

The more just solution is to accept the will of the people and to democratically and fairly settle these political problems; this is the only way that durable peace will emerge in this part of Africa. Regardless of what the Ethiopian and Sudanese states and their supporters are doing, Oromia and the Southern Sudan will continue their respective national struggles until they achieve national-self determination. As neighbours and people who have similar experiences, Oromia and the Southern Sudan must begin to build good relations with each other without being manipulated by oppressors into accepting temporary political advantages. The leaders of OLF and SPLM have historical obligations to develop political and cultural strategies that can build a bridge between these two neighbouring African peoples.

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5 The Oromo *Gada* system of government

An indigenous African democracy

Lemmu Baissa

Most of the Oromo people administered themselves democratically through their elected officials under the *Gada* republican system of government before the Abyssinian conquest in the 1880s. Until the-mid seventeenth century, *Gada* government comprised a hierarchy of triple levels of government: the national, the regional and local. At the pan-Oromo level, the national government was led by an elected *luba* council formed from representatives of the major Oromo moieties, clan families and clans, under the presidency of the *abba gada* and his two deputies, collectively known as the *warana saden.* The national leadership was responsible for such important matters as legislation and enforcement of general laws, handling issues of war and peace and coordinating the nation's defence, management of intra-Oromo clan conflicts and dealing with non-Oromo peoples. Since the mid-seventeenth century, the national level declined and eventually collapsed while regional and local clan republics emerged more autonomous and responsible for self-government. Each local republic followed *Gada* laws and practice, set up its *chafe*, or open air assembly, and elected its *luba* council and leaders by whom it was administered. The local republics maintained law and order and provided justice within their borders. The Oromo enjoyed considerable personal liberty and freedom and democratic self-governance as witnessed by foreign travellers such as Walter Plowden and Antoine D'Abbadie. However, profound internal transformation and external manipulation by neighbours further weakened *Gada* rule in several regions in the nineteenth century, encouraging the rise of war chiefs and undermining Oromo defence. Assisted by massive modern firearms, the Abyssinians conquered and terminated Oromo sovereignty and independence in the 1880s. Immediately Emperor Menelik of Shoa issued orders to ban *Gada* rule and suppress Oromo democracy, placing the conquered nation under the highly reactionary, exploitative and despotic Abyssinian feudal empire.

The Oromo democratic culture of *Gada* was and is the complete opposite of the Abyssinian (Amhara and Tigray) monarchical autocratic culture. For the last 500 years of recorded history of the two peoples, these two opposing and competing cultures have existed side by side and recently

have been interpreted differently when new models were sought for creating viable modern institutions of governance in the twenty-first century. The Tigrayan-dominated current Ethiopian regime, for instance, invited many foreign and domestic Abyssinian constitutional experts to conduct seminars and propose the most relevant constitutional model to be copied. The US presidential system and British parliamentary system and several other systems were considered and finally something that appeared to resemble the Westminster model of parliamentary system was adopted, at least on paper. This constitutional model, just like other constitutional parliamentary systems, created the separate office of the head of state, with only ceremonial powers, while real power is vested in the hands of the prime minister who is the head of government. The British model has some similarity to the short-lived Abyssinian era of the princes where the *Ras* wielded considerable powers while retaining the king on the throne with nominal powers between the mid-eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries. Contrary to this exception, the rest of Amhara/Tigray history was characterised by royal absolutism where the monarchs wielded supreme and unquestioned legislative, executive, judicial and even ecclesiastical powers. The kings also exercised absolute power over the lands and their subjects whom they regarded as their own personal property. The appointed judges of the land were neither free nor independent to give impartial judgment. The rule of law was either nonexistent or extremely weak.

Among the Oromo people, on the other hand, it was the institutions that were created under the *Gada* and the laws made under them which were the dominant culture, rather than reverence for the 'big men'. The Oromo generally respected and gave overwhelming reverence to the rule of law in contrast to Abyssinian monarchical absolutism. Before their conquest and banning of the *Gada* system by the Abyssinian Emperor Menelik, most of the Oromo elected leaders served only for fixed terms of eight years. Using first-hand accounts and a diversity of sources, this chapter explains briefly how the *Gada* democratic system of government operated in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries when the Oromo national government was under the leadership of the *luba* council that was elected to office every eight years. Decentralisation of *Gada* rule into different autonomous regional and local republics and the weakening of Oromo power in subsequent years are then comparatively discussed based on scholarly studies undertaken since the mid-nineteenth century.

Even though the Oromo *Gada* system was banned in 1885 by Emperor Menelik, it remained and is still almost intact among the Borana and the Gujji people in southern Oromia while ritual performance of *Gada* ceremonies continued among the rest of the Oromo for many decades afterwards. Moreover, most of the Oromo people have internalised and retained *Gada* democratic values and principles in their daily behaviour and interpersonal relationships to this day. The Oromo *Gada* political

culture, therefore, can serve as an effective foundation for creating modern democratic institutions in Oromia and the rest of the Horn of Africa if given the chance in the twenty-first century.

There is much data from historical, anthropological and Oromo ethnohistorical sources about the *Gada* system of government before Menelik's conquest of the Oromo people. Primarily, Bahrey's 'History of the Galla' is the first useful account, despite the author's negativism toward the Oromo, describing the activities of nine *luba*, covering a period of 71 years from 1522 to 1593. Bahrey's document serves as the crucial primary source which, with other sources, provide a clear picture of the organisation and structure of the *Gada* system in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

Portuguese sources in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries shed additional light on some aspects of the *Gada*. For instance, Bermudez was the first European to record in 'The Letter of the Patriarch D. Joao Bermudez' contacts with the Oromo between 1545 and 1548 in the Dawaro province. Bermudez was one of the 150 Portuguese soldiers stationed in the province to bolster the defence of the southern flank of the Abyssinian empire after the famous Christian and Muslim wars. According to him, the Oromo pastoralists were organised into military squadrons and marched in a disciplined and orderly manner under their leaders when they clashed with and expelled the Portuguese from the frontier posts.[1]

In 1623 some Portuguese Jesuit missionaries, led by Jeronimo Lobo, came into contact with Oromo settlements on the coast of the Indian Ocean at Malindi, when they were searching for new routes to reach the Abyssinian court from the south. Father Lobo and his company met the local leadership, the *abba gada* and his *luba* council. These *luba* leaders advised the missionaries to abandon their journey because the route was extremely dangerous. Lobo left a useful description in his 'The Itinerario of Jeronimo Lobo' of the *luba* council in operation.[2] Manoel de Almeida also recorded some important facts on military aspects in his work entitled 'History of Ethiopia or Abassia'.

Job Ludolphus, based mainly on sources supplied to him by the Ethiopian Abba Gregory, recorded some useful information on the Oromo during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Ludolphus described briefly Oromo customs and their division into some 70 clan families and two national moieties.[3] Almost a century later, James Bruce reported that the Maccha Oromo in Gojjam elected their leaders whom they recognised more than the governor appointed over them from Gondar.[4] Moreover, based on the information he was supplied by Oromo elements in Gondar around 1769, Bruce wrote that the seven clans of western Oromo (perhaps referring to the seven clans of Gudru) each had its own council, and selected representatives from their councils who met

jointly to elect their common leaders at a higher council. This higher level *luba* council was therefore composed of representatives from the different clans constituting the major clan family.

The Gudru *Gada* system was studied in more detail by Antoine D'Abbadie around 1845. D'Abbadie described not only the democratic nature of the Gudru *Gada* republic but also the different offices at the time.[5] A *Gada* council was headed by an elected leader, *abba boku* (known as *abba gada* in other regions), in times of peace. He was assisted by officials like *abba saa* (officer responsible for public property), *irresa*, and *abba dula* in performance of the legislative, security and judicial functions.

Among the later European travellers, missionaries and explorers who attempted to explain the *Gada* system among the Tulama and Hararghe Oromo, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, are Martial de Salviac and Enrico Cerulli.[6] Their source materials provide additional clarification on the structure and operation of the *Gada* system in the different regions.

More detailed anthropological studies of the *Gada* system among the Borana, Guji, Arsi, eastern Maccha and Tulama Oromo were conducted by Paul Baxter, Eike Haberland, John Hinnant, Karl Eric Knutsson, Asmarom Legesse and Dinsa Lepisa.[7] Their findings reveal a striking similarity of structure and operation of the *Gada* among the different regions in spite of the distance in space and time that separated them.

Finally, Oromo ethnocultural history, based on the author's interview data collected between 1958 and 1976, Yilma Deressa's *History of Ethiopia in the Sixteenth Century* and Asma Giyorgis's history of the Oromo supplement Bahrey's account of the *Gada*.[8] Based on Bahrey's document and the subsequent studies, it is possible to discuss the organisational structure and the operational responsibilities of the *Gada* system in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries before its decline in subsequent centuries.

The structure and operation of *Gada* in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries

Bahrey's observation and report was the most valuable earliest evidence of *Gada* structure and Oromo democracy. In his words:

> They [Oromo] have neither king nor master like other peoples, but they obey the *luba* during a period of eight years; at the end of eight years another *luba* is made, and the first gives up his office. They do this at fixed times; and *luba* means 'those who are circumcised at the same time'. As to the law concerning their circumcision, it is thus: when a *luba* is formed, all the Baraytuma and Boran give themselves a collective name, just as the king of Ethiopia's regiment call themselves by names like Sellus Hayle, 'the Trinity is my strength'.[9]

Bahrey correctly observed that the Oromo were a democratic republican nation ruled by *luba*, not by kings or masters. The *luba* stayed in power only for eight year periods and were replaced by new *luba* after the fixed term. Bahrey used the term '*luba*' to refer to the *Gada* class or 'party' whose members were circumcised at the same time in the *Gada* fifth grade. It referred also to the *luba* council and leaders who were elected from the *Gada* class and were in charge of Oromo republican government for a period of eight years. Bahrey confirmed that the two halves or division of the Oromo, Barentu (Baretuma) and Borana, came under a collective name when a new *luba* was formed, establishing that they were originally united and were under the same *luba* leadership.

Bahrey further discovered that male Oromos were grouped into five active *Gada* grades which corresponded to different stages in life.[10] The first stage or grade is that of children called *mucha*, those older than *mucha* were called *elman*, and those who were older than *elman* were called *gurba*. The *gurba* were those 'who began to take part in warfare'. *Qondala* referred to men older than *gurba*, who were dressed like soldiers, before they were circumcised to become *luba*. Each of these stages lasted for eight years. *Luba*, therefore, referred to a *Gada* grade of mature adults from whom the *luba* leadership, the *abba gada* or *abba boku*, and other officials were selected and assumed supreme political, military, ritual, legislative and judicial responsibilities for eight-year periods. The military role was an essential component performed by the *luba* leadership under the *Gada* system as Bahrey indicated in his work.

As the following description of the *Gada* system in different regions and epochs proves, it is marked by extremely consistent structural and operational similarities. An eight-year term of *Gada* government by elected officials, the *luba*, the division of male society into five active *missensa* or 'parties' which progressed through five active grades from childhood, to youth, and mature responsible adulthood, and entering a grade by the son exactly 40 years after the father were universally observed. Moreover, the *Gada* council, composed of representatives of Oromo moieties, major clan families and clans, under the leadership of a triumvirate, exercised legislative, administrative, ritual and military roles. The similarity of the *Gada* structure and operation in the different Oromo regions and its correspondence with Bahrey's account support convincingly the theory that most of the Oromo were under a common republican *Gada* government in the sixteenth and, at least, half of the seventeenth centuries.

Bahrey asserted that 'when a luba is formed, all the Baraytuma (Barentu) and Boran give themselves a collective name'. Thus, according to Bahrey's account,[11] the Barentu and Borana had their common *luba* or *Gada* class called *malba* in 1522. Eight years later, Mudana succeeded with membership transcending Barentu and Borana moieties and clans, geographical and age affiliation. Mudana was succeeded by Kilole *luba* or

Gada class, who in turn, was succeeded by the Bifole *luba*. These four *luba* trained the *folle* (the military class) in horse and mule riding, organised cavalry and strengthened Oromo defence and security.[12] Michile (Mesle) was the fifth *luba* who established their centre at Oda Nabe, succeeding the original Oda Wallabu.

After they established their permanent centre at Oda Nabe, north of Ziquala, Bahrey noted some distinct mobility among the Oromo.[13] The more numerous and powerful Barentu Oromo were mobilised on the eastern front in Hararghe and Wallo territories. The Maccha and Tulama divisions of the Borana Oromo lived west of the Barentu moiety and mainly north and west of Oda Nabe. Bahrey also reported that the sixth *luba*, sons of Malba, were called Harmufa by the Barentu, and Dulo by the Borana. Both continued coordinating their defences even though more powers were conferred on the Barentu and Borana forces in their respective regions. It was in this light that Bahrey pointed out the different names of the sixth *luba* while there was no such distinction between 1522 and 1562 for the two halves of the Oromo nation since they were under a single leadership.

As the nomadic Oromo spread more thinly in later years, they had to loosen their central coordinating council to facilitate maximum mobility and manoeuvrability. In fact, by the beginning of the seventeenth century, they had modified the structural organisation of the central *Gada* government giving more powers to regional councils like Oda Nabe for the Tulama, Oda Bisil for the Maccha and Oda Bultum for the Barentu in Hararghe region.

While Bahrey focused only on the central institution of the governing supreme *luba* council, we know from the various studies that the Oromo had actually triple levels of government at the time. The highest national or supreme *luba* council was responsible only for general policy, formulation of broad military strategy and coordination of general campaigns besides general legislation, maintaining interclan peace and conducting relations with non-Oromo peoples. Haro Walabo served as the centre before it was replaced by Oda Nabe, Oda Bisil and Oda Bultum. The *Gada* system was in practice a loose federal arrangement even though some call it a confederation. It was a federal arrangement because, at the highest and general level, it had executive, military, judicial, legislative and ritual responsibilities while it enabled self-administration at the lower levels.

Even though Bahrey did not discuss them, there were regional and local *Gada* councils, below the supreme *luba* council, where local *abba gada*, *irresa*, *abba dula* and other officials were elected to provide justice, keep peace and order among the people. It was from these regional and local clan councils that leadership at the highest level was recruited. Specifically, the major clan families and moieties, on the basis of their seniority, elected representatives who were sent to the supreme *luba* council of which

Bahrey left us the account. It was also on the basis of seniority of their moieties and clans as well as their personal merit that the top leaders in each *Gada* class or *missensa* were elected.

It was because of the essential rule of seniority that Bahrey identified the composition of the Oromo nation into two major moieties of Borana and Barentu and their component sub-moieties, indicating their status on the seniority scale based on the order of fictitious birth of their founding fathers – Borana was the elder and Barentu the younger.[14] It was Barentu which supplied most of the forefront leadership during the sixteenth century. Within Barentu, Karayu was the eldest and Liban was the first among Karayu's six sons, representing major clan groupings.[15] Therefore, the Oromo presidency under Malba came most probably from Liban, Karayu of the Barentu Oromo in 1522. According to Yilma Deressa and Bahrey,[16] the Michelle *luba* mobilized both the Barentu and Borana forces to rout the Harar forces of Emir Nur at Hazelo in 1559.

Coordination of all Oromo affairs continued into the seventeenth century according to the royal chronicles of kings Ze Dengel and Susenyos which Asma Giyorgis summarised in his history on the Oromo. The Tulama and Macha, Karayu, Ittu, Arsi and Marawa Oromo maintained their contacts and coordination in war and peace during the reign of Susenyos between 1607 and 1632. Before he became emperor, even Susenyos, fleeing into the Oromo from the Abyssinian power struggle, participated in several of these campaigns, carrying their flag and speaking their language, between 1597 and 1604. While the Oromo sought to use the Abyssinian prince to migrate to the north, Susenyos, on the other hand, needed their support to seize the imperial throne. Therefore, he cultivated their friendship and won their trust to mobilise and seize the throne in 1607. Rewarding some followers, the new king selectively settled some Oromo in Gojjam and Dambea to employ them in the defence of the Abyssinian kingdom.[17]

As emperor, Susenyos aggressively waged protracted wars against the northern Oromo on several war fronts inflicting on them horrendous costs in human and material loss in the three decades of his reign. Using his knowledge of Oromo society and warfare strategy, he manipulated differences among the moieties and clans to weaken their strength in northern Oromia. To prevent them from invading Gojjam, he encited the non-Oromo minorities residing among the Maccha Oromo to revolt, and assisted them with northern troops.[18] Reacting to Abyssinian pressures, many northern Oromo clans began settling after 1626, clan by clan, modifying their animal herding while adopting sedentary agriculture. Their central *luba* council, at first slowly but later rapidly declined while regional and local clan councils were consolidated. Only minimum interclan contacts were maintained through the pilgrimage to the ritual leaders, *abba muda*, at Haro Wallabu, in southern Oromia (Ethiopia).

Decentralisation of *Gada* government in the eighteenth century

The autonomous republics followed *Gada* laws and practices and exercised full military, administrative, legislative, judicial and ritual powers in their regions. Nevertheless, a great degree of similarity in the structure and operation of the *Gada* was maintained among the republics, indicating the commonality of origin and unity the Oromo nation had previously enjoyed. The local clan governments were further transformed in different ways. While in some regions they were replaced by chiefly rulers (for instance, in the states of Wallo, Dambea, Gojjam and Gibe), in most places the republican system was retained until the end of the nineteenth century when it was abolished by Emperor Menelik after his conquest of the Oromo people.

Gada among the Maccha Oromo

For several generations the Maccha Oromo had their common interclan assembly or *chafe* (open-air parliament) at Oda Bisil, located between the Gibe and Awash rivers. But, as Yilma Deressa and Maccha traditions indicate, they abandoned their centre after their ruling *Gada* assembly decided to transfer power to local autonomous clan republics to reflect their permanent settlement. Each clan was permitted to administer itself according to *Gada* laws and procedures.[19] The settlement was mostly clan by clan while minor clans were permitted to settle within major clans.[20]

Liban, Amaya, Chalia, Kutai, Obo, Nonno, Leqa Billo and Limmu clans settled close to Bisil. Liban–Amaya established their assembly or *chafe* at Goro Sirba in Tukur Inchini while Boku Chitta, located southeast of Ambo, served the Kutai, and Miaa Iressa became the centre for Chalia.[21] Gudru, Horro, Amuru, Jimma Rare and Sibu Sire settled south of the Blue Nile and north of Oda Bisil. Bulluq and Qobo served as centres to the Horro and Gudru respectively. Other major clans had their own *chafes*. For example, the Hulle clans of Jimma Kaka, (known as Jimma Abba Jifar), Gumma, Gomma, Ghera and Limmu had their assembly at Oda Hulle in Jimma Kaka.[22] Leqa Naqamte had their *chafe* at Oda Barakat, while those around Gimbi had Oda Choli, located to the west of Gimbi town.[23]

The Sayo made their centre near today's Dembi Dolo while those Leqa around Mount Walal created their centre at Tulu Walal. The western Sibu located between Gimbi and the Dabus River in the west, and between the Didessa and Blue Nile Rivers in the north, and Tulu Walal in the south established their assembly at Miaa Gnaa Goro, at Nedjo. The rest of the major Maccha clans established their assemblies or *chafes* and republican governments by the end of the seventeenth century.[24]

At the local level, each clan had democratic government. As witnessed by the French scholar and traveller, Antoine D'Abbadie, among the Gudru in the 1840s, each republic had its assembly, elected *luba* council, and officials such as *abba gada* or *abba boku*, the president, *abba dula* (father of war, an official responsible for campaigns), *abba saa* (official in charge of public property) and *iressa* (a religious official in charge of ritual matters). Election of and transfer of power to new officials was accompanied by joyous public celebrations and festivities. The council officials were elected from representatives of the different subclans (*qomo*) into which the clan family was further divided. The *luba* leaders provided justice, settled interpersonal conflicts and maintained law and order as well as making legislation (*sera-tuma*) whenever necessary. Additionally, they defended the clan against its enemies and supervised the performance of rituals at the right time (Abbadie 1880: 176).

The elected leaders convened at the end of their fourth year a popular assembly of the multitudes where they reviewed existing laws, amended some and repealed obsolete ones, and introduced new laws according to the needs of the time. The occasion was also used to familiarise the people with the laws and the regulations, especially the young, since the Oromo held the rule of law in considerable respect. The people enjoyed substantial liberty in the local republics where 'each man does what seems best to him' approximating Bahrey's earlier observation of Oromo democracy.[25] Antoine d'Abbadie further reported that power was divided among the officials of the council to avoid the emergence of despotism.[26] In fact, *luba* councillors deliberated freely to reach decisions and each councillor had the power to stop temporarily the passage of unfavourable decisions. The system permitted maximum freedom for peaceful deliberation on public issues, while tolerating divergent views.

Another eye witness, Walter C. Plowden, admiring its democratic governance, reported in the mid-nineteenth century his impression of Gudru's republic in the following words:

> Gudru is, perhaps, a specimen of nearly as pure a republic as can exist, and one that would be almost impossible in a wealthy or civilized nation, where, as interests become more complicated, and consequently justice more intricate, the necessity for concentration is soon felt, to avoid confusion.[27]

Obviously, just like D'Abbadie, Plowden appreciated the democratic governance among the Gudru. He noted further that an equitable distribution of wealth facilitated the smooth and effective operation of the Gudru republic since there were neither too affluent nor too impoverished people among them in the 1840s. According to him, all enjoyed a decent self-supported standard of living, based on a prosperous agrarian economy, under which only some influential men existed.

Gada among the Tulama Oromo

Similar to the Maccha Oromo, the Tulama Oromo had their interclan regional assembly or *chafe* at Oda Nabe (which also served the Maccha until their own centre, Oda Bisil, was established). As Dinsa Lepisa explained, the different Tulama clan families always sent elected representatives to Oda Nabe even though its powers were reduced considerably after the eighteenth century.[28] The centre served symbolically as a unifying institution for the whole Tulama Oromo. According to Asma Giyorgis, over 100,000 people used to gather at Oda Nabe ceremonies before the conquest and Menelik's prohibition of *Gada* rule in 1885.[29]

While Oda Nabe served as a loose and symbolic regional centre, Tulama power was decentralised among the local republics as among the rest of the Oromo. Each of the major clans had its republican *Gada* government, local assembly or *chafe*, and elected officials under the presidency of the *abba boku* or *abba gada* and his two deputy *abba boku*s. For instance, the Bacho had *chafe* Ballo while the Soddo had Birbirsa Tiya, Jidda had Foqa Awas, and the Galaan had their *chafe* Galaan just south of Finfinee (Addis Ababa).[30]

The Tulama clan groups continued performing *Gada* ritual ceremonies until the 1960s and this writer found strong memory among the Galaan Oromo at Oda Nabe in 1976. Comparably, in the late nineteenth century, basing his information on the Tulama, Asma Giyorgis explained the *Gada* system in the following way:

> From youth to old age they [Oromo] have an order like the order of priesthood; it is known as gada. Gada is similar to the law or to the order of hierarchy found in the priesthood. Each period of authority lasts for eight years; that is, their life span is divided into eight year periods. This they call gada.
>
> The eight year periods are grouped into (two) units of five (periods each) and are named after the five luba … They give a name to each eight-year period, and thus each 40-year period bears the names of five heroes. When they complete the 40-year cycle, they undergo circumcision and become Luba. The *Gada* are 1) Birmaji. 2) Hurata or Bilbah (Malba), 3) Menchele or Mudana, 4) Dulo, 5) Robale.[30]

Asma Giyorgis also noted the *Gada* grades as *itimako*, *daballe*, *folle*, *qondala*, *doroma* and *luba* each lasting for eight-year periods and corresponded to the grades Bahrey noticed in the sixteenth century. He mentions that the central *chafe* or centre for the whole Oromo was originally in Borana, in southern Oromia until a new *chafe* was established in the Awash valley at Malka Bollo. Asma Giyorgis wrote that the *hayyu* with the *luba* council administered justice.[32]

More recently, Dinsa Lepisa Abba Jobir has made a more detailed

study of the Tulama *Gada* system than Asma Giyorgis. Using interviews with Tulama Oromo elders, especially from the Oda Nabe area, in the 1960s, Dinsa provides an extensive description of the structure and operation of the *Gada* system.[33] Just like the *Gada* system among the Gudru of the Maccha Oromo, the Tulama *Gada* was simplified and characterised by five *Gada* classes or *missensa* which passed through five *Gada* grades which signified social age groups and division of labour. These *missensa* and grades were identical to Asma Giyorgis's observation of the late nineteenth century.[34]

According to Dinsa, membership in the *luba* or *Gada* class (*missensa*) transcended clan, geographical and age groupings, uniting its members on a broader basis, like a modern political party, while promoting loyalty and cooperation among them. Each *missensa* or *Gada* class performed expected roles corresponding to the ascending grades of *itimako*, *daballe*, *folle*, *doroma/qondala* and *luba* through which it moved every eight years. While the *luba* grade provided leadership, the *doroma/qondala* grade of warriors provided military service and were training in legislative, judicial and administrative functions, during the last three years, before they assumed responsibilities as *luba* themselves. Thus, since the ruling *luba* and the future *luba* officials worked closely together for at least three years before the transfer of power, the new *luba* leaders assumed their leadership duties smoothly and with continuity which the orderly and peaceful transfer of power afforded them. During the three years of preparation and cooperation with the governing *luba*, the *qondala/doroma* had reviewed the laws and decided on which ones to revise, amend or abrogate to meet the needs of the time.[35]

While *itimako* and *daballe* were periods of initiation, socialisation and learning from the elders, the *folle* grade had an active military role supporting the *qondala* warrior class. Therefore, the *folle* and the *qondala* provided military service among the Tulama as among the rest of the Oromo and were the main force behind the Oromo defence in the sixteenth century as Bahrey had noted in his account. [36] The *folle* grade is still remembered with strong emotions among the Tulama Oromo.

According to Dinsa's findings, the *Gada* system permitted a decentralised self-administration since the Oromo abhorred the concentration of powers in the hands of a single individual or a few persons. Tulama *chafes* or assemblies operated at different levels. At the lower levels were the local *chafes* like Foqa Awas for the Jidda which were responsible for maintaining order, peace and rendering justice within the Jidda Oromo. At a higher level, the regional or inter-clan *chafe* of the whole Tulama was constituted from representatives of the local assemblies. Theoretically, the regional assembly had powers to reverse decisions of the lower chafes. In practice, however, the local *chafes* were virtually independent.[37]

Both Dinsa and Asma Giyorgis[38] recorded that Oda Haro Wallabu in southern Oromia served as the central *chafe* to which all Oromo clan

republics had sent two delegates since the Mulata *Gada* in the late sixteenth century. The *abba muda*, or *qallu oditu* of the Gona moiety of the Borana Oromo, to whom the pilgrimage was made, served as the centre for maintaining contacts among the rest of the Oromo nation,[39] a noteworthy indication that they were united before the disintegration of the *Gada* republic.

Gada among the Arsi and Hararghe Oromo

The eastern Oromo in the Arsi, Bale and Hararghe regions retained their republican *Gada* rule until Menelik's conquest in 1886/87. According to Asma Giyorgis,[40] the Ittu had their assembly or *chafe* at Kara Qurqura while *chafe* Bullullo served the Oromo around Harar. *Gada* rule was decentralised in the Hararghe region when the regional centre of Oda Bultum was weakened and the local assemblies emerged among the Ittu, Afran Qallo and Anniya groups. The Oromo in Hararghe discontinued ritual performance of the *Gada* after they were converted to Islam in protest against the Shoan conquest and Amhara cultural encroachment.

Amazingly, *Gada* celebration was commemorated for several days at Oda Bultum in 1992 by massive Hararghe-region Barentu Oromos and their large invited delegations from all over Oromia.

The 12 Arsi clan families, according to Abas Haji, each had its own local *Gada* government, under its *abba gada* or president called *bedassa*, and had its open air assembly or *chafe*.[41] Each of them sent elected representatives to the all-Arsi *Gada* council, called the *hattis* which was presided over by an elected *abba gada*, assited by his two deputies. The general council was responsible for broad legislation (*sera-tuma*), settling interclan conflicts, defence of Arsi against their enemies, and safeguarding the welfare of people.

The structure and operation of *Gada* among the Arsi, Ittu and other eastern Oromo further confirm Bahrey's account as the Maccha and Tulama practice has already proved. According to Abas Haji, the Arsi had five *Gada* classes or *missensa* called Birmaji, Bultuma, Horata, Behera and Robale. Even though some of the names (Bultuma and Behera) were different from those of the Maccha and Tulama *Gada* names, their structure and operation were identical. Each *Gada* class exercised power for eight years which it surrendered, when its term expired, to the *missensa* waiting in line while it moved to an advisory role of mature elders.

The Arsi also called the chief *Gada* officer, *bedassa* instead of *abba boku*. Despite such variance in name, he performed duties similar to other *abba gada* among the rest of Oromo. The *bedassa* (*abba gada*) presided over the supreme *luba* council called *hattis* who were representatives of the 12 Arsi clan families. The council was responsible for legislation and administering justice and defending the Arsi before their conquest by Emperor Menelik. The *abba gada* was assisted by other officials including

the *abba losha* (title for the *abba dula*) who conducted campaigns as war leader.[42]

Below the supreme council or *hattis*, each of the 12 Arsi clan families had its own *chafe* or assembly, elected its own *abba gada*, and other officials and administered itself locally. It was under their *Gada* system that the republican Arsi offered stiff resistance to Menelik's invading forces between 1878 and 1886, and were defeated mainly due to their lack of modern firearms.[43]

Just like the Arsi, the Oromo in Hararghe had *Gada* classes with different names but similar structure and operation. De Salviac says that there were five *Gada* classes or *missensa* each of which would hold power for eight years.[44] Executive power was in the hands of a triumvirate consisting of the *abba boku*, the president, and *dori*, and *raba*, two vice-presidents. The *abba boku* was elected on the basis of merit when satisfying the law of *angafa* or seniority among the clans. Power was transferred from one *Gada* class to another with performance of a ceremony just as among the rest of Oromo republics.

Gada among the Guji and Borana

The Guji and Borana Oromo of southern Oromia (Ethiopia) had preserved intact most of the original *Gada* structure and operation when John Hinnant and Asmarom Legesse conducted their field research among them respectively. The Guji and Borana *Gada* also have many similarities, even though the latter's seems more elaborate and profound. John Hinnant found the Guji *Gada* mainly operative in the ritual field in 1968. Hinnant observed *Gada* grades and five *Gada* classes while Robale was in power.[45]

While the Guji Oromo were divided into two moieties, Akaku and Dalata, they were organised into several clans, each of which had its own local council or assembly with its own *abba gada* and advisors to provide justice and maintain peace among the people. At the higher Guji level, they had a common *Gada* council which was responsible for making laws, performing rituals and defending the people against their neighbours.[46]

Like the Guji's *Gada*, the Borana *Gada* system was an operating institution even though much of its political and military powers were curtailed after the Shoan conquest as confirmed by Asmarom Legesse, in his extensive field investigation in the 1960s.[47] Just like Hinnant, Knutsson, Dinsa, and D'Abbadie, Legesse's findings on the *Gada* corresponded to Bahrey's description.[48] The Borana were ruled by their elected supreme *Gada* council under the presidency of a triumvirate, called *gada saden*, consisting of the chief *abba gada*, the *abba gada arbore*, and his two deputies called *abba gada kantoma*. The supreme *Gada* council was elected democratically and represented the two Borana moieties of Sabbu and Gona and their respective constituent clans.

The three *abba gada* were assisted by a larger body of councillors and assistants in the performance of their administrative, judicial and ritual duties. Powers were transferred to the *Gada* council with the performance of a ceremony called *balli* in Borana, when the *missensa* in the *raba* grade was promoted to the *luba* stage, while the former *luba* retired into an advisory status of the *yuba* grade. The new *Gada* council was assisted by the *missensa* in the *kusa* or *folle* grade in the defence of Borana against cattle raiders from neighbouring peoples.

The organisation and operation of the Borana *Gada* system is extraordinarily similar to the *Gada* among the rest of the Oromo people. It is characterised by classes or *missensa* (which they call *gogessa*) which progressed through stages of childhood, youth, and mature adulthood of the *Gada* government and the old age of an advisory stage and the eventual retirement and removal from the system. The *missensa* in the *kusa* and junior *raba* (*folle* and *qondala* elsewhere) performed military duties. The transition from one grade to the next was smooth and orderly and extremely close cooperation prevailed between the incoming and the outgoing ruling *Gada* councils.[50]

Another striking observation about the Borana *Gada* is the strict observance of balanced representation between the two moieties and their respective clans who share power through their elected representatives in the *Gada* council and the advisory bodies and the non-elective offices like the *qallu*.[51] While the chief Borana *qallu* came from the Oditu clan of the Gona moiety, the chief *abba gada* came usually from the Karayu clan of the Sabbu moiety. *Gada* officials were elected on the basis of personal merit and satisfaction of the seniority rule among the different clans. Asmarom described the intensive campaigns and negotiations during the 1963 election to the *Gada* council, testimony of the democratic nature and process of the system.[52]

In the periodic exercise of popular sovereignty, the Borana like the Arsi and other Oromo, convened a general assembly of the public, the multitudes, called *gumi* where present and past *luba* councillors and adults deliberated on extremely serious issues affecting all the Borana. The 37th Gumi Gayo assembly was attended in August 1996 by a large number of Borana participants and outside guests and observers including the Ethiopian Head of State, Dr Negasso Gidada and other federal, regional and local government officials. Representatives of many foreign and domestic non-governmental organisations were also present according to Golloo Huqqaa. In such an assembly, called *gumi gayo* in Borana and *qitte* in Arsi, it was neither the *Gada* officials nor the *qallu* leaders who had powers but the whole community exercising their supreme popular sovereignty.[53] It was in such an assembly that the Arsi resolved to resist the Shoan conquest rather than submitting peacefully for better terms offered to them by Emperor Menelik in 1882.[54] Once the assembly adopted a resolution, it was the ruling *Gada* council that was responsible for its implementation.

Asmarom and the other students and observers of the *Gada* system have described an exceedingly remarkable similarity in its structure and operation in spite of the few differences in names in the different regions. Asmarom Legesse's observation and study of the Borana *Gada* system has provided useful empirical evidence substantiating the earlier studies among the Tulama, Maccha and other Oromo.

Menelik's conquest of the Oromo and the banning of the *Gada* system

There was a decline and weakening of the *Gada* system in some regions in the nineteenth century primarily due to external manipulation and attacks and internal fundamental socio-economic changes which the Oromo experienced after their settlement from pastoralism. As Knutsson, Mohammed Hassen, Tesema Ta'a and Herbert Lewis explained,[55] the northern Oromo (such as Yeju and Wallo), the Maccha and the Hararghe Oromo and parts of the Tulama adopted a sedentary agrarian culture and life which restricted mobility of the people and tied them perpetually to the land.

Agricultural production of coffee and other foodstuff promoted local commerce and long-distance trade which encouraged stratification of society and contributed to the emergence of chiefly families. Individuals, through whose lands trade routes passed, raised levies from merchants dealing in coffee, ivory, slaves and other items.[56] Plowden, for instance, described how merchants patiently negotiated with powerful local persons between Gudru and Limmu Enarya for weeks and paid taxes before moving their caravan to Enarya.[57] Merchants from northern Ethiopia came through Gojjam and travelled, crossing Gudru and other Oromo republics, to the Gibe states, especially to Limmu Enarya and Jimma Kaka. Caravan traders also shipped products from the Gibe region to Zeila, Berbera and other Red Sea ports. Another trade route from the region crossed into the Sudan through western Wallaga. Thus, many trade routes criss-crossed each other on Oromo territories and played a significant role in promoting social change in the nineteenth century.[58]

The long-distance traders also brought Islam to the Gibe states early in the nineteenth century. Islam attacked the traditional Oromo culture undermining the *Gada* system. Most of the northern Oromo of Wallo, Yeju and Raya were also converted to Islam and adopted Amharic and Tigregna languages while following the *Gada* system until the late eighteenth century according to James Bruce who reported that the Maccha in Gojjam elected their councils and leaders who administered them parallel to the appointees from the royal court at Gondar.[59]

The great majority of the Oromos followed the *Gada* system in spite of the internal social changes and the multifront Abyssinian attacks on their territories in the nineteenth century when Oromo power was divided and

fragmented. Abyssinian rulers from Gojjam, Shoa and Tigray launched their continuous expansionist wars to seize Oromo territories. Across the Blue Nile, Gojjam conducted its expansionist campaigns against the Oromo such as Guduru and Horro and sought control of all the lands up to the kingdom of Kaffa. Tigray rulers on their part were fighting to annex Raya/Azabo and Wallo lands while Shoan Amhara rulers intensified their attacks against the Tulama Oromo bordering on their territory. As travellers such as J.L. Krapf, W. Cornwallis Harris, and Walter Plowden reported around 1842 King Sahle Selassie of Shoa, using modern firearms and a large army, made three annual raids into Oromo lands to seize slaves and cattle for himself and his followers. The protracted wars encouraged the rise of war chiefs (the *abba dula*) among several clan republics and the struggle for power with elected *Gada* leaders. For instance, among such chiefs, Harris reported on Queen Chamie of Mullofalada, Butta Bunie Borri of Adaa, and the Botora family around Mojo who were forced to establish relations with King Sahle Selassie.[60] In the 1870s, chiefs like Changare Soddise of Bacho, Biratu Gole of Metta, Banti Mannie of Sullo and Amaya, Merga Gobana of Chalia and Tufa Munna of Sululta were competing with elected *Gada* leaders when Gobana Dachi of the Abichu Oromo forced them to submit to Sahle Selassie's grandson, Emperor Menelik of Shoa.[61]

Among most of the Maccha Oromo, elected *Gada* leaders were struggling with the rising war chiefs (*abba dula*) on the eve of the great conquest. Many war chiefs like Abishe Garba (in Horro), Bakare Godana and his son Moroda Bakare (Leqa Naqamte), Danno Beira (Leqa Horda Arjo), Wacho Dabalo (western Sibu), and Jote Tulu, Abba Dasa, Burayu Abba Gosa (Leqa Qellem/Sayo), were competing for power with the elected *Gada* officials when Oromia was invaded by forces of Menelik of Shoa. In spite of the division among the Oromo and the weakening of the *Gada* system most of the Oromo enjoyed their liberty and democratic self-governance on the eve of the conquest. On the other hand, among the nomadic Oromo pastoralists such as the Borana, Guji and Arsi of southern Oromia the *Gada* system operated effectively and the people also enjoyed considerable freedom at the time of the Abyssinian conquest in the 1880s.

However, immediately after his conquest of Maccha and Tulama Oromos, Emperor Menelik of Shoa banned the *Gada* system and suppressed Oromo democracy. Only among the Borana, Arsi and Gujji of southern Oromia did it continue to operate intact after the conquest, while in most regions it was transformed into ritual celebrations until recent years.

Summary and conclusion

The Oromo were organised under the *Gada* system into five 'parties' called *missensa* and participated in political, legal, military and cultural

affairs for many centuries. Power and responsibilities were broadly distributed among the population even though the leadership was elected from the *missensa* whose members reached the adult stage of the *luba* grade. The youth and young adults (called *folle* and *qondala*) provided military service and prepared for leadership to assume power.

Elected leaders formed a council and exercised power for fixed terms of eight years, at the national level in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and in the local republics from the eighteenth century. The elected officers had specific tasks to perform under the presidency of the first officer called *abba gada* or *abba boku*. The *abba gada* was assisted by two vice-presidents and together they constituted a triumvirate, called *warana saden* and served as the head of the *Gada* government. In the hands of the *abba gada* lay the guardianship of the *Gada* government and the safety of the people. The *abba gada* was responsible for keeping law and order and the maintenance of justice as well as to seeing the functioning of *Gada* ceremonies at the right time. He presided over the Oromo assembly, called *chaffe*, in which legislative and judicial powers were concentrated.

There were other officers who also assisted the *abba gada*. The *abba dula*, father of war, was responsible for leading the militia of *folle* and *qondala* warriors during campaigns and emergencies when he was accorded full powers to defend the people. The *abba sera* or father of law was elected for his knowledge of the *Gada* laws and assisted at the *chaffe* meeting with *abba chaffe*, another officer, elected for his expertise in *chaffe* procedures. The *abba alanga*, father of the whip, acted as the chief lawyer. The *irresa* (*irecha* in some places), or *hayyu* was the officer who performed the role of leading in prayers during ceremonies seeking God's blessings for public decisions and acts. The *abba saa* or father of cattle, was in charge of public property whose main task was raising contributions for public needs. The *Gada* officials formed the *luba* council and assumed executive, legislative and judicial responsibilities during an eight-year term.

The *Gada* leaders convened a popular assembly of the multitudes at the end of their fourth year. The meeting was accompanied with mass celebrations and festivities. Previous leaders and prospective future leaders were present at such meetings. At such public celebrations, the ruling *Gada* leaders reviewed existing laws and customs (*seraa* and *adaa*), reaffirmed the relevant ones, repealed the outdated ones, and introduced new ones according to the needs of the time. The public, especially the youth, were familiarised with the laws. The *Gada* system gave immense respect to the rule of law and legality and was opposed to despotic and authoritarian rule unlike in most traditional societies. The laws also provided for removal of unfit or corrupt leaders even before their term expired. The system was based on elaborate checks and balances to safeguard personal liberty of the people.

When their eight-year term expired, the ruling *Gada* officials were

replaced peacefully by a new set of leaders who were preparing and waiting in line. The retired leaders would have the advisory role of experienced elders thereby providing continuity for the system.

Gada government operated at national pan-Oromo level in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and in the local republics from the eighteenth century. In summary, the *Gada* system provided for the Oromo before its banning and for the Borana and Guiji up to now:

1 the institutions for self-rule at central and local levels;
2 the right and the mechanism to participate in public affairs;
3 enjoyment of basic rights and liberties including freedom of speech, the right to own private property, and the right to debate freely public issues and reach compromise solutions;
4 the procedures for selection and peaceful change of leaders every eight years;
5 accountability of leaders and the right of recall (called *buqisu*) of those who fail in their responsibilities;
6 the concept of supremacy of the rule of law (*seraa-tuma chaffe*);
7 balanced representation of clans, lineages and groups in *Gada* offices;
8 the right to make and obey their own laws and regulations through their own elected officials;
9 the settlement of disputes according to the law through neutral and impartial judges;
10 the concept of pluralism in participating in politics through the five *missensa* or parties;
11 the concept of *nagaa* and *araraa* (peace and reconciliation) for solving conflicts instead of resorting to force;
12 the concept of popular sovereignty where periodically the general assembly decided the most important issues affecting the people.

These and similar cultural elements are internalised and retained among most of the Oromo people who manifest them in their personal conduct and interpersonal relationships. Similarly, many of these democratic principles and values are shared by several non-Oromo ethnic groups in the Horn of Africa. These groups, just like the Oromo, are struggling today for their democratic rights and self-government.

Gada's legacy and possible contribution

The *Gada* democratic culture provides a viable alternative model to the authoritarian political system that currently dominates the Horn of Africa. Even though resuscitation of the entire *Gada* system is neither desirable nor necessary, there are ample ingredients of the democratic culture among a large population to influence the democratisation process in the Horn of Africa under more conducive conditions.

Most people in the Horn of Africa are presently suffering under irresponsible, incompetent and corrupt leaders who are denying the people enjoyment of their God-given natural rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Lack of self-rule, accountability and responsiveness to the needs of the people by government officials and leaders have caused mass exploitation, underdevelopment, pandemic catastrophe, ignorance, severe intercommunal conflicts, abject poverty and periodic famines and starvation for millions of people, forcing them to beg for international handouts just to stay alive.

These evils of poverty, exploitation and repression could dramatically change if the people were empowered to select and change their leaders freely and fairly and make them accountable for their policies and programmes. The power of electing responsive leaders to the needs of the people they govern and the power of holding such leaders accountable for their policies and programmes is indispensable for safeguarding the welfare of the people. The right of removing corrupt, incompetent and irresponsible leaders is the manifestation of the exercise of popular sovereignty and is a step forward toward overcoming many of the evils of underdevelopment.

The *Gada* political culture can serve as a useful foundation for establishing a viable and working democracy in the Horn of Africa if given the chance under a favourable political environment. The democratic cultural ingredients that are found among the Oromo and other ethnic groups in the Horn of Africa would assist in promoting the right attitudes, beliefs and emotions thereby facilitating the creation and operation of a genuine working democracy. A truly democratic government would invest national resources responsibly for the development and welfare of the commonwealth and to help overcome poverty, ignorance and other evils of underdevelopment.

Notes

1 Bermudez reported that the Oromo forces 'advanced collected in bodies, like squadrons' and camped out of reach of fireshots of the Portuguese whom they drove away from Dawaro; Miguel de Castanhosa, 'The Letter of the Patriarch D. Joao Bermudez', in *The Portuguese Expedition to Abyssinia in 1541–1543* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1902), pp. 228–31.

2 *The Itinerario of Jeronimo Lobo*, trans. by Donald M. Lockhart (London: Haklyut Society, 1984). Lobo also noted that the coastal Oromo showed squadron formations armed with javelins and shields. They knew about several Oromo clan families to the north like the Macha, Barentu and Arsi on whom the Abyssinian kings constantly waged wars.

3 Job Ludolphus, *A New History of Ethiopia* (London: Samuel Smith Bookseller, 1682), p. 85.

4 James Bruce, *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile, 1768–1773*, vol. II (Edinburgh, n.p., 1790), p. 216.

5 Antoine d'Abbadie, 'Sur Les Oromo', *Annales de la Societe Scientifique de Bruxelles*, 4 (1880).

6 Martial de Salviac, *Un peuple antique au pays de Menelik: Les Galla* (Paris: H. Oudin, 1901); Enrico Cerulli, *The Folk Literature of Southern Abyssinia* (Cambridge, MA, n.p., 1922).
7 Paul T.W. Baxter, 'Boran Age-sets and Generation-sets: Gada, a Puzzle or a Maze?', in Paul T.W. Baxter and Uri Almagor (eds), *Age, Generation, and Time* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1978); Eike Haberland, *Galla Sud-Athiopiens* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag, 1963); John Hinnant, 'The Guji: Gada as a Ritual System', in Paul T.W. Baxter and Uri Almagor (eds), *Age, Generation and Time* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1978); Karl Eric Knutsson, *Authority and Change* (Göteborg: Etnogrfiska Museet, 1967); Asmarom Legesse, *Gada* (New York: The Free Press, 1973); Dinsa Lepisa Abba Jobir, 'The Gada System of Government' (LL.B. Thesis, Addis Ababa University, 1975).
8 Yilma Deressa, *Ye Etiopia Tarik* (Addis Ababa; Berhanena Salam Printing Press, 1959); *Asma Giyorgis and His Work: History of the Galla and the Kingdom of Sawa*, edited by Bairu Tafla (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1987). The present author periodically interviewed Oromo elders in Wallaga, Shoa and Arsi between 1958 and 1976.
9 Bahrey, 'History of the Galla', in C.F. Beckingham and G.W.B. Huntingford (eds), *Some Records of Ethiopia, 1593–1646* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1954), p. 115.
10 Ibid., p. 127.
11 Ibid., p. 116.
12 Deressa, *Ye Etiopia Tarik*, p. 230.
13 Bahrey, 'History of the Galla', p. 116.
14 Ibid., pp. 112 and 114.
15 Ibid.
16 Deressa, *Ye Etiopia Tarik*, pp. 233–5; Bahrey, 'History of the Galla', p. 117.
17 Ludolphus, *A New History of Ethiopia*, p. 178; *Asma Giyorgis and His Work*, p. 197.
18 *Asma Giyorgis and His Work*, p. 347. When confronted, by 1620, with a rebellion from the nobility who, exhausted by incessant destructive wars against the Oromo, plotted to abolish the monarchy and establish a republic on the *Gada* model, Susenyos increased his resolve to divide and weaken the Oromo might. One of his tactics was enciting to rebellion the *yahabata* and *ilma gossit*, the non-Oromo minorities who were adopted by the Oromo and were settled among the Maccha. According to Oromo oral tradition, Susenyos also secretly encouraged the Maccha to steal the *boku* or symbol of *Gada* authority from the Tulama in an attempt to split the two.
19 Deressa, *Ye Etiopia Tarik*, pp. 240–1.
20 Tesema Ta'a, 'The Political Economy of Western Central Ethiopia' (Ph.D. Dissertation, Michigan State University, 1986), p. 56.
21 Hunde Daba, 'A Portrait of Social Organization and Institutions of the Oromo of Jibat and Machcha in the Nineteenth Century Till the Conquest of Menelik II' (BA Thesis, Haile Selassie I University, Addis Abab, 1972), pp. 60–1.
22 Tesema, 'The Political Economy', p. 66.
23 Alessandro Triulzi, *Chronicle of the Bakare Family* (in Amharic), collected in his Wallaga Field Notes, 1972–73, p. 4.
24 Interview with Deressa Abba Marga, according to whom Miaa Gnaa Goro was established at Nedjo by the western Sibu in 1684.
25 Bahrey, 'History of the Galla', p. 114.
26 d'Abbadie, 'Sur Les Oromo', pp. 176–7.
27 Walter C. Plowden, *Travels in Abyssinia and the Galla Country* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1868), 307.
28 Dinsa, 'The Gada System of Government', p. 63.

29 *Asma Giyorgis and His Work*, p. 185.
30 Lemmu Baissa, 'The Democratic Political System of the Oromo (Galla) of Ethiopia and the Possibility of its use in Nation-Building' (MA Thesis, George Washington University, Washington, DC, 1971); Dinsa, 'The Gada System of Government', p. 63.
31 *Asma Giyorgis and His Work*, pp. 127–9.
32 Ibid., 131–3.
33 Dinsa, 'The Gada System of Government', pp. 1–192.
34 Ibid., pp. 29–30.
35 Ibid., pp. 27 and 35.
36 Bahrey, 'History of the Galla', p. 127.
37 Dinsa, 'The Gada System of Government', p. 63.
38 *Asma Giyorgis and His Work*, pp. 132–3.
39 Knutsson, *Authority and Change*, p. 155.
40 *Asma Giyorgis and His Work*, p. 135.
41 Haji Abas, 'History of the Arsi, 1880–1935' (BA Thesis, Addis Ababa University, 1982), pp. 9–10.
42 Ibid., p. 24.
43 Ibid., pp. 25–6.
44 de Salviac, *Un peuple antique*, pp. 183–4.
45 Hinnant, 'The Guji', p. 221.
46 Ibid., p. 231.
47 Legesse, *Gada*.
48 Ibid., p. 63.
49 Ibid., p. 65.
50 Ibid., pp. 73, 81–2.
51 Ibid., pp. 40–2.
52 Ibid., pp. 302–32.
53 Golloo Huqqaa, *The 37th Gumii Gaayo Assembly* (Addis Ababa: Norwegian Church Aid, 1996); Legesse, *Gada*, p. 93.
54 Abas, 'History of the Arsi', pp. 25–6.
55 Knutsson, *Authority and Change*, p. 181; Hassen Mohammed, *The Oromo of Ethiopia: A History, 1570–1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 87; Ta'a, 'The Political Economy', pp. 59–61; and Herbert Lewis, 'A Reconsideration of the Socio-Political System of the Western Gallai', *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 9, 1 (Spring 1964), pp. 140–3.
56 Mohammed, *The Oromo of Ethiopia*, p. 114.
57 Plowden, *Travels in Abyssinia*, p. 308.
58 Mohammed, *The Oromo of Ethiopia*, p. 136.
59 Bruce, *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile*, p. 216.
60 W.C. Harris, *The Highlands of Aethiopia* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1844).
61 Interview with Blatta Deressa Amante (Addis Ababa, 7 April 1962).

6 Contending democracies

US-sponsored 'democracy' encounters indigenous Oromo democratic forms[1]

Bonnie K. Holcomb

When the 17-year regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam collapsed in Ethiopia, there followed considerable confusion and dispute over the nature of the government that replaced Mengistu's *Dergue* and took control of the Ethiopian state. The group that moved into power in May of 1991 with the open support of the United States declared its intent to introduce democracy into Ethiopia. This was astonishing news. The EPRDF, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front,[2] was the least likely of the potential candidates in the region to promote popular grassroots democracy.

Nevertheless, the EPRDF, basically a Tigray liberation organisation which had recently expanded into a multiethnic political force, was invited by the US Undersecretary of State for Africa to enter Addis Ababa to 'maintain security'[3] and was then ensconced in power. All other political groups in the Ethiopian empire were invited by this new US partner to join with them in an effort to build what was to be called a 'multiethnic democracy' in Ethiopia. Nearly all, including the groups representing the majority nationality in the empire, the Oromo, and several southern peoples, accepted at face value the invitation to participate in constructing a democracy for Ethiopia. They agreed to attend an organising conference in July 1991 to establish a transitional government for Ethiopia. Most of these groups were also drawn into the process of framing, endorsing and signing a Transitional Period Charter which offered the promise of rights to govern their own affairs within their regions. Thus they looked toward a year of preparation for an election that all hoped would consolidate their progress toward democracy. Leaders of Oromo organisations, for example, displayed great confidence in the Oromo people's ability to draw upon a democratic cultural heritage in building a just social order.

By the end of the first transition year, however, most of the independent parties had withdrawn from the coalition. There is no dispute that the transitional process ended in the establishment of one-party rule in Ethiopia. How do we explain this breakdown in the project to build a multiethnic democracy? What happened here? Taking the Oromo as our particular focus, did the Oromo somehow fail to uphold the tenets of a

viable form of democracy that their leaders had anticipated? Or did the EPRDF simply bungle the job, proving unable to implement the type of democracy envisioned by their US supporters? If so, how?

Contending democracies

It is my argument that neither did the Oromo fail to uphold the tenets of popular democracy nor did the EPRDF fail at the undertaking entrusted to them by their US supporters. What happened here was that each of these groups projected a different plan for the future design of Ethiopia. These plans clashed fundamentally. Yet each group utilised the term 'democracy' to describe their objectives. The key to understanding this breakdown is to be found in contradictory notions of democracy represented in the struggle over the fate of the social order that had prevailed in Ethiopia.

That struggle emerges as a tale of two democracies. As a matter of record, there were several conceptualisations of an ideal democratic polity operating among the many groups who came forward to participate in forming a transitional government. For the purposes of this study we focus on two of them, first on the particular form of 'democracy' promoted worldwide by the United States. It has become an integral part of an economic development and foreign policy initiative taken in the mid-1980s. Its objective, in the case of Ethiopia, was to preserve the prevailing social order for the purpose of maintaining stability and security in the Horn of Africa. This is the version of 'democracy' that was accepted wholesale and championed by the EPRDF for introduction into Ethiopia.

A second form of democracy, that which came into contact with the EPRDF-sponsored version in the Ethiopian context, can be called 'Oromo democracy'. This form was a type of popular democracy championed by independent Oromo organisations desiring to achieve Oromo national self-determination, a project that required restructuring an Oromo political entity while dismantling the Ethiopian empire. The Oromo claimed that Oromo democracy was embodied in the political culture of the indigenous Oromo people who are known to have practised a form of republican democracy at the time they were conquered and incorporated into the Ethiopian empire in the late 1800s. The form of democracy that the Oromo proposed was to be built upon central concepts of popular democracy that exist in Oromo tradition apparently grounded in that precolonial political experience. The assumption was that, since these concepts remain accessible to all Oromo, the people would be able to utilise them to construct democratic practices and institutions of self-governance from the grassroots in the Oromia region.

In the battle over political transitions in the current era it is important to look carefully at how the term 'democracy' is being used by each side in the encounter. For purposes of political analysis of these confrontations,

the term 'democracy' itself can be regarded as an 'essentially contested concept'.

> This refers to a concept in which different and competing definitions exist, such that the terms themselves are problematic since they are not reducible to 'primitives'. Each definition yields different interpretations of social reality . . . By their nature, these terms involve implicit assumptions, are enveloped in ideology and are therefore subsets of broader discourse which sets the framework of the social–political or theoretical agenda in question. Each essentially contested concept comes to have multiple and internally contradictory meanings which are given to it by specific class and group interests with a stake in its definition.[4]

It is very useful to consider the encounter between Oromo democracy and the version of democracy that was introduced into Ethiopia via the EPRDF as a battle over such an 'essentially contested concept'. In this case two distinct social formations have struggled over which of them would impose its meaning of democracy on the political landscape of the Horn of Africa. Each version was intimately connected to a social–political agenda, and each party had a stake in its own interpretation of democracy finding its imprint in the Ethiopian context.

Background to 'New Wave' democracy

In retrospect it is clear that the form of 'democracy' introduced in Ethiopia was the ideological product popularised as 'New Wave' democracy by one of its chief advocates, Samuel P. Huntington, in his book *The Third Wave,* published in 1991 – the same year that the Ethiopian transition began. In that volume Huntington argued that 'democratisation' in the late twentieth century follows a particular pattern and chronicles how this new kind of 'democracy' is being introduced to replace crumbling authoritarian regimes worldwide. Huntington and other New Wave ideologues have presented central features of this new 'democracy' as a model for the involvement and the integration of new elites from all major sectors of the political terrain into the management of a uniquely devised central government apparatus in the 'democratizing' empire or dictatorship. The type of system that Huntington and other writers are willing to call 'democratic', and apparently willing to accept as such, is one which has developed as part of a specific political strategy to introduce US influence into countries where revolutionary change is imminent. This form of political arrangement, which they are bold enough to promote as 'democracy', serves to maintain intact a prevailing unjust social order.

I have chosen to place this type of 'democracy' in quotation marks to indicate that I contest this application of the term as initially misleading

and wish to distinguish it from popular democracy as advocated and sought by many of the world's oppressed peoples in their quest for self-determination. It is a way of signalling the deviance of its usage. What becomes evident in looking at Huntington's examples is that this type of 'democracy' is introduced by the United States as part of a formula for intervention in a situation of political unrest – particularly when formerly oppressed people are on the verge of changing the political arrangements of their oppression.

What becomes evident in looking at Huntington's examples is that, in this type of 'democracy', a multiethnic group of local Western-educated elites in a country are selected and supported by the United States to step in to grasp the controls of governance with a firm hold while presenting the appearance of political openness. That appearance of openness is primarily maintained through the conduct of highly subscribed and publicised formal elections held to legitimise the transition. Huntington has written, for example, '*The principal criterion of democratization* is selection of a government through an open, competitive, fully participatory, fairly administered election'.[5] Yet the holding of elections when this component is divorced from other components of democratic process serves to present an image of democracy while camouflaging the real dynamics of the political system in formation. Therefore, elections play the role of providing the appearance of equal access to decision making for all social and political groups. In reality the process of determining who is able to run for office is tightly controlled during the short but determinative period of transition from an authoritarian regime. The elections actually serve as a diversion from the seizure of power that is underway in the state apparatus. A crucial element, then, in the introduction of New Wave 'democracy' is the process of stage-managing these elections both internally and externally. Particularly important to this type of 'democratisation' process is that some international 'neutral' body be quite publicly recruited to be physically on hand in the country to 'witness' the elections. Their presence can thus influence international public opinion and attest to the claim that the procedure was officially 'open, competitive, fully participatory, fairly administered', in other words, that the elections were 'free and fair' in some technical sense, which is interpreted to mean 'democratic'.

Yet observers recruited to legitimise these voting procedures and participants alike have expressed puzzlement, dissatisfaction and eventually outrage with the apparent contradictions that emerge during the process of introducing the New Wave democracy through highly advertised elections, including in Ethiopia. They have pointedly observed that the result is not a type of popular or grassroots democracy, despite the concerted efforts to present it as such and to explain away the 'discrepancies'.

William Robinson has shed a penetrating light on the phenomenon of establishing elite 'democracies' worldwide and has contributed greatly to our understanding of the United States' role in a sustained analysis

entitled *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, U.S. Intervention and Hegemony*. In it he has addressed the development of US foreign policy from the mid-1980s. He details how the explicit design of polyarchy (what I have indicated as 'democracy' in quotation marks), such as the version epitomised by Huntington, emerged out of the highest echelons of the US national security apparatus and reveals how it has been applied in several situations of political transition similar to that of Ethiopia.[6]

Robinson demonstrates how the US military defeat in Indochina, followed by the collapse of the Shah's regime and the rise of the Nicaraguan resistance to the US-backed dictator at the close of the 1970s, seriously damaged the US ability to shape events abroad. This was particularly true in the Third World, where nationalist revolutions abounded. The need for a new political, military and economic approach to put resistance forces on the defensive gave rise to the new formula for conducting US foreign policy. Robinson traces the birth and evolution of this new policy through the corridors of the US policy-making apparatus.[7]

He argues that this form of administration should not be referred to as democracy, but is more accurately called 'polyarchy',[8] meaning the rule of elites. US policy makers have introduced confusion by insisting on calling what is clearly polyarchy by the term 'democracy'. This usage initiates the contestation of the concept of popular democracy. As mentioned above, for the present discussion this type of elite 'democracy' or polyarchy is indicated by quotation marks to identify this application of the term as distinct from popular democracy. As becomes clearer below, the confusion over the term 'democracy' itself is part of the struggle over the political outcome.

The strategy of Third Wave 'democratisation' was put into place at the time that the phenomenon of globalisation was taking off, the considerable and rapid changes that have taken place in the world from the mid-1980s to the present. The creation of a global economic order introduced the globalisation of communication, of currency and of the labour force itself. This economic change also forced the systematisation of politics leading to the need for a new global political order as well. Consequently, the old nation-state boundaries are shrinking in significance. Global finance has created a reality in which 20 per cent of the population of First World countries owns and controls the vast majority of the resources of the globe.[9] A marked feature of globalisation is that this highly privileged 20 per cent in the First World has recently begun to share its status with tiny percentages of the populations in Second and Third World countries to constitute a group of transnational ruling elites who are the decision-making members of a shrinking global village. The new global order is in the process of creating conditions where these ruling elites will meet no significant boundaries to investment. The strategy of Third Wave 'democratisation' is that economic conditions thought to be favourable to this order are preserved where they once existed under US-backed authorit-

arian regimes, or implemented where they were lacking, by the promotion of polyarchy or elite democracy. It is a policy designed for intervention in areas where popular unrest is bringing down dictatorships. The idea behind it is that through the introduction of polyarchy the peripheral regions may be more tightly integrated into the global system.

Social elements that were once called the old 'compradore' and 'national bourgeoisies' are being gradually absorbed into this new transnational ruling class. And that incorporation of old elites into a global class is occurring simultaneously with the emergence of a new privileged and Westernised group of functionaries or managers who have been attracted to the economic and administrative centres created by the global economy. A close look at these global processes throughout the late 1980s and 1990s reveals that the world has gradually become separated into three broadly identifiable groups – an organised global ruling class, a fairly disorganised group of Western-educated administrative functionaries, and a massive global working class.

The introduction of the model of Third Wave 'democracy' aims at stemming the tide of popular unrest that has swelled under the injustice and inequality of authoritarian regimes – both those supported by the United States, or in the 1990s, by the Soviet Union. The strategy is that this can be accomplished by integrating the new category of 'functionaries' into governing and administrative positions in those countries. The functionaries are made up of the products of Western educational, religious and business training institutions who constitute the trained, managing sectors of peripheral Third World countries. These are the privileged few beneficiaries of a 'modern' Western-oriented education which has provided them with language, business and social skills as well as economic opportunities that render them elites in relation to the populations into which they were born. Whether the members of this group receive their education in the West or at educational institutions established on a Western model in the Third World, they are distinguished by the language and orientation acquired in the socialisation that a Western-style education imposes. Education on a Western model was established throughout the Third World as part of the 'modernisation' programme of the twentieth century. We will refer to the graduates or products of these institutions as 'Western-educated' or 'Westernised'. Since the mid-1980s the 'promotion of democracy' programme of the United States has targeted these new transnational functionaries for participation in what they call a new political venture of 'rebuilding' after the demise of an oppressive regime. The purpose of this 'rebuilding' is to put in place an apparatus which preserves the old economic arrangements that had benefitted capital investment under the authoritarian regime and thus prevent the popular forces from successfully altering the social order.

The processes of consolidating a global economy have created conditions for formerly isolated groups of localised Westernised managers,

administrators and intellectuals from different ethnic groups to come together, to share experience and to communicate, at least tentatively, based on Western culture. Their shared knowledge of the English language, and their social and educational skills as well as their acquired tastes for Western products (for example, blue jeans, television and Western music) have already begun to isolate them from their divergent populations of origin and provided a basis for the possibility of their uniting as a Western-oriented and Western-influenced group. The new policy of 'democracy promotion' has relied upon the strength of Western thought and influence to determine the direction and behaviour of this group, placing upon their shoulders the responsibility of protecting US interests. But, in reality, the strength of the Western influence remained to be tested in the crucible of the New Wave 'democratisation.'

The new 'democracy' or elite democracy has been crafted as a means to establish US hegemony globally by relying on the participation of the new transnational functionaries. What relatively isolated witnesses have been observing, on a case by case basis around the world is the formal abandonment of the old US policy of direct military intervention, recognition of the victors in a 'coup', or support of authoritarian regimes in favour of the introduction and development of its replacement policy, 'promoting democracy', as the preferred form of political intervention on the global level. This type of intervention is formally declared to be the introduction of 'democracy' and promoted as such. In fact, however, instead of a popular democracy a polyarchy is instituted, a carefully curtailed system in which a tiny group of transnational Westernised functionaries friendly to the United States actually governs. A crucial element of this approach is that mass participation in government and decision making is effectively prevented. This works by strictly limiting the participation of the masses to leadership choice between competing individuals from this select functionary group in highly publicised and carefully managed elections. The political strategies associated with the new 'democracy' have been put forward in an effort to develop and protect the environment for investment and the maximisation of profit of transnational ruling elites, now formed out of the traditional 20 per cent of the First World population together with their new Second and Third World cohorts.

The fact that it took some time for observers and participants in the Ethiopian transition to conclude that the form of 'democracy' advocated by the United States and adopted by the EPRDF was not a form of popular democracy was a measure of the success of the US strategy. The confusion introduced by the United States acknowledging the aspirations for democracy among the oppressed bought considerable time for gaining control of the central instruments of the state.

The strategy for 'democracy promotion' is based in great measure on the assumption that the United States will be able to control, or at least exert significant influence over, the group of Westernised functionaries

that they select for placement in each of the locations that has been targeted for 'democracy'. They further assume that this approach will introduce stability in any particular country by way of these elites' ability to exert control and influence over the sizeable working populations into which they were born, populations that help to comprise the vast labour force which collectively represents well over 80 per cent of global society.

The nature and composition of both the Westernised group and the working populations become quite important in assessing the potential for success of this strategy. The composition changes from continent to continent, from dictatorship to dictatorship and from empire to empire depending on the particular histories and experiences of each group with the oppressive regime. By virtue of their training, the group of functionaries is primarily composed of urban-dwelling persons who, in the process of education and separate residence, have become isolated from the rural populations from which they came, and who have been prepared and equipped, through their education in Western-designed institutions, to serve in administrative and management roles in business and/or government. It is assumed that because they aspire to elite status they will respond quickly to opportunities made available to them in a system of government based on a model of power sharing, especially one directly introduced or supported by the United States. US strategists have assumed three things about these Western-influenced individuals 1) that even though they come from different backgrounds, they share a similar outlook; 2) that they will respond to US influence and pressure particularly if they are offered employment and position; and 3) that they have strong directive links with the working populations from which they come which will enable them to provide an adequate measure of control over the labouring masses in their respective regions.

Although these are only a few of the assumptions upon which the strategy is built, they are crucial ones. Yet the assumptions are seriously flawed, particularly for Africa, as we shall discuss below. The political architects of the new 'democracy' promotion have constructed in transitional societies worldwide 'democratic' administrative structures designed to be operated by a locally recruited Western-educated managerial and intellectual elite corps. This model requires the corps to serve in an infrastructure that is intended to provide the necessary stability for that megastate or global state. The key to this stability, however, lies in the extent of a shared outlook among elites and the presumed cooperation, or at least the quiescence, of the bulk of the huge working population (the remaining 80 per cent referred to above) who, it is assumed, will be mollified by the knowledge that elites from their nation hold positions in government that might potentially serve their interests.

What is not taken adequately into account in this strategy is that the nature and the strength of the connection among these new management elites and the strength of the connection between them and the working

peoples among whom they were born varies greatly according to the specific circumstances and history of the society in question. The approach of 'democracy promotion' tends to overlook the reality that this group of Western-influenced functionaries is particularly tiny and volatile in Africa. The extent of Western influence on the members of these recently privileged functionary groups can be quite tentative and superficial. The strategy also underestimates the powerful hold that their cultural and social backgrounds can have on members of this group. Also, since their collective interests as a class are not well consolidated, they tend to be divided and subject to infighting.

Concern about the possibility of rebellion among the majority working populations is what lurks behind the political strategy of the new 'democratisation' with its explicit focus on political 'stability'. In the past, conflicts among Western-trained functionaries of Third World nations for control of the state apparatus have been regarded as a great threat to investment and stability worldwide, primarily because they were thought to indicate deeper contradictions that exist society-wide. It is assumed that potential conflicts among the selected elites from a wide range of backgrounds who are invited to share in the multi-ethnic 'democracy' project represent such real or potential clashes among the wider populations. Rallying their popular power base behind them, they could potentially seize the state apparatus. The New Wave 'democracy' brings educated persons from various conflict-prone populations into government because government is the arena where the transnational ruling class assumes it can exert considerable sway. Two assumptions underlie the strategy for containing and controlling in the vice of the state these restive members, and by extension, their home populations. First, these managerial elites must actively embrace Western mores and modes of government, and second, power and influence must flow outward from the functionary group to their home populations rather than in the reverse direction.

US 'democracy promotion' in Ethiopia

Events in the northeast African corner of the globe reveal that Ethiopia indeed represents a case study of this US 'democracy promotion' strategy of intervention. The drama played out in the Horn of Africa between differing visions for democracy is another example of the ongoing worldwide effort by the United States to quell popular aspirations by constructing political and social institutional arrangements to accommodate the needs of corporate investment globally.

It is clear that US agencies operating in northeast Africa chose to support a group in Ethiopia who would ally with them and assist in the fabrication of a 'democratic' framework as designed and guided by US policy makers. Key to the selection of a Tigray group by the United States was the extent to which the TPLF (Tigrayan People's Liberation Front)-

cum-EPRDF formed an elite willing to offer US corporations access to resources within the empire that the Tigray elite (EPRDF) also sought to control. On this point the US and TPLF/EPRDF interests converged neatly. Another issue was whether the Tigray as EPRDF were willing to perform the function of servicing corporate institutional needs locally and regionally. A third factor was the TPLF/EPRDF willingness to adopt the 'multi-ethnic' approach to governance that is central to US policy. The Tigray/EPRDF were extremely accommodating in all regards. The acceptance by Tigray elites of this version of 'democracy' was swift.

It should be noted here that in *The Invention of Ethiopia: the Making of a Dependent Colonial Empire in Northeast Africa* – published the year before this transition took place – we presented two points that explain this natural collusion between the United States and the Tigray-dominated organisation, EPRDF.[10]

The first point was that the Ethiopian state itself was originally created by a partnership between Christian Abyssinians desiring to control the resources of the peoples who surrounded them and western Europeans seeking to protect the interests of global capital in northeast Africa. The institutional arrangements of a colonial state were initially constructed there to protect the interests of each of these parties. We wrote then,

> the basic paradigm that gives shape to the [Ethiopian] state by creating the categories around which the state is organized, is predominantly that of the European capitalists. The representatives of capitalism were not only influential in fashioning the state but also took an active role in advising during its development and refinement. The ideological underpinning is embodied in the hierarchical model in which control is assured by a centralized bureaucracy that extracts value and ensures compliance from all populations within its domain. The Ethiopian colonial mythology strives to obscure the fact that the state is a European–Abyssinian hybrid and that an imported design lies at the center of the empire's formula for control.[11]

As the current defender of global capitalism, it is to be expected that the United States has intervened to protect a state structure that was originally designed to serve the interests of capital in that corner of the world and has yet to be reconfigured.

The second point was that during the military clashes that helped bring down the *Dergue*, the groups who positioned themselves against Mengistu's *Dergue* regime held fundamentally different objectives in seeking the end of that government. On the one hand were resistance movements among peoples like the Oromo whose nations had been conquered and colonised by Ethiopia. These desired liberation, that is, to dismantle the structure of the empire that held them in subjugation. On the other hand were the opposition groups like the Tigray whose fellow

Abyssinians had wrested control of Ethiopia from them and had subordinated them as second-class citizens. We said at that time that the Tigray people 'claimed historical responsibility to seize the state power of Ethiopia'.[12] They sought to govern a unified Ethiopia with its institutional arrangements intact.

US policy makers seeking continuity in the Horn of Africa found that an organisation of Westernised Tigray elites, regardless of its so-called 'Stalinist' organisation style, proved to be a natural partner in the quest to maintain the prevailing institutions in Ethiopia in any name, even the name of capitalist-style 'democracy'. Neither then did it appear inconsistent that once US strategists held out the prospect of implementing a type of 'democracy' that provided no opportunity for the popular democracy of the liberation movements to take root, Tigray 'Marxist-Leninists' easily embraced their new status as elite 'democrats'. The collusion of these two parties was entirely consistent with the interests of each to preserve Ethiopia and to suppress the efforts of those who sought to change it.

Following their efforts at 'democratisation' in the Philippines, Chile, Nicaragua and Haiti, representatives of precisely the same branches of US foreign policy apparatus arrived in northeast Africa to implement their 'democracy promotion' programme in the Ethiopian venue by coaching the EPRDF in the appropriate procedures. Many of the major institutional and individual players in these foreign policy organs appeared on the scene, often in person, to carry forward the Ethiopian experiment. In fact, Meles Zenawi, newly established head of the 'democratic' Ethiopian state, himself had prepared himself for the job at hand by reading *The Third Wave.* He invited its author, Samuel P. Huntington, ideologue for this new democracy movement, to meet with him personally. Huntington did sit down with him in Ethiopia and reported part of their discussion in a paper delivered to USAID/Ethiopia on 17 May 1993.[13] Huntington provided Meles with a menu of 'democratic' choices with which they together might characterise and legitimise the type of 'democracy' imposed upon Ethiopia. Huntington suggested that Ethiopia represented an opportunity to develop a 'peasant-based, dominant-party democracy'. The meeting of these two men symbolizes the coming together of a massive US-led movement to introduce a specifically tailored design for an elite democracy and a representative of the local elite group more than willing formally to put aside any previous political principles in order to be tutored in how to accomplish the seemingly insurmountable challenge of 'democratising' an empire. It happened that the objectives of the Tigray elites matched quite well with those of the United States. Neither desired to encourage popular democracy. Both saw the independent groups as outside their control and therefore as sources of 'instability'. They feared the power that could be unleashed to shake the foundations of the existing state. Each had a stake in the perceived 'stability' of the Ethiopian state institutions. Consequently, Tigray elites were able to operate easily in consort with inter-

national policy planning institutes, US agencies, and academic circuits linked to the policy-making process.

In each setting where institutional arrangements of elite democracy are introduced, their effect is to deflect, disarm and disassemble movements for popular democracy or popular aspirations for democracy. Popular democracy here refers to a system designed to empower participants to make decisions about their immediate living conditions, establish institutions to manage their own affairs, redistribute material resources to serve the needs of the labouring people, bring together social, political and economic dimensions of their lives, and direct government from the base of the population upward and outward through participatory representation. Since the polyarchy or elite democracy interposed by the United States is specifically charted and equipped to enhance the investment environment of transnational and corporate concerns by preserving the conditions of creating value through inequity, it is designed to undermine movements to develop popular democracy wherever it is introduced. Plans of the global ruling elite to implement a 'democracy' that ensures local labour and resources will remain in subordinate position within the state clash fundamentally with the plans of the indigenous popular movements to implement a democracy that will alter the relations of production by empowering the labouring people. The two designs and the opposed interpretations prove to be incompatible. In the Ethiopian case, the discrepancy in interests and design was revealed within a relatively short time frame.

With these distinctions in mind between elite and popular democracies, let us interpret the events of the first year of transition to 'democracy' in Ethiopia. It has been stated that the EPRDF appeared to be an unlikely candidate to introduce democracy into Ethiopia. That was the case only if popular democracy was the desired objective. Clearly the type of 'democracy' which the US Assistant Secretary Cohen announced for Ethiopia was not the popular grassroots version planned by the Oromo and other peoples of the region. In fact, the Oromo liberation fronts had chosen openly to champion specific components of popular democracy identified with Oromo cultural practices that dated back to a preconquest, pre-Ethiopian *Gada* system of government. Had popular democracy indeed been the US goal for Ethiopia, the democratic credentials of the Oromo organisations might have been favourably regarded, even embraced, by US policy makers. However, once the US strategists had secured their partners and the US-backed EPRDF group had moved into place in Ethiopia, a strategy began to unfold that systematically repressed the popular movements in the country while providing the appearance of 'democratisation'. The strategy attempted to frustrate and isolate the leaders of the popular movements from the base of their population. Independent organisations, in spite of their advocacy of democracy – probably because of it – were subjected to a policy in which they began to

be shoved aside. First they were regarded with suspicion, then reviled and finally labelled as 'disruptive', 'subversive' and eventually even as 'terrorist'. Furthermore, the symbols, slogans, colours and songs which championed Oromo popular democracy became suspect. Individuals associated with these groups began to be arrested or killed. Independent parties were specifically targeted for elimination and replacement. As we shall see, this process took less than a year.

In the Ethiopian case, the EPRDF qualified as a particularly appropriate agent for the job of embracing and promoting the US version of democracy. EPRDF constituted a set of educated managerial elites, primarily of Tigray background who were responsive to US directives, eager to gather around them ambitious elites from surrounding ethnic groups, and aspiring to manage an empire that they had been competing to control, not to change. Tigray nationals collectively have long regarded the prospect of Tigray ascendency to state power in Ethiopia as a justifiable 'reinstatement' of the Tigray nation to the rightful position it held prior to its forcible suppression by the Amhara. Given this interest of Tigray nationals in being established at the pinnacle of the Ethiopian state and the willingness of its leaders publicly to abandon former political postures to attain assistance in achieving this goal, its national liberation front, TPLF, stood ready to do US bidding. TPLF leaders began to develop a relationship with US agencies in the last years of military struggle with the *Dergue*, while the United States was seeking avenues of influence in the region. During this period whatever suspicion or antipathy might have been expected between 'Stalinists' and 'Imperialists' apparently evaporated.

In preparation for assuming the leading role in Ethiopia, TPLF accepted assistance and drew upon extensive advice from US consultants to build up its credentials as a multiethnic force. It transformed itself into the 'Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front' by creating a set of shadow institutions called Peoples Democratic Organizations' (PDOs). When this approach was first attempted in the late 1980s a call was issued for Oromo 'democrats' to accept TPLF leadership in the building of an Ethiopian 'united front'. No educated Oromo individual from any independent Oromo organisations came forward to accept the call. Appeals for volunteers from other nationalities also fell on deaf ears. Undaunted, TPLF began to recruit prisoners of war of every nationality taken from the defeated army of the *Dergue* to fill the empty ranks of the PDOs. Gilbert Kulick's depiction of these early PDO recruits as 'social outcasts aka "lumpens"' is indeed appropriate.[14] Nevertheless, with these puppet organisations in place, the TPLF became the EPRDF. US strategists appear to have been satisfied with the structure despite this ignominious beginning. With this design EPRDF was poised to replace any national or political organisation that might eventually challenge EPRDF leadership. The design of this organisational form was repressive in its initial conception. While publicly inviting independent parties to join in

the construction of 'democratic Ethiopia', proxy branches of EPRDF, formed for the purpose of replacing those very parties, stood in reserve. For the Oromo areas, the Oromo-PDO known as OPDO was patched together from political mercenaries to compete with, uproot and replace existing and long-standing independent Oromo groups. Robinson has also noted other cases of US 'democratisation' strategy where replacement institutions were fashioned and individuals groomed to parallel (shadow) and then supplant whatever forms were judged to threaten global corporate interests.[15]

Substantial US contact with the TPLF, starting at the time of the 1984–85 Ethiopian famine, exemplified a pattern in which the United States uses humanitarian assistance and quasi-humanitarian agencies to create avenues of intervention into crisis-ridden situations.[16] The US contact with TPLF through REST (Relief Society of Tigray) in Sudan was initiated at a time when the introduction of US 'democracy promotion' was in full swing globally and gaining momentum as the Soviet system weakened. If and when an insider's account of this relationship is ever forthcoming, the story of Tigray-US collusion from its genesis will likely offer interesting revelations into the process of adapting US foreign policy to an African war zone. As the *Dergue*'s position weakened, it is clear that the TPLF was assisted, advised and groomed to step into the position of advocating the US version of 'democracy' and to assume the reins of power in Ethiopia. Their aspirations, together with the absence of democratic credentials, may well have made the TPLF a more, rather than less, suitable partner in the task of implementing the US 'democratisation' programme in this region; they had no established, working concept of popular democracy that clashed or interfered with the version proposed by the United States. It appears that TPLF's willingness and ability to defend the social order by military means became more important to the United States than TPLF's democratic qualifications. Once the US decision to work with the TPLF was reached, and the TPLF accepted its role in promoting 'democracy', the message from both the TPLF and from the United States was 'whatever the TPLF does is henceforth to be considered "democracy". Anyone who opposes the TPLF is opposing "democracy".' Leenco Lata commented on a 'serious gap between the [TPLF] organization's public pronouncements [regarding democracy] and its actual practice … the TPLF never engaged in the re-education of its operatives that the apparent shift in policy to a more participatory one would have demanded'.[17]

When the *Dergue* collapsed, US intervention was swift and decisive (leaving aside the US role in orchestrating the timing of the *Dergue*'s ultimate removal from power). Immediate events unfolded as follows:

In May 1991, when Mengistu Haile Mariam, the hated Soviet-backed dictator, fled Ethiopia for asylum at a pre-arranged haven in Zimbabwe, US State Department officials were attending a meeting in London with

leaders of three opposition groups who had participated in bringing down Mengistu's regime. At the moment of Mengistu's departure, the US First Undersecretary of State for Africa, Herman Cohen, took time from the meeting first to 'recommend' that the military of one of these groups, the EPRDF, enter the capital city, Addis Ababa in order to maintain security in the country.[18] Through a seeming coincidence, a significant contingent of Israeli defence forces were present in Addis Ababa at that very juncture for the announced purpose of evacuating Ethiopian Jews to Israel. Upon the arrival of the EPRDF forces in the city, the Israelis withdrew, acknowledging the authority of the US-recognised EPRDF troops. At that time, the United States formally recognised the EPRDF to be in control of the city. At the conclusion of the London meeting, US officials announced full cooperation with the EPRDF, for as long as it worked to introduce democracy into that war-torn country. The United States urged all independent popular forces to cooperate with this organisation. EPRDF announced plans for a conference to be held in Addis Ababa in July 1991 to form a Transitional Government of Ethiopia, with EPRDF holding the majority of seats. All political groups in Ethiopia were invited to attend.

The news of the US support for 'democracy' in Ethiopia was received with relief and astonishment both in the country and in the international community. The capital city exploded with the clamorous enthusiastic fanfare of people whose aspirations for self-expression had long been clumsily suppressed by the *Dergue*'s regime. Announcements of the triumph of 'democracy' were translated into the indigenous languages of all the nations and nationalities who had dreamed of freedom from subjugation. The enthusiastic celebration of liberation continued as preparations were made for the transition to democracy.

With Tigray elites as chief accomplices, the US programme for promoting the US version of democracy was underway. Herman Cohen declared that the effort to build a 'democracy' in Ethiopia had begun. In fact, it was understood that unless democracy was pursued, the United States would withdraw support. 'No democracy, no cooperation', he said. Everyone who heard that remark could and did inject his or her particular interpretation of 'democracy' into the statement. It is now clear that he meant polyarchy, elite democracy of the 'Third Wave' variety, not popular democracy. But that predictable and anticipated confusion bought the United States and their EPRDF allies several months to seize the central controls of government and to disarm any effective challenge before the discrepancies became evident. Over time all of the onlookers and participants who initially held out hope that popular democracy was the goal of this alliance between the United States and EPRDF eventually resigned themselves to the same sobering conclusion. It was not to be achieved. It began to become evident that whatever one chose to call the resulting form of government, it not only failed to qualify as a democracy itself, but

one of its primary functions was actively to suppress popular democracy among the very peoples who eagerly aspired to achieve it.

In case after case, the point of transition after the fall of an authoritarian regime is the primary juncture at which the new US policy of 'democracy promotion' has been introduced. The prospect of US-supported 'democracy' has been generally applauded worldwide. Even sceptics have acquiesced, adopting a 'wait and see' attitude during crucial weeks and months following these announcements. Who wants to come out openly to denounce 'democracy' in the immediate aftermath of dictatorship? The strategy worked effectively in Ethiopia. Especially during the rapid globalisation underway in the early 1990s, there was no effective resistance organised even on the Left to recognise and identify this 'democracy promotion' policy for what it was. No one in Ethiopia was organised to mount a successful opposition to its general acceptance among either local populations where it was initially celebrated or in the international community where it was heralded as a welcome alternative to Soviet dictatorship. By appealing in May 1991 to the aspirations of the broad majority of people in rural Ethiopia, who were hungry for freedom from a ruthless dictatorship and also hungry for popular sovereignty, the United States promised to encourage democracy. This tactic thereby blunted protest, disarming the population for many crucial months between May 1991 and the scheduled June 1992 elections.

Neither the ideological content of the US concept nor the political implications were immediately recognised among those who responded to the call for 'democracy'. The desire among the Oromo and other peripheral peoples to build a popular democracy according to their own tradition and objectives prevented them from perceiving the distinction between the US/EPRDF version and their own. This desire kept the Oromo and others from resisting effectively the appeal for cooperation with the United States and the Tigray at a critical formative point in the political process, July 1991–January 1992. The desire among Oromo people and their leaders for democracy, combined with their confidence that it could be achieved in their own homeland region, led them to make irreversible errors in this early period. Popular democracy seemed within their grasp. This illusion caused them to dismiss glaring inconsistencies between the rhetoric of 'democracy' and the realities of the Oromo people's experience. Though the Oromo constituted the unquestioned majority population in Ethiopia, the largest of the Oromo organisations, for example, acquiesced in accepting 12 out of 87 seats in an ostensibly 'representative' council.

In another crucial concession based upon blind faith in the processes of 'democracy', OLF (Oromo Liberation Front) accepted an arrangement that EPRDF's militia be officially designated to serve as the state police and as the national army during the transitional period, a status that provided EPRDF legitimate rationale for a constant presence which led to interference in the Oromo and others' territories. OLF accepted this

interim proposal, on the condition that the United States and Eritrea would defend against any abuse of the agreement. The required assurances were given by the United States and Eritrea. Thus, the apparatus of coercion fell into the hands of the EPRDF. This turn of events was decisive and ultimately left the indigenous peoples vulnerable to intimidation, violence and fraud at the hands of increasingly hostile armed troops during a period when regions were supposed to be self-administered.[19] OLF leaders were initially blinded by a faith in US and Eritrean commitment to popular democracy and their promises of protection from any misuse by EPRDF of their security and police roles. But as time wore on, it became clear that the United States was poised to give the EPRDF the benefit of any doubt that was raised and to accept all EPRDF justifications for repeated interference in Oromo areas, whether it was 'to protect minorities', 'to secure the roads', or 'to investigate OLF abuses'. The result was that when EPRDF troops arrived in Oromo territories on charges that Oromo claimed were trumped-up, the 'investigations' dragged on for months while the United States gave the right of way to their EPRDF partners in democracy promotion.

The tactical move of inviting Oromo intellectuals to participate in the process of drafting and then defending the Transitional National Charter for Ethiopia also had the effect of sidelining many Oromo thinkers. Because the Oromo viewed the Charter seriously as representing the rule of law, they focused their energies on seeking ways to enforce the collective agreements embodied in the Charter. The EPRDF disregarded the document. The obsessive attention with which the Oromo drafters attempted first to conceive a workable form of democracy for the Ethiopian context and then to find ways and means to implement it, was not matched by the EPRDF partners. The EPRDF and the US operatives further consolidated their position in most branches of government while the Oromo and others made repeated and considered attempts at forging cooperation through early June 1992.

The Oromo leaders' confidence in their ability to build at least a regional popular democracy in Oromia based on the Oromo people's commitment to and familiarity with popular democratic concepts and mechanisms (represented in the *Gada*), proved to be overconfidence. It assumed in the first place that a popular democracy was the objective of the democratisation exercise. Focusing attention on the implementation of popular democratic forms kept them from seeing the pattern of repression that was emerging to undermine that very objective. The pieces of a well-orchestrated pattern were revealed one by one – the inordinate pressure placed on the OLF to attend the London Conference in May 1991 followed by manipulative treatment in the proceedings, the illogical bias in the apportionment of seats in the interim Council, the preemptive move to establish EPRDF troops as the supreme 'security' force, party decisions made behind closed doors which overrode the results of democratic process, the manoeuvre to

allocate the key ministries such as Foreign Affairs and Defence to EPRDF, the effective capture of power within remaining government ministries through the assignment of loyal TPLF/EPRDF party operatives as deputies positioned to divert decision-making processes, the pattern of low intensity warfare, the build-up and financial support given to the OPDO. All these steps appear as stratagems in a concerted effort by the EPRDF with US backing to seize control of the Ethiopian state machinery and obstruct the democratic process. The June 1992 elections were a battle in struggle between divergent US/Ethiopian and Oromo over which version of democracy would prevail in the former empire.

Election politics

When the first OLF representatives converged in Addis Ababa in June 1991 to participate in the formation of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia, they arrived by way of Bole airport, in Addis Abada, and triumphantly travelled by road through territories only recently contested militarily. The overwhelming turnout in the city to meet them stopped all traffic for many hours. One of the OLF leaders who was received at that time revealed in an interview later in 1991 that they themselves were astonished by the size of the turnout and the tumultuous reception expressed by the crowds on that occasion. It was indeed an indication of the prevalence of Oromo nationalist sentiment and a ready willingness to embrace Oromo identity and openly to assert Oromo culture after long suppression by the *Dergue* and Haile Selassie regimes.

Then in the months between July 1991 and December 1991 several mass rallies were held by the Oromo parties throughout the Oromia region in which tens of thousands of Oromo came forward, euphoric in their anticipation of sweeping changes, declaring their support for the construction of a long-sought-after 'Oromo democracy'. I have viewed several videos taken at these events and have listened to many of the welcome statements, introductions and speeches that were given in the Oromo language to the enthusiastic response of cheering and receptive crowds. There can be no doubt that the Oromo in attendance regarded the conjuncture of all those events – the demise of the *Dergue*, the arrival and public reception of the leaders of the OLF and all previously underground resistance movements, the open display of the OLF flag which carried the potent image of Oromo democracy, the odaa tree, and the US support for democracy – as the arrival of a long-awaited opening for Oromo self-determination and the opportunity to establish Oromo democracy in Oromia. It is interesting to note that in these public occasions 'democracy' was translated using Oromo terminology that referred to elements of democratic practice familiar in Oromo culture. Oromo listeners embraced the prospect of implementing publicly their own concept of practical democratic management of their affairs at local and regional levels. Their

subsequent responses demonstrate that they brought to the project a practical conceptualisation of what was to be done. They were well acquainted with democratic practice and eager to implement it.

If the OLF members who arrived in Addis Ababa to participate in forming the Transitional Government of Ethiopia found the scale and clamorous nature of their June 1991 reception in that city to be staggering, one can only imagine the effect upon the EPRDF and US policy makers who were committed to join with this force in the formation of a 'democratic' government. It was already well known that the Oromo numbered roughly half of the total population of Ethiopia – even prior to the separation of Eritrea. The prospect of establishing the EPRDF in control of the state through democratic means might have seemed daunting indeed had it expected to proceed using open means of popular democracy to achieve that end. Yet it was only months following the triumphant return of the Oromo leaders to Addis Ababa, heralded by crowds yearning for democracy, that the establishment of one-party rule over all of Ethiopia was consolidated securely in the hands of the EPRDF.

How did this struggle unfold?

With local and international attention focused on highly lauded events in the Ethiopian capital, repression by EPRDF armed forces was increased in the countryside in an explicit attempt to prepare the ground for elections. Specific acts of repression were aimed at influential local-level leaders of independent organisations who had intimate contact with the rural populations. The highly visible Westernised leaders of these movements who were engaged in official public business of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) were not targeted for harassment. Those who had accepted positions as ministers in the interim government were, however, given assignments to travel in and out of the country as spokespersons on behalf the TGE, a policy which effectively separated them from their constituencies at a sensitive period in the transition.

Testimony from persons who were later required by the EPRDF to review videos of these Oromo rallies, reveals that in the weeks following these public events videotapes were examined by EPRDF operatives to identify participants on the stages and in the crowds. In these open gatherings vast numbers of Oromo publicly and confidently revealed their support for Oromo liberation fronts that had not previously participated in government but were at that officially sanctioned. The videotapes provided a tool for singling out individuals who were targeted for eventual harassment and imprisonment and even death in an effort to intimidate the population and thwart OLF participation in the elections. By January of 1992, the EPRDF had begun to move against persons identified in the tapes, threatening, imprisoning and, in several documented cases, executing the most visible community leaders and key OLF organisers at the local level.

It did not seem to matter to the US representatives in Addis Ababa that at the time that these systematic actions were planned and taken by EPRDF, the OLF was functioning as a legitimate participant in the transitional government of Ethiopia or that attendance at these public rallies was not an illegal activity. The leaders of the Oromo and other national movements were at the time actively attempting to implement Transitional Period Charter and cooperating in preparing for the elections. Yet in the aftermath of the *Dergue*'s repressive government, well-targeted intimidation, especially conducted by armed personnel, had the effect of terrifying the population. Reports of abuses, particularly of notable local personages preparing to participate in the upcoming elections, began pouring into the offices of the OLF and other organisations. Local Oromo organisers who opened offices or began campaigns at the local level started by early 1992 to document attacks by armed EPRDF forces against the offices, the staff and the candidates. These reports, usually handwritten originals, were transferred to the OLF headquarters in Addis Ababa. (Some of them eventually ended up in the hands of election observers who arrived in June, for example, see copies of original papers transferred by Oromo participants which offer detail and document grievances concerning the election process, including full names and villages of candidates who were killed, injured, imprisoned, the dates and places of office closure, description of policy violations, for example.)[20] The avenue of legitimate appeal available to the OLF leaders in Addis Ababa was to transmit such evidence and complaints emanating from the Oromo populace to the US and Eritrean representatives who had offered solemn assurances of protection against abuses throughout the process of democratisation. The response was inaction, indifference and, in the words of one OLF leader, 'resounding silence'.

The 'ineffectual' nature of US/Eritrean intervention in preventing abuses, and their downright failure to acknowledge or protect non-EPRDF parties against the systematic repression of armed EPRDF forces, supports the hypothesis that US 'democratisation' seeks actively to curtail and discourage popular movements. This puts into perspective the deaf ear and the blind eye of the US personnel during the period leading up to the elections, and the 'resounding silence' that characterised their response to the violations of US-mediated agreements. Eritrea, whose own fate relied heavily upon the US master plan for the region, also responded with stubborn indifference, a choice which demonstrated that its own national self-interest superceded its assumed role as protector of the victims of EPRDF violence.

As elections grew nearer, detailed plans for the conduct of elections were issued from the NEC (National Election Commission). After some false starts, a plan was formally adopted for bipartisan election committees to be formed by voice vote in each locality to supervise election procedures. These quick polls were referred to as the 'snap elections'. These

committees were to consist of one representative from the EPRDF, one from the challenger party in the vicinity and a third neutral person chosen by acclamation from the populace. Implementation of this scheme proceeded quickly throughout Oromo regions, among Oromo who were widely and well acquainted with the process of election. These boards were scheduled to begin their work when the results began to indicate that OLF candidates would likely win in all regions where the 'snap elections' had occurred, the EPRDF responded by invalidating the results.

At this time Oromo groups began to report that they were systematically alienated from the process and pushed for correction of the election procedures to render them more amenable to the Oromo population who was clamouring for greater involvement. On the other hand, the dominant participation of the Oromo parties in the elections was increasingly regarded as a threat to the Tigray/US system of 'democracy'. Consequently, conflicts flared and deepened throughout the empire, as the scheduled elections loomed large. Yet, up to the eve of the voting, the Oromo and other leaders who had opted to cooperate with the EPRDF continued to express faith in the Charter and to turn to the United States and Eritrea for intervention and protection on their behalf. For some reason unclear to these cooperating leaders, mediation by the United States and Eritrea was ineffectual. Relations between EPRDF and the Oromo groups deteriorated to the point where violence by armed forces of the EPRDF in Oromo regions systematically prevented the Oromo parties from conducting or participating in the elections. When in March EPRDF forcibly closed the offices of legitimate, recognised Oromo parties and imprisoned numerous organisers without charge, hundreds of rural Oromo, predominantly farming families at Watara and in Dire Dawa in Harar, appealed to the government. By participating in a peaceful demonstration, they sought respect for the democratic process, an end to the violence and reconciliation with the forces that stood armed against them. As they stood with green grasses in their hands, a profound Oromo cultural symbol of appeal and vulnerability akin to carrying white flags, EPRDF troops opened fire against the crowds. Both events were massacres.

Staggering violations of the rights of rural peoples repeatedly took place under the unseeing eye of the United States. Despite several events in which violence was perpetrated on both the rural and urban Oromo, the Oromo leadership doggedly continued to seek ways to cooperate with the EPRDF so that the process might go forward. The attempt to control combatants culminated in a highly controversial agreement that both sides encamp their armed forces under the supervision of the United States and Eritrea during the course of the election. OLF encamped its forces. EPRDF failed to honour its commitment to encamp the bulk of its army. Throughout the crucial weeks of the spring of 1992, no effective action was taken by the United States or Eritrea to enforce the encampment arrangement. Acts of violence against Oromo participants at the local level esca-

lated. Most of the Oromo groups declared that without a postponement of the elections that would allow for the rectification of the basic conditions of access to the process, they would withdraw. In the absence of a positive response, and in the face of extreme dissatisfaction from the population, these major independent Oromo organisations did formally withdraw from the elections on 17 June 1992. They protested the absence of protection from the egregious conditions for which the EPRDF were responsible and stated that these prevented the contest from being free and fair. They declared that there was no rule of law being applied in the land.

Surprisingly, the absence of independent representatives from the majority ethnic group did not derail the election process. To the contrary, it created very little stir. In fact it left the playing field clear for the EPRDF, which was poised in the few remaining days and hours to put forward its Oromo wing, OPDO, as a replacement organisation for the Oromo Liberation Front and others in the election. Substantial US assistance in the form of logistical, advisory and financial aid enabled the EPRDF to proceed without the Oromo and other groups who were officially still members of the coalition government. In Oromo areas, candidates who were unknown to their new constituencies were fielded by the Oromo branch of the EPRDF, which monopolised the ballots and controlled the process of voting.

Amidst fanfare and a host of international election observers, the Joint International Observer Group, or JIOG and press, a highly publicised election proceeded as scheduled.[21] Since the US and EPRDF criteria for what constituted a satisfactory election clashed fundamentally with the criteria of the supporters of the independent Oromo organisations, the entire process assumed a stage-managed quality. Candidates were fielded whom the local residents did not know;[22] none was nominated by locally viable parties. Some observers were deported, including the leader of the US delegation to JIOG for the act of addressing remarks to a gathering of people at an OLF office in Addis Ababa.[23] Registration and voting did take place under the eye of international election observers. Most observers brought forth serious criticisms and objections to the process and rejected the results outright.[24] Nevertheless, everyone was thanked and sent home. The elections were declared by the National Election Commission of Ethiopia to have been essentially 'free and fair'. The United States supported the NEC in this assessment.

Background to Oromo popular expectations for democracy

Several foreign election observers concluded that the process failed because the idea of full-fledged elections was not well understood by the rural participants. This was not true in the case of the Oromo. Far from targeting a rural area filled with malleable peasants, the Unites States and EPRDF were confronted by a rural people prepared with a complete set

of expectations regarding what would be required for a democratic process to be put into place. Consequently, the strategy of announcing support for democracy followed by attempts to confine 'democratisation' in Ethiopia to the mechanics of voting procedures alone met with strong local resistance.

The concept of popular democracy brought by the Oromo participants to the encounter with US/Ethiopian 'democracy' at the local level was well grounded in a heritage of democratic cultural practice. By all accounts, the Oromo people welcomed with enthusiasm the prospect of establishing Oromo democracy to replace the *Dergue*'s repressive administrative apparatus – that had reached down to the level of the neighbourhood and peasant associations.

In fact, the fall of the *Dergue* government provided the first opportunity for Oromo nationalism or Oromo democracy to find legal public expression. It also afforded the Oromo liberation organisations – which were formed as underground groups in Ethiopia or abroad in the early 1970s – the first occasion to meet publicly with supporters and sympathisers on Oromo territory.

The Oromo speakers and listeners alike interpreted US support for democracy according to their expectations, that is, as a welcome opportunity and an endorsement of the project of Oromo liberation initiated through democratic self-management. It is fair to say that the desire to build an Oromo democracy had already become the chief aspiration of Oromo nationals. Apart from the issue of whether the Oromo had yet developed an ideological basis for democracy within the emerging liberation fronts themselves (they had not), there is no question that Oromo nationalism had become inextricably tied up with the aspiration to achieve some form of 'Oromo democracy'. The expectations on this point came back to haunt the Oromo leaders who participated in the Transitional Government of Ethiopia with the EPRDF, as we shall see.

Prior to the fall of the *Dergue*, protecting and eventually reinstating central features of an Oromo democratic tradition had become an important public commitment and had also become part of the rhetorical appeal of all Oromo liberation organisations. But, the important question became, were the Oromo prepared to carry out such a project? Return to 'Oromo democracy' may have been inextricably linked at the level of public discourse with promises to empower the Oromo people and ensure participation of all people in the management of their own affairs, but what elements of the tradition were accessible to the common people to accomplish the task, especially in light of the previous suppression of public life?

Oromo who participated in the transition process from across Oromia shared fairly consistent expectations of democratic procedure. They responded similarly when their expectations were disappointed. It is interesting to note that Oromo scholars and other students of Oromo society in

the twentieth century, including historians, political scientists, philosophers, sociologists and anthropologists, have unanimously remarked upon democratic traditions honoured universally among Oromo, both urban or rural dwellers. Several have reported remarkably consistent deliberative democratic practice that Oromo people apply to the management of family affairs, ritual affairs and affairs at the local level, at least those that were not directly controlled by the government. Others have traced ubiquitous features of Oromo modes of interaction and belief to the *Gada* system of government that operated prior to the conquest of the Oromo people in the late 1800s.[25]

Among these, the work of Asmarom Legesse stands out as the most comprehensive exploration to date of the pervasive structural features of Oromo democracy. His work offers insight into the principles that inform and shape the norms, values and beliefs that find expression through Oromo cultural practice. He has distilled these essential principles to the following:

1 The premise that the laws stand above all men.
2 The principle of accountability: the role of confession and penalty.
3 Subordination of warriors to deliberative assemblies.
4 Man-made laws and the great law makers.
5 Supreme authority of the general assembly.
6 Government by councils and assemblies: seniority and equality.
7 Term of office and measurement of time.
8 Limitation of office to a single term.
9 A period of testing: time gap between election and investiture.
10 Use of history and precedent and ethical guide.
11 Heredity and elective leadership.
12 Principle of staggered succession.
13 Principle of alliance of alternate groups.
14 The problem of discontinuity of authority.
15 Principle of balanced opposition.
16 Distribution of power across generations.
17 Separation of powers: functional and spatial.
18 Separation of ritual and political domains.

His book, *Oromo Democracy: An Indigenous African Political System* (2000: 198) contains a rich exploration of these principles as applied in Oromo public life, specifically in the Borana areas of Oromia where Ethiopian government interference with traditional practice was minimal.

Democratic practices and pervasive attitudes which influence them are consistently found to include the following throughout Oromia:

- reaching group consensus in decision-making at a local level regarding issues that affect the community;

- respect for collective agreement as if it were the rule of law;
- extensive discussion of the application of law;
- electing representatives from among group members to perform tasks assigned by the group;
- the view that public responsibility is a sacred trust; and, consequently,
- the answerability of the representatives to that public;
- reconciliation of differences which impede the group's objectives;
- a belief in the free expression of ideas; and
- explicit social measures taken to protect the right of an individual to express his or her opinion or belief in private or in public.

Behaviour of Oromo communities during the transition year demonstrated that the concept of Oromo popular democracy operating in that context was informed by these expectations. In fact, the understanding of the people regarding how the implementation of democratic practice should proceed outstripped that of the leaders who represented them in the TGE.

The fascinating issue of how principles of practical democracy remained alive in the culture of a people whose political system had not been practiced for several generations, and whose national self expression was actively suppressed by a hostile government, must eventually become the subject of a full study. We can note here, however, that the Oromo language itself conveys many of the underlying concepts applied to Oromo standards for governing and administration, including the selection of appropriate representatives, that is, elections. The language learned in conjunction with oral history, song, ritual and social practice reinforces the underlying precepts of democratic procedure. Despite the fact that the Oromo people have lived under Ethiopian rule since the turn of the twentieth century, the norms and values which prescribe appropriate behaviour and determine social interaction are well understood by most Oromo and explained in terms of historical Oromo democratic processes. Oromo oral history includes accounts of famous election campaigns that were held during the *Gada* period, intense competition for votes among highly regarded, charismatic and knowledgeable candidates, detailed descriptions of the moral issues at stake in the selection, the content of arguments made to vast listening crowds on a moonless night, challenges and questions called out from the crowd underscoring the right of anyone to speak, and the final voting by show of hands. Historically grounded norms passed on through such histories and a variety of other cultural means appear to have provided a moral position from which the events of the recent elections of the EPRDF were evaluated and judged by the population.

Let us take, as an example for comparison of the 'democracy' introduced by EPRDF and Oromo popular expectations of democratic governance, the content of one component, the criteria for the election of local and regional representatives. Here we find an encounter of fundamentally

different expectations. The EPRDF were intent upon fielding confirmed party members of the EPRDF-allied OPDO in all Oromo localities. Consequently, some Oromo candidates who arrived to stand for election in Oromo localities had been recruited to the OPDO from outside the region where they were sent, many were even recruited by the TPLF directly from POW camps in Tigray and elsewhere. Though they were strangers to members of the local populace, these former Oromo prisoners of war qualified as candidates according to EPRDF criteria solely on the basis of their Oromo ethnicity and their membership in the OPDO. Local Oromo standards of procedure regarding the election of representatives required that candidates be put forward by people who know them, followed by a screening process of candidates during which the voters were allowed to question and test the knowledge of the persons seeking their support. According to oromo traditional procedure, individuals were considered qualified to be put forward as candidates for election based primarily upon their ability and willingness to respond to the demands of those they represent. Familiarity with the individuals to be elected to office was an important issue with the Oromo voters. Their attempts to implement these procedures and their reactions to the preemptive actions of the EPRDF attest to the vitality of the Oromo concept of democracy.

The expectation regarding screening of candidates to be elected has ample precedent. Traditionally Oromo consider that knowledge of the individuals who were to act on their behalf is inseparable from the very process of election. Historians and anthropologists of the Oromo report that the historical process of elections under the *Gada* system required individuals to be selected for governance from among a group of candidates who had gone through several periods of education and skills training with their peers. Elections were held among peers to select the most competent leaders from those with whom they trained. Other society-wide elections were held by show of hands or voice vote among individuals who had to demonstrate their knowledge of the law, showing their ability to apply the law to specific situations on which they were challenged in open meetings. Leaders were expected to serve as exemplars of character, honesty and acceptability, first among their fellows, and then among the society as a whole. Knutsson, Birru and Waldhaansso have described this.[26] The outright rejection by the Oromo of abjectly unqualified OPDO candidates is consistent with this expectation, as is their abhorrence of the manner in which respected persons knowledgeable in traditional Oromo law were targeted with violence.

Among the Oromo, public office is a sacred trust. Oromo individuals who are regarded as leaders by the population, either those who are elected or those who step forward to represent the Oromo, are compelled by the people to acknowledge and show respect for the Oromo system of values (*Oromummaa*) or lose the support of the people. Oromo law and tradition provides for recall, the removal from public office of the

individual who fails to please those who elected him. It is called, *buqisu*, or uprooting.

Oromo expressed outrage that they were expected to vote at the local level for people they had never met and whom they had not had the opportunity to assess or instruct. Yet their attempts to support candidates whose qualifications they knew were frustrated at every turn. The prospect of putting their affairs into the hands of unknown persons was a violation of their concept of democracy and was considered unlawful in itself.

Accustomed to speaking their minds to a candidate and voting by show of hands, rural Oromo were also exasperated and impatient when confronted with the officiousness that surrounded the prescribed method of Ethiopian voting. To vote required making a mark on a piece of numbered paper using an inkstained thumb print, a process which had to take place in a booth. Charles Schaefer witnessed the process that Oromo found so frustrating: 'I saw that the officials were so besieged that they didn't care who voted for whom and in fact when a peasant would hesitate too long the officials would press the peasant's thumb anywhere, thus invalidating the ballot'. He goes on to report that when the counting was done later, '. . . if a signature or thumbprint spilled outside the candidates box so much as a millimeter, great debates arose as to whether it should be consigned to the "spoilage" pile'.[27] I suggest that rural Oromo were confounded, not by the concept of the election of persons to represent them in an assembly, but by the technical process of this particular method of registering a preference among candidates. Casting of these inscrutable ballots in the presence of antagonistic and intimidating EPRDF officials appeared to many as a process unrelated to democracy. One Oromo inquired of a foreign visitor, 'Why go through that complicated procedure of voting if the person to be elected is unknown to the community?'

In the build up to the 1992 balloting, time and again members of the rural Oromo population judged the election operated by the EPRDF not to be a democratic election. They complained continuously to visitors, to observers (including election observers), to their family members abroad, and to the leaders of Oromo groups who were supposed to be representing them in the TGE about failures and shortcomings of the process underway. They reported that the agents of the EPRDF, the OPDO, were harassing their local representatives; closing offices of participating groups; imprisoning people who engaged in the free expression of ideas; trying to bribe farmers to register and to vote for their candidates with promises of fertilisers, marketing assistance, and so forth; threatening entire communities at gunpoint about the outcome of the election; bringing candidates that they did not know and had no influence over, and so forth.

A member of the JIOG (Joint International Observer Group) offered the following account of Oromo reaction to the election process in the area to which he was assigned. I quote it at length because it demonstrates the active involvement of the local Oromo people in implementing a

concept of democracy which clashed fundamentally with that being implemented by the EPRDF and the OPDO:

> Late one afternoon, passing through the village of Meliyyu, we were flagged down and asked to come to a brief meeting. Following the local elders to the muddy village square, we found a makeshift table and three rickety chairs set up in front of a crowd of several hundred people who had been waiting patiently for us most of the afternoon. For over an hour they held forth with their hopes for peace, their desire to run their own affairs, their anger over broken promises, and their willingness to fight if necessary for their rights, which they understood well.
>
> Illustrating with passionate personal accounts, they told us that the entire election process was a fraud . . .
>
> We heard again and again that the right to self-determination for all of Ethiopia's 60-plus ethnic groups – a solemn pledge of the EPRDF – was being systematically thwarted . . .
>
> OPDO was, to all appearances, a puppet organization cobbled together from POWs from Mengistu's army, social outcasts (aka 'lumpens' in post-Marxist–Ethiopian jargon), and opportunists of various stripes. The local OPDO chief was almost invariably from somewhere else, usually not even from Bale . . .
>
> The entire process was several weeks behind the detailed timetable laid down in the election code. Bipartisan committees were just being established. In their absence, the registration process had been controlled by the government. Registration cards were in short supply and, to no one's surprise, OPDO supporters seemed to have a much easier time obtaining them than the far more numerous partisans of the Oromo Liberation Front. Although most voters, eager to participate in the election, managed to register despite the manipulation, the election process had been abysmally retarded.
>
> The worst abuse, by far, came in the form of massive intimidation of voters and harassment of opposition activists by the EPRDF and OPDO. We heard countless stories of OPDO cadres' invading homes and villages late at night, pointing guns, and threatening residents with dire consequences if they voted for the OLF. While complaining bitterly, many of our interlocutors refused to be intimidated and defiantly declared their intention to vote OLF.
>
> In the event, they never got the chance. Three days before the election, the OLF leadership announced in Addis Ababa that, in the face of the EPRDF's clear determination to prevent them from competing on equal terms, the OLF was withdrawing completely from the elections . . .
>
> The horror stories we heard as we traveled around seemed, at first, not to jibe with our cordial, open reception by the local authorities

> and the ease with which we were permitted to circulate. So impressed was I by the unprecedented freedom of expression in Addis and the EPRDF's oft-repeated commitment to national reconciliation that my first impulse was to attribute the reported abuses either to rogue elements out of touch with Addis Ababa and its democratic program or to OLF disinformation – and probably some of each. And many of the shortcomings of the registration process were undeniably products of an unrealistically compressed timetable, a vastly overburdened bureaucracy and a decrepit infrastructure.
>
> But the pattern was much too consistent and too pervasive to be dismissed so lightly. After 10 days on the ground my conclusion was inescapable: At best, the transitional government made no serious effort to instruct its officials in the norms of free elections. At worst, the manipulation, intimidation, and coercion were condoned, if not prescribed.
>
> This sorry tale was not limited to Bale. In a long post mortem session in Addis Ababa, observers from all over the country – even from areas where the opposition was far less vigorous – reported substantially the same pattern of conduct, varying mostly in the amount of coercion applied'.[28]

Contrary to the assumption that 'democracy' as introduced by the EPRDF failed because the rural people were not able to comprehend the complexities of the democratic process, it failed because the people in Oromia understood and were critical of the system that was preventing them from participating. On the basis of their understanding they rejected the charade that was being imposed upon them in the name of democracy.

Peter Niggli, a long-time keen observer of political events in Ethiopia and the Horn, participated in the JIOG as a member of the German Observer Group sent by the Heinrich Böll Institute. The report of his team, published in German (Niggli, 1992), summarises and consolidates numerous accounts given by Oromo and other rural residents. What distinguishes Niggli's report from those of other election observers is that it offers a more comprehensive picture of the struggle at the neighbourhood level and give us insights into the active attempts made by the rural Oromo population to participate in the process. In contrast to many visitors, Niggli and this team took the time to listen to the rural people's accounts of their experience, to register their judgment and to include their experiences as an important component of the unfolding story of the election process. That report reveals that there was a concerted effort by Oromo to apply their concept of democracy during the transition. The rural people were not a confused or passive peasantry requiring civic education in election procedures. Rather their accounts reveal that they were keenly aware of the administrative and coercive measures that were used against them by the EPRDF to render a true election impossible. Oromo

and other frustrated parties were fully capable of explaining the procedural intricacies and myriad traps built into the election process that prevented them from participating at the local level. What is of interest to us here is that people's frustration was a result of their active attempts to implement a well-formulated indigenous concept of democracy which affected the dynamics of the encounter. Their efforts faced impediments at every turn.

Starting from the pre-election party politics, Niggli details contradictions and inconsistencies that caused the Oromo at the local level to proclaim that democracy was being destroyed rather than introduced. The following scenario emerges from that account. When the 'snap elections' which were held to establish bipartisan election committees at the local level went against the EPRDF, the results were cancelled and reversed. People reported their frustration when persons elected through that process were turned away at the local level by EPRDF representatives on various pretexts when they arrived to perform their responsibilities. Campaign offices opened by Oromo opposition parties were closed by local EPRDF officials. Actual and potential candidates to run against the EPRDF were repeatedly arrested by armed EPRDF operatives. Movement of opposition politicians was severely restricted by local EPRDF authorities, preventing them from communicating with the voters. In a pertinent case, when one politician from Addis Ababa was denied the right to tour in the region of his constituents, he went over the heads of the local EPRDF representatives by calling the Addis Ababa Election Commission. His brother was shot in retaliation. Violence, and in a few cases, murder, targeted at persons in lower- and middle-ranking positions, sent clear signals to others. Official policy often shifted unpredictably. Those who attempted to follow procedures in order to participate were at a disadvantage when changes to the rules were regularly announced. EPRDF core and ordinary members in Oromo regions were armed with a variety of different weapons – pistols, rifles, automatic weapons and different types of machine guns.

The legal basis for the election itself was continually adjusted and shifted in favour of the EPRDF. Take for example the case of filing petitions. To file as a candidate required the signatures of 250 registered voters from the district, to be submitted by a given deadline. Niggli's interviews revealed the predicament faced by Oromo candidates who were excluded from running for office because they failed to submit proper petitions in time for the fixed deadline. This occurred in a region where not a single voter registration card had yet been delivered to the premises of the very officiating committee that was refusing to budge in upholding the strict filing deadline! When registration cards were made available to the OPDO personnel, those who registered to vote were often required to sign the petition of the OPDO candidate in order to receive the voter card. Niggli's book contains a wealth of data obtained from rural observers

which document the finer details of an orchestrated process of sabotage of the democratic process. In addition to providing evidence of an indigenous consciousness of democratic practice, these data support the notion that the intent of this 'democracy promotion' exercise was to undermine popular democracy.

Yet election observers who were present at the breakdown of the 1992 and 1994 elections offered the opinion that many of the difficulties in implementing the elections occurred because Ethiopia has no democratic traditions and no democratic political culture. Ted Vestal, in summarising the reports of election observers, recounted their conclusion that the number one problem in the 1992 elections lay in 'Voter and Civic Education'. He wrote in November 1992,

> The most frequently cited issue was the widespread lack of voter understanding of the election process and the critical need for voter and civic education. While many Ethiopians were enthusiastic about participating in a democratic election, few seemed to really know for whom or what they were voting. There was a need for better understanding by the electorate of basic principles of democratic processes – representation, choice, participation, advocacy, tolerance of opposition, and a free flow of information.[29]

This assessment conveys a misreading of what was going on in Oromia. As I pointed out above, the rural Oromo did indeed reject EPRDF election procedures, but not because they failed to grasp the concepts of democracy – competition, nomination of candidates, campaigning, and so forth. It was rather because they grasped them too well and actively employed them to reject what they saw to be a poor substitute. The democratic practice produced by their indigenous political culture proved superior to the imported version.

The outcome

The Oromo reaction to the US/EPRDF elections demonstrates that deeply embedded democratic traditions have continued to shape and inform Oromo modes of interaction at the level of civil society even through the extremely repressive era of the *Dergue*. The fact that the Oromo had an active concept of democracy that they wanted to implement is what prevented the implantation of US sponsored Ethiopian 'democracy'. Likewise, the contending mechanisms of 'democracy promotion' impeded the expression and attainment of popular democracy in Oromia.

The initial appearance of political inclusiveness implied in the anticipation of democratic elections served to disarm those who sought popular democracy. But this 'democracy', limited ultimately to the conduct of

stage-managed elections that were judged on little more than the formal act of voting, obscured other crucial dimensions of the process such as who the candidates were, what they represented, their ability to run for office or to have access to the means to compete for office. Consequently, a focus on elections in the construction of 'Ethiopian democracy' provided a diversion from the actual seizure of the administrative apparatus by the US-backed party. It also provided a legitimating function in the court of public opinion for acceptance of a kind of political system bearing little resemblance to popular democracy.

The US, and by extension, the EPRDF, fixation on elections clearly was designed to serve as a substitute for participatory democracy. The exercise was a focus on *form* in the holding of elections. 'Free and fair' came to be interpreted to mean procedurally correct casting and counting of ballots or public procedures with no visible signs of fraud *on the day of the voting*. Election observers were instructed to watch the counting of ballots and to report on minutiae. As one observer lamented, 'Having sat on a rickety chair in a smoke-filled room for eight hours watching every single ballot be inspected by not one but by three officials and then held up so that the public – about thirty other interested individuals in that cramped room – could inspect it, I can say without equivocation, that the count was accurate'.[30] Close public attention given to this kind of detail served to draw attention from the lack of equal access to conditions for participation. We should also not fail to note the active role that Oromo participants at the local level played in alerting the visiting observers to the greater shortcomings in the process they had come to judge. One observer mentioned above finally voiced the lament of the Oromo constituents, 'What is the point of elections when there is no opposition?'.[31] Ultimately the conditions for participation and thus the elections which were widely condemned by Oromo were also declared to be unfair and unacceptable to the international observers.

The negative conclusions of the neutral observers made no impact on the 'democracy promotion' programme, however. As Marina Ottaway wrote in a particularly candid piece regarding her role as an election observer, 'We were escorted there by an embassy official … to me it was particularly disturbing because unguarded comments by our escort strongly suggested that the embassy had decided in advance that the elections results would be declared acceptable'.[32] Disgruntled members of the international observer group remarked frequently upon their frustration and inability as a group to influence the process. Ottaway articulated their dilemma:

> The elections were unsuccessful … Our reports did not have to be taken into consideration by embassies whose conclusion reflected not what happened, but their political agendas … The fact that we witnessed endless violations but that there were no repercussions taught

> the EPRDF that the international community which appeared to put so much importance on democratic elections was in reality willing to accept an empty ritual, even increasing the respectability of the process by paying for our presence. It taught opposition parties that their chances of gaining fair representation through a political process was nil, since the international community was unwilling to put pressure on the government to keep the elections fair.[33]

These frustrations were voiced in the reports of most observers.[34] But the EPRDF's National Election Commission (NEC) dismissed the negative reports and warnings of the Joint International Observer Group (JIOG). The acquiescence of the United States in that dismissal only reinforces this interpretation.[35]

In the Ethiopian case the mounting frustration of the excluded parties in the months leading up to the scheduled elections had been exacerbated by the failure of the United States to intervene to prevent the violations or to provide promised protections against abuse. The non-EPRDF parties ran into a well-honed indifference on the part of the United States and the Eritreans – and faced an election in which the profound efficiency in mobilising an army of international observers was not matched by the ability to put training, personnel, or equipment in place in time for the elections process to proceed as outlined in the original agreements. Registration materials that had been irretrievably lost by EPRDF officials were miraculously found as soon as the OLF withdrew from the election process in several regions, for example. The EPRDF appears to have turned inefficiency into an art form in the peripheral areas with their US backers equally artful in providing internationally acceptable excuses and justifications for them. Violations were explained away with statements such as, 'the elections were not perfect, but it should be regarded as an acceptable first attempt'; or, 'these Africans are not accustomed to the mechanisms of democracy' (with the implication that they cannot grasp the concepts or handle the logistics); 'at least this is not the *Dergue*'; '"under the circumstances" the elections represented a step in the right direction'; or by suggesting the only alternative to this process, 'flawed as it might be', is dictatorship rather than popular democracy.

The independent Oromo movement, along with other independent movements, was predictably sidelined following the 1992 elections. By withdrawing from that election independent Oromo parties were issuing an ultimatum that unless they were treated as partners in a democratic process they would not continue to cooperate in the TGE. Within days of the refusal of these Oromo to accept EPRDF dominance, the EPRDF rejected the ultimatum and acknowledged that the partnership had failed. EPRDF informed the Oromo participants in the TGE that the EPRDF could no longer guarantee the protection of the Oromo coalition members in the country. The United States and Eritrea stood 'helplessly' by, unwill-

ing to intervene to ensure full Oromo partnership in the coalition. The Oromo departed; their choice was clear, and the choice of the Oromo people was also clear to them. The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), for example, recalled its ministers and ambassadors and informed them to leave the country. These Oromo groups were replaced in government – as quickly and easily as they had been in the elections – by OPDO personnel waiting in the wings. Soon after a series of efforts designed to compel the EPRDF to adhere to several basic tenets of popular democracy failed, other southern peoples' organisations withdrew as well. There proved to be PDOs (People's Democratic Organisations) ready and waiting to replace every ethnic group that withdrew. Ambassadors from several Western countries mounted a last-ditch diplomatic effort to bring together the leaders of the disaffected parties in a concerted attempt to get the coalition back together. The gesture proved unsuccessful.

The project of promoting 'democracy' in Ethiopia proceeded apace with the support of the United States despite the absence of any independent national party or front representation in the government. Leenco Lata, who served as OLF Deputy Secretary General, ruefully observed this fact in a retrospective account of this period. He wrote, 'Unfortunately, the directly opposite measure was taken when the largest amount of economic assistance ever provided to an Ethiopian government was approved by the Consultative Group while the results of the June elections were still contested'.[36] Participating parties had presumed that TPLF's desire to receive a significant amount of economic aid to revive the country's devastated economy would serve as leverage for donor governments to force EPRDF to adhere to some semblance of democratic practice. US policy makers and their Western allies obviously considered their work complete and their strategy in this case to have succeeded.

Over time, a consensus has developed among analysts and observers (with the exception of writers directly connected with the US foreign policy apparatus), that the democratic experiment in Ethiopia had irretrievably collapsed. Ironically, efforts by the Westernised Oromo leaders – who initially accepted the invitation to take a role in the transitional government and agreed to participate in the project of introducing 'democracy' into Ethiopia – have been denounced for their 'failure' to make democracy work. Commentators have written of the 'Missed Opportunity' in Ethiopia and of the popular democracy that 'might have been'. The dynamics of this process and the actions of each of the players in this dramatic encounter provide ample opportunity for reflection and assessment.

Observations and conclusions

I have examined the encounters between two democracies in the arena of Ethiopia as a clash between contenders who held distinct paradigms linked to distinct social formations. On the one side was that of the United States

through its State Department seeking to extend global hegemony through the agency of the TPLF/EPRDF into an unstable corner of the world. On the other was that of Oromo nationals attempting to achieve self-management by replacing Ethiopian state institutions that had long subjugated the Oromo people and suppressed their language and culture. Each contender identified its goal as 'democracy' and struggled to apply its version to shape the institutional arrangements at the heart of northeast Africa.

The outcome of this encounter affords the opportunity for several observations about the social forces at work in this region, and about political dynamics that continue to prevail.

The first observation is that the US policy instrument, the creation of polyarchic rule in the name of 'democracy', proved to be inadequate to the task for which it was introduced. It failed to establish the basis for consensual domination that could lead to long-term stability in the region. As we have said, the strategy had been designed to ensure stability at the outer reaches of the global order by recruiting elites from discontented sectors to join the government and from there to exert control over their own masses. In the Ethiopian case, however, the Westernised Oromo and other elites from oppressed nations who had come forward to participate in building 'democracy' withdrew from the exercise. In so doing these potential Ethiopian state functionaries rejected the role that the United States had been designated for them. The resulting conclusion is related to the above discussion, that the US strategy for global stability rested on the emergence of a Western-oriented functionary group to administer problematic outpost states. The departure of the Oromo destroyed the immediate hope and future prospects for the formation of a viable class of multiethnic functionaries in Ethiopia capable of serving collectively their own interests as a class and the interests of global capital. Hence, the experiment in 'multiethnic' democracy reverted in short order to externally supported domination by an Abyssinian ruling elite assisted by isolated individuals from other nationalities. It is a twenty-first century expression of the Ethiopian-dependent colonial model of governance.

The second observation addresses the reasons for the unexpected behaviour of the group of Westernised Oromo who were originally targeted to assume that 'privileged' role of administering Ethiopia as part of a multiethnic elite group. They backed out of the elections and then out of the coalition government. Why did they walk away? For one thing, the Oromos acknowledged that the partnership was a dangerous charade. The Ethiopians had consistently rejected as partners any and all Oromo who were not part of the EPRDF political organisation, i.e. OPDO. This relentless rejection by the EPRDF of the independent Oromo occurred at every level of government. When the United States and Eritrean participants, who had come forward to serve as guarantors in the process, failed to recognise and address this situation, it fell to the Oromo in the coalition to

adress the mutual rejection. That brings me to a more germane point that is usually ignored.

It is my view that despite their desire to introduce popular democracy into Ethiopia, the Oromo in the coalition were responding to the Oromo people whose appeals compelled them to withdraw. Oromo people acting in keeping with their traditional cultural norms prevailed upon their Oromo leaders to abandon the election charade that was proceeding apace. The population strongly voiced their opposition to participation in what was to them a morally repugnant process. When faced with the options before them these actors did not and could not violate the sacred trust that Oromo imbue with public office, that is to say, they were not willing to lose credibility with their popular base. Most explanations and assessments of the withdrawal of independent Oromo groups from the coalition neglect this factor. This groundswell of opposition emanating from the heart of the population and moral pressure grounded in Oromo culture proved to be a powerful influence on the Westernised Oromo causing them as individuals and as a group to choose not to lend their support to the elections or to the political process that was underway.

US strategy fails on this point. Thus far US policy assumed that 'the masses', especially those who are predominantly peasant farmers and herders, can be manipulated if their leaders and representatives can be manipulated. The Oromo experience demonstrates that this is not the case. Any policy that assumes a vertical, top–down relationship between urbanised, Westernised leaders and the Oromo nationalists who constitute the bulk of the working population is quite likely to run aground as this one did. The observation that Oromo leaders were responsive to their base population may explain why the United States immediately opted to accept the more manipulable OPDO as a preferable substitute for anyone from an independent Oromo organisation, and also why the United States then stood quietly by – unheeding and ineffectual yet again – as unambiguous and violent public repression of Oromo nationalism became EPRDF policy.

The third, and related, observation is that the Oromo population proved to be capable of laying claim to traditional precepts in order to assert themselves as a national interest group. It also demonstrated the vitality and persistence of Oromo culture. The collective response of the Oromo to the promise of democracy, short-lived as that hope was, unveiled the power and potential for members of this population to utilise their shared culture. It revealed their ability to call upon it to manage their public affairs. Events that took place during this transition confirmed the authenticity of Oromo nationalism and indicated that the possibility of self-management is within their grasp.

Fourth, this encounter revealed that despite the evidence of a vibrant culture predisposed to democracy and the proactive involvement of the Oromo population in seeking to assert themselves at that time, the Oromo

national movement had not yet produced an Oromo nationalist ideology. Writing in 1992, Terrence Lyons commented on the failure of the largest independent Oromo organisation to indicate a programmatic direction for the movement: 'The OLF (Oromo Liberation Front) included some who favor an independent Oromo state ("Oromia") but others who professed a willingness to remain within Ethiopia'.[37] His observation was appropriate. Such ambivalence plagued the entire movement and plagues it still. Oromo at the local level had proceeded to seize the opportunities that were made available to them to express their desire for national self-determination. But there was not yet a formulation of clear direction or a practical political agenda to which all Oromo nationalist parties and individuals might subscribe in order to achieve that as-yet undefined goal of 'self-determination'.

The fifth observation is that this encounter took place in a global context and was part of a larger struggle played out at the historical juncture when the United States was assuming hegemonic leadership over a capitalist system that was absorbing former Soviet-dominated countries. The United States was intent on establishing a secure environment for investment. The strategy for keeping 'stability' was to maintain the existing configuration of the states it subsumed and to treat them as outposts operating in the interests of the centre. This is why popular movements who challenged those states, seeking justice and equality, were regarded as threats to that particular formula for stability. Ethiopia was a case in point. Ironically, then, in the name of maintaining 'stability' in the region, the full panoply of ideological and material forces at the disposal of the United States – the army of political strategists and consultants, the large grants of economic aid, the military assistance – were arrayed against the fledgling efforts to realise Oromo democracy in the short political opening following Mengistu's demise. Once this US strategy was in place, it is no wonder that any demonstration of Oromo credentials for democratic practice or appeals to assist Oromo to implement Oromo democracy met a dismissive and even antagonistic response from US officials at the time, let alone from their local EPRDF partners.

This brings us to a sixth observation. A new solution must be found for the crisis of instability in the global order. Unfortunately, the West is facing the new era of globalisation with its old 'promotion of democracy' strategy, intended to address the instabilities perceived in the mid-1980s, that is, by trying unsuccessfully to integrate weak states into the global system through polyarchy or Third Wave democracy. The failure of this policy demonstrates that the West cannot generate a paradigm adequate to accommodate the capacities of those on the periphery. The centre has reached the limit of its ability to extend itself. A new solution, particularly a new paradigm which offers stability for the overextended global system, is called for. Though the West cannot generate such a paradigm, it can choose to accommodate a design generated elsewhere. It is my argument

that nations on the periphery like Oromia possess a paradigm capable of producing an infrastructure that can influence and stabilise conditions in their corner of the globe. Why would not those responsible for safeguarding the central institutions of the global order find such a prospect worth exploring? The continuing crises of instability will compel the centre to accommodate the proposals, demands and, more likely, the formulas for solution that come forward from peoples in the periphery. Stability reached through accommodation holds the promise of introducing both justice and peace through reconfiguring relationships on a global scale.

A seventh observation is that the assumptions imbedded in the kind of US policy put in place in Ethiopia are destroying the very source of future global stability. As long as US policy makers continue to assume that long-term stability of the global order will be found in defending these old state arrangements, then any group seeking to challenge the injustice built into those arrangements will be regarded as a threat to the global system. Such a strategy is wrong-headed, expensive and counterproductive. It causes the United States to align policy and military instruments against indigenous peoples who possess dynamic, democratic, cultural paradigms capable of building the viable infrastructures necessary to achieve stability and peace. Not only will the current strategy fail to succeed in achieving either stability or peace in the long term, it will undermine the possibility of finding and developing alternative paradigms for doing just that.

A final observation and conclusion is that resources currently invested by the West in futile attempts to uproot and supplant traditional culture would be better applied to investigating and developing the capacities that exist for peace and stability among peoples in the periphery of the global system. For example, *Oromummaa*, the complex of traditional Oromo principles and mechanisms that once built an indigenous African democracy, likely contains within it a viable formula for the balanced integration of large populations in a strategic corner of the globe. The values and principles that produced *Gada* in a different era have peacefully interacted with Islam and Christianity for several centuries to date. Several elaborate mechanisms operated effectively to ensure that peace. There is every reason to presume that an approach to social and political organisation grounded in the wisdom and experience of an ancient philosophy represented in *Oromummaa* will continue to be compatible with both religious systems in this era as well. Events have demonstrated that the Oromo still have access to this set of principles through their shared language, history and culture and that it impacts on their thought and behaviour. At present such capacities are being ignored and their populations decimated at the peril of the region's future. Acknowledging and developing the potential for peace within indigenous paradigms such as this one, will contribute greatly to resolving the Horn's dilemma.

Notes

1 This chapter is a revised version of a paper published in the *Journal of Oromo Studies*, 4, 1&2 (July 1997), pp. 47–82.

2 The group was historically a national liberation organisation, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). The TPLF itself had been the subject of an internal coup during the late 1980s and had been taken over by a group calling itself the Marxist-Leninist League of Tigray (MLLT). The leadership of the relatively open nationalist organisation changed overnight. The internal politics after the MLLT takeover were secretive, ruthless, notoriously hard-line and often referred to as following a 'Stalinist' or 'Albanian'-style organisational model, that is, tightly controlled by an exclusive internal elite core of decision makers. In the months prior to 1991, the group suddenly began to present itself as multi-ethnic organisation by recruiting prisoners of war of various sought-after national backgrounds taken from the defeated *Dergue* forces during the last days of the *Dergue*'s regime. These new recruits were put forward to bolster a claim that TPLF had transformed into the EPRDF through the addition of several Nationality-based organisations.

3 Conveniently for the United States, this request coincided with a well-timed arrangement with the Israeli Defence Forces who were in Addis Ababa to oversee the evacuation of the country's remaining Ethiopian Jews to Israel as part of Operation Moses. In effect, the IDF were in physical control of the city until the Jews were safely dispatched and on site should any untoward even threaten to derail the plan to transfer power to the TPLF/EPRDF.

4 William I. Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, U.S. Intervention and Hegemony* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996), p. 49.

5 Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman, OK, and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), p. 113, emphasis in the original.

6 It really came into existence with the creation of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) in 1983. This agency took over many of the political operations of the CIA, but in a public overt forum and utilising a more specialised, sophisticated vision and strategic agenda. The ideological underpinning of this new effort was developed within the National Security Council (NSC) drawing heavily on the writings of William A. Douglas (1972) and Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968) and other US scholars tied to the policy-making apparatus. Douglas argued that what was needed to serve US interests was a kind of 'regimented democracy' that could effect a measure of 'social control' or 'stability' without arousing the ire of the masses. This approach would replace the strategy of supporting authoritarian rulers. His ideas indicate the outlines of what became the grand design for a new phase in US foreign policy (see Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, pp. 84–5).

7 The new programme was initiated by the Council on Foreign Relations and the Trilateral Commission in the early 1980s seeking broad bipartisan consensus. The position reached was that the United States should abandon support of authoritarian regimes and take the political and ideological offensive globally. A bipartisan group called the American Political Foundation was formed to implement this process, recommending in 1982 that a presidential commission examine how the United States could promote democracy overseas. The White House approved the recommendation for the creation of a Project Democracy. At the outset, it was attached to the National Security Council supervised by the chief CIA propaganda specialist who worked closely with Oliver North. The NSC's work with Congress resulted in the legislation creating the National

Endowment for Democracy (NED) in 1983. The NED was to take over the funding and political guidance activities that the CIA had handled up to that time. The elaborate orchestration of government and quasi-governmental institutions required to put this new programme into place was to take place through the NED. (Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, esp. ch. 2, pp. 73–116).

8 This concept has been fully developed first by Robert A. Dahl in a classic work entitled *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1971).

9 Christopher Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1995), pp. 45ff.

10 Bonnie K. Holcomb and Sisai Ibssa, *The Invention of Ethiopia: the Making of a Dependent Colonial Empire in Ethiopia* (Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 1990).

11 Ibid., p. 338.

12 Ibid., p. 403.

13 Samuel P. Huntington, 'Political Development in Ethiopia: a Peasant-Based Dominant-Party Democracy'. Report to USAID/Ethiopia on Consultations with the Constitutional Commission, 17 May 1993.

14 Gilbert D. Kulick, 'Ethiopia's Hollow Elections: Observing the Forms', *Foreign Service Journal* (September 1992), p. 44.

15 Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*.

16 For an account of the cross-border operation into Ethiopia from Sudan see Michael Duffield and John Prendergast, *Without Troops and Tanks: Humanitarian Intervention in Ethiopia and Eritrea* (Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 1994).

17 Leenco Lata, *The Ethiopian State at the Crossroads: Decolonization and Democratization or Disintegration?* (Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 1999), p. 93.

18 See Terrence Lyons, 'The Transition Toward Democracy in Ethiopia: Observations on the Elections in Welega, June 1992'. Testimony before the House Foreign Relations Subcommittee on African Affairs hearing 'Looking Back and Reaching Forward: Prospects for Democracy in Ethiopia', September 17 1992.

19 See Terrence Lyons, 'Closing the Transition: the May 1995 Elections in Ethiopia', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 34, 1 (1996), p. 127.

20 Sharon Pauling, Report on Observations of Elections in Ethiopia. Bread for the World, 802 Rhode Island Ave, NE, Washington, DC, 20018, 15 July 1992.

21 NDI [National Democratic Institute of International Affairs & African American Institute] *An Evaluation of the June 21 1992. Elections in Ethiopia* (Washington, DC: NDI, 1992); John W. Harbeson, Elections and Democratization in Post-Mengistu Ethiopia. Draft report prepared for the United States Agency for International Development Project on Elections in War-Torn Societies, September 1996.

22 Lyons, 'The Transition Toward Democracy in Ethiopia'.

23 See NDI, *An Evaluation of June 21 1992*.

24 Marina Ottaway, 'Of Elections, Democracy and Holy Water: Reflections on the Ethiopian Experience'. Paper presented to the 35th Annual Meeting of the frican Studies Association, Seattle, WA, November 20–23 1992; Lyons, 'The Transition Toward Democracy in Ethiopia'; Theodore M. Vestal, 'Perspectives on the Ethiopian Elections of 21 June, 1992: the Viewfrom the Center'. Paper presented to the 35th Annual Meeting of the frican Studies Association, Seattle, WA, 20–23 November 1992; Peter Niggli, *Die verpasste Chance: Athiopien nach Mengistu, Die Regionalwahlen vom juni 1992, Bericht der Wahlbeobachtings Delegation* (Cologne: Heinrich Böll Institute, 1992).

25 Among the scholars who have contributed to this growing literature are Asmarom Legesse, *Gada: Three Approaches to the Study of African Society*

(New York: The Free Press, 1973), and particularly idem, *Oromo Democracy: an Indigenous African Political System* (Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 2000); Mario Aguilar, 'Keeping Peace: Generational Responses in Ritual among the Oromo of Eastern Kenya', Unpublished MS, 1994; Bartels, *The Oromo Religion: Myths and Rites of Western Oromo of Ethiopia – an Attempt to Understand* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1983); P.T.W. Baxter, 'Social Organization of the Galla of Northern Kenya', (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Oxford University, 1954); idem (with Uri Almagor), *Age, Generation and Time: Some Features of East African Age Organizations* (London: C. Hurst, 1978); idem, 'The Problem of the Oromo or the Problem for the Oromo?' in I.M. Lewis (ed.), *Nationalism and Self-Determination in the Horn of Africa* (London: Ithaca Press, 1983); Lemmu Baissa, 'The Democratic Political System of the Oromo (Galla) of Ethiopia and the Possibility of its Use in Nation-Building' (MA Thesis, George Washington University, Washington DC, 1971); idem, 'Can the Gada Political Culture Serve as the Basis for Political Democratization Today?', *Proceedings of the 1991 Conference on Oromia* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1991); idem, 'The Political Culture of Gada: Building Blocks of Oromo Power'. Paper Presented at the Oromo Studies Association Conference. University of Toronto, Canada, 31 July–August 1993; idem, 'Gada Values: Building Blocks of a Democratic Polity', *Journal of Oromo Studies*, 1, 2 (1994); and see also this volume; Marco Bassi, I Borana: Una societa assembleare dell'Etiopia (Milano: Franco Angelini, 1996); Dinsa Lepisa Abba Jobir, 'The Gada System of Government' (LLB Thesis, Addis Ababa University, 1975); Gemetchu Megerssa, 'Knowledge, Identity and Colonizing Structure: the Case of the Oromo in East and Northeast Africa' (Ph.D. dissertation: University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1993); Richard Greenfield and Mohammed Hassen, 'Interpretation of Oromo Nationality', *Horn of Africa*, 3, 3 (1980); Gunnar Hasselblatt, *After 14 Years: Return to Addis Ababa and to a Free Oromia. A Travel Diary* (1992); Mohammed Hassen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia: a History, 1570–1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); John Hinnant, 'The Guji: Gada as a Ritual System', in Uri Almagor and P.T.W. Baxter (eds), *Age, Generation and Time: Some Features of East African Age Organizations* (London: C. Hurst, 1978); Bonnie K. Holcomb, in Holcomb and Ibssa, 1990; idem, 'The Concept of Party and Set in Oromo Traditional Politics'. Paper presented to the 35th Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association, Seattle, Washington, 20–23 November 1992; Bonnie K. Holcomb, 'The ideological basis for Oromo empowerment' Paper presented at the Oromo Studies Association Conference, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada, July 31–August 1, 1993; Bonnie K. Holcomb and Sisai Ibssa, *The Invention of Ethiopia: the Making of a Dependent Colonial State in Northeast Africa* (Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 1990); Sisai Ibssa, 'The Implications of Party and Set for Oromo Political Survival', Paper presented to the 35th Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association, Seattle, Washington, 20–23 November 1992; 1993; Asafa Jalata, *Oromia and Ethiopia: State Formation and Ethnonational Conflict, 1868–1992* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Reiner Publishers, 1993); idem, 'Toward a Theory of Cultural Liberation', Presidential address to the Oromo Studies Association, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada, 30–31 July 1994; idem (ed.), *Oromo Nationalism and the Ethiopian Discourse: the Search for Freedom and Democracy* (Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press; Aneesa Kassam (with Gemetchu Megerssa), 'Aloof Alollaa: the Inside and the Outside – Booran Oromo Environmental Law and Methods of Conservation', in David Brokensha (ed.), *A River of Blessings: Essays in Honor of Paul Baxter* (Syracuse, NY: Maxwell School of Public Affairs, 1994); idem, 'The Oromo Theory of Development', in T. Mkandawire and E.E. Osgahae (eds), *Between the State and Civil Society in Africa: Perspect-*

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29 Vestal, 'Perspectives on the Ethiopian Elections', p. 12.

30 Schaefer, 'Free and Fair in Ethiopia?', p. 4.

31 Ibid.

32 Ottaway, 'Of Elections, Democracy and Holy Water', p. 11.

33 Ibid., p. 17.

34 See Lyons, 'The Transition Toward Democracy in Ethiopia' and idem, 'Closing the Transition'; Niggli, *Die verpasste Chance*; LaVerle Berry, Statement by the Members of the Dembi Dolo Joint International Observation Group on the Recent Electoral Process in Regions 4, 6, and 12 June 1992; Ottaway, 'Of Elections, Democracy and Holy Water'; Pausewang, *The 1994 Elections and Democracy in Ethiopia*; Charles Schaefer, 'Free and Fair in Ethiopia?'; Theodore Vestal, 'Perspectives on the Ethiopian Elections'; and idem, Testimony before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Africa, House of Representatives, July 27 1994; Pauling, Report on Observations of Elections in Ethiopia.

35 NDI (National Democratic Institute of International Affairs & African American Institute), *An Evaluation of the June 21, 1992 Elections in Ethiopia* (Washington, DC: NDI, 1992); John W. Harbeson, *Elections and Democratization in Post-Mengistu Ethiopia*, Draft report prepared for the United States Agency for International Development Project on Elections in War-Torn Societies, September 1996.
36 Lata, *The Ethiopian State at the Crossroads*, p. 136.
37 Lyons, 'The Transition Toward Democracy in Ethiopia', p. 3.

7 The Sidama nation and the solidarity of colonised nations in Ethiopia*

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Relatively little is known about the Sidama nation due to a consistent lack of study of such nations in Ethiopian historiography. The general lack of useful sources in Sidama studies has been a bone of contention among contemporary Sidama intellectuals for quite some time. The paucity of information has resulted in confusion and ambiguity in identifying the people, the culture, the history and the current developments underlying change and continuity in Sidama. Whereas the relentless efforts of Oromo scholars have led to the establishment of Oromo Studies, significant gaps exist about other colonised nations in Ethiopia.

This chapter aims to address the problem of the articulation of the historical and current condition of the Sidama people by making information and reasoning accessible to the general public. It is argued that successive Abyssinian-cum-Ethiopian rules have imposed social injustice, political corruption and economic deprivation on the colonised nations. The chapter elaborates on the common patterns prevailing in the oppressed nations and that of Sidama with a view to promoting unity and solidarity between like-minded peoples in their struggle for survival. It concludes that the future of the Sidama nation lies in directing a concerted effort towards the attainment of cultural self-respect and political freedom to implement appropriate economic policies. The attainment of these objectives requires designing broader political and social strategies, one of which is building a coalition of oppressed nations. This is not a political manifesto; if it appears so, it is only because of the political-economy approach adopted in view of the problem at hand. As with any other intellectual enterprise, the current effort does not intend to be either comprehensive or conclusive, yet it is intended to be indicative of and informative on issues which are crucial to respective societies and to the region. The chapter is divided into three sections: the background to the Sidama nation and its place in Ethiopian polity; contemporary developments; and the need to build political coalitions.

Background to the Sidama nation

Sidama territory is situated in northeast Africa, the southern part of Ethiopia.[1] The population of the Sidama *nation* is estimated at 4 million. Here, the concept of nation involves a people with common language, culture, shared history and political peoplehood. The author has explored the notions of nations and nationalism in other publications.[2] The main elements of Sidama nationhood still exist today despite a century of Abyssinian colonial rule which has subjected the Sidama to relentless oppression and domination. In this context, the terms 'nation' and 'country' are used interchangeably, as are the terms 'oppressed' and 'colonised people/nations'.

The land covers an area of approximately 15,588 square kilometres,[3] large parts of which lie between 4,500 and 10,000 feet above sea-level, with high levels of rainfall in the highlands. The contrary is the case for the lowlands which form part of the East African Rift Valley. Until recently, most of Sidamaland was covered by tropical vegetation making Sidama known as an ever-green country. This image is progressively changing as the population grows and since large swathes of land were consumed by malicious and suspect forest fires in 1999.

The Sidama country shares boundaries with Oromia in the north and east, Wolayita in the west and Gedeoland in the south. In geographic terms, Sidama contains a varied landscape, including lakes and rivers with diverse climatic zones. The major rivers, mostly flowing from the highlands, include Loggita, Gambeltu, Gennale, Colla and Gidawo. The larger lakes are Lake Hawaasa (often referred to Awassa) and Lake Abaya. Sidama is rich in terms of resources suitable for agriculture, mining, industry and other modern services. It produces several foodstuffs, fruits and vegetables, cereals, and cash crops. The *wesse* plant is the main staple food while coffee is the major cash crop.

History, people, culture and language

Sidama has a long and rich oral history. Written records on and about Sidama are contemporary phenomena. Historical and cultural research has been severely circumvented by the Abyssinian colonial system of domination which has undervalued and undermined knowledge creation and dissemination on non-Abyssinian cultures. In what is available through foreign scholarship (most studies are socio-anthropological), the Sidama are given different names. For example, a browse through the works of John Hamer, Jan Brøgger, Ulrich Braukämper, G. Hudsen, S. Stanley, Enrico Cerulli, Klaus Wedekind, and Norberto Vecchiato indicates the use of different names at different times. John Hamer noted the problem of nomenclature in his later works and adopted the name Sidama as it is used by the Sidamas themselves.[4] For a long time, however, scholars referred to Sadama, Sidamo or one of the Kushitic-speaking people of

southern Ethiopia. What is more ambiguous is the use of the term 'Sidamo' to describe the Kushitic ethnic groups which, in addition to 'Sidamo' proper, includes Hadiya, Kambata, Alaba, Gedeo, Bambala, the Ometo, Kafa, Gibe and Janjero.[5]

The problem of nomenclature is noticeable not only among scholars but also in popular parlance. It is no wonder that the Abyssinian rulers and their historians deliberately refuse to recognise Sidama, preferring instead the term Sidamo. The latter is a mere geographic description assigned to the southern region which contains several nations.[6] The problem of terminology also exists with an Oromo usage of the term Sidama, which in fact refers to Amhara, or strangers.[7] Due to the lack of focused studies on Sidama society in the past, informed debate on the Sidama political economy was bound to rely on oral tradition, rituals and symbols, all of which remain a matter for further research.[8] The available written sources do not give precise and conclusive periods of internal movements and settlements. However, there is no doubt that the Sidama have lived in their present environment for millennia with inevitable internal and external population movements affecting their settlement.

The most critical physical dislocation was the conquest by Menelik's army in 1893 that created the colonial system of *nafxanya-gabbar* or tenant-settler/soldier relationship. The conquest resulted in the promotion of authoritarian values and the demotion of the Sidama system of governance inculcated in *halaale* ideology[9] and the *Luwa* system[10] that have egalitarian and consultative decision-making principles in common with the *Gada* system of the Oromo.[11] Many Sidama people still entertain these belief systems despite Emperor Menelik's effort at conversion which hardly goes 'beyond the sphere of influence of the military colonists (*chewa*) from northern Ethiopia'.[12]

The Sidama people, like other comparable social groups, trace their origins to common ancestors and shared cultural values. The Sidama language is spoken by almost all of the Sidama population, and it is one of the mechanisms for maintaining existing cultural and political bonds. The social ethos of the Sidama people is based on community life. They believe 'in a creator sky deity, Magano, who once lived on earth, but returned to the sky after people continued to complain about having to make a choice between reproduction and eternal life'.[13] The belief systems, the day-to-day activities, the attitudes and the reactions of the people have been influenced by the introduction of cash crop economy and the spread of protestant Christian denominations.[14]

Economy

The economic welfare of the majority of the Sidamas depends on agriculture which is almost exclusively rain-fed, without proper investment or suitable land-use policy, and often neglected by Ethiopian policy makers.

On the other hand, a heavy emphasis is placed on extracting the products of the land and peasant labour.

The existence of vast arable lands enabled the growth of indigenous plants like *weese* (also called '*inset*', a plant resembling a banana tree and the source of the staple food, *waasa*) and a variety of other cereals and crops. The main cash crop is coffee. Sidama farmers produce large quantities of high-quality coffee for the world market, yet they do not benefit. In the 1970s and 1980s, coffee prices were fixed by the military government well below world market prices, and the prices received by farmers were meager in comparison. The pricing policy itself was an additional burden on Sidama farmers, who were forced to pay rising prices for industrial products and services with unfavourable terms of trade. At times farmers were forced to cut down coffee plants to replace them with other food stuff items. While heavy tax burdens forced them to continue producing coffee, low fixed prices discouraged them from improving their productivity.

In much of the Sidama region, mixed agriculture is practised with a deteriorating trend of cattle rearing in the lowlands where there are severe hazards both for human and for animal health. Malaria is endemic in some places and it claims thousands of lives every year. Health facilities are inadequate in relation to the population numbers and density. It is a surprising fact that the capital, Hawaasa had no hospital. Until quite recently, the only hospital was based in the town of Dale (Yirgalem) and even this was built with foreign aid.

Other forms of infrastructure such as transport and construction are not developed. In the rural areas, few all-weather roads exist and those that do were designed to facilitate coffee transportation, being constructed largely in the coffee-growing midlands. There is only one highway which aimed to connect Addis Ababa to Moyale, a Kenyan border town, passing through Sidama. No rail connections exist and there is no airport. There is no public transport even in the city of Hawaasa where the private sector is ill-equipped to provide the services. There are hardly any construction schemes or modern industries. A textile factory was set up in the 1980s as a show project catering for the external market with few links to the local economy. There are no large-scale coffee processing and exporting plants other than the numerous badly managed primary coffee processors.

Sidama in Ethiopian historiography

Ethiopian studies ignore the issues of the colonised nations, and Sidama studies are, to date, virtually non-existent, even for mere academic purposes. As William Shack noted, the 'lack of critical scholarship had inadvertently distorted [the perception of] the human achievements of conquered peoples like the Oromo, including transformations of their social, cultural and political institutions'.[15]

The contemporary Ethiopian empire state was formed when Menelik's

army conquered the Sidama and other free nations. The patterns and effects of this conquest coincided with European colonial rule in Africa in what has been described as 'a unique case of African imperialism'.[16] Abyssinian settler colonialism led to the confiscation of land from the rightful owners and its distribution among armed settlers. In Sidama, this dispossession was followed by severe coercion against dissent. While collaborators in the conquered lands were co-opted, local chiefs were chosen arbitrarily, baptised and assigned such titles as *balabat* and *dejazmach*. State and Church were united in the enforcement of physical, cultural and spiritual submission. The same happened elsewhere in Africa as Ngugi wa Thiongo notes:

> Colonialism imposed its control of the social production of wealth through military conquest and subsequent military dictatorship. But its most important area of domination was the mental universe of the colonized, the control through culture, of how people perceived themselves and their relationship to the world. To control a people's culture is to control their tools of self-definition in relation to others. For colonialism this involved two aspects of the same process: the destruction or the deliberate undervaluing of a people's culture and literature, and the conscious elevation of the language of the colonizer.[17]

When European colonialism physically departed from the rest of Africa in the 1950s, Abyssinian colonial rule still remained in Sidama as well as in other oppressed nations. The legacy of colonial domination and exploitation was maintained and upgraded by the 'modernising autocracy' of Haile Selassie. The collective memory of the Sidama of this 'modernisation' is the modernisation of their oppression. This author recalls a lament by a Sidama elder, who, speaking of what had changed since Menelik, said that the Sidamas had stopped travelling to Shawa, the Abyssinian political centre, to pay tribute or *giwire*, but the tax collector had come to their home with a police officer. What was upgraded was the method of exaction; namely, the system of tax collection, recruitment to the army and bureaucracy. The spoils of the conquest were thus maintained by force, land dispossession, myth and external support.

In 1974, with the advent of what might be called the military revolution, Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam made his bid for power in the empire, ruling it with a Soviet-style ideology. In the name of building a socialist state, his regime, also known as the *Dergue*, pursued a policy of severe repression, villagisation and militarisation of societies. In this task, he counted on massive aid in terms of armaments, military personnel, economic and political support from the then 'socialist bloc'. Despite all the support, the demise of the *Dergue* was inevitable and it was replaced by another northern elite who had been effectively locked out of rulership for almost a century.

In 1991, the Tigrayan insurgency movement, led by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF), seized power. The movement's territorial and social foundations lie in Tigray, but it managed to control power at the centre due to a combination of luck, manipulation and political deception. The much-detested *Dergue* system was in disarray because of internal legitimacy crises, while the end of the Cold War hastened the dissolution of similar state systems in Africa and elsewhere in the world. What is unique in the case of the Tigrayan national movement was its public admission of historic inequities in the state system. The empire state was shaken up, and its fundamental problems became public knowledge. The new nationalist regime had changed the patterns of privilege established for over a century. In this process of change, it was forced to diagnose correctly the problems of the empire but it completely failed to address or contribute to the resolution of these problems. The very nature of the formation of the Ethiopian empire state precluded the TPLF leadership from reckoning with past misdeeds. In its bid to assume central power, the TPLF regime echoed the fashionable rhetoric of 'competitive' politics and economics. If true political democracy and freedom of economic enterprise were to be realised, the TPLF believed it would lose. Hence it soon thwarted all genuine moves in that direction, ironically, without ceasing to talk of freedom, peace and democracy. Looking at their performance over recent years, one can see how hollow these claims have been, for there is barely room for political and civil rights such as freedom of association, freedom of information, or freedom of the press. The prominent characteristics of this period have been repression, the creation and support of surrogate parties, building Tigray at the expense of others, embezzlement and corruption.

Table 7.1 describes the main events that underlie the transfer of power among subsequent Ethiopian regimes and their effects on the social, political and economic patterns in Sidama as in the rest of the oppressed nations. The problems lie in the formation and the operation of the empire.

The problems of empire

If the problems caused by the empire are perceived in terms of the fashionable standards of the day, namely democracy, peace, development and freedom, we find that these are the very standards upon which consecutive regimes of Ethiopian empire have faltered.

First, let us ask if the empire state system and democratic practices augur well. The answer lies in the examination of what democracy entails. It is important for democracy that the population consents to the proposed political structures or that the consent of the governed is sought. Has there ever been a time when the nations and people within the Ethiopian empire were asked for their consent or was the empire state formed on

Table 7.1 Summary of the main events in Ethiopian empire since the 1890s.

Notable periods	*Politics*	*Economy*	*People*	*Culture/Language*
Emperor Menelik (1890s–1913)	Conquest; medieval feudalism; external military support	Slave Trade, a *nafxanya-gabbar* system; compulsory labour	War-lordism, destruction, land expropriation	Imposition of conqueror's culture, language and religious beliefs on the oppressed nations
Haile Selassie (1920s–1974)	Consolidation of absolutist state; feudalism; force; external political, military support	Modernisation of selected economic sectors and regions	'Modernised' domination; expropriation of land and property; famine	Promotion of Amhara values, language and culture in social and political life
Mengistu Haile Mariam (1974–1991)	Military dictatorship; military force; aggression; external support	State ownership; villagisation; military conscription; foreign aid	Repression; 'red' and 'white' terror; war and genocide; famine and hunger	Acculturation; systematic repression of oppressed national cultures and languages
Meles Zanawi (1991–?)	Repressive dictatorship; deceptive; federalism; northern rule; external support	TPLF cadre aggrandisement; widening poverty; environmental damage; foreign aid	Repression; force; exaction flagrant human rights abuses	Superficial recognition of national languages and cultures; rising tide of 'wind of change'

consensus? The answer to both questions is decidedly 'no', contrary to the assertions by the military government of stage-managed elections, or claims by the TPLF government that the elections of 1992, 1993 and 1995 constitute the consent of the people. Owing to its very nature, colonial rule knows no consent. The basis for legitimacy of such a rule is nonexistent. In the absence of legitimacy, the empire system relies on force, anachronistic tradition and manipulative marriages. In the Ethiopian context, these are not only illegitimate but also immoral.

Reforming the Ethiopian empire in a democratic manner is an uphill struggle for any social reformer. It is not immediately clear how a system founded on cruelty, one which was framed to denigrate humanity, one which denies and decries human cultures and languages and could be rectified in any way short of decolonisation. Thus the resort to people's right to national self-determination, a democratic right par excellence, is a logical conclusion because the current government, like its predecessors, is undemocratic and repressive.[18] The wave of repression of independent media, cruel treatment of notable personalities and intellectuals from the colonised nations, the *refoulement* of refugees from neighbouring states, and so on, is part and parcel of Abyssinian polity.[19]

Peace is another elusive issue within the contemporary Ethiopian empire state. Peace implies stability. It exists when people go about their daily business without fear of violence and death. The horrific century of imperial history of Ethiopia is hardly one of peace; on the contrary, it has been one where feuding northern warlords extended instability, warfare and accompanying famine to the surrounding territories guided by a militarist ethos often given to civil strife, violent repression and subsequent external intervention.

Development is another indicator against which performance can be measured. Taking *per capita* income levels for purposes of international comparison, it becomes evident where the subjects of the empire state were forced to stay: last, or nearly the last in the world. Even when economic growth is assumed to exist, it has been extremely lop-sided, often based on towns close to those in power. We have a situation where extreme poverty prevails alongside the unabashed prosperity of a predatory Abyssinian class that manipulates political power. Never has this been as clear as in the contemporary era, when predation, corruption and crippling dependence on external handouts have exposed different societies, including the Abyssinian-cum-Ethiopian poor, to the vagaries of severe poverty and uncertainty.

It goes without saying that bad governance engenders bad economic and social policies. Obstinate pursuit of destructive wars has consumed vital resources; it has also wreaked havoc in communities by forcibly fragmenting families, the basic units of society. Forced collectivisation carried out by the *Dergue* ruined the fabric of rural life by imposing alien constructs borrowed from remote societies. Land dispossession did not end

(even now land remains the property of the state which decides on its use and lease). For much of the imperial era, for instance, the land ownership system in the north has been based on what is called '*rist*' – a system of individual and communal land ownership – while a different system operated in the majority of south (a system of tenancy where the armed settlers and the imperial state owned most of the land and where the people had the right to till and toil for subsistence).

Some changes were introduced by the *Dergue* which partly demolished the Abyssinian feudal state system but replaced it with Ethiopian-cum-Abyssinian 'communist' state system. Land has become the state property. The *Dergue* not only tampered with land but also with the products thereof. Examples include agricultural marketing and pricing policies, cumbersome taxation, pervasive social controls through so-called peasants' and urban dwellers' associations. The TPLF and its amorphous umbrella, the Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) were initially cautious about changing the land policy of the military regime in spite of ceaseless pressure from the formerly advantaged elite for rapid sale of land, particularly in the south and in the towns. This regime seems more concerned with what follows a change in the land-holding system than the long-term welfare of the people. It prefers to concentrate on the speedy and short-term exploitation of the resources of the lands thus leading to environmental degradation, pollution and health hazards. All these combine to affect negatively the actual and potential economic welfare situation of the oppressed people.

Freedom is another principle on which the empire state falters. If one perceives freedom in terms of individual civil liberties and the collective rights of a society or community, the latter includes the right to choose the system of governance. Western liberalism places the emphasis on the individual with the presumption that the state, which is also assumed to be a social guardian, will take care of society and collective rights. But the situation here is very different. In many parts of the post-colonial Africa in general, and in Ethiopia in particular, a state is not representative of its resident peoples. Instead, it serves as the personal fiefdom of despots and is owned by members of one particular, often ethnonational community. It is such a state which denies not only the expression of individual identity, but also the national or communal identity of the colonised nations.

In the case of Ethiopia, the politics of empire produced perpetual poverty, ignorance and anti-democratic tendencies. What we have witnessed, so far, is the perpetuation of an extractive state run by the northern-based elite. The southern nations are forced to bear the burden of nation-building elsewhere, not to mention the repayment of debts incurred by past irresponsible regimes buying armaments to keep control over the south. In effect, the power holders have stayed in power with immoral values and norms that are not those of enterprise but rather of officialdom, not of appraisal but of contempt for the common man. This class upholds

an instrumentalist world-view where everything in the land is to be manipulated including the family, language, society and state. In this context, we can see what TPLF rule has done to the Sidama nation.

The current regime and its policies in Sidama

While noting some positive changes initiated by the current regime, in comparison with the age-old Abyssinian rule, the prevailing picture does not offer much hope. The following are details of what has occurred in Sidama since the replacement of an overly arrogant central rule by a deceptive federal one. First, in economic terms, the TPLF regime continues to underdevelop the Sidama nation. The vital products of the nation, such as coffee, hides and skin, and the earnings therefrom go to finance projects in the home towns of the ruling elite. At the same time, the Sidama farmers bear the long-term cost of the transfer of wealth. The human resources of Sidama are squandered to benefit the ruling elite. Sidama's entrepreneurs and educated persons are discouraged from their activities through different political and administrative measures. Despite vast potential resources, natural and human, the majority of the people remain poor while disease and at times even famine visit some parts of Sidama. On the other hand, the Sidama were excluded from the jumble/garage sale of what was formerly state property to the members and the supporters of the new regime in the run-up to the policy of 'privatisation'.

Second, on political grounds, soon after and in some cases even before assuming power, the EPRDF manufactured surrogate parties with a view to projecting its political influence beyond the territory of Tigray. It created the Sidama People's Democratic Organisation (SPDO), the Sidama version of the many Peoples Democratic Organisations (PDOs) hatched by the TPLF. It armed, supported and financed this PDO while terrorising other groups including the members and supporters of the Sidama Liberation Front (SLF) and independent individuals. In this task, it used the prisoners of war and people who earned little or no respect from the populace. By promoting subservient personalities, it suppressed the bright, independent and creative people. Weak, passive characters were advertised to Sidama society as models to be followed while active, creative and inquisitive thinking was denigrated. This is but part of the systematic abuse of Sidama's national potential.

The TPLF regime, being unstable, continues to harass, detain and intimidate the Sidama people who question the validity or the legitimacy of its rule. It has worked to undermine the symbols of Sidama nationhood. This is done throughout the so-called southern region which is an amalgam of different peoples and cultures. Typical of Abyssinian strategy, to weaken Sidama nationalism and that of other colonised nations, this multiethnic amalgam uses a colonial language as its lingua franca because it has found it impractical to use all the other languages of the constituent

nine or so different groups. Moreover, the new northern settlers in the nation do not speak Sidamuaffo, the Sidama language, and press for the use of Amharic as an official language and the medium of education. This has a direct bearing on the future of the Sidama language.[20]

Third, through one of its clone structures, the Southern Ethiopian Peoples' Democratic Front (SEPDF), the TPLF/EPRDF attempted to take over the Sidama national capital, Hawaasa. This has contributed to unplanned growth of slums, shanty areas, the spread of diseases, environmental pollution and congestion in the capital. The government plan to make Hawaasa the regional administrative capital under the control of the central government has harnessed insecurity among Sidamas since it has serious consequences for the nation's economic, political and social development. The protest by Sidamas on 24 May 2002 lead to the Looqe Massacre in which over 100 people were killed or wounded, almost all of whom were Sidama. The massacre, which is part of the genocidal policies of the government, was extensively reported in the world media, including in the *Sidama Concern*.[21] Many government and human rights organisations expressed dismay at the behaviour of the government and its security forces. Some governments, including the European Union, demanded an independent investigation into the massacre not only in Sidama but also in other areas in the south.

Fourth, the regime has also continued to create and spread discord and conflict among the colonised nations, for example, between the Sidamas and the Oromos who live in adjacent territories. The regime sponsors conflict (even warfare) while it later enters the conflict as a do-good, non-partisan mediator. Several prominent Sidamas have lost their lives in these incidents. This author recalls the death of widely respected individuals, such as Fissa Ficho, in such skirmishes. The old Abyssinian tactic has always been to separate the oppressed nations from each other so that they cannot initiate a common struggle. The Abyssinian government has been encouraging educated Sidamas to be ignorant of their close neighbours (the Oromo, Kaficho, Wolayta, Hadiya and their cultures and histories) while striving to teach them the language and the values of the oppressors from the north.

Those few people who joined the only university in the empire were forced to study colonial history and language. During the *Dergue* rule, many Sidama students who graduated were dispatched to the north, and they rarely return to visit their families in Sidama. This trend was temporarily reversed in the 1990s, but then the development of Sidama human resources were blocked by political considerations. Those who were appointed in decision-making positions are either incompetent, or corrupt, or both. They are kept because they are 'acceptable' to the centre. The misuse and abuse of human resource potential is evident.

In the absence of interested social guardians and caretakers, deadly diseases and unyielding religious cults are spreading in Sidama. The

concentration of the administrative personnel of the so-called Southern Peoples Region in Hawaasa without the commensurate provision of the necessary infrastructure is contributing to social evils such as the spread of diseases, prostitution, drug abuse and unemployment. Furthermore, unplanned and unwarranted expansion of the town has resulted in the displacement of the Sidama people. The sense of unease and despair is reflected in popular apathy on matters of practical significance; adherence to a fatalistic world view is increasing. One can observe a multitude of semi-religious organisations that preach the virtues of slavery on earth with the promise of emancipation in another world.

The author argues that no government formed and based on the Abyssinian capital, be it Meqele, Gondar or Shoa can conceivably be hoped to bring about democracy, development and prosperity to the Sidama nation. On the contrary, the very concept of a Sidama nation is antithetical to the tenets of centralism, predation and exclusion unique to the empire state system. What is needed is a way of articulating the solutions and presenting them to the wider public.

Coalition building

The Sidama nation, like the rest of the aggrieved nations, reserves the right to pursue and achieve national self-determination. This need puts the Sidama nation on a par with people who have similar problems, intents and aspirations. In order to achieve their goals and to change the current situation, an alliance of equally aggrieved nations is vital. The future is better served if such nations pool their resources. Alliance is not only necessary, it is almost indispensable, and it should aim at the right of the Sidama and like-minded nations to national self-determination.

Those who understand the need for such a coalition and the urgency of the situation need to recognise that the right to decide the destiny of the Sidama nation belongs to the respective people. They will decide on the system of governance that will consider the aspirations of other colonised nations. But these choices will occur only outside the current apparatus of domination and colonial rule. The grounds to invoke the right to national self-determination are as follows:

First, the Sidama people, along with other colonised peoples, have suffered from systematic discrimination and abuse under Abyssinian rule. They have been denied opportunities to improve their lot. It is now more evident than ever that the Sidama nation cannot expect to be served fairly by any northern-based colonial elite. No hope, progress or freedom would be forthcoming from predatory classes that preach ignorance, impose darkness and incite violence. Neither a decent living standard nor modern growth is foreseeable in the colonised nations under the dependent, militarist and poverty-perpetuating Abyssinian colonial rule. The colonised nations can only be better served if they govern themselves, if they are

ruled by the laws they set, by the language they speak, by the justice they trust and by their own people. No one knows one better than oneself, as the saying goes.

Second, the gap between the world-views of the colonised nations and the predatory ones is widening; the latter promotes melancholic, status-oriented, racist and conservative values. On the rise are also contested historical symbolisation, aspirations and identification. For example, the heroes and symbols of oppressors from the centre are the symbols of subordination of the colonised nations in the south. In other words, the symbols of pride of the oppressor are the very symbols of suffering and shame for the oppressed people. A few of the examples include Menelik's conquest, the imposition of a belief system based on the Coptic Orthodox Church, and the socio-linguistic dominance of Semitic languages. Similarly, the perception of the past, the diagnosis of the current problems and prescriptions of solutions for the future too, are divergent if not diametrically opposed. Domination is what the oppressed people have inherited but the present generations are wise enough not to bequeath this to posterity.

In spite of ethnic diversity among the colonised nations, the central values of cultural and political traditions and the shared experience of domination provide the basis for unity of action. While a shared perception of history leads to shared aspiration, the desire of oppressed peoples for freedom stands in contrast to the wishes of the rulers who clamour about the disintegration of the 'motherland'. If disintegration is bad, then it is only themselves they have to blame because they made the 'motherland' unacceptable to the oppressed peoples. The people will form the best kind of unity, based on their own free will and will maintain that unity because it is born out of their understanding and consent. Even when they make mistakes, they learn through the process and they would defend that unity. People defend what they consent to and what they know.

Third, the ethnic affinity and geographic proximity of the colonised nations link their destiny. Therefore, those who articulate the concerns and the aspirations of oppressed people need to work out formulas for peaceful survival and cooperation. This will have several interconnected advantages. It promotes understanding of the past and the future of the colonised people; it preempts potential conflicts arising from territorial claims and counter-claims; it will pool disparate resources for a united action; it will enable far-reaching social and political change in the nations concerned; it will allow people to think and focus on long-term development with peace.

Fourth, the 'wind of change' or the growth of national consciousness in the colonised nations warrants significant change. The point has come where the oppressed cannot take further oppression. People from all walks of life, be it in the villages, in the towns, in the schools or in almost any part of the oppressed nations have begun to resist and oppose the

colonial tyranny. As anyone who has observed the pattern of the world's famous social transformations would attest, this is a significant trend. The nationalism of colonised nations in the empire is in its prime since the cumulative effects of past and present misdeeds have now exceeded any tolerable limits.

Therefore, colonised nations that are bound by a common legacy of colonial domination and cultural suppression are required to understand their common problems and search for mutually intelligible solutions. Once this understanding is reached, then the need arises to work on common strategies to end tyranny. In this project of nationalist enterprise, popular solidarity rests first on ideas and principles. The national struggles of the colonised nations are a just struggle against century-long suffering at the hands of ruthless Ethiopian rulers. The oppressed peoples are united in the search for justice and against domination. They stand for freedom and democratic rights. Besides these principles, these nations are bound by ethnicity and cultural affinity, for there is no readily available reason why all the Kushitic-speaking nations remain subservient to alien rule.

Ethnicity will strengthen solidarity to achieve freedom from domination and oppression but also, and more importantly, solidarity beyond that freedom. In this venture, the coalition may aim to engage the international community. Being part of the world, particularly in the face of 'economic globalisation', one has to deal with it. In the past, there has been an understandable reluctance on the part of the outside world to recognise the cultural, political and economic rights of 'new' nations. The world state system seemed better served by the status quo, but it is never immune to change. It adapts to change when there is every reason to adapt. For example, Eritrea in Africa, and many other new nation states in what was eastern Europe and the Soviet Union were added to the list of the United Nations. If a compelling internal case and strong reasons for change exist, the international/external environment is never a stumbling block, and this should be noted.

Conclusions

Since it came into existence in the last decades of the nineteenth century, the Ethiopian empire state system has been based on the paradigm of conquest, domination and exploitation of the subject people. The products of that conquest have resulted in repetitive civil wars and mass poverty all of which have resulted in starvation and hunger. The resources of the colonised nations were misappropriated while their peoples and their cultures were suppressed. Currently, the prospects for progress and for human improvement are effectively blocked by the ascendance of another power-hungry Tigrayan elite which draws its social and political support from its homeland and from outside. Given this situation, the future of the colonised peoples would be better served if they

pool their resources toward the attainment of self-respect and self-determination.

The proposal to forge a united front is simple. It is to put effort and time into thinking and working for the better by constructing a system which is morally superior and lofty in its ideals. It is now abundantly clear that, bound by brotherhood, sisterhood and good-neighbourliness, the colonised nations should offer a lesson to the warring polity: a lesson of living in peace.

One should not only be considering national self-determination for respective societies, one needs also to think of nation-building on the ashes of an unyielding empire which is slowly but surely decaying and, therefore, on its historic way out. The task is not only to deconstruct but also to construct; it is not for destruction or disintegration but rather for the formation and building of nations. The tasks are so monumental, and so noble, that we need to think of mechanisms for establishing consensus founded on society-based organic unity rather than the unworkable union witnessed so far. The Sidama contribution towards the building of a united front has been the creation and dissemination of information on aspects that have common effects, collaborating on mutual aims in terms of information provision, and indicating the need to organise and arrive at a memorandum of understanding between the like-minded organisations.

The practical implementation of many of the suggestions put forward here depends on conscious and far-sighted leadership. In every country in Africa since independence, the style and substance of the political leadership has proved critical in determining whether the people descend into the abyss of poverty or rise to a relatively better future. The respective nationalist leaders and opinion formers are expected to be acutely well informed, accountable and responsible.

The types of coalition will take such forms as social/educational, intellectual cooperation, political cooperation based on continued consultation and even political union of loose federations with nations that share a common past and aspirations. Apart from this broad indication, it is too early to set the precise picture of future aspiration. Economic necessity requires that there must be strong economic cooperation and interaction among nations to reinforce political interaction.

Points for further research

1 Ways ought to be sought to promote scholarship and research on the problems and prospects of the nations under Ethiopian rule.
2 Collaborative research and scholarship agendas have to be developed on indigenous cultural foundations of colonised societies so that the democratic cultural values and norms that will assist the formation of political alliances can be identified and developed.
3 Priority has to be given to the rectification of several sources of distortion and misunderstanding introduced by the colonial rulers in order

to divide and rule. For instance, derogatory usage of the term 'Sidama' needs to be discouraged in political and cultural discourse including in music and dance.

4 Strategies have to be designed that offer assurance for the colonised nations that they will be able to live and work peacefully in the future in a friendly and good-neighbourly atmosphere. This includes the issue of preempting potential conflicts for the good of the respective societies, their long-term stability, peace and prosperity.

Notes

* Reprinted from *The Journal of Oromo Studies*, vol. 5, 1 and 2 (July 1998), pp. 105–32.

1 This estimate is based on the sample survey carried out in November 1995 by the Sidama Development Program 'A Socioeconomic Profile' (Hawaasa, July 1996). The survey further shows that of the 3.7 million population, 50.9 per cent were males and 49.1 per cent females (see *Sidama Concern*, 2, 1 (April 1997), pp. 5–6. Another source takes the 1989 population estimate of Ethiopia of which Oromos make up 40 per cent, Amharas 25 per cent, Tigres 12 per cent and Sidamas 9 per cent. (See the *Hutchinson Encyclopedic Dictionary*, London: BCA, 1991, p. 368). The US State Department source takes the 1995 population estimate of Ethiopia as 55 million of which Sidamas account for 8 per cent, or 4.4 million (see US Department of State, *Country Profile: Ethiopia*, Released by the Bureau of African Affairs, 4 December 1997). These figures stand in contrast to the official Ethiopian population data. The 1984 census put the Sidama population at 1.5 million. Recent Ethiopian official figures reported the population number of 2.5 million. Both of these are inaccurate because, first, the population counts did not cover areas where there were armed conflicts at the time. Second, their political sensitivity of the ruling circles meant that they were not supposed to reflect the social reality. Whenever politics weighs heavily, important data including censuses is 'adjusted' at design and implementation stages to overestimate the favoured 'politically correct' group and understate the 'politically wrong' group. The fear of correct accounting is real.

2 See Seyoum Y. Hameso, *Ethnicity and Nationalism in Africa* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 1997); also idem, *Ethnicity in Africa: Towards a Positive Approach* (London: TSC, 1997).

3 Sidama Zone Planning Office, Awassa, 1997. For the same reasons of lack of documented information, we have been forced to use different figures including 7,000 sq km and 10,000 sq km. The figure of 15,588 sq km is arrived at by the Sidama-wide survey carried out by the above-mentioned planning office.

4 John Hamer, 'Inculcation of Ideology Among the Sidama of Ethiopia', *Africa*, 66, 4 (1996), pp. 526–51.

5 A. Tucker and M. Brayan, *The Non-Bantu Languages of North Eastern Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956); George Peter Murdock, *Africa: Its People and their Culture History* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959), p. 123; Jan Brøgger, *Belief and Experience Among the Sidamo: A Case Study Towards an Anthropology of Knowledge* (Oslo: Norwegian University Press, 1986), p. 22.

6 For these accounts, see the *Sidama Concern*, 1, 1&2, (1996).

7 See Gamachu B. Tuke, 'Sidama and Oromo: A Problem of Name', *Sidama Concern*, 1, 2 (1996). In his core study area, Kembata-Hadiya, Braukämper uses terms like 'strangers' and 'enemy' as relating to the word Sidama. See

U. Braukämper, 'The Ethnogenesis of the Sidama', *Cahier*, 9 (1978). The author of this paper upholds the view that such a usage needs to be discouraged in popular Oromo parlance.

8 Currently, Sidama studies are developing in the Sidama Diaspora. The *Sidama Concern* has established contacts among the Sidamas as well as scholars keen on Sidama studies. A gap still persists in the knowledge creation about the historiography, about the studies of economic, social and cultural values, about the importance of local knowledge in offering solutions to the different problems.

9 Professor John Hamer defines *halaale* ideology as principles of a moral code governing the relationship between people. The term *halaale* literally means 'truth' or 'a true way of life'. See J. Hamer, 'Commensality, Process and the Moral Order: An Example from Southern Ethiopia', *Africa*, 64, 1 (1994), pp. 126–44. Also J. Hamer, 'Inculcation of Ideology among the Sidama of Ethiopia', *Africa*, 66, 4 (1996), pp. 526–51.

10 *Luwa* is a generation age-grade system which bestows authority on wisdom, often emanating from age.

11 See the *Sidama Concern*, 2, 1 (1997), pp. 6–7 for comparisons. Asmarom Legesse provides a classic work on the *Gada* system. See A. Legesse, *Gada: Three Approaches to the Study of African Society* (New York: The Free Press, 1973).

12 Ulrich Braukämper, 'Aspects of Religious Ayncretism in Southern Ethiopia', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 22, 3 (1992), p. 197.

13 John Hamer and Erene Hamer, 'Impact of a Cash Economy on Complementary Gender Relations Among the Sadama of Ethiopia', *Anthropological Quarterly* (1994), p. 188.

14 Ibid.

15 William Shack quoted in Asafa Jalata, 'The Struggle for Knowledge: The Case of Emergent Oromo Studies', *African Studies Review*, 39, 2 (1996), p. 95.

16 Edmond Keller, *Revolutionary Ethiopia: From Empire to People's Republic* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992), p. 45.

17 Ngugi wa Thiongo, *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language and African Cultural Literature* (London: James Currey, 1986), p. 16.

18 Trevor Trueman, 'Democracy or Dictatorship', in Seyoum Hameso, *et al*. (eds), *Ethiopia: Conquest and the Quest for Freedom and Democracy* (London: TSC, 1997), pp. 141–52.

19 See the publications of the Sagaalee Haaraa and *Urgent Action* newsletters of the Oromia Support Group, Malvern, UK. The reports by Africa Watch, Amnesty International and other organisations represent the human dimensions of the human rights violations by the Ethiopian regimes.

20 Seyoum Hameso, Speech given to the London International Book Fair Seminar, March 1997. See also Seyoum Hameso, 'The Language of Education in Africa: The Key issues', *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 10, 1 (1997), pp. 1–13.

21 See www.sidamaconcern.com

8 Globalisation and Africa

Reconstructing the failed Somali state and reviving national identity

Alice Bettis Hashim

Background

The lifespan of the modern nation-state as designed by Britain and Italy for the Somali people was brief. On the eve of independence in July 1960, the former colonial powers fashioned a constitution that sought to enable the formerly British north and the Italian south Somaliland to integrate their governing strategies into one coherent administration.[1] It was a last-minute attempt by Britain who decided to relinquish its control of its northern Somali territories shortly after Italy announced independence for the south. No two European systems were more different, nor were the lifestyles of the European peoples and those of the Somalis.

As in other countries throughout Africa, the British came into Somalia in the late nineteenth century. They made various treaties with local clans in the northeastern corridor along the coast and gradually extended their influence inland. The French had already established themselves in the region by entering into political and economic agreements with Ethiopia. One in particular was the establishment of a Franco-Ethiopian railway to the coast. French authority eventually extended into territories that became known as French Somaliland, the French territory of the Afar and Issa, and the Republic of Djibouti. In the meantime Britain sought to protect her interests in the Horn by annexing a region of northern Somalia, which came to be known as the British Protectorate of Somaliland.

Italy, not indifferent to the trade routes that the strategic area afforded, sought to expand its control by encouraging settlements, and the development and exploitation of the agricultural potential of the more fertile southern areas of Somalia. The British, less threatened by Italian than they were French claims in the Horn offered their good offices for negotiations between Italian trader Vincenzo Filonardi and the Omani Sultan of Zanzibar in 1893 for concessions over areas that included Barva, Merka and Mogadishu. Ultimately Somalia was divided between the British, French and Italians. Britain ruled in the north as well as the 'Northern Frontier District' of Kenya; Italy governed in the South, and France held a

territory north of Britain's that later became known as Djibouti. The Somalis had already lost a huge slice of Somali land by virtue of a treaty between Ethiopia and Britain in 1897 that gave the westerly portion of Somalia, known as the Ogaden, to the Ethiopian empire, then under Emperor Menelik.

Somalia, located at the juncture of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, links the African continent with Middle Eastern trade routes that were established as early as the third century AD with Sassanid Persia, and Basra in Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq).[2] Somalis believe their present location along the eastern coast of the Horn of Africa began with the settlement of one Abu Taalib from the Arabian Peninsula, touted to be a common ancestor of both the Soomale and the Sab, the two defining major groups of Somali people. From the former group, major clan families were distinguished, notably the Dir, Issaq, Hawiye and Darood; from the latter, the Digil and Rahanwien. The Sab had settled in the south of the country where land was fertile, permitting settled agriculture. Thus, from the outset perceived differences among the Somalis in lifestyle and economic orientation began to overshadow the fact that they speak a common language, practice a common religion and claim a common ancestor.

The Issaq (not to be confused with the Issa of the French territory mentioned above) had early contact with the British as a result of immigration to Aden in search of wage labour. By 1827, a treaty signed by the head of the Issaq clan family and the Director of the British East Africa Company firmly established British authority among this group. A pattern of preferential treatment toward members of the Issaq clan for clerical jobs and positions of authority continued through the life of the British Protectorate.

Somali pastoral nomads have ranged over the Horn of Africa since antiquity. For example, in biblical times Somalia was known as the land of Punt from which traders acquired frankincense and myrrh. Northern nomadic herdsmen developed a rhythm of life based on the availability of water and grasses. This transhumance was inconsistent with governance through a distant central authority. A system for the maintenance of order was devised that worked well for the interdependence that survival in the semi-arid and arid conditions of the north demanded. This system, known as *Diya*, was a means of governance, and an understanding of its centrality to Somali life is fundamental to understanding the misappropriated European governing overlay.

Diya (which means 'blood-wealth') is a legally binding system of mutual obligation. It is based on a system of patrilineal kinship. It is through the patrilineal line that Somalis derive their sense of identity. A young boy may be able to recite his ancestry through the male line as far back as nine generations (and this might be a minimum requirement). It is this genealogy that binds political, social and economic allegiance. Through this

system, nomadic herdsmen have not only a sense of place, but also legal status.[3] In the absence of centralised authority, it is a principle of government that evolved to mediate disputes and deliver political goods. Accordingly, the clan is collectively responsible for compensation for incursions against a neighbour. The degree of compensation depends on the seriousness of the crime. The *Diya*-paying group is basic to everyday life and commands the herdsman's first loyalty. It may consist of a few hundred to a few thousand men.[4]

Working in tandem with *Diya* is the social contract known as *heer*. *Heer*, a term that means compact and contract or bilateral treaty, reinforces *Diya* and could only successfully be extracted among equals. Therefore, weaker groups might accept the best terms of settlement they could get. The Somali proverb 'either be a mountain or attach oneself to one' is applicable here. As a matter of fact, the relative strength of various clan families, clans and subclans would be the basis for shifting alliances and allegiances based on circumstances and need. In classical *Diya*, based on principles of Islam, every individual is responsible for his own deeds. However as applied in Somalia it 'defines their collective responsibility in external relations with other groups'.[5]

Sanctioned by Sharia law, the system was clearly an adaptation to local custom and needs. In the environment of northern Somalia, centuries of survival dictated a form of governance and authority that was adaptable to long treks across semi-arid or arid lands to watering holes and other encampments. The fluidity of the lifestyle was inimical to a strong centralised authority hundreds or thousands of miles away. The nomadic way of life that Somalis have lived for thousands of years made mutual respect of physical, personal and social boundaries a necessity. At the same time an indigenous democratic and egalitarian spirit nurtured by the pastoral, nomadic lifestyle prevailed. It has been argued that this spirit might be useful to newly independent nations seeking to establish a representative democracy.[6] However, as will be discussed below, the experiment with representative democracy following independence in Somalia would not yield positive results.

The *reer,* or herding group was the primary collectivity of Somali society and the basis of nomadic life. Following in ascending order of importance and strength were the subclan, clan and clan family representing ever-widening and more distant circles of loyalty. Decisions were made by gatherings of elders and when necessary, as in larger conflict, by heads of clans and clan-families. In this way the good of the individual would be protected by the community. Life was hard but there were certain freedoms associated with the constant movement that transhumance demanded. This overview of Somali social organisation provides the framework for the analysis to follow.

Independence

The modern nation-state began with the granting of Independence by Britain and Italy. Britain had former dealings with northern Somalia because of its major trading and military post at Aden. Issaq clan members found a ready market for their livestock there. The more educated and versatile of them sought wage labour and many became petty clerks and administrative officials. Therefore, when Independence came, the British found relations with the Issaq fairly easy. The Issaq clan-family of former British Somaliland had a designated political party known as the Somali Youth League (SYL). It had succeeded the Somali Youth Club formed in 1943. After Independence, the League sought to project an all encompassing Somali nationalism and attempted to recruit across clan lines and geographic regions. Since seats in Parliament were filled on the basis of the number of votes each political party received, there was intense competition to get on the party list of potential representatives. There were 47 electoral districts from which 123 deputies would be sent to the National Assembly. The Darood clans also supported the SYL. Given the support of both northern and southern clans, it was thought that the League might be able to bring a truly national government into fruition.

Indeed, the very first Somali cabinet, led by Abdullahi Issa (Hawiye) was composed of representatives from the Hawiye, Darood and Dir. A defection from the SYL by several Majerteen (a sub-clan of Darood) members led to the formation of the Greater Somali League challenging SYL leadership. This was the beginning of political fragmentation. The possibility of a potential candidate forming his own party and collecting 500 signatures to throw his hat into the ring initiated a trend toward fragmentation and certainly made the process unstable. The development of democracy and a viable nation-state was also inherently limited by the ruling tendency toward elitism and autocracy. The larger, more successful pastoral families tended to set themselves apart. Furthermore, the overlay of British colonialism clung to the incipient state. As I have outlined elsewhere, British rule, especially toward the end of the Protectorate, had insisted on clan representation in governing councils. We argue that the legacy of that design tended to subvert the development of national or supra-clan parties.[7] Indeed, Basil Davidson argued that the colonial legacy imposed structural and institutional limits on development, and that the 'neo-colonial' phase that lasted until 1969 was marked by sycophancy, corruption and incompetence.[8]

As it happened, from Independence in 1960 until the Siad Barre coup d'état of 1969, there were multiple and intricate alignments and realignments between sub-clans and clans. By 1967 the hegemonic northern alliance of Dir, Hawiye and Issaq represented by the Somali National League was broken. There were cleavages within the Darood-led Somali Youth League; and a third party with Majerteen backing, the Somali

Democratic Party emerged. A pattern emerged whereby allegiances were transferred to smaller lineages combining across clan lines. This fragmentation culminated into 72 political parties vying for assembly seats in the 1969 election, representing smaller and smaller constituencies.[9]

The most successful post-colonial governments in Africa accommodate all major social interests.[10] However, in the case of Somalia, clan divisions were very old and 'colonial rule had deepened them'.[11] The new constitution called for a system of proportional representation based on districts, however political parties, not candidates would be recipients of votes. The number of representatives sent to the Assembly depended on the number of votes each party received. Therefore if an individual did not receive party backing or was not on the list the party had drawn up, he would not be successful. This contributed to the notion that political parties could be formed at will in order to send a clan representative into the corridors of power. This certainly made the system vulnerable to abuse. Ultimately there were 72 political parties vying for places in the government. Additionally, the small group of elite who came to power at Independence fought to maintain their own interests, 'disunity and personal rivalry led directly to bad government and corruption'.[12]

The chaos of party politics in Somalia during the first decade of Independence set the stage for the coup d'état in October 1969, which was led by Colonel Barre and 25 other high-ranking military officers called the Supreme Revolutionary Council. Colonel Barre had been trained for the military by the colonial regime of the Italian government and had served in the Italian police force; he had also served as a police inspector under the British Military Administration (1940–50). Barre presented himself as a visionary in the vein described by Huntington,[13] who would employ 'scientific socialism' to come to terms with Somalia's problems. Although he never made clear exactly what the tenets of scientific socialism were, nor specifically how it would work, there were certain objectives that his early regime pursued. It is necessary to discuss Barre's 21-year rule in phases because circumstances and people change over time. International events and political climates affect governments, and the pressures of office affect and in some cases debilitate rulers over time. The longer one stays in office, the more likely this is to be the case.

Phase I – good intentions

As explained above, there was no social basis for a highly centralised authoritarian system of governance led by one important ruler. There were in Somalia's past military heroes and charismatic figures such as Sayid Abdille Hassan and Imam 'Gran' who earned respect or admiration on the battlefield, unifying clans and leading Somalis against outsiders. Somalis will pull together irrespective of clan allegiances when faced with a non-Somali threat.[14] However, in the case of Siad Barre, although he had

considerable charisma and oratory skills, loyalty and respect would have to be earned through the deliverance of political or economic goods. His role was to contribute to the fulfillment of the basic needs of his countrymen.

Barre sought to capture the imagination of his people by seeking to emulate the revolution of Jamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt. Nasser was admired across Africa and the Middle East for his success in overcoming generations of foreign rule, and giving the Egyptians a new sense of national purpose. In this endeavour, Barre gave numerous speeches in which he talked about self-help, cooperation and 'crash programmes' for development. The new vision was essentially nationalistic. It would seek to outlaw small group particularism as evidenced in Somalia by clan allegiance, and demand that first loyalty be given to the national government. The government, in turn, would take care of the people. Barre argued that there would henceforth be no need for *Diya*. The government through its judicatory and law enforcement organs would mediate and settle disputes.

According to the early philosophy of the regime, the spirit of equality and justice could and would prevail. Pan-Somalism was the goal, and rather than Somalis referring to each other as 'cousin' as they had always done, they would use the term '*Jaalle*' or 'team member'. Although it had been the intent of the first post-Independence government to gather all Somalis under one administrative structure, there was little if any time to consider how to address the problem of those Somalis still under British, French or Ethiopian rule. The parliamentary regime sought to establish and legitimise itself.

Barre decided to focus on recapturing the Ogaden, since it was for him an especially sensitive issue. The Ogadeni were of the Darood clan family as was Barre, although he was from the much smaller Marehan in terms of paternal lineage, his mother was Ogadeni. The drive to regain the Ogaden led to war with Ethiopia in 1974/75, a subject to which we will return in discussion of phase two.

It was essential for 'the revolution' to have a legitimising ideology. In a speech to the armed services on 9 November 1969, Barre spoke of not 'differentiating the rich from the poor, the educated from the illiterate, the urban from the nomad and the high from the low'. He spoke of a 'nationalism of oneness'. Speaking some time later to a resettled nomadic community in Kurtan Warey, he said that Somalia must rid itself of 'tribalism' because it was 'a cancerous virus that had been slowly rotting away [the fibre] of society'. In referring to clan cleavage, Barre claimed 'tribalism' was 'our number one enemy'.[15]

Early in the revolution Barre acknowledged that social and political success depended on economic success, and to that end, the government would turn its immediate attention toward development efforts. By way of consolidating the revolution, one year after the coup that brought him to power, Barre declared that Somalia would become a 'socialist state'. He

argued that the 'patriotic and progressive' soldiers along with 'left-wing thinkers from civilian life' would be able to make progress toward development, unlike the parliamentary regime that the revolution viewed with great distaste.

In keeping with the spirit and objectives of the revolution, phrases such as 'wealth sharing based on wisdom' and concepts such as 'self-reliance' and 'togetherness' were widely disseminated. 'Crash programmes' were begun that included cooperatives; consumption based on what could be produced locally; and production of commodities based on the use of indigenous raw materials. To sum up, the basic elements of a socialist state were in place since there was to be public control of the means of production, egalitarianism, rapid economic growth and disengagement from world capitalism.

The first phase of the revolution came to a close in 1974, ending with a massive effort by the regime to save tens of thousands from starvation. The Rural Development Campaign had closed schools so that youths could go into the countryside to teach the new Somali orthography. This effort took on the added task of distributing food to drought-stricken populations. This was certainly a laudatory move by Barre and one, he made irrespective of compromises with respect to his socialist goals.

Perhaps the first and most significant compromise of his socialist goals was allowing the livestock trade to remain in the hands of the *dilaals* (drovers and brokers) and the *abbans* (middlemen traders) so that the pastoralist producers received only 50 to 60 per cent of the selling price. In all likelihood, Barre did not want to disturb the traditional arrangements in this area since livestock-related activities brought in over 70 per cent of the country's foreign exchange earnings.[16] The pastoralists did not receive their fair share of the returns on their labour nor did they have access to foreign currency compensation. In fact, they were specifically disadvantaged by having to wait for long periods to receive the money paid weeks or months before to the traders, who were not concerned with the interests of the herdsmen.

Small industries producing items such as cigarettes, matches, pasta and other foodstuffs, furniture, and so on, were also left in private hands. Even though Barre believed that Somalia had been freed from the legacy of colonialism, the Italians maintained involvement in the economy, especially with respect to the much larger and profitable banana industry. Nevertheless, in an effort to halt the exodus of large amounts of foreign exchange, all foreign banks, oil-distributing companies and the Italian-owned electric company and sugar industry were nationalised.[17] This partial public ownership of means of production is not uncommon in Africa where mixed economies prevail, and seem to be preferred.

Barre made an effort to build Somali infrastructure in the First Development Programme of 1971/73, which began with road building aided by Chinese labour. Momentum was lost, however, as a result of the devastat-

ing drought of 1973/74, and this project was abandoned. Another reason for difficulties of implementation had to do with social strategies. One such strategy was the establishment of weekly meetings at 'orientation' centres to replace lineage structure socialisation. A second was the decision to make 'women equal with men' by equalising inheritance and other rights, providing educational and employment opportunities, and banning polygamy. All of this was too radical for certain conservative elements among clansmen, elders and clergy. Nevertheless, Barre followed through to the extent that he had ten sheikhs executed for condemning the new laws. Thus many achievements came at a high cost to civil liberties and human rights.

Other accomplishments in first phase of the regime, in addition to those mentioned above, were the building of health centres and infirmaries throughout the countryside; vaccination campaigns; a dramatic increase in school enrollment; and a successful literacy campaign that reached over 50 per cent of the population. A considerable part of the nomadic community was resettled in agricultural and fishing villages. The mastery of the new orthography and its application to reading and writing was encouraged and thought to be a necessary tool for enabling Somalis to move forward in development. Nevertheless, there were serious problems and impediments, many of which were international.

Phase Two – as the economy fails Somalia struggles in the international arena

As mentioned above, independent Somalia sought to reintegrate the territory and peoples it had lost to imperialism and colonisation. As early as 1956 the Somali Youth League argued that this was an esssential item on the party platform. Furthermore, both the parliamentary regime and Siad Barre's Revolutionary Council endorsed the irredentist objective. The first such effort was made with regard to the Ogaden when skirmishes broke out in the midst of turmoil following the overthrow of Emperor Haile Selassie in 1976. An avowed 'Marxist' regime led by Colonel Mengistu Haile Marriam precipitated a Soviet presence that had been kept at bay since the onset of the Cold War by the Emperor's staunchly pro-Western position. In 1977, the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF), with the help of regular forces from Somalia, gained control of the Ogaden. However, they were not able to consolidate their victory as the Soviet Union brought in materiel, advisors and Cuban troops to fight alongside Ethiopia, who then launched a successful revanche.

Barre had hoped, and even expected that the United States would intervene if, for no other reason than to stem the communist threat. The United States sat on the fence and ultimately did nothing. Then national security advisor under President Carter, Brzezinski encouraged

US intervention fearing a domino effect in the region. However, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance was against it. He was more concerned about furthering the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) with the USSR and believed that a standoff in the Horn would jeopardise this objective. No one else came to Somalia's aid. The Organisation for African Unity had made itself clear on the question of borders: they would remain as they were at Independence. The Arabs also kept their distance from the crisis, although they were known to have provided certain grants or credits for defence spending. The defeat that inevitably followed Somalia's isolation left Barre a bitter man and a pall of disappointment and disillusion settled over the country. To make matters worse, there loomed the spectre of a slowing economy.

The economy

Military spending had not increased appreciably during the first phase of Barre's rule. It had been 26 per cent of total government expenditures between 1972 and 1977.[18] While this may seem significant for a developing country, it is not unusual for a military regime. However, it increased to 37.1 and 39 per cent in 1978 and 1979 respectively.[19] Another drain on the national budget was government policy of guaranteeing jobs in the public sector to all graduates of the national university, secondary schools and technical institutes, although by necessity salaries were discouragingly low. Many qualified persons left government enterprises and government service for the private sector or for jobs in the oil-producing states of the Middle East.

Productivity was also low. State enterprises attempted to provide housing and social amenities out of what small profits were attained. Government deficits mounted and external aid was no longer able to fill budgetary gaps. 'Extraordinary expenditures' covering items not included in regular development plans increased. One such item was the ever-increasing outlay for refugee resettlement. Approximately 350,000 Ogadenis streamed in across the border from the war-torn Ogaden. Many of them were resettled in Issaq lands to the north, and to the credit of the Issaq, what meagre resources were available were shared. Millions of dollars went into the effort as the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) administered this huge operation. Five World Food Programme agents were dismissed during the operation for reporting and protesting irregularities in the use of funds as large sums of money designated for specific purposes could not be accounted for. A former soft drinks salesman became the National Commissioner for Refugees, the Somali counterpart head of the UNHCR project. Millions of dollars were embezzled while he was in this position, and it is known that he became very wealthy. Many other ordinary citizens became wealthy through access to public resources.

As the economy continued to worsen, and in the wake of the humiliating Ogadeni defeat, those clans already disenchanted because of the alleged favouritism shown to Marehan, Ogadeni or other Darood clan members (MOD) began voicing their criticisms. The Issaq in particular decided they could no longer tolerate Barre leadership. The infrastructure of their northern capital, Hargeisa, had been allowed to deteriorate through neglect. The Issaq believed they had not been included in the government employment schemes. Moreover they were unhappy about the placing of government appointees in local offices that abrogated principles of local Issaq self-government. Attempts by the government to implement controls over the livestock trade and expatriate labour remittances were the final straw. They could not apply any of the options of voice, loyalty or exit.[20] Rebellion seemed the only course of action open to them.

The Issaq rebellion

Mohammed Siad Barre became increasingly impatient with what he considered unjust criticism. His mood became autocratic and he was determined to stamp out dissonance and the roots of rebellion. As Jackson and Rosberg have argued,[21] legal and moral restraints are absent where there is total power. The Huntington model that Barre initially exemplified, that is, the prophetic-cum-beneficent military ruler, deteriorated into authoritarian despotism followed by the worst sort of tyranny.[22]

The Issaq formed the Somali National Movement (SNM), a vehicle that would help them challenge the policies of the regime. Rather than addressing their grievances, Barre initiated a reversal of his earlier stated policy of ending 'tribalism' by offering the dissonant Majerteen leadership in exile in Ethiopia, lucrative business opportunities and positions in the army, if they would return home and support his regime. This open and flagrant policy of playing one group against another was to continue, which culminated in the regime finally precipitating a civil war. In May 1988, SNM forces seized control of Hargeisa and Burao. Government troops responded with systematic shelling and bombing until both towns were flattened. This internal war of the regime against the Issaq caused a reversal of the refugee movement as more than 350,000 people fled northern Somalia into Ethiopia.[23] Additionally some 8,000 fled to Djibouti, 60,000 into the desert and even more to southern regions to family and friends.[24]

Phase three – government entrenchment and civil war

By 1988 most Somalis believed Barre should be ousted. It was not immediately clear how this would be accomplished. However, the unfolding of events overcame the need for preparing specific plans. In 1989, Barre

carried his war against the Issaq into the capital of Mogadishu where he ordered house-to-house searches. Shortly thereafter, the infamous 16 July Gezira Beach massacre occurred in an area about 20 miles southwest of the city. Dozens of men were collected, put in a pick-up truck, killed and thrown in a ditch. This was a wake-up call for other groups who had grievances as well, and for those who were increasingly impatient with the regime's inability to keep the economy going. That year the Hawiye clan-family organised the United Somali Congress (USC) with the intention of dislodging Barre from the capital and from power.

One event in particular acted as a catalyst to the conflagration that followed. On 9 July 1989, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Mogadishu was murdered. The government accused Muslim clerics and conveniently rounded up a few of them. There were demonstrations outside several mosques. Dozens of demonstrators were killed or wounded as were several soldiers. As government violence escalated, the various clan elders took stock of the situation. The USC (Hawiye) declared its support for the SNM (Issaq). Ogadeni opposition to Siad Barre was organised under Colonel Omer Jess. Jess, who had been carrying out Barre's orders in Hargeisa, realised the war against his Issaq countrymen could not be justified. He therefore defected from the government military, left Hargeisa and swung west along the Ethiopian border, picking up Ogadeni troops along the way back to the capital. Ogadeni opposition was organised under the Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM).

There were attempts to prevent civil war. The resident representative of the United Nations in Mogadishu conferred with General Mohammed Farah Aideed, the Hawiye leader, about the possibility of bringing various clan leaders and the government together with the United Nations acting as mediator. Unfortunately, UN headquarters was not predisposed to send negotiators, conciliators or mediators. This discrepancy between what the UN representative said was needed as a result of his first-hand knowledge and observations, and the contrary decision made at UN headquarters, evidenced a lack of policy coherence. This lack of policy coherence with regard to United Nations action will be the subject of a future book. Suffice it to say here, that Somalia, once again, lacked the sort of external help it needed the most.

Elders of his own personal Marehan clan made Barre aware of the disaster looming for both state and society. They, along with others from rival clans, suggested that a 'government of reconciliation' be put into place. General Mohammed Ali Samatar, a former member of the original Supreme Revolutionary Council was called upon to take on the role of Prime Minister. However, even though, theoretically, a new government was in place, it did not seem to differ much from the one that preceded it. Thus the attempt at reconciliation was extremely short-lived. One reason for its brevity was that General Samatar sought to protect the regime by force and marched on Colonel Jess who was at Baidowa, a few miles from

the capital. Casualties were very high. Samatar was dismissed shortly thereafter and an Issaq, Mohammed Hawadle Mudhar, was appointed and asked to form a government.

The Barre regime continued to be under enormous military and political pressure. The new Prime Minister, Mohammed Mudhar, did what had traditionally been done and attempted to balance clan interests and representation in the new government. A constituent assembly was formed and there was vigorous debate as a new constitution was articulated. Various leaders, intellectuals and others following the debate in the constituent assembly believed the Barre regime was beyond salvation. Cynics argued that Barre was merely buying time in order to hold onto power, while responsible leaders wanted order and normalcy restored. In July 1990, a manifesto, signed by 80 or so clan leaders, businessmen, intellectuals and even former government officials, was presented to Barre demanding his resignation.

Even though the end was in sight, Barre could not accept it. One of the characteristics of authoritarian rulers is that they are loath to give up power. It is clear that Barre had become more than an authoritarian military ruler, and when his power was challenged, he became a tyrant. Barre had the signatories arrested while they awaited trial. This brought on more unrest as demonstrators came out en masse on the appointed trial date. In the face of such citizen resistance the judge ordered the detainees released.

Showing remarkable restraint, the political-cum-military organisations that had united in opposition to Barre still hoped for a reasoned and peaceful outcome to the crisis. Manifesto II, a second demand for a return to democracy, with an additional 120 signatories, demanded Barre's resignation. Meanwhile the various political clan militias were growing in strength and gradually closing in on the capital. Chaos reigned in Mogadishu as shortages of basic services, inflation and food shortages continued to worsen. Barre's Red Berets roamed the capital, looking for militia while looting and killing at will.

At this time the military branches of the SNM (Issaq) and the USC, (the Hawiye front lead by Colonel Mohammed Farah Aideed) were coordinated and closing in on the capital city. Aideed was disparaged as a 'War Lord' by the US press, especially just prior to and during Operation Restore Hope. He was, in fact, something of an intellectual, well read and politically astute, and an elder of the Habre Gadir subclan of the Hawiye clan-family, a significant constituency. There was agreement across clans that Barre should be ousted and Aideed was chosen by his peers in the armed forces to lead the combined forces of the clans against the forces of Mohammed Siad Barre.

Colonel Omar Jess, mentioned above, who led the Ogadeni (Somali Patriot Movement – SPM) forces, held the line 18 miles south of Mogadishu at Afgoi. By December of 1990, Aideed's forces had secured

the central plains of Somalia and pushed on toward Mogadishu. Barre vacated his residence and left the city on 26 January 1991. This date marks the end of the regime of Mohammed Siad Barre but opened an era of civil war, secession and a retreat to interclan rule.

In the aftermath of the successful campaign by the united clan-families against Barre, the Abgal sub-clan of Hawiye attempted to place its leader, Ali Mahdi, in power. Even though he was called an 'interim' president, presumably until elections or a referendum was held, this was seen as a unilateral seizure of power. Aideed had not been consulted, and this was a particularly onerous move since the man of the hour had been Aideed and not Ali Mahdi. Furthermore, some Habre Gadir saw this unilateral action as a violation of the solidarity pact between sister clans and a 'double-cross'.

For their part, the Issaq decided that attempting to collaborate with the other clans, especially in the face of the Hawiye split, was a losing proposition. They proceeded to form the Republic of Somaliland that, as of the summer of 2002, has not received international recognition. The Organisation for African Unity (OAU) has been loath to give approval to secessionist regimes. They have ruled that borders should remain as they were at Independence. A deviation from this rule might easily encourage splintering in most African States, where, clan or other group identity and consciousness militates against national integrity. Pan-Somali arguments advanced for creating one Somali nation-state have fallen on deaf ears. The 'greater Somalia' national point of view would incorporate areas populated by Somalis that include the Ogaden, which remains officially part of Ethiopia, the Northern Frontier District of Kenya, and the Somalis who live in Djibouti. The five-pointed Somali flag was symbolic of the reintegration of these populations with those of the north and the south.

Today integration would be harder than ever to accomplish since the Somali clans have been entrenched in internecine strife throughout the 1990s. This strife confirms what Somali scholars know as the fissiparous nature of the society.[25] The Somalis can pull together as one in a united effort when threatened by a common enemy. On the other hand the centrifugal forces, possibly driven more by scarcity of resources than clan lineage, have continued over generations to dominate.

Therefore, what can be said of the 20-year rule of Siad Barre? The parliamentary period could accomplish very little in the short span from Independence in 1960 to the 1969 coup d'état that brought the military regime to power. In the early days of the regime Siad Barre set in motion certain initiatives and reforms. Rural health clinics were set up and universal education was begun. The literacy rate increased dramatically – six-fold within the short span of nine years. For the first time women were encouraged to participate in economic and political development as well as the social and cultural aspects of Somali life. Resettlement schemes were put into place for a considerable part of the nomadic community. These were all positive contributions.

In the latter half of the regime, poor governance made it impossible to continue the development programmes and social advances. The 1978/79 war with Ethiopia came only a few years after one of the worst droughts in history (1973/74) leaving thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons needing resources that put an enormous financial strain on the government. After Barre was unable to get any help from outside to save his campaign, the defeat in the Ogaden caused a loss of face that he was not able to overcome. In the aftermath of that debacle, the autocrat became more dictatorial accepting no criticisms nor suggestions, and making no effort to alter any contested policies. He broke away from his formerly stated objective of ridding the nation of 'tribalism' and embraced an atavistic approach of playing one clan against the other.

While Barre was involved in attempting to change age-old social structures, he neglected the care of the open countryside and the 60 to 70 per cent of Somalis who still lived there as pastoral nomadic herdsmen, the backbone of the economy.[26] While promising all secondary school graduates jobs in the administration (perhaps a lofty ambition or a shrewd political move), he tended to overload the bureaucracy, creating the phenomenon of the 'swollen state' that is symptomatic of ambitious but troubled African states. Moreover, as discussed above, if one were not MOD, the chances of getting into the bureaucracy were small. Barre's neglect of Issaq and other clans and sub-clans splintered national support and planted the seeds of insurrection.

The splintered Somali state

While united Somalis were able to oust Siad Barre, the split within the Hawiye family precipitated a general splintering that has yet to be resolved. At this time, three separate Somali governances have emerged: Somalia (central and south); the Republic of Somaliland (north) and Puntland (northeast). This accommodation has at least allowed a minimal return to certain economic activity.

Mohamed Ibrahim Egal, one of the founding fathers of the post-independence parliamentary government, has headed the secessionist northern Republic of Somaliland that presently has the original British Somaliland borders. A referendum held on 31 May 2001 sought to legitimate this state for international recognition, (although there were dissidents among the Gadabursi, of the Dir clan-family, who fear an Issaq ascendancy). The Transitional National Government (TNG) in Mogadishu has rejected the claim of Somaliland, as has neighbouring Puntland. The Darood clans Harti, Dulbahante and Warsangali populate this area with the latter two clans in the Sanaag and Sol areas as well, which are also being claimed by Puntland.[27] The United Nations has failed to give the much-desired recognition pursued by Egal.

The Issaq secession started a trend that concerned the Organisation For

African Unity, which has always maintained that the borders at Independence should remain intact; to do otherwise, they cautioned, would invite continent-wide secessionist movements. The continued splintering in Somalia following the initial Issaq secession justifies this concern. Currently Puntland is struggling for statehood and there are unconfirmed rumours that political moves have occurred in the south for secession as well. The idea of reintegration is not seriously being entertained at this time. Over a dozen reconciliation conferences have collapsed because no mechanism for power sharing has been worked out and chances for sustained peace do not look good.

The President of Djibouti has made efforts to facilitate and foster discussions that might lead to reintegration.[28] In September 1999 the President, speaking at the United Nations, called for the participation of elders, professionals and business leaders in designing a government of reintegration. However, thus far these efforts have not met with success. Abdul Kassim Salat Hassan (Ayr clan), who had been Prime Minister and Interior Minister in the Barre regime, won the 20 August 2000 election, held during the Trans National Authority (aka Trans National Government in Mogadishu) assembly meeting at Arta Djibouti, after a third round of voting. Neither the Somaliland Republic, nor Puntland sent representatives to the Arta Conference.

In Mogadishu, Hawiye clan leaders continued to vie for leadership as candidates from the subclans Saad and Ayr of Habre Gadir (Hawiye clan-family) contended for the presidency. The power struggles within the Hawiye clan that began with the fall of the Barre regime in 1991 continue, as do those between and within the other major clan families of Darood, Issaq and Dir. The latest trend toward centrifugality has involved splintering within clans and subclans who struggle for ascendancy and hegemony.

The lack of political cohesion makes it impossible to address other problems that need attention. For a start, there are the effects of perennial drought that adversely affects the economy and threatens economic and social progress. The failure of the 2001 harvest has affected hundreds of thousands.[29] Obversely, heavy rains in Ethiopia during the same period caused displacements in southern Somalia as rivers overflowed. Other problems facing Somalia include a freeze on remittances from abroad because of the US War on Terrorism. The Somali enterprise Al-Barakaat, based in Dubai, that deals with telecommunications, banking and postal services and facilitates monetary transfers, has recently been dubbed a 'financier of terror'. Thus, it is clear that Somalis are being scrutinised as they continue to struggle for survival. Import and export trade is at a standstill while the economic international expansion of the global market continues, so that the ability of any nation to protect its national interests is crucial. A system of federal government is indicated if the Somalis hope to maintain the integrity of their nation.

The argument for a federation

I have said elsewhere that Somalis have a familiarity with an indigenous form of 'federalism' for collective defence known as *gaasgaanbuur* or 'pile of shields'. When it is necessary to seek help outside the kinship network, alliances are struck. Therefore, there is a traditional societal base for collective action. I agree with Rudolph and Rudolph cited above that indigenous traditions may serve as a basis for democratic governance.[30] I argue additionally that they may serve in the Somali case as a basis for federalism. Even in peaceful times there is usually a system of alliances already in place among the pastoralists. A *Diya*-paying group (as discussed above) will not generally have all the resources it needs. Therefore alliances with other groups to protect water sources, grazing and other property rights are put into effect.

Alliances may be strengthened through marriages or they may be dissolved and new ones made. The *heer* treaty will be entered into by herding groups of not less than 200–300 men with sizeable stock-wealth. This size group is known as a *reer*. As the *reer* enters into mutually binding treaties, it is participating in a process of alliance building. *Heer* alliances have the force of treaties and the tradition of alliance-building has the potential to form the basis of permanent alliances among clans. In addition to protecting Somali identity, culture and traditions, a federation based on the indigenous democratic and egalitarian spirit of the pastoral nomad would have the objective of giving permanency to this indigenous institution.[31]

Another tradition that would lend itself to the successful governing strategy of a federation is the Drought Response Mechanism employed by Somalis in the Horn of Africa for hundreds of years.[32] Drought response as used in the Horn demands cooperation, planning, strategy and a search for the common good. Scholars of pastoralism have listed these characteristic responses in order of execution: dispersal, depletion, exchange and temporary settlement outside the pastoral sector.[33] Networks of alliances already in place, as described above, are called into operation. In the first step, the herdsman categorises and separates animals according to their ability to withstand drought conditions. Next he reduces his stock by exporting as many animals as possible; and further buttresses his income by exporting hides. Weaker animals are slaughtered and sold so that staples such as rice, grains and dates can be purchased and stored. Sheep and goats will be slaughtered first and cattle and camels only in the most dire circumstances. To further lessen pressure on the pastoral community, only essential personnel remain on the land. Women, children, the elderly or infirm are sent to urban kinsmen or predetermined agricultural allies. There is a symbiotic relationship between pastoralist and agriculturalist as there is between rural producers and urban tradesmen. The urban–rural connection is strengthened further if there are kinsmen in both places.

The ecological measures described above have been worked out over

generations without government help. Townspeople have been sensitive to the needs of the pastoralist during drought as have merchants throughout the Red Sea and Persian Gulf. They will bring in survival items and may extend credit, allowing the pastoralist to survive and recoup his loses. New alliances may be formed during difficult times and weaker or less prosperous lineage groups might have to accept client status to a clan in a nearby district for access to the patron clan's grazing and water. It is fair to say that pastoralism will continue to be crucial to the Somali economy for some time to come. Siad Barre, recognising this fact, left the pastoral sector in the private hands of the nomadic herdsman. The pastoralist continues to be the major foreign currency earner.

Therefore, it appears that the indigenous systems, such as 'the pile of shields' and the drought response mechanisms, put in place by the pastoralist should be used to incorporate disparate groups throughout Somali lands. The tradition of self-help on the one hand and regional cooperation, when required, on the other, provides an appropriate social framework for a federal system advocated here. The actual administrative details of such a system should be worked out by Somali leaders, elders and scholars themselves as the imposition of a totally foreign system is not likely to succeed. Somalia has been a pawn in the hands of great powers for many generations. This situation was due in large measure to its strategic location at the junction of the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea. Having said this, however, certain models are available that might lend themselves in part to adaptation, or may serve as models. One such model is that of the Swiss Canton system.

Although the Swiss governing system is now more integrated and centralised, the original formula for accommodating disparate groups may be instructive for Somalia. The Swiss confederation was originally composed of 22 (later 26) sovereign cantons that were self-governing states, and not provinces of a centralised state.[34] Three states were further subdivided because of specific geographic features such as valleys or mountainous regions; religious predilection, such as Catholic or Protestant or socio-economic situation, urban or rural. Everyone, regardless of canton held universal Swiss citizenship. As the Swiss felt no need for the control of one chamber by another,[35] the constitution provided for a unicameral parliamentary system. Canton leaders derived their respective agendas not at annual meetings for government policy formation, but from public debates where there was 'complete freedom of speech for every person'.[36]

A model of democratic participation such as this is very important for Somalia. The Somalis have a well-recognised oral tradition and they are renowned for their oratorical skills. Open debate of issues is a feature of indigenous Somali democracy. Yet, more structure is needed so that policy consensus can be translated into action. For example, in the Canton model deliberations at the annual Canton meeting could only deal with points

appearing on the agenda. This allowed the meeting to move along without disruptions, heated conflict and rash decisions.

The grassroots approach of the Canton model is comparable to Somali socio-political organisation in the following manner: the Swiss had three tiers of political identity, the commune, canton and Swiss confederation with universal Swiss citizenship, while the Somali is connected through the identity tiers of the herding group, subclan and clan-family. In the Somali case, lineage permeates all three levels and as such cannot be abrogated. Civic and political participation designed on this basis would give the Somali inalienable rights of universal Somali citizenship. A unicameral legislative body as in the Swiss cantonal model would be appropriate for the Somalis as well. There would be no need to have one chamber oversee another since the *heer* contract has explicitly formulated obligations, rights and duties to which all are bound. The annual *gu* gathering of Somalis when social, literary and other cultural exchanges take place would be an ideal time to include a general session of local representatives to frame and pass legislation. The councils of elders might convene just prior to *gu* festivities to discuss the agenda that will follow.

The Swiss version of *gaasgaabuur*, the 'pile of shields' or coming together for self-defence, was established for resistance to oppressive feudal overlords.[37] Gillet argues that in the thirteenth century, when Europeans could unabashedly be referred to as tribes, they knew something of democratic practices; and because of this, pastures were owned communally where everyone took part in management decisions.[38] Shared decision-making is a hallmark of *heer*, in customary Somali law that guides kinship group governance and relations with other Somali groups, clans or communities.[39] Thus the skeleton of a working system to reconstitute the Somali state is already in place based on traditional social and political customs. What is needed at this point is to recall those traditions and customs to which the Somalis, one of Africa's largest groups of homogeneous people, referred for democratic governance in the past, in order to build on this social basis to provide an over-arching structure that can offer security, protection and eventual prosperity.

The actual form that the federal arrangements take should suit Somali needs, and considerations of theoretical purity should take a back seat to workable political arrangements. Somalis need to strengthen and prepare themselves to meet the demands of today's global nexus of economy, technology and ecology. They have been very vulnerable in the past given their strategic location in the Horn at the juncture of the Red Sea and Indian Oceans. They are no less vulnerable today. In order to protect their mineral, oil and other known and yet to be discovered natural resources, a stronger not weaker 'pile of shields' is necessary. In addition, the obvious requirements for a monetary policy, a postal, telecommunications and transportation system and a united foreign policy stance should be addressed. A Somali Confederation should be given serious consideration

because it would allow the republics of Somaliland, Somalia and Puntland, and any other splinter groups, to join together to form a government that would not encroach on the independence of any. Other areas or groups that might be considering secession could then rejoin a greater Somalia that would be in a far better position to benefit from the world economy than are the splintered entities found in the Horn of Africa today.

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9 What next in the Horn of Africa?

Reconsidering the state and self-determination

Leenco Lata

Introduction

Nowhere else on the African Continent has the principle of self-determination been invoked in all its diverse manifestations as in the Horn of Africa. And nowhere else has so much ink been spilt to take positions in defence of or opposition to the invocation of self-determination in one form or another. Even more blood has been spilt due to the passionate quest for self-determination and the equally passionate determination to obstruct its realisation. And blood continues to flow as struggles for and against self-determination persist in large parts of the Horn of Africa into the new millennium. The actual wars being conducted in search of and opposition to the principle and their proxy verbal counterparts, however, do not seem to take into account the challenges, hazards, and opportunities that have come to the fore in the post-Cold War era. Contributing to the much needed effort of pushing the ongoing intellectual debate forward to situate it within the contemporary context is the primary aim of this chapter.

The invocation of self-determination was made inescapable by the very process of conquest that brought into existence the Horn's most populous state, the Ethiopian empire. The events that occurred at the time it gained flag independence played a decisive role in making the invocation of self-determination inevitable in the region's territorially largest state, the Sudan. Invoking self-determination as a principle for in-gathering of all Somali speakers under one state preceded Somalia's independence and continued to serve as the ultimate cementing factor of the nation within and outside the state boundaries. The frustration of this cherished aspiration was the ultimate cause for the eventual disintegration that took place in the late 1980s to early 1990s. The overall result of this convergence is truly remarkable. In every case, struggles for self-determination date back to the historical juncture when the entities currently populating the region came into existence. Two frameworks that were current in the 1960s were instrumental in enabling these struggles to achieve improved political and organisational coherence. These were de-colonisation and revolutionary

national liberation, which either separately or in combination, could be tapped when the framing the agenda of these struggles. Whether current self-determination movements are adhering to one or both of these frameworks is not very clear. There are factors, however, that at least force us to question these frameworks' currency or efficacy in the post-Cold War era.

De-colonisation's track record

The right to self-determination came into greater international prominence at the end of the First World War primarily as a mechanism for dismantling the sprawling Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires. At the time, European overseas colonial possessions were simply presumed not to deserve such a right.[1] After the end of the Second World War, however, the conviction that self-determination's relevance should be restricted to Europe was completely reversed leading to its banishment from the 'European arena'[2] for the entire Cold War era. Furthermore, self-determination's function was reduced strictly to 'bringing independence to people under alien colonial rule',[3] giving rise to the new term called de-colonisation. This was accompanied by other acts of reductionism, which were no less serious. First, colonial rule was presumed to prevail only if the self-determining 'self' and the alien ruler were separated not only by the sea but also by race. Second, self-determination, more often than not, became just another term for independence in its de-colonisation variety. Third, the belief that 'once a people exercised its right to external self-determination, the right expires'[4] led to the process being considered accomplished once the midnight ritual of hoisting the flag of independence was over.

Four decades have now elapsed since de-colonisation swept through the African continent giving birth to its more than 50 states. Thus we have arrived at the vantage point that should enable us to evaluate its track record. The philosophical genesis of self-determination is often traced back to the post-Enlightenment European 'legal and political concept [which] propelled the populace to the highest level of authority as the repository of sovereignty'[5] (Grovogui 1996: 80). The ascendance of the populace to the status of *repository of sovereignty* was accompanied with the new entity called the *citizen* replacing the former *subjects* of the God-ordained sovereigns. Hence, for much of its prior history self-determination was conceived as the principle that transforms subjects into citizens. One of de-colonisation's most disheartening outcomes, at least in the African experience, is its failure to herald such a transformation as attested to by Ayoade's apt description of the continent's countries as 'states without citizens'.[6] Since the emergence of the phenomenon called the 'nation' was supposed to be contingent on the transformation of subjects into citizens, such states definitely fall into Montserrat Guibernau's 'states without nations' category.[7]

The process that vested sovereignty in the citizenry was accompanied by the gradual erasure of the diversity of state types and the adoption of the nation-state as the only appropriate model for organising local and global affairs. This trend had attained its zenith by the time de-colonisation started to occasion the birth of 'independent' African countries. Independent statehood and nationhood were then conflated despite many African countries lacking one key attribute of the nation-state, that is, cultural and linguistic homogeneity. Eliminating this shortcoming was deemed possible through the process of nation-building. The essence of this project was founding a single national identity and cohesion on the graves of the multitude of 'tribes' populating the colonial state.[8] Meanwhile, democracy was deemed inappropriate and unworkable for it could lead to political mobilisation based on 'tribal' allegiance. Single-party civilian rules or military regimes were embraced as the effective antidote to this predicament. In some cases, promoting outlandish personality cults of the dictators leading such regimes was carried out not only at the expense of the populous but also the very state that they were ruling.[9]

Harnessing traditional allegiances was, however, rarely abandoned wholesale in both the military and single-party civilian regimes. Tapping this time-tested sentiment of loyalty was simply monopolised by the power wielders. For example, when he came to power, Somalia's Siad Barre proclaimed the 'objective to replace archaic, divisive lineage loyalty, by productive revolutionary allegiance to the nation'.[10] He went on to preside over the ritual burying of effigies representing various Somali clans.[11] While engaging in this public posturing, however, 'the head of state himself was covertly relying on older, time-honored ties of loyalty'.[12] The end result was the entrenchment of the much-libelled traditional allegiance instead of its gradual erasure. Consequently, nation-building's end result, the monocultural nation-state, and democracy remain rare on the continent's political landscape, after 40 years. Meanwhile, the wisdom, feasibility and the moral logic of doing away with 'tribes' are becoming increasingly questionable. Finally, the sovereignty that African countries gained 'simply on the basis of being decolonised'[13] has remained more apparent than real. Furthermore, traditional attributes of contemporary states, particularly sovereignty, are experiencing serious erosion due to internal and external factors. We will return to this critical matter in a later section.

Revolutionary national liberation

Revolutionary national liberation combined the aspiration of effecting radical social and political transformation within a target society with the simultaneous effort of bringing about a totally new global order. Its main features were: ending foreign domination while also working to avert the continuation of exploitation of one sector of society by another; founding

the cohesion of the target society on the subordination of all other competing identity types to class allegiance and working with similar-minded forces to bring about a more just global order. This strategy appeared feasible during most of the Cold War era marked by the fierce competition between the capitalist and socialist camps.

The vision of the world as being divided into capitalist versus socialist, East versus West, progressive versus reactionary proved too simplistic soon after it started assuming this shape. Relations within the socialist camp at times became even more acrimonious than the one marking the division between the two main camps. Two other practices also started manifesting themselves alongside the emergence of this complication. First, each state's aspiration to maximise its particular interests was rarely subordinated to prioritising fraternal solidarity with other socialist countries. Second, the attempt to subordinate other forms of intra-society and inter-societal allegiance to class solidarity continued to be elusive even in the oldest socialist countries.

Regardless, revolutionary national liberation's success in alliance with one or the other factions of the socialist world continued to appear feasible so long as the polarisation of the Cold War era prevailed. Thinkers and activists often took this external alliance for granted and focused on uncovering the pitfalls that the strategy would face within the particular target society. Amilcar Cabral went further than perhaps any member of this narrow circle of thinkers/activists in identifying the condition under which revolutionary national liberation could score ultimate success. This success could be guaranteed only if the group that takes control of the post-victory state willingly commits suicide as a class, according to him.[14] Although resulting from adherence to the dialectical and historical materialist perspective, his prescription of sacrificing one's lifestyle in order to improve that of others strikes one as being more in the mould of the Holy Scriptures than a Marxist stand point.

While revolutionary thinkers/activists were grappling with this highly implausible condition for success, an even more menacing development started gathering momentum. Members of the socialist camp not only started to make peace with their global opposition but to also increasingly imitate or even embrace capitalist-like economic policies. This trend ultimately led to the end of the Cold War and the attendant defection of revolutionary national liberation's traditional allies to the opposite camp. Thereafter, revolutionary national liberation as a strategy that self-determination movements could rely on to articulate the agenda of their struggles started becoming overtly passé or tacitly moot.

Despite its highly questionable posture of making genuine liberation contingent on its leading forces' class-suicide, revolutionary national liberation did significantly contribute to stemming some negative inclinations that often dog the invocation of self-determination. Its universalist framework and globalist agenda, for example, did enable self-determination

movements to sidestep the temptation to define the 'self' in highly exclusionary terms. This had quite positive implications for how solidarity was conceptualised and promoted. The target society's solidarity was made to rest not only on cultural and linguistic commonality but also on the common aim of simultaneously elevating (politically, materially and culturally) the most downtrodden sector of the society undergoing liberation. The policy of focusing on the fate of the downtrodden had the additional consequence of at least conceptualising solidarity with such a sector belonging to even the dominant power, the target of the struggle. In the process, the inclination of perceiving the struggle as a conflict pitting peoples against each other was averted. The subordination of a strictly cultural and linguistic identity formulation to such a more encompassing vision did also stem the tendencies to further fragmentation by playing upon all manners of differences even within the struggling society.

For self-determination movements to play a role in advancing human emancipation, the need to seek alternative visions that preserve some elements of revolutionary national liberation's positive influences appears self-evident. However, this more challenging search is rarely addressed even in scholarly circles. Instead, the tendency to simply treat self-determination as the synonym of the quest for independent statehood seems to be on the rise. This approach's simplicity makes it obviously attractive. It also happens to be seductive as 'all too many statesmen, the media and popular opinion glorify independence'.[15] Consequently, such slogans as 'the nation in search of a state!' are increasingly becoming ubiquitous in the enunciations of some contemporary self-determination movements.

Rendering the state and nation conterminous is the underlying aspiration driving this vision. This is, of course, often a reaction to and a rejection of achieving the same result through coercive assimilation. These apparently opposite aspirations are ironically united by reaching for the very same 'heaven' of creating 'the homogenous nation-state' as so aptly put by Okafor.[16] Achieving homogenisation unites the protagonists since the latter's aim happens to be 'the upward homogenisation of a number of sub-state groups into a larger cultural community or nation'. And 'the downward homogenisation of one such group' by seceding 'from a multinational state, in order to escape the clutches of repressive nation-building' constitutes the agenda of the former. But what are the key attributes of both the *nation* and the *state*, the ultimate prize of this confrontation? Are these fixed eternal definers or are they subject to change? What is the track record of the centuries-old attempts elsewhere to render state and nation congruent?

Conflation of nation and state

The practice of conflating the state and nation emanated from the presumption that the convergence between the *political* and *cultural* commun-

ity constitutes the ideal basis of modern statehood. It is this presumption that gave rise to the practice of treating nation and state merely as synonyms. The hybrid term nation-state also started to increasingly be used in reference to all contemporary states. The following are the premises that gave birth to this model state type, as it emerged in western Europe and spread to the rest of the world.

(1) The state is situated on a *territory* with clearly defined and stable borders, recognised and respected by all other similar entities.
(2) The various *peoples* inhabiting this territorial space have coalesced into a single *nation* through the process of cultural and linguistic homogenisation, or will do so in the near future.
(3) The citizens constituting the nation presumably exercise collective *sovereignty* (uncontested political authority and control) over their state, which they vest in a clearly identifiable *central* body through the enactment of a binding compact.

These defining attributes of the modern state – a clearly demarcated *territory*, peoples who have fused to shape the *nation,* and *sovereignty* that is pooled in a particular central institution or person/persons – were often from the very outset more apparent than real. And developments in the contemporary post-Cold War era have brought into sharper focus this pre-existing disjuncture between rhetoric and reality. We will first explain the role of territory by revisiting the condition that was decisive in bringing into existence the so-called European nations. This will be followed by brief look at the other attributes.

The role of territory

The western European states bordering the Atlantic seaboard (Britain, Spain, Holland, Denmark, Sweden and Portugal) are routinely identified as the pioneers of the nation-state model.[17] Those wishing to follow these states' path to political, economic and social development often overlook one very salient factor. These states, at the time they were increasingly adopting the nation-state posture, were all directly or indirectly benefiting from the plunder of other continents' human and material resources. As Stephen Castles concludes 'Colonialism was crucial to the emerging nation-states; exploitation of the natural resources and the labour power of dominated peoples made industrialization possible'.[18] Furthermore, industrialisation and the economic system that epitomises nation-statehood, free market capitalism, would not have taken off without the Atlantic slave trade.[19] Hence, the European nation-states were conceived, created and nurtured by the triple sins of the slave trade, colonisation and economic plunder. And the new state type's political, economic, and cultural features were forged by tapping the resources of a geographical

space much more expansive than just the state territory at home. One should then question the morality and feasibility of repeating the European experience in the absence of these pivotal factors.

Fusing diverse peoples into a single nation

The internal cultural and linguistic diversity of these pioneering states was considerable at the time they launched their nation-building agenda. For example, France at the time of the Revolution (1789) was home to non-French speakers constituting no less than 20 per cent of its population.[20] Italy was even more diverse on the eve of unification in 1861 with Italian speakers making up no more than 3 per cent of its total population.[21] Most of these western European states did make significant progress towards homogeneity through the combination of a carrot and stick approach. No more than 5 per cent of France's non-immigrant citizens are currently non-French speakers. This reduction of diversity was achieved, according to van den Berghe, 'by ruthlessly suppressing the languages and traditions of a dozen *petites nations* all around the periphery of Ile de France: the Flemings, Bretons, Alsacians, Corsicans, Basques, and others. The blueprint for nation-building was born: ethnocide (the cultural suppression of ethnic and linguistic diversity), or genocide (the physical extermination of ethnies)'.[22] One needs to remember that this ruthless process was perhaps rendered less intolerable by the concurrent rapid pace of economic and social development as well as the prevalence of a high level of collective self-esteem resulting from conquest, colonisation, colonialism and racism.

Despite being pursued under these comparatively less painful circumstances, the centuries-old European aspirations to achieve total homogeneity remain incomplete. In the words of T.K. Oommen, 'the nation-state was only an aspiration, in fact an unfortunate aspiration, which was never realized *even in Western Europe*'.[23] He also suggests that 'the nation-state as an aspiration and as an ideal ought to be abandoned'.[24] Those forces intending to implement nation-building under the less conducive conditions of rising poverty and plummeting sense of collective self-esteem should perhaps heed this advice. Another scholar, implying that the presumed correlation between citizenship, the state and nation should also be abandoned, suggests that 'At the individual country level, citizenship must be based on the separation between nation and state'.[25] The usual presumption of identity between country, nation and state is no more taken for granted in this emerging picture. Van den Berghe recommends that the state should now be denationalised as it was secularised in the past. He writes,

> Ideally, the state should not be associated with any particular group, but should be the neutral common property of all its citizens. I am simply advocating an extension of the principle of secularization in the

> religious sphere to language and other cultural domains. Much as the state should tolerate all religions but be associated with none, the state should also be 'denationalized'.[26]

Struggles for and against self-determination should take into account this unfolding change of attitude towards the state, nation and citizenship. Overall, if the coercive agenda of transforming every *state* into a *nation* is abandoned, conceiving self-determination as a process that will necessarily convert every *nation* into an independent *state* may easily be rendered superfluous. As it is, one key attribute of independent statehood, sovereignty, is experiencing considerable challenges as we will briefly discuss below.

Erosion of sovereignty

Sovereignty, perceived as the ultimate defining feature of modern independent statehood, is the essential bone of contention in struggles for and against self-determination. Those denying this right insist that sovereignty has already been achieved and should remain inviolable; no external power should question either the manner in which it is exercised or who exercises it. And no internal challenge should entertain the rupture of its wholeness either through partially sharing it or through the break away of a similarly endowed entity. Sovereignty happens to be a very complex and ambiguous concept meaning different things to different people. As Stephen Krasner argues, much hypocrisy revolves around the practice and principle of sovereignty.[27] Despite pretensions to the contrary, in practice, powerful states are, and have always been, more sovereign than weaker ones as they can easily impose conditions or interfere in the domestic affairs of weaker states in numerous open or hidden as well as direct and indirect ways.

Meanwhile, the number of scholars uncovering the systematic erosion of the sovereignty of even powerful states is on the rise.[28] Surprisingly, even the United Nations, the very institution based on the supposedly strictest upholding of sovereignty, is advising that conventional attitudes concerning this principle should be reconsidered. None other than Boutros-Ghali, when he was still the UN General Secretary, offered the following two very critical revisions. First, in his *Agenda for Peace*, he asserted that 'The time of absolute and exclusive sovereignty … has passed; its theory was never matched by reality. It is the task of leaders of States today to understand this and to find a balance between the needs of good internal governance and the requirements of an ever more interdependent world'.[29] Equally important is his second recommendation that 'The sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of States within the established international system, and the principle of self-determination for peoples, both of great value and importance, must not

be permitted to work against each other in the period ahead'.[30] These recommendations appear to afford self-determination movements a unique opportunity to pressure recalcitrant regimes to enhance good governance including by internally sharing an element of sovereignty. The allied challenge, however, would seem to be re-articulating self-determination as befitting the evolving global change of attitude towards sovereignty, the state, nation and citizenship.

Tentative re-conceptualisation

We cannot perhaps arrive at the definitive re-articulation of self-determination since we seem be in the twilight zone between the future and the present. We seem to be at the historical moment when 'while no new form of political organization has unseated the sovereign state, new forms are beginning to emerge around the sovereign state that are chipping away at functions previously performed by the state and changing the role of the state'.[31] Others go a little further to conclude that 'The nation-state as a standardized political institution is going to be replaced (and has partially been replaced) by a large number, as well as a variety (potpourri) of political actors'.[32] Adrian Hastings concurs by positing 'the model of a nation-state, which could seldom fit social reality without grave injustice to numerous minorities, may well be wisely superseded by arrangements which stress both smaller and larger units of power and administration'.[33] Any attempt to envision a more current approach to the principle of self-determination needs to take into account this evolving picture.

This emerging picture poses a major challenge to the conventional notion of self-determination as the midwife of the nation-state since this entity is facing internal and external forces that are transforming it. What new functions then can self-determination perform, in our day? One such function would appear to be addressing the paradox of contemporary states being too large and too small at the same time. In the words of Agnew,[34] many contemporary states 'are too large for full social identities and many real economic interests. But they are also too small for many economic purposes.' Once the issue of identity has been broached, we must mention the gradually increasing conviction that 'the public sphere is constituted by a diversity of identities, not one shared or uncontested set of understandings that transcend cultural locations'.[35] And 'the legitimacy of the state and its related social, cultural and political institutions' can be promoted only if 'the core features of citizens' identity are both *recognised by the state and (rendered) recognisable in the state*'.[36] Adherence to the principle of *just recognition*, which entails acknowledging 'the "inherent worth" of those whose identity is defined in terms different from our own',[37] is key to achieving this kind of mutual recognition of each other's dignity. The challenge this poses for those attempting to create the *nation* in their own image by erasing the presumably worthless identities of

others is self-evident. It also has implications for the societies seeking self-determination since the convergence of identity even within such milieu cannot be perfect. Tolerating the inevitable elements of diversity emanating from regional and religious differences or even style of speech can be possible only by upholding the principle of just recognition.

Multidimensional self-determination

Two departures from past approaches appear imperative for self-determination to serve as a principle for addressing the paradoxes mentioned above. The first is conceptualising self-determination as being multidimensional. The paradox of states being too small and too large at the same time seems to demand this vision. It is a vision which facilitates the pooling of resources, voice and energy at various levels to address the concerned societies' particular and common affairs. As articulated by Danspeckgruber such a model may be composed of (1) internal, (2) bilateral, (3) horizontal and (4) vertical exercises of self-determination.

(1) The internal exercise of self-determination concerns the enactment of a compact between a large nation and other smaller ones inhabiting a common territory.
(2) The exercise of bilateral self-determination occurs when two neighbouring nations enter into mutually acceptable agreements on matters primarily the concerning the duo.
(3) And the creation of a common state fairly serving all the nations living within its borders constitutes the horizontal dimension of self-determination.
(4) Finally, the vertical dimension of self-determination is said to be in operation when states constituted in this fashion decide to pool elements of their authority and energy to pursue regional integration.[38]

Incidentally, this multidimensional conception of self-determination was arrived at quite independently by the Oromo academic Mohammed Ali.[39] A.I. Sammatar's suggestion that self-determination in the Horn needs to be re-articulated as a mechanism for resolving 'contradictions within and between three different, but related moments: (1) local, (2) national and (3) regional'[40] serves as another vindication of this model's appropriateness for addressing the region's various economic, political and social predicaments.

This alternative vision can perform a positive role only if the previous conviction regarding self-determination's end result is reversed. The emergence of a smaller replica of an existing large state commonly results from the pursuit of self-determination merely as an agenda of secession. Similarly, regional integration too is often pursued with the aim of realising merely a larger replica of existing states. Both are focused on increasing or decreasing the number of states without qualitatively transforming the

nature of states and how they interact with concerned societies. For self-determination and regional integration to positively impact on the lives of the common people effecting qualitative change should replace the fight over merely achieving quantitative increment or reduction of actors.

Their studies of the evolving situation in Europe led Anderson and Goodman to anticipate the emergence of 'new mediaevalism' in which 'the pressures on the state "from above and below" [would] achieve more partial and ambiguous changes: sovereignty undermined and diffused rather than clearly relocated'.[41] Gellner joins them in anticipating the revival of the diversity of state types that existed in medieval times.[42] One must remember that political authority, in medieval Europe, was shared between feudal knights and barons, kings and princes, guilds and cities, bishops, abbots and the papacy. Power, in addition to being functionally divided into the temporal and spiritual spheres, was also associated with territories that were fluid and discontinuous. And Okafor concludes his interesting study on the need to reconfigure African states by enumerating the changes that appear necessary. These are the

> encouragement of de-centralisation (as opposed to the over-centralisation of the state), diversity and multicultural nationhood (as opposed to homogenisation and coercive nation-building), access to international sphere (as opposed to the strict domestication of sub-state groups), deference to norm-based legitimacy (as opposed to the strict application of the doctrine of effectiveness), and infra-review (as opposed to the strict application of the doctrine of peer-review).[43]

The shape of the state he is imagining tallies fairly closely with what is now increasingly being referred to as the neo-medieval type.

Self-determination as a continuous process

The second area of departure from the post-Second World War attitudes concerning self-determination concerns the presumption that this right expires once the flag of independence has been hoisted. Incidentally, this presumption starkly contrasts with the manner by which Britain's overseas White Dominions rose to independent statehood. In their case, the process was so gradual that pinning down the dates of their independence is often difficult, according to Clarence-Smith.[44] In these experiences, the theory that 'at its simplest the principle of self-determination accords people a right to govern their own affairs'[45] turned out to be much more functional than what routinely followed the more precipitous granting of independence or de-colonisation. The growing current insistence that 'self-determination, as other human rights, must be considered an open-ended ongoing process without point of closure'[46] depicts a clear departure from the post-Second World War approach to the principle. Such a process-oriented

pursuit of self-determination is no more restricted to the theoretical sphere of scholarly analysis.

For example, Catalan nationalists, by continuously upping the ante according to their slogan 'Now for More!', are working towards attaining the status of 'a self-governing nation within a weak Spanish state encompassed in Europe'.[47] They are working to 'advance the interests of their national community and are ready to play in multiple political arenas in order to do this: the local arena; the Spanish arena; the European arena; the Mediterranean arena'.[48] Thematic concerns as well as geographical considerations have motivated their cultivation of relations within and outside the Spanish state as well as within and outside the Mediterranean region. Catalonia has thus concluded a special agreement of cooperation with Valencia and the Balearic Islands to develop and enhance the status of their common language.[49] Engaging the Maghreb countries, particularly Morocco, in dialogue concerning the economy and immigration has been necessitated by geographic proximity.[50] Furthering other interests has impelled the Catalans to forge contacts with such diverse entities as Argentina, the State of Illinois, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Pursuing self-determination as a continuous process and trying to implement it in a multidimensional fashion are thus treated as mutual corollaries of each other in the Catalan approach.

The growing practice by sub-state entities to act in diverse arenas is not restricted to Europe. The tradition of imagining the state 'as a unity, as a monolith, as a single voice'[51] is gradually giving way to an evolving practice of affording sub-state socio-cultural groups their separate 'voice' particularly in west Africa, according to Okafor.[52] Developments in the Horn of Africa are no different. The United Nations has now for years maintained close contact with Sudanese groups fighting against the central government, as do many governments in Africa and elsewhere. Furthermore, numerous foreign governments, both African and non-African, now commonly and openly dialogue with some of the Horn regimes' opposition groups, including armed national liberation fronts. Some of the latter have offices in Washington, DC, and their representatives are often received at the State Department. Meanwhile, an even more surprising development is evolving at home. For example, the Oromia State Council, in late April 2002, openly addressed a memorandum to the Ethiopian capital's resident diplomats, surprisingly with copies to the Federal Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Justice.[53] These developments would have been completely unthinkable barely two decades ago. The challenge facing both sides in the self-determination contests would seem to be flexibly and creatively exploiting these openings, while engaging in dialogue at various levels, to launch an ongoing process of putting in place ever-increasing just relations within the common states of contracting nations as well as among similarly constituted entities. The paradox of states being simultaneously too small and too large seems to demand such a response.

Changes within the region and their implications

The implications of Eritrea's independence

The Ethiopian empire's experience with the invocation of self-determination in fact reveals adherence to different interpretations. We realise this by contracting Eritrea's experience with that of other self-determination movements. Eritrea's success in attaining independence by breaking away from another African state is an unprecedented development in the continent's entire postcolonial history. The people who led Eritrea to independence did so by overcoming numerous challenges. Distinguishing Eritrea's case from other quests for self-determination in the empire and dealing with Eritrea's cultural, linguistic and religious diversity figured among these challenges. Fitting Eritrea's case into the more common African invocation of self-determination as decolonisation by arguing that its 'borders were fixed and its national identity defined by colonial history, like the rest of colonial Africa'[54] served the purpose of distinguishing it from other demands for the right. Starting from this premise Eritrean leaders arrived at the conclusion that all other quests for self-determination should be resolved short of independence while Eritrea and Eritrea alone deserved this most coveted outcome of struggles for self-determination.

Dealing with its cultural and religious diversity required investigating the historical roots of Eritrea's nationhood. Defining Eritrea's national identity is sometimes attributed to Italian colonialism. At other times, Eritrea's territorially defined national identity is believed to have been in existence even before colonialism. The statement that 'The people of Eritrea had their own history and civilization, their own laws and administrative systems before colonialism' attests to this belief.[55] Hence, Italian colonialism is given credit only for furthering the consolidation of this previously existing Eritrean national consciousness. The Italian colonialists did so when they opened up 'a new chapter in the history of Eritrea' by forcefully establishing Eritrea's boundaries and thus 'bringing under one administration all peoples within these boundaries'. Furthermore, Italian colonialism created 'a condition where Eritrean citizens from all corners of the country were introduced to each other and gained common experiences'.[56] Despite denouncing its attendant racism and oppressive rule, Eritrean leaders believe Italian colonialism was instrumental in sowing the seeds of Eritrean national consciousness. In contrast, the British Military Administration, successive Ethiopian regimes, and even the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), the parent movement from which the EPLF (the Eritrea People's Liberation Front) emerged by breaking away in the early 1990s, are all blamed for trying to undo Italian colonialism's positive contributions to the enhancement of Eritrean national integration.[57] The EPLF is depicted as the only force that was determined to build on the

foundations laid by Italian colonialists. The EPLF did so by bringing together 'hundreds and thousands of Eritreans who came from rural and urban areas, from highland and lowland regions, and from the most marginalised localities', and by thus serving as 'a melting pot' was successful in shaping 'one of the most unified populations among societies with similar social structures'. And EPLF's victory was in fact due to this unity.[58] Based on the conviction that 'the natural history of the people of Eritrea was interrupted by colonialism' the leaders of independent Eritrea expressed the determination to complete the process of national integration by performing 'miracles in nation-building' similar to the one performed 'in the war of liberation'.[59] In several ways, however, the vision they were articulating happened to be out of sync with developments in the region and the world at large. First, most of the older states of the Horn region were at the time being compelled to abandon centralisation of power and the shaping of monolithic national identity. Consequently, scholars were wondering if the EPLF could in fact become 'the last adherent in the Horn of the ideology of the centralised multiethnic state'.[60] Second, as we discussed in a previous section, the justice and necessity of nation-building is globally coming under increasing criticism as the Eritrean leaders are embracing it with gusto.

Eritrean leaders seem to display the conviction that independence is the ideal outcome of self-determination struggle and the only reliable launching pad for shaping a prosperous, cohesive and traditional nation-state. As earlier discussion has demonstrated, this conviction seems to be at variance with the thinking evolving in the post-Cold War world. Furthermore, the precedent set by Eritrea thus far has implications for on-going struggles for self-determination. There were many who hoped that Eritrea's separation from Ethiopia would remove one cause for interstate and intrastate conflicts in the Horn region. Contrary to this expectation, however, Eritrea clashed with literally all its neighbours in the first decade of its independent existence. Nor has Eritrea's internal sphere become a zone of peace, as dissensions within the ruling party and between it and its contenders appear to be escalating. Meanwhile, reports of the flight of members of Eritrea's Kunama community to Ethiopia under suspicious circumstances are circulating. Although the Eritrean authorities' claim that these are not genuine refugees but people abducted by the Ethiopians for sinister purposes cannot be totally dismissed nor can the accusation of persecution by the Eritrean officials voiced by some of these Kunama be completely baseless.[61] These developments do cast a dark shadow on the prospects of additional Eritrea-like independent entities emerging in the region for it points in the direction of a worrying scenario. One of self-determination's ultimate missions is the enactment of peace compacts within entities that could easily develop peaceful relations with similarly constituted neighbours. If the emergence of additional Eritrea-like states simply leads to the introduction of new interfaces for interstate conflicts

while also failing to promote internal peace, the negation of this mission becomes tragically self-evident.

Ramifications of the rump Ethiopian state's reconfiguration

While Eritrea was adopting the nation-state as the ideal state type and nation-building as its single most important preoccupation, the very opposite process was unfolding in the remainder of the Ethiopian empire. The empire had to, much more explicitly than any other state in Africa, abandon the nation-state model in response to other self-determination struggles besides the one that had led to Eritrea's independence. These other struggles for self-determination were in fact gathering momentum at the time the Ethiopian empire had to begrudgingly accommodate Eritrea's independence. Responding to these struggles by federalising the rump state thus appeared just as prudent as acceding to Eritrea's separation. However, the federal structure ultimately put in place happened to draw on a policy whose inherent futility and even dangerous implications were already proving indisputable. This was the dual policy regarding responses to self-determination articulated by Lenin. Lenin's policy on self-determination reflected two interlocking convictions. First, struggles for self-determination are deemed legitimate only in so far as they are conducted under the leadership of a proletarian vanguard party. Second, the vanguard party should champion the practical exercise of self-determination in such a way as to avert state fragmentation.[62] Going back to the late 1960s, numerous Bolshevik-wannabe Ethiopian leftist groups had been locked in competition to emerge as the saviour of the Ethiopian empire by single-handedly implementing this dual policy. By 1991, when it captured central power, the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front's (TPLF) emergence as the victor from among the groups vying to monopolise the emulation of the Leninist policy on self-determination was beyond doubt. Ironically, the Yugoslav and USSR type of centrally controlled federations, which were structured in accordance with the Leninist policy on self-determination, was starting to unravel just as the TPLF was in the process of emulating it.

Consistent with the Leninist precepts that influenced it, the federation instituted by the TPLF reflected the formal devolution of power to the various federal regions and even the enshrinement of the right to secession in the Constitution of its so-called Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE). Whatever power was devolved in the public sphere was, however, effectively withdrawn by the actual centralisation of power in the dominant ruling party, the TPLF. A scholar who conducted a ten-year study of this practice concluded

> the most prevalent political development during this period is the consolidation of a centralised party rule along with the formalisation of a

> federal system, a development which implies an apparent paradox. According to fundamental federal theory, centralised party rule and genuine federalism are incompatible because the presence of an all-powerful party inevitably centralises power and regional autonomy.[63]

The overall result of this disjuncture between words and deeds was heightened polarisation of political opinion and rising frustration.

The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), that initially gave the benefit of the doubt to the promise of settling the Oromo people's demand for self-determination by instituting federalism, became one of the earliest forces to openly air frustration. Unable to persuade the TPLF and its international backers of the fake federal policy's futility, the OLF had to resume armed struggle for the Oromo people's right to self-determination.[64] The Oromo people's struggle for self-determination, although deserving more attention due to its decisive implications for the empire and the Horn region, is not the only one continuing into the new millennium. The liberation fronts of the Ogadenis, the Sidamas, the Benishanguls, and so on, are also stepping up their activities. Some elements within this camp seem tacitly bent on following the Eritrean example of considering independence as the ideal outcome of quests for self-determination. The Amharic elite, the creators and masters of the Ethiopian empire until losing power to the TPLF in 1991, subscribe to the very opposite stand of denouncing not only the TPLF's federal policy but also Eritrea's separation. The ambitions of a number of non-Amhara and non-Tigrean political forces range between these two extreme positions. This heightened polarisation, combined with rising poverty and frustration, constitutes a highly explosive situation which has remained dormant primarily due to the various concerned peoples' patience and tolerance.

The impact of the disintegration of Somalia

While the Ethiopian empire was splintering into two states as the result of Eritrea's secession, neighbouring Somalia was going one stage further to experience the total fragmentation of state and society. The latter event, a tragic reality by the early 1990s, was at the time as unprecedented as Ethiopia's break up was in the annals of postcolonial Africa. With its population perceived as being more homogeneous than that of any other African country, Somalia's cohesiveness was considered enviable until this tragedy proved to the contrary. Somali society evinced factors that appeared to unite more than divide, such as overwhelmingly sharing the common religion of Islam, speaking slightly varying dialects of the same language, and mostly practising nomadic pastoralism. Furthermore, the commonly shared highly emotive aspiration of ingathering into one state all those sharing these attributes provided the unity of purpose which appeared to fuse all concerned, including those outside Somalia's

internationally recognised borders, into one organic community. This level of unity, perhaps also unprecedented in postcolonial African experience, reached its peak in the lead up to the Ethio-Somali war of 1977/78. Comprehensively elaborating how this level of unity was replaced with its exact opposite falls beyond the scope of this work. Suffice it to state, however, that Somalia's defeat in this war played a pivotal role in putting the Somali state and society on the course that ultimately resulted in disintegration. And this defeat can in turn be attributed, more than any other factor, to the Somali authorities' deliberate policy of subverting the Oromo and Ogadeni peoples' struggles for self-determination.

The perversion of the principle of self-determination lies at the heart of the erroneous and ultimately disastrous policy that the Somali authorities pursued towards the Somali inhabitants of the Ethiopian empire's Ogaden province and their Oromo neighbours. Inverting perhaps one of self-determination's quintessential missions, negating the peoples' treatment as 'a mere appurtenance of the land', was the essence of this perversion.[65] The Somali authorities committed this departure from the essence of self-determination in two ways. First, they shifted emphasis from the fate of the Somali subjects of the Ethiopian empire to a territory they designated as western Somalia thereby completely overshadowing the legitimate cause of the Ogadeni people. Disturbed by this turn of events, Ogadeni nationalists were forced to organise the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) not only to end Ethiopian imperial rule but also in resistance to the Somali authorities' abuse of their people's cause. Second, western Somalia's definition as the territory that includes not just the homeland of Somali speakers but also at least a half of the Oromo-inhabited parts of the Horn had even more grave implications for Oromo identity and interests. The Somali authorities went to the extent of renaming the Oromo inhabitants of this target area as Somali-Abbos with the apparent aim of rationalising their annexation. The overall result was not just the abuse of the principle of self-determination, as happened in the case of the Ogadenis, but amounted to its actual negation. Feeling insulted by the attitude of the Somali authorities, the concerned Oromos did everything possible to frustrate Somalia's expansionism. Somalia could have plausibly won the 1977/78 war with Ethiopia by sustaining the enthusiastic participation of the Ogadenis and by entering into alliance with the legitimate leadership of the Oromo people's struggle for self-determination. The Oromo Liberation Front actually spent most of the late 1970s and of early 1980s trying to impress on the Somali authorities the mutual advantages that could accrue from cooperation, to no avail.

The regional dimension of their struggles hence dawned on the leaders of the OLF and ONLF once they found themselves simultaneously at loggerheads with the regimes of Ethiopia and Somalia. It is not wholly implausible for political developments in former Somalia and the development of Oromo and Ogadeni struggles to mutually impact on each other

even in the period ahead. Understandably, the highest preoccupation of most Somalis presently is dealing with the consequences of the disintegration of their state and society. They are engaged in the labourious process of seeking a political order suitable for their specific situation. Whether they would end up reconstituting a single Somali state or find forging more entities unavoidable is hard to determine at the moment. Both the processes they are pioneering and the nature of entity/entities resulting from them, however, would very likely influence the Ogadeni and Oromo pursuit and ultimate exercise of their right to self-determination. Similarly, how the Oromo and Ogadeni quests for self-determination are ultimately settled would have implications for the processes underway in former Somalia and the entity or entities resulting from them. Notwithstanding the fact that they are still works in progress, the processes currently underway to reconstitute the failed Somali state or turning its fragments into new states deserve as much scrutiny as possible.

Former Somalia is currently serving as a unique laboratory for grassroots community's protracted involvement in the articulation and structuring of the state. This protracted stage by stage promotion of communal consensus, presently being witnessed in various regions of former Somalia, heralds a departure from the more common African decolonisation experience whereby the achievement of self-determination was perceived as a single event exercise. In the more common African decolonisation experience, domination by an alien power was perceived as precipitously giving way to liberation at the moment the midnight ceremony of hoisting the flag of independence was completed. As we have briefly summarised in a previous section, a number of grave aberrations accompanied the reduction of self-determination to this single event of hoisting the flag of independence. Whether the Somali state or states resulting from the ongoing processes of societal consultation would indeed avoid the pitfalls of the decolonisation era cannot be determined at this early stage. However, the possibilities for charting a new course do seem to exist.

The bottoms-up process of state reconstitution began in the northwest province of former Somalia ultimately leading to the declaration of an independent Somaliland Republic. The Somali National Movement (SNM), whose membership is primarily from the Isaaq clan-family of the former British Somaliland Protectorate, was one of the most active armed opponents of the Siad Barre dictatorship. When Siad was finally deposed in January 1991, the SNM proceeded to declare itself as the administering authority of its home area. Despite making critical remarks about the Mogadisho-based faction's decision to declare itself as Somalia's new government, the SNM spent most of the first half of 1991 expressing interest in the reconstitution of a single Somali state. However, the SNM suddenly declared the independence of Somaliland on 18 May 1991, unable to indefinitely wait for the resolution of the interminable wrangling going on in the rest of the country. However, the SNM was unable simply to declare

itself as the break away state's governing authority (as the EPLF was destined to do in Eritrea only a few weeks later) due to a couple of reasons. First, the need to demonstrate the inclusion of other clans meant that 'the ranks of the government' that it instituted earlier had to be 'swelled with members of non-Isaaq clans from the northern Somalia'.[66] Second, it soon found out that maintaining consensus even within the Isaaqs was proving increasingly difficult. Due to disagreements within the ranks of the Isaaqs and between them and other clans in the months immediately following the declaration of independence, Somaliland in fact appeared to be on the brink of the chaos then escalating in the rest of Somalia. This tragedy was averted primarily due to the emergence of a parallel power structure in the form of a Council of Elders. These committees of notables constituted themselves to run local administration while simultaneously starting wide-ranging peace and reconciliation consultations. This process continued to gather momentum over the following two years culminating in the convening of the Somaliland Community Elders' Conference (Guurti) at Borama on 24 January 1993. The Borama Conference dragged on until 5 May 1993 when it ended upon the election of a new government. The Guurti was ultimately institutionalised as a key element of Somaliland's power structure along side the Parliament and the executive branch. Its brief looks quite extensive according to an observer, who states 'In cases of conflict between the government and the parliament – or any other conflict in society – the "Guurti intervenes at once and initiates a process of discussion and negotiation" with the "Guurti" being a "facilitator"'.[67] The mixture of traditional and modern concepts underpinning these structures, relatively more comprehensible to the concerned social sectors than those merely copied from European experiences, has effectively served as the basis of political order missing in the rest of Somalia. Although the Somaliland Republic remains unrecognised by any other state or inter-state body, relations between the state and society may evince the existence of a higher degree of empathy than that which prevails in many African states. Notwithstanding the hardship that this has entailed, it has made maintaining internal legitimacy the *sine qua non* of Somaliland's existence as an entity, contrary to the reality prevailing in much of Africa. However, Somaliland's outright rejection of ever rejoining a unified Somali state and the contrary determination displayed in some quarters constitutes a very worrying prospect. Meanwhile, a slightly different approach to this issue is being witnessed in the Majerteen-dominated Puntland administration. The leaders of Puntland have left the door open to rejoining a unified Somalia so long as it is reconstituted as a federal state.[68]

Giving primacy to internal consensus, the pillar of Somaliland's ten-year-long relative stability, hardly figured in more than 20 mostly externally driven attempts to reconstitute a single Somali national state since 1991. One of these attempts, the Conference held at the Djibouti town of Arta in August 2002, appeared to have achieved a breakthrough when the

formation of a Transitional National Government (TNG) was agreed to by delegates. The TNG, evidently refusing to emulate Somaliland's success of basing the pursuit of stability on the primacy of internal consensus, 'invested greater energy in seeking international recognition than in broadening its support inside the country'.[69] The overall result of lending primacy to external legitimacy is quite remarkable, for the TNG, despite occupying Somalia's 'seats in the UN, the African Union and the League of Arab States', became virtually indistinguishable from other factions two years after coming into existence. Although the TNG's status exemplifies the vacuity of purely externally based state legitimacy better than any other, that it represents a more widespread African experience is hardly debatable. This experience should have implications for framing self-determination in the Horn of Africa.

Developments in the Sudan and their implications

We have briefly touched on the positive and negative repercussions of Ethiopia's split into two states and neighbouring Somalia's total fragmentation in the 1990s. Developments within the Horn's other major state, the Sudan, fall somewhere between these two positions with large swathes of its territory remaining outside the control of central government for more than two decades. The struggle in the Sudan, normally perceived as pitting the dominant northern Moslem Arabs against the southern Animist or Christian Africans, commenced on the eve of independence in 1956 and has continued virtually without interruption ever since. Separation from the rest of the Sudan constituted the agenda of the first round of the armed struggle in the south lasting from 1956 to 1972. The Addis Ababa Agreement of 1972 was made possible because granting the south regional autonomy could be adopted as an acceptable compromise. Full-scale armed struggle was resumed in 1983 due to the systematic erosion of the Addis Ababa Agreement's provisions by the central authorities with some help from elements in the south. The Sudanese Peoples' Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M), which was formed to lead this second round of struggle, adopted the wider agenda of radically transforming the nature of the Sudanese state. Forging 'a new Sudan' through the dual processes of national liberation, that is ending 'external dependency and internal exploitation', and national formation, meaning fusing the various 'nationalities or tribes into a nation', was articulated as the movement's sacred mission.[70] The declaration of the Sudan as an Islamic state to be governed according to Sharia law was in fact what instigated this round of fighting. An impasse has resulted from the adoption of these two virtually irreconcilable visions, in the views of one group of scholars,[71] rendering the 1972 type of compromise settlement more unwieldy.

The SPLA's adoption of a Sudan-wide agenda has a number of implications. First, it led to the SPLA's declaration 'if anybody wants to separate

even in the North, we will fight him because the Sudan must be one',[72] and to its insistence that 'Arabic must be the national language in a new Sudan'.[73] Consequently, the SPLA has come to share with its northern protagonists the ultimate aim of forging an Arabic-speaking nation out of all the inhabitants of the Sudan. Other than the former's rejection of the latter's intention of going one stage further to consider transforming this Arabic-speaking nation into an Islamic one as well, the essence of their visions seems remarkably identical. Second, the SPLA's Sudan-wide agenda has led it to invite even northerners to join its fight, a practice missing during the 1956 – 72 armed struggle. The first to respond to this call were the marginalised elements of the north, that is, the peoples of the Nuba Mountains, the Ingessanas of Southern Blue Nile, and the Bejas of the Red Sea Hills. With some members of even the northern establishment forging an alliance with it subsequent to the 1989 coup, the SPLA's aim of emerging as a movement with countrywide reach appeared to be complete. This development itself generated two additional complications. First, acrimony resulting from their conflicting aspirations marred relations between the SPLA's followers from the marginalised northern communities and its other northern allies. For example, the Beja Congress (BC) and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), one of the establishment parties that later allied itself with the SPLA, found themselves at loggerheads due to the invocation of the Beja people's right to self-determination. Meanwhile, the other implication of the SPLA's success in garnering membership and alliance from the north was manifesting itself. This was the SPLA's continued perception merely as the advocate of southern rights despite its insistence that it is championing a Sudan-wide transformation. The Sudan government, other northerners, the world at large, and even many of its southern members often found it difficult to consider the SPLA as nothing other than a southern movement. As the result, its aspiration of realising a new Arabic-speaking Sudanese nation is apparently not being taken seriously in any quarter.

The practice of mutual subversion through the provision of haven and other sorts of support to each other's armed opposition is as old as the Horn state's existence as independent entities. This has often created a close interdependence between the fates of the regimes involved in this exercise and the movements hosted by them. This situation had crystallised so much by the late 1980s that one scenario had become self-evident. The survival of the Ethiopian regime had become contingent, more than anything else, on the victory of the Sudanese movement it was hosting, a predicament which also applied equally to the Sudanese regime and the anti-*Dergue* movements using Sudan as a door to the outside world. The victory of the anti-*Dergue* movements in May 1991 thus had wholly predictable disastrous consequences for the SPLA. Frustration resulting from the loss of its most committed regional backer (the *Dergue*) prompted a process of fragmentation along ethnic lines thus making the

survival of the SPLA as a cohesive movement questionable during the early 1990s. Two tragedies resulted from this development ultimately necessitating societal innovations with far-reaching implications. First, the intercommunal strife then instigated by the intellectuals endangered the survival of some southern communities had it not been responded to by the people-to-people peace (PPP) process. Peace accords resulting from protracted reconciliation dialogues drawing on both current and traditional conflict resolution expertise have been concluded between Dinka and Nuer communities as well as between Dinka and Didinga peoples.[74] A specific vocation of self-determination, the conclusion of bilateral and multilateral pacts between grassroots communities on the equitable access to territory and other resources, hence started being witnessed in these cases. The second tragedy was the SPLA–Nuba branch's perilous situation when it started facing the regime's scorched earth campaign while remaining cut off from the mother organisation and from the trickle of supplies through east Africa. In an attempt to involve Nuba society in deliberations on whether to continue the struggle under these obviously perilous circumstances or not, the leaders of the SPLA–Nuba branch assembled the Nuba people's elected representatives, an uncommon practice by liberation fronts.[75] The subordination of the liberation army to elected civilian officials thereafter became a feature of the Nuba liberation process, with clearly positive implications for post-liberation civil military relations.

After briefly looking at developments within and between the Horn's major states, we have arrived at the stage where their salient features can be summed up. Eritrea emerged as the only African state that attained international recognition after breaking away from another. Its determination to follow the course of nation-building, whose futility is becoming increasingly indisputable in the contemporary era, is fraught with numerous pitfalls with possible internal and external ramifications. Similarly, Eritrea's preoccupation with the doctrines of unitary sovereignty and territorial integrity appears out of tune with the growing contemporary practice of subordinating these traditional notions to the pursuit of interdependence in the substate, subregional, regional and global spheres. The rump Ethiopian state's moves to parcelise internal sovereignty to afford peoples the right to self-government could be described as a move in the right direction. But the dominating party's Leninist–Stalinist hangover has created a frustrating and potentially explosive situation by practically negating this right. The enviable homogeneity of Somalia's population proved inadequate for sustainable cohesiveness and as the only pillar for societal consensus. The highly contextual distinction of the 'self' from the 'other' has thereby been demonstrated so powerfully that framing self-determination as merely the pursuit of a more homogeneous entity has become debatable. Meanwhile, the emphasis given to transparent bottom–up forging of the state on the foundation of social consensus being witnessed in parts of former Somalia appears to point in the right

direction. The novel attempt to found intercommunal peace on grassroots community deliberation, the result of the tragedy in southern Sudan, also bodes much better than centrally imposed peace and stability. The subordination of the liberation army to elected civilian officials, being pioneered by the Nuba people, appears to herald a departure from other practices in which the reverse prevails negatively affecting post-liberation civil military relations. Finally, the existence of movements whose success or failure has regional implications must be mentioned. The Oromo and Ogadeni quest for self-determination fits this picture since the way in which this quest would ultimately be consummated would definitely impact on the state/states forging process/processes in former Somalia and vice versa.

Furthermore, the SPLA's experiences at two different historical moments demonstrate how developments within and between neighbouring states could effectively interfere with its agenda of realising the 'new Sudan' by defeating the incumbent regime. Its military pressure to achieve this aim appeared to be climaxing in the late 1980s exactly at the time the fronts fighting against the SPLA's host, the Ethiopian regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam, were poised to bring about its downfall. The SPLA's prior victory threatened to preempt the defeat of the Ethiopian regime by its armed opponents. In order to avert the potentially disastrous implications of this scenario, a joint EPLF–OLF military operation was conducted in early 1990 driving SPLA troops out of the Asosa province of western Ethiopia. This was one of several decisive military offensives that sealed the fate of the Ethiopian regime with disastrous consequences for the SPLA. The SPLA could once again intensify its military and political pressure on the Sudanese regime only after Eritrea and Ethiopia started backing it in the second half of the 1990s. Its victory appeared virtually imminent until it suffered another setback when the Ethiopian and Eritrean authorities started scrambling to mend fences with Khartoum subsequent to the outbreak of hostilities between them in May 1998. While negatively affecting the SPLA, this development had positive implications for those fighting against the Eritrean and Ethiopian regimes as each side started supporting the other's armed opposition.

Interactive state and nation formation in the Horn

The most cursory reading of the histories of the entities currently populating the Horn region, if read together and not separately, clearly shows how they came into existence through a highly interactive process. Such a reading will also reveal how they all tried to carry out nation-building in a similarly interactive manner only to harvest failure. The overall result of this convergence too is quite remarkable. The region's numerous intrastate contests and interstate tensions tended to connect seamlessly and to resonate with each other to a degree rarely witnessed elsewhere. In the words of Terrence Lyons, 'The Horn of Africa region . . . has been the

site of endemic inter- and intrastate conflict for decades'. According to him, 'The many conflicts are interlinked in a regional "security complex", a group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another'.[76] Lionel Cliffe echoes the same opinion by concluding that the region's 'conflicts are intermeshed in such a way that "solutions" to any one country's problems in isolation are extremely difficult'.[77] He goes on to advise 'a two-tier process, and there has to be a simultaneity in settling two or more disputes'.[78] Lemmu Baissa is convinced that simultaneously settling the ongoing intrastate conflicts has the more decisive impact than dealing with its interstate ramifications. According to him, Ethiopia and Sudan were, for example, successful in resolving conventional causes for interstate conflict, such as border disputes. However, he believes that interstate tensions persisted due to the continuation of intrastate conflicts in both countries. Disentangling the interstate from the intrastate in Ethio-Somali relations has, of course, always proven impossible. The following conclusion that Lemmu Baissa draws from his study of Ethio-Sudanese relations applies here even more as well as to other cases. 'The *simultaneous* solution of the persistent domestic conflicts – not through the failed policy of resorting to force and intimidation, but through the restructuring of power, the equitable sharing of national resources and the fair participation of the component elements without domination by any group – within Ethiopia and the Sudan is the key to greater opportunities'.[79]

Lyons posits the structure that may help the simultaneous resolution of the Horn's interlocking conflicts. He believes that, while some authority and responsibilities could continue to reside at the old level of the state, creating new structures or regimes at the local (provincial), subregional (Horn of Africa), continental and global levels would be necessary. And such an overhaul of the exercise of authority would necessitate 'redefining sovereignty, the basis of citizenship, the meaning of borders, and other legal abstractions that have been used by political leaders to control their territories'.[80] Similar changes of attitude and practice are recommended by Pausewang,[81] and Crawford Young.[82] So the picture that is being arrived at by looking at the particular predicaments of the Horn societies and states tallies fairly well with what is emerging from a more global study of self-determination.

Conclusion

What has been assembled above is culled from a massive assembly of current criticisms of the state, and the nation and their attributes as well as evolving thoughts about self-determination. It is quite hazardous to list a strict set of recipes that need to be followed in the pursuit of self-determination for a number of reasons. First, each case has its peculiarities.

Second, no 'Other' has the right to define how the 'Self' should be identified but the concerned 'Self'. Third, weighing the hazards, costs, gains and losses incurred in exercising self-determination in one form or another concerns strictly the self-determining 'Self'. I belong to a generation that thought arriving at 'scientifically' appropriate social/political blueprints was possible and desirable. The experiences of the past three decades should caution us about such top–down social engineering. Perhaps the time has come for activists/thinkers to enter into a protracted dialogue with their societies as the means to discovering socially relevant and acceptable aims of political change.

Finally, I would like it to be known that I study self-determination and related matters not as a scholar but as a one-time Oromo political activist. During that vocation I came to grapple with some unique aspects and challenges facing the Oromo struggle for self-determination. The peculiarity of the Oromo struggle for self-determination rests on the fact that it is one of very few cases, if any, in which the demographic majority includes the agenda of separation in its manifesto. The challenges facing the Oromo struggle are numerous. Perhaps the most outstanding is the reality that Oromo affairs are more intimately entangled with those of other peoples of the empire than any other. Moreover, Oromo politics is also much more highly entangled in the region's politics than that of any other. No other liberation movement had to simultaneously struggle against at least the regimes ruling two states (Ethiopia and Somalia) to survive and gradually move towards the restoration of the Oromo people's usurped rights. How the ultimate Oromo exercise of self-determination will disentangle Oromo politics and affairs from the regional, state and communal ones remains to be seen. Or will it be necessary to take into account this entanglement in envisioning the ultimate goal? I must conclude by admitting that neither my practical experience nor my reading of recent years have put me in a position to confidently describe the way ahead. I would be happy if my often deliberately provocative enunciations start more participatory and less disingenuous discourse.

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