

The Ethiopian State: Authoritarianism, Violence and Clandestine Genocide

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“Modern” Ethiopia has been created and maintained through the achievement of external legitimacy. As the European colonial powers such as Great Britain, France, and Italy enabled the Abyssinian (Amhara-Tigray) warlords to create the modern Ethiopian Empire during the last decades of the nineteenth century, successive hegemonic world powers, namely England, the former USSR, and the United States, has maintained the existence of various Ethiopian government until now. At the same time, the successive Amhara-Tigray regimes have failed to achieve internal legitimacy among the more colonized peoples while maintaining some degree of legitimacy among the minority Abyssinian population. While authoritarian rule has been sufficient to maintain semblance of public order among the Abyssinian population, state terrorism and massive human rights violations have been widely used in an attempt to control the colonized peoples, particularly the largest national group, the Oromo, creating political instability, conflict and war, recurrent famines, poverty, and underdevelopment. The achievement of stability, peace, and development in Ethiopia requires a genuine democratic paradigm that includes decolonization, self-determination, and popular sovereignty.

The “modern” Ethiopian state emerged in the second half of the 19th century, resulting from the confluence of three factors: the intervention of European powers in the Horn of Africa, the intensification of the process of political centralization in Abyssinia proper, and the increased war-making capacity of Amhara-Tigray warlords that resulted from asymmetric access to European firearms. These three factors occurred in the context of the development of capitalism in Western Europe and its expansion into Africa in the international political process of colonization known as the “Scramble for Africa.” The intervention of European colonial powers in Abyssinia proper facilitated the process of political centralization by increasing the war-making capacity Amhara-Tigray warlords thus enabling them to gradually create the Ethiopian Empire. With the support of European powers, the Abyssinian/Ethiopian state emerged as a dependent-client state whose legitimacy on the world stage was dependent upon its relationship with a sequence of world powers who served as its benefactors. As a dependent-client state, the Ethiopian Empire achieved external legitimacy but lacked internal legitimacy from the ethnonations who were colonized and forced into the empire at gunpoint. The successive regimes of Menelik, Haile Selassie, Mengistu Haile Mariam, and Meles Zenawi have followed similar policies and practices in achieving external legitimacy while promoting a series of different ideological discourses to legitimize their respective governments.

The modern Ethiopian state has survived to the present day without achieving internal legitimacy. For more than a century, it has defended the interests of the Amhara-Tigray heads of state, state elites, and, to lesser degree, the interests of the Amhara-Tigray ethnonational groups from which the successive state leaders have emerged. While drawing its external political legitimacy from external powers, this state, through its leadership, has attempted to construct and maintain itself using the particularistic ideological foundations of Semitic ancestry, Orthodox Christianity, and Abyssinian (Amhara-Tigray) political culture within a political unit made up of a multinational and multi-religious population. As a result, the leadership has been unable to create the social consensus necessary to achieve the level of internal legitimacy necessary for Ethiopia to transform itself into a viable and self-sufficient country. To maintain their power, successive state leaders have maintained order through authoritarian structures where that is sufficient and state terrorism when necessary. Consequently, Ethiopia has remained an impoverished empire-state known to the world for its recurrent famines, wars, diseases, abject poverty, and a lack of respect for human rights. Without critically understanding the essence and characteristics of this state, it is impossible to recommend an appropriate and acceptable political solution that respects the legitimate political aspirations of its multinational populace.

This paper critically explores four interrelated issues. First, it explores how the Euro-American intervention on the side of Amhara-Tigray successive state elites provided it with external legitimacy. Second, it explains how the convergence of identity, religion, and political power created a political culture of authoritarianism in Amhara and Tigray society that ignored the life, liberty, and human rights of its multinational populace enabling it to survive in spite of the lack of internal legitimacy.

Third, it focuses on and explains the essence and consequences of the policies and practices of political authoritarianism in Abyssinia proper and state terrorism in the colonized parts of the Ethiopian Empire. Finally, the paper explores how the Ethiopian state's policies and practices of political authoritarianism and state terrorism have undermined the processes of peace and development, and proposes some pragmatic policies to boldly confront and solve these complex and difficult political problems.

External Legitimacy, Dependency, and the Ethiopian State

Over the last century-and-a-quarter, Abyssinian leaders have achieved external legitimacy for their governments as witnessed by a combination of 1) a legitimating discourse that appealed to the sensibilities of a patron state, 2) the extraction of colonial area resources for the benefit of the patron state, the interstate capitalist system, and the current Ethiopian leadership structure 3) recognition of the Ethiopian government in world fora and at the diplomatic level, 4) the provision of military training, weapons and other military hardware by major state actors in order to consolidate and maintain the Ethiopian state, 5) coordinated diplomatic and military activity on the part of Ethiopia in consonance with the needs and wishes of the benefactor state, and 6) access to technical assistance to build a semblance of the infrastructure and bureaucracy that is necessary to consolidate a modern state.

Prior to the middle of the 19th century, the numerous ethnonational groups that inhabited the interior of the Horn of Africa were able to maintain a rough military parity with one another. The territory of these nations expanded and contracted over time depending upon social organization and the relative skills of the various leaders. This parity of power was disrupted when European imperialism expanded into the region in the second half of the 19th century as France, Britain, and Italy vied with each other for control of the area. In the Scramble for Africa, Abyssinian warlords were able to take advantage of their Christian identity and of the rivalry among the three European powers to obtain the resources and the external interstate legitimacy necessary for them to expand their territory, conquering the territory, people, and resources of neighboring ethnonations thus establishing the Ethiopian Empire (Holcomb and Ibssa, 1990; Jalata, 1993).

The actions of Tewodros capitalized on underlying Abyssinian concerns and set in motion a series of events that led to the establishment of the modern Ethiopian Empire. Between 1855 and 1868, under the leadership of Tewodros, some of the Abyssinians engaged in a series of campaigns to both colonize and convert the Wallo and Yejju Oromos to Orthodox Christianity or expel or exterminate them. Prior to this time, the Wallo, Yejju, Azabo, and Raya Oromos had accepted Islam "as bulwark against being swamped by Abyssinian nationalism" (Trimingham, 1965: 109). The Ethiopian rulers had long feared both Islam and the Oromo "and the thought of the two in combination [was] their recurring nightmare" (Baxter, 1978: 285). Tewodros was able to mobilize Abyssinians against the Oromo by reintroducing this fear. Despite his barbaric campaigns and the attempt to deport the Wallo Oromo en masse to western Abyssinia, Tewodros failed to effectively control them.

On October 29, 1862, Tewodros wrote two identical letters to Queen Victoria of England and Emperor Napoleon III of France expressing his hate for the Oromo: “My fathers, the emperors, having forgotten the creator, He handed over their kingdom to the Galla [Oromo]...But God created me, lifted me out of the dust and restored this empire to my rule. He endowed me with power and enabled me to stand in the place of my fathers. By this power I drove away the Gallas” (Quoted in Greenfield and Hassen, 1980: 8). After Queen Victoria ignored the letter, Tewodros mistreated and imprisoned British diplomats in Abyssinia. As a result, Great Britain sent an expeditionary force to release them. Yohannes of Tigray and Menelik of Amhara, rivals of Tewodros, then allied themselves with the British to destroy Tewodros. Yohannes provided logistical support for an expeditionary force of Great Britain that was sent to release those British who were imprisoned by Tewodros. Tewodros was defeated by the British expeditionary force and committed suicide in 1868 without completing the process of the creation of the modern Ethiopian state. He was unsuccessful in this project because he lacked “both [the] resources and [the] experience needed to handle the European powers properly” (Venkataram, 1973: 129-145). The death Tewodros was followed with fierce competition and conflict between various centralizing warlords, such as Gobaze of the Amhara, Wag, and Lasta, Kasa of Tigray alias Yohannes, and Menelik of Shawa.

On July 11, 1871, with the military and political assistance he received from the British Kasa defeated Gobaze at the battle of Assam and proclaimed himself Emperor Yohannes IV on January 21, 1872. He also established his suzerainty over Menelik of Shawa and Adal Tassama (Takla Haymanot of Gojjam) and began to collect taxes (Pankhurst, 2001: 163). Yohannes “was militarily powerful, in part on account of the gift of arms he had received from the Napier expedition, and the assistance given to him by a former member of the British force, John Kirkham, who had volunteered to train his army on European lines” (Pankhurst, 2001: 162). During his reign, between 1872 and 1889, Yohannes faced three external political pressures. As the Italians were expanding their colonial territory from the Red Sea coast into Tigray, they made an alliance with Menelik in Shawa who was consolidating his power. During this period, the Egyptians and the Mahdists of the Sudan were also fighting Yohannes (Jalata, 1993: 49). On March 9, 1889 at the battle of Matamma the Mahdists killed Yohannes, creating the requisite political space for Menelik to expand his power and control.

With the support of Great Britain, France, and Italy, Menelik’s colonization of non-Abyssinians, particularly the Oromo, allowed him to gain access to the abundant human and material resources that he mercilessly exploited so that he could purchase the modern weaponry and expertise necessary to create and maintain the Ethiopian empire (see Jalata, 1993; Holcomb and Ibssa, 1990). Since the extraction of produce was very limited in Abyssinia proper, the main economic resources were obtained from the colonized and racialized population groups. Glen Bailey (1980: 12) notes, “the creation of the empire-state was financed by the southern expansion. Tribute along with revenue from the control of the slave trade (an estimate 25,000 slaves per year in the 1880s) and valuable ivory, coffee and civet exports financed Menelik’s consolidation of power.”

Using a Christian ideology and the willingness of the Abyssinian ruling class to collaborate with the European imperialist powers, Menelik gained access to the European technology, weapons, administrative and military expertise, and other skills that allowed him to consolidate the modern Ethiopian clientele state (Pankhurst 2001: 179). Successive rulers followed the pattern set by Menelik even though the configuration of patron states providing external legitimacy changed.

When Menelik died in 1913, his successor Iyasu's attempt to change the trajectory of Ethiopian politics met with opposition from the Abyssinian elites, the Christian establishment, and the Allied powers. Iyasu "desired to do away with the religious and national distinctions that prevailed in the empire...and began to build a foundation for some kind of national unity on a different model from that which was already in place and to establish a base support different from that of" the Ethiopian establishment (Holcomb and Ibssa, 1990: 158). The European-Abyssinian establishments vehemently opposed Iyasu's policies of making an independent decision by introducing economic and political reforms and by equalizing Christians and Muslims and other religious (Holcomb and Ibssa, 1990: 152-171). Consequently, in 1916 he was overthrown by an alliance of the colonial settlers, the Orthodox Church, and the Allied Powers and replaced by Haile Sellassie, the leader of the *nafxanya* (settler) class.

Italy colonized Ethiopia between 1935 and 1941 deposing Haile Sellassie, reorganizing the state, eliminating the hated *nafxanya/gabbar* (semi-slavery) system, and changing the land tenure system. With the defeat of the Italians in the Horn of Africa, the British restored Haile Sellassie to the throne in 1941. Because of the conditions at the time, Great Britain decided it was more expedient to restore the Haile Sellassie clientele government than engage in establishing a colonial government over Ethiopia (Jalata, 1993: 86). On December 19, 1944, Great Britain made an agreement with the Haile Sellassie government to build the Ethiopian bureaucracy by providing a British military mission for raising, organizing, and training a strong central army that could defend the Ethiopian state (Hiwet, 1975: 87). The agreement "served Haile Sellassie very well and allowed him to concentrate on normalizing domestic matters while Great Britain policed Ethiopia, seeing to it that opposition to the emperor was kept in check" (Hiwet, 1975: 87-88).

From 1941 to 1960, the expansion of the centralized bureaucracy and social services in Ethiopia were the major development (Bailey, 1980: 37). By building Haile Sellassie's bureaucracy, and suppressing opposition forces, Great Britain enabled the regime to implement its political and economic policies in accordance with the British interest. The growth of the Ethiopian bureaucracy and increased produce extraction from within strengthened the Haile Sellassie government. The United States also played a significant role in building the Ethiopian state. In the 1940s and 1950s, the United States was interested in the Horn of Africa in general and Eritrea, a former Italian Colony, and Ethiopia in particular for two main reasons.

Early on the priority was the establishment of a military post with a global communications network in Eritrea in order to challenge the military expansionism of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy in the early 1940s. Once WWII was over, the United States' goal was to monitor the activities of the former Soviet Union in this part of the world (Schraeder, 1994: 114-120).

As Ethiopia used the influence of the United States to incorporate Eritrea into Ethiopia, the United States tried to use Ethiopia to limit the expansion of the former Soviet Union in the Horn of Africa. In 1956, the U.S. National Security Council accepted the arguments advanced by the Bureau of Near Eastern and African Affairs, and "acknowledged Ethiopia's overriding political importance to the United States as a regional bulwark against the spread of Egyptian and communist radicalism in the Middle East and the Horn of Africa, and directed the Defense Department to 'provide the Ethiopian Armed Forces with limited military equipment and training of kind suitable for maintaining internal security and offering resistance to local aggression'" (Schraeder, 1994: 120-121). Ethiopia and the United States signed a mutual defense assistance agreement in 1953 which remained in effect until 1977. The defense treaty closely linked Ethiopia to the United States. The United States considered "its political investment in Ethiopia as an investment toward the future realization of its wider interests in Africa" (Agyeman-Duah, 1984: 209).

On its part, the Haile Sellassie government wanted to obtain dependable supply of military and security resources to be used against its internal and external enemies. The regime was successful in receiving military aid from the United States and suppressing its enemies. The U.S. military and economic assistance helped Haile Sellassie remain in power for a long period. According to Peter Schwab (1979: 101), "Without the military weapons received from the United States, it was unlikely that Haile Sellassie could have maintained himself on the throne. Half of all United States military assistance to Africa was channeled to Ethiopia." The U.S. modernization programs were also economic and educational. In 1952, the Point Four Program under the U.S. International Cooperation Administration was extended to Ethiopia. Through this program, the United States trained and developed Ethiopian bureaucrats in the fields of agriculture, public administration, finance, commerce, industry, and health. The modernization programs continued in the 1960s and the 1970s; thousands of Peace Corps volunteers were sent to implement such programs. Consequently, the United States strengthened the Ethiopian state elites who had little knowledge of the modern world in technical and administrative fields.

While the Haile Sellassie regime used the ideology of Orthodox Christianity and the Solomonic myth as a legitimizing discourse, the uprising that deposed him in 1974 had to look elsewhere. The military regime (the *derg*) that came to power in the cauldron of competing popular groups needed another ideology justifying its position in keeping the crumbling empire intact. Between 1974 and 1977, while the *derg* searched for a legitimizing ideology that moved the regime beyond the ideology of Orthodox Christianity and the Solomonic myth, it received financial and military aid worth \$180 million from the U.S.A. (Korn, 1986:21).

Gradually the *derg's* claim of an anti-imperialist position, the nationalization of American-owned industries, which were estimated at US\$30 million, and the killing of 60 top former officials broke the relationship between the U.S. and Ethiopia (Korn, 1986:1-21).

This condition blocked the *derg* from buying the amount of arms it wanted from the U.S. The reorganization of the crumbling empire, fighting against the national movements and other organizations, and conflict with Somalia required a huge amount of arms. Mengistu, the eventual leader of the *derg*, wanted Soviet arms badly to keep the empire together. The former Soviet Union allied with and contributed to the survival of the military regime led by Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam for seventeen years. For Colonel Mengistu's regime, to be allied with the former U.S.S.R. and to obtain the firearms essential for keeping the crumbling empire intact were questions of life and death. From 1977 to 1986, the former Soviet Union alone provided arms valued between \$2 and \$4 billion (Korn, 1986: 91) for a military regime that failed even to feed its famine-stricken population. Up until 1989, the Soviet Union military assistance to Ethiopia was estimated at \$7 billion (Press, 1989: 4). Between 1974 and the mid-1980s, the army increased tenfold, from 45,000 to 480,000 (Korn, 1986: 91). With the demise of the Soviet power in the late 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, with the intensification of national liberation struggles, and with the crisis of the Ethiopian army, the Mengistu regime collapsed in 1991.

With the support of the United States, Meles Zenawi, the leader of the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF), replaced Mengistu Haile Mariam as the head of the state. The United States supported the creation of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary democratic Front (EPRDF) by the TPLF, and with Israel, it financed the flight of Mengistu to Zimbabwe in 1991, and endorsed the emergence of the Meles regime (Jalata, 1993: 177-197). It still provides all necessary assistance to the regime. U.S. foreign policy makers primarily support regimes like that of Ethiopia for perceived strategic and economic self-interest. U.S. officials are more concerned with political stability, economic reform, and the existence of regimes such as that of Ethiopia at any cost, and cared less for democracy and human rights. *The Economist* (1997: 36) comments that Meles Zenawi "is regarded as one of Africa's 'new leaders': he recently won an award in the United States for good government....Their [Western] governments tend to give priority to the Prime Minister's economic reforms rather than his record on human rights."

Internal Legitimacy among Abyssinians and Colonized Peoples: Different Outcomes

Successive Abyssinian regimes have attempted to achieve internal legitimacy through the process of Amharization/Christianization by creating through force if necessary a common ethnonational identification (Ethiopian), a common religion (Ethiopian Orthodox Church), a universal narrative that imbues people with a common set of values and goals (those of the Abyssinian people and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church), and a common worldview on the nature of authority (acceptance of authoritarian rule as reflective of the will of God) (Tamrat, 1972; Hoben 1970, 1973; Markakis, 1974).

Given the different cultural and historical narratives that are present among the nationalities represented in Ethiopia, the attempt of the successive Ethiopian governments to establish internal legitimacy has been met with generalized success among the Abyssinian population and failure among many of the conquered ethnonations.

In the 13th century, remnants of the Christian Auxumite kingdom developed a separate identity known as Amhara (Jalata, 1993). The Amhara ethnonational group and another group known as Tigray are collectively called Abyssinians. The two groups of Abyssinians maintained a common religion, the Abyssinian now Ethiopian Orthodox Church, common traditions and customs, but different languages. The Amhara are the larger of the two groups. In their conquest of the interior of the Horn of Africa during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Abyssinians used their state power to impose their Christian religion and their languages—Amharinga and Tigragna—as well as their customs on the more than 75 ethnonational groups they colonized of which the Oromo are the largest.

Using a discourse of Semitic (i.e. racial: The Abyssinians saw themselves as Semites, not Africans) (Jalata, 2001) and Christian (religious) superiority, the Ethiopian elites and their leaders strengthened the sense of common identity among the Amhara and Tigray. This racial and religious identity is rooted in a universal narrative involving the mythical claims of a 3000 year lineage of Abyssinian rulers genealogically linked to Solomon, the ancient King of Israel. The successive kings of this Solomonic dynasty claimed that they were elected by God and placed themselves at the top of the secular and religious hierarchies, asserting the power to appoint or dismiss their administrators and church officials (Jalata, 1993:33). The document known as the *Kebra Nagast*, glory of the kings, rationalized and legitimized the monarchy using this Solomonic narrative (Budge, 1932) and, by extension, related the Abyssinians to the chosen people of Israel. According to *Kebra Nagast*: “God has appointed all these rulers and given them authority; one that opposes the ruler and is against him, rebels against the ordinances of God, his creator. Those who rebel against the rulers secure their condemnation” (Strauss, 1968:29).

The sense of racial superiority is also tied to this narrative for while most Abyssinians are phenotypically African, they see themselves as Semitic people—as children of Solomon—and thus superior to the Africans who constituted the other ethnonations they conquered in the creation of the Ethiopian state (Jalata, 2001:95-105). The sense of racial superiority in Ethiopia is similar to what can be found in the U.S. In the U.S., people are considered to be African-American if they have one drop of African blood—skin color is not the issue. Similarly in Ethiopia, one is Semitic if one could claim one drop of Solomonic blood. This perceived Semitic identity allowed Abyssinians to identify themselves more closely with Europe and Europeans than with Africa and Africans and aided them in their achievement of external legitimacy. It also created a cohesive bond among the Abyssinians that allowed them to distinguish themselves from other residents of the Ethiopian state. The existence of written languages, Amharic, Tigrana, and the ancient religious language, Geez, and the absence of a written form of many of the languages of the conquered peoples also contributed to the Abyssinians’ sense of superiority over their non-literate neighbors.

When the Haile Selassie regime fell—and with it the Abyssinian sense of internal legitimacy that came with the myth of 3,000 years of Solomonic rulers—the *derg* attempted to achieve internal legitimacy through its program of *Ethiopia Tikdem* (Ethiopia First) as a rhetorical device to persuade people to subjugate their individual ethnonational identities to that of Ethiopia. The new regime denounced Haile Selassie while at the same time praising Tewodros, Yohannes, and Menelik as the builders of the Ethiopian state. In addition, the Mengistu regime used the concept of revolutionary socialism in an attempt to create a universal narrative that would unify the various nationalities within Ethiopia with a common set of values and goals. However, the *derg* was put on the defensive by the development of national liberation movements among a number of the conquered peoples. Even Abyssinian co-religionists, the Tigray, developed a national liberation front which was among those who brought the *derg* down in 1991. With the support of the United States, Meles Zenawi, the leader of the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) replaced Mengistu Haile Mariam as the head of the state. In coming to power, the TPLF marginalized the Oromo Liberation Front, keeping control of the Ethiopian state fully in the hands of the Abyssinians.

Over time the Abyssinians came to see the conquest of other ethnonations within the Horn of Africa as the reestablishment of what they perceived to be the historical bounds of ancient Abyssinian empires. They then appended the name “Ethiopia”—a name embedded within Jewish and Christian scriptures—to their newly conquered territory using a name that had an air of ancient legitimacy among Christian and Euro-American peoples (Melbaa, 1980). Thus for the Abyssinians Mengistu's appeal to “Ethiopia First” and Meles' appeal to the territorial integrity of Ethiopia contributed to the legitimacy of their rule. For the Abyssinians, successive governments achieved a generalized internal legitimacy by giving a nod to a common narrative—the 3,000 years of Solomonic rule and the ancient identity of Ethiopia—that unified Abyssinians around issues of religion, race, and a common sense of authority. When the Haile Sellassie reign began to crumble, Amhara elements quickly took control of a generalized uprising to maintain control within their community. Similarly, when the *derg* lost the support of a crumbling Soviet Union, the Tigrayan Peoples Liberation Front quickly established its dominance over the other national liberation movements that were allied against the Mengistu government. Once again state power was retained within the Abyssinian community with the support of Euro-American powers.

Among the Abyssinians one can distinguish between the legitimacy of an Abyssinian controlled state and the legitimacy of a given government. During the monarchical period, the death of Menelik eventually brought about the rising and deposing of Iyasu—who had non-Abyssinian Oromo blood—and the establishment of the rule of Ras Mekonen as Haile Sellassie through palace intrigue and a struggle among various Abyssinian elements. For the Abyssinian elite, though the Ethiopian state maintained legitimacy, Iyasu lacked the legitimacy that Haile Sellassie provided. When Haile Sellassie's government lost legitimacy in the eyes of a crucial portion of population, the legitimacy of the government was maintained by Mengistu.

Again when the Mengistu government was weakened by internal and external events, Meles and the TPLF maintained a sense of governmental legitimacy among the Abyssinian populace while it is doubtful that they would have seen a government with significant Oromo influence and leadership as legitimate. The difficulty of the Ethiopian state in establishing internal legitimacy among the colonized nations lies both in the differences between the religion, values and structure of the dominant Abyssinian society and those of the other ethnonations. This can clearly be seen with regard to the Oromos, the largest of the conquered ethnonations. The presence of liberation forces among other nationalities within Ethiopia suggests that the same argument could be made for them as well.

An understanding of *Waqaa*, the divine being of the monotheistic religion of the Oromo, serves as a starting point from which one can understand Oromo traditions and the differences between Oromo religion, values and worldview on the nature of authority (Bartels, 1983) and those of the Abyssinians who for 125 years have controlled the Ethiopian state. In Oromo religion, based on a belief in *Waqaa*, we find the ideology and principles that historically informed the institutions, organizations and systems of power balance within Oromo society. While in the past century and a half many Oromo have adopted Christianity or Islam as their religion, the ongoing traditions and cultural institutions have been formed in large part by the older, relative to Oromo society, Oromo religion based on *Waqaa*.

Waqaa is the creator of the universe and the source of all life. The universe created by *Waqaa* contains within itself a sense of order and balance that is to be made manifest in human society. Oromos believe that society collapses unless a balance is struck between female and male, young and old, spiritual and physical power in the cosmic order of *Waqaa*'s wisdom. The interdependence of the dominant and the liminal is considered a precondition for peace and prosperity in both metaphysical and practical sense.

Oromos refer to this concept of peace and order of *Waqaa* as *safuu* [moral and ethical codes]. *Safuu* is extremely important in Oromo religious and political thought. If the balance is disturbed, it is said that *safuu* is lost (Kumsaa, 2006).

This balance can be seen in the concept of property rights within the Oromo community where land is held in common and livestock are owned by the family. The men traditionally were responsible for raising the cattle and using them for farming and women do the milking and are responsible for the distribution of the milk. *Waqaa* is intolerant of injustice and crime, opposing the exploitation of both people and nature because injustice disrupts the peace and order of the cosmos. The present domination of the Oromo people and the non-sustainable use of the land that has resulted from colonization by Abyssinians represent a loss of *safuu* and violate the precepts of *Waqaa*. The maintenance of *safuu* includes the responsibility of society to protect the weak and calls for the congruence of individual and societal interests.

Within Oromo society the precepts of *Waqaa* have become institutionalized in social constructs like *gadaa*—Oromo popular democracy. *Gadaa* is a democratic tradition that organizes the male population into both 8-year age-determined gada grades (*hirya*—determined by birth year) and 8-year generational *gadaa* sets (*luba*—entered into 40 years after father) (Jalata, 2005a: 18-19). Within the *gadaa* system, power is rotated every eight years and *gadaa* includes representation of many segments of society as well as a set of checks and balances that makes it difficult for any one individual or group to establish autocratic power over Oromo society and its institutions. Election to office is by universal male suffrage excluding members of a limited number of caste groups (Jalata, 2005a: 19). Women were able to exercise and protect their rights through a parallel institution called *siqqee*. While the historical development of *gadaa* has not been thoroughly documented, it is clear that it was operational in Oromo Society at the beginning of the sixteenth century. However, as conflict over land resources within and among the Oromo and their neighbors (Tigray, Amhara, Somali, Afar, etc.) increased, the *gadaa* system began to break down in some Oromia regions. Eventually, under wartime pressure, some Oromo groups established kings, but even then the rights of kings were limited by the remnants of the *gadaa* system. Oromos also share a common language, *Afaan Oromoo*.

While Oromos don't share a common religion—the major religious affiliations are Oromo traditional religion, Ethiopian Orthodox, Islam, Catholic, and Protestant—they exhibit a high degree of religious tolerance showing respect for each other's religious practices. In the case of the Oromos, their unity is shown not in a common religion, but in a commonly shared respect for the religion of others. To show disrespect for the religion of another disturbs the harmony of the community resulting in the loss of *safuu*. The contrast between the religious diversity and tolerance of the Oromos and the presumed superiority of and central place of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in the life of the Abyssinians provides a significant hurdle in a state where internal legitimacy is in part based on a common religion.

Similarly, the Oromo concept of *gadaa* with its emphasis on a democratic polity differs dramatically from the Abyssinian worldview of authority which begins with God who gives authority to an earthly regent. In this structure, any defiance of that earthly regent represents a defiance of God. While, through *gadaa*, Oromos hold their leaders accountable, within Abyssinian society, it is the people who are accountable to what to date has been a succession of singular leaders—God's earthly regents. The differences in polity and the understanding of the nature of authority has made it difficult for the successive regimes that have controlled Ethiopian state to establish a sense of internal legitimacy among the Oromo. Abyssinian society finds order in a hierarchical structure of society which in the monarchical period included “15 military ranks and 13 civilian ranks below the level of royalty” (Legesse, 2006: 13). This hierarchical understanding of society is consistent with the Abyssinian racialized Semitic discourse which they believe makes them superior to those of “African” descent. In contrast to that Oromo society is based on an understanding of the essential equality of all persons within the state.

Using a discourse of racial and religious superiority, the Ethiopian colonial project attempted to overcome these barriers and create internal legitimacy through the Abyssinization of the conquered peoples—by forcing them to abandon their African heritage, language, traditions, and religion. The goal was the complete destruction of the identity of the colonized population groups. The colonization and destruction of various population groups throughout the conquered territory and the expropriation of their lands and economic resources, the establishment of military colonies, the evangelization of the remnants of the colonized population groups, and their cultural assimilation were the continuous process of Abyssinization/Christianization and the marginalization of those who held to their ethnonational/African roots (Tamrat, 1972). The Abyssinian kingdom and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church played leading roles in the process of the colonization, Abyssinization/Christianization, and marginalization or destruction of indigenous people.

While at the time of the conquest, many of the people within the Ethiopian state spoke languages that had not been reduced to writing, attempts to produce written forms of many of these languages was met with resistance by Ethiopian authorities, and if these languages were to be produced in written form then these same authorities insisted on the use of the Geez alphabet rather than the more universal Latin/English alphabet. The fear was that the presence of written forms of these languages would eliminate one of the rationales for using Amharic and thus undermining the Amharization/Christianization enterprise. The efforts at Amharization/Christianization were largely counterproductive as large numbers became Muslim, Protestants, or more fully involved in traditional religion as a way of defying the goals of successive Ethiopian governments to establish internal legitimacy through the acceptance of a common religion, language, and national narrative.

The very elements by which the Ethiopian state established legitimacy among the Abyssinians—common religion, common language, common set of values and a common worldview on the nature of authority were in the end the very elements that made it difficult for the state to establish internal legitimacy among most of the conquered populace. The ethnic federalism that was instituted by the Tigrayan-based Ethiopian government also failed to provide internal legitimacy in the colonized states such as Oromia because the replacement of the Amhara power by that of Tigray was unable to change the essence and characteristics of the Ethiopian colonial state. Still the colonized peoples are racialized and hierarchically organized by the Tigrayan-led regime that engages in state terrorism, hidden genocide, and massive human rights violations (Jalata, 2005b). We will explore these issues below.

Political Authoritarianism as a Means of Political Control among the Abyssinians

The Ethiopian state has achieved some degree of legitimacy among the Abyssinian population with leaders and citizens alike holding a common set of values that are closely tied to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. There is the common presumption that Orthodox Christianity is superior to other religions, even to the point of expecting that those who hold public positions are members of the church. Tigrayans support the use of Amharic as the national language even when they are in control of the national government, as they presently are. Though it may not be as strong as it was during the reign of Menelik and Haile Sellassie, the concepts contained in *Kebra Nagast* are deeply ingrained in Abyssinian society constraining political choices. These deeply held values predispose Abyssinian society to allow authority to be concentrated within a very small circle of persons.

The authoritarian nature of the Ethiopian state can be seen in the way it is highly militarized and repressive. It tightly controls information and resources in the form of foreign aid, domestic financial resources, and political appointments. It also directly owns and controls all aspects of state power including security and military institutions, judiciary and other public bodies, and financial institutions (Bestman, 1999: 2-25; Jalata, 2000: 64-89). It provides access to economic resources to some favored supporters of the state while denying them—even removing access to resources they already control—to persons who are not supportive of the current leadership. The Ethiopian state is authoritarian in that it is controlled by a small group of individuals be they Emperors and courtiers in monarchical times or singular individuals and committee or party members in more current times. Political change is infrequent in the authoritarian Ethiopian state and comes not by an expression of democratic political will, but by court intrigue or revolution.

Again the alignment of a hierarchical religious authority structure with a hierarchical political structure is consistent with *Kebra Nagast* and the underlying political values and understandings of Abyssinian society. Thus the fact that decisions are made by those in authority is sufficient to ensure compliance by most members of Abyssinian society. The Ethiopian ruling class used political authoritarianism, Christian ideology, and ethnic affinity to control the Abyssinian peasant and extract their labor and produce (Crummey, 1981: 127). Elections and other semblances of democracy are implemented, not to gain internal legitimacy or affect the internal decision making process, but to continue to maintain external legitimacy in the eyes of major state benefactors. Elections are showcase events rather than exercises in true democracy. Full democracy runs counter to the ingrained acceptance and expectation of authoritarian rule within Abyssinian society.

State Terrorism as a Means of Political Control in the Colonized Nations

Failing to achieve internal legitimacy through Amharization/Christianization of the bulk of the populace, the Ethiopian elite have sought other ways to ensure the integrity of the state and compliance with its decisions. One of these ways is relying on members of non-Abyssinian ethnonations who have sought to ensconce themselves within the dominant Abyssinian society by adopting Amharic names, joining the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and using Amharic as their preferred language even to the point of refusing to use their native language, hoping to avoid being identified with members of their conquered nation. Out of personal choice, political expediency, and/or economic gain these Amharized/Christianized individuals have decided to accept the common set of values and understanding that bind Abyssinians into a coherent society. For these individuals, for whatever reason, the Ethiopian state has achieved a degree of legitimacy and they exhibit a willingness to adhere to its strictures. Members of this collaborator class were often used as intermediaries to reduce conflict with the conquered population. Despite their work on behalf of their overlords, they are never fully accepted into Amhara-Tigray society, but remained second class members of society despite the nature of the positions they achieved.

When the work of the collaborator class, authoritarian rule, and attempts to gain the voluntary consent of the governed failed to achieve the political and economic objectives of the Ethiopian ruling class, the authorities resorted to state sponsored terrorism. State-terrorism is a systematic policy of a government through which massive violence is practiced to impose terror on a given population group to change their behavior of political struggle or resistance. The main assumptions of such a state are that it can control the population by destroying their culture of resistance and leaders. States that fail to establish internal legitimacy, ideological hegemony, and political order are unstable and insecure, and hence they engage in state terrorism. Annamarie Oliverio (1997: 48-63) describes two essential features of state terrorism:

First, the state reinforces the use of violence as a viable, effective, mitigating factor for managing conflict; second, such a view is reinforced by culturally constructed and socially organized processes, expressed through symbolic forms, and related in complex ways to present social interests. Within increasing economic and environmental globalization, gender politics, and the resurgence of nationalities within territorial boundaries, the discourse of terrorism, as a practice of statecraft, is crucial to the construction of political boundaries. As such, terrorism is invoked in the art of statecraft when multiple, often conflicting versions of the past are produced and, at particular historical moments, become sites of intense struggles.

As such, State-terrorism is associated with the issues of control of territory and resources and the construction of political and ideological domination (Oliverio, 1999). In the Ethiopian Empire, state-terrorism manifests itself in multiple forms. Its obvious manifestation is violence in the form of war, assassination, murder, torture, rape, confiscation of properties by the police and the army, forcing people to submission by intimidation, beating, and disarming citizens (Pollock, 1997; Oromia Support Group, 1996, 1997; Trueman, 1997).

The Abyssinian warlords created the Ethiopian empire by terrorizing and committing genocide on the Oromo and other peoples during the last decades of the 19th century (Jalata, 2005; Holcomb and Ibssa, 1990). With the resources of the colonized peoples Menelik “rewarded his generals, paid his soldiers, and bought first from the French and then from the Italians, huge supplies of arms and ammunition wherewith to equip his ever-growing armies” (Murray, 1922: 36). The Abyssinian state and its agents were primarily interested in resource extraction by transferring the ownership of lands and other resources to themselves and forcing the people to work for them without paying them for their labor; colonial agents were interested in “fiscal and political-security” and “prevention of an uprising” (Bulatovich, 2000: 68). During Ethiopian/Abyssinian colonial expansion, Oromia, “the charming Oromo land, [would] be ploughed by the iron and the fire; flooded with blood and the orgy of pillage” (De Salviac 1901, 349).

Calling this event as “the theatre of a great massacre,” Martial De Salviac (1901, 349) states:

The conduct of Abyssinian armies invading a land is simply barbaric. They contrive a sudden irruption, more often at night. At daybreak, the fire begins; surprised men in the huts or in the fields are three quarter massacred and horribly mutilated; the women and the children and many men are reduced to captivity; the soldiers lead the frightened herds toward the camp, take away the grain and the flour which they load on the shoulders of their prisoners spurred on by blows of the whip, destroy the harvest, then, glutted with booty and intoxicated with blood, go to walk a bit further from the devastation. That is what they call ‘civilizing a land.’

The Oromo oral story testifies that Amharas and Tigrayans and their supporters destroyed and looted the resources of Oromia, committed genocide on the Oromo and others through massacre, slavery, depopulation, mutilating hands and breasts, famine, and diseases before and after they colonized Oromia and other territories. Recognizing this tragedy, “the Oromo said: ‘It is Waaqa [God]...who has subjected us to the Amhara’” (De Salviac 1901, 350). According to De Salviac (1901, 8), “With the power of firearms imported from Europe, Menelik [Abyssinian warlord] began a murderous revenge.” The violent colonization of Oromia and other territories involved mass murder and slavery: “The Abyssinian, in bloody raids, operated by surprise, mowed down without pity, in the country of the Oromo population, a mournful harvest of slaves....An Oromo child [boy] would cost up to 800 francs in Cairo; an Oromo girl would well be worth two thousand francs in Constantinople” (De Salviac 1901, 28).

The Ethiopian colonial government massacred half of the Oromo population (five million out of ten million) and their leadership during its colonial expansion to Oromia (Hassen 1998). According to Alexander Bulatovich (2000: 68-69), “The dreadful annihilation of more than half of the population during the conquest took away from the Gallas [Oromo] all possibilities of thinking about any sort of uprising...Without a doubt, the Galla, with their least five million population, occupying the best land, all speaking one language, could represent a tremendous force if united.” Most Oromos who used to enjoy an egalitarian democracy known as the *gadaa* system, and who had “the main character...of love of complete independence and freedom” (Bulatovich, 2000: 65) were forced to face an impoverished life. The destruction of lives, institutions, and liberty were aspects of Ethiopian colonial terrorism. Most Oromos were forced to face political repression. Bulatovich (2000: 68) explains about the *gadaa* administration and notes “the peaceful free way of life, which could have become the ideal for philosophers and writers of the eighteenth century, if they had known it, was completely changed. Their peaceful way of life is broken; freedom is lost; and the independent, freedom loving Gallas [Oromos] find themselves under the severe authority of the Abyssinian conquerors.”

Bulatovich (2000: 263) provides several eyewitness accounts of the destruction of several population groups by Ethiopian colonial terrorism. For instance, explaining how the Kaffa and Gimra peoples would be destroyed, on February 3, 1898, he states the following:

As far as the eye see, the valley and hills were densely settled. Smoke arose from the houses. Evidently, food was being prepared there. Cattle were returning from the pasture, and the eight marvelous white cows aroused the appetite of my traveling companions, who exclaimed the whole time, ‘Look how many cows! So White! And cows! Those are such cows! ...’ The field around was cultivated. The quiet hardworking life of a peaceful people was evident in all, and it was sad to think that tomorrow all this would be destroyed....The picture will change: the inhabitants will flee, driving their livestock and carrying their goods and children. They will, most probably be killed, wounded, and captured. Their houses will go up in a blaze, and all that will remain of them will be the hearths.

Traditionally Abyssinians destroyed their forests and environment by cutting trees. Ethiopian colonialists brought the same culture to Oromia and destroyed Oromo natural resources and the beauty of Oromia. When Alexander Bulatovich, a Russian, visited Oromia between 1896 and 1898, Menelik was consolidating Ethiopian settler colonialism, and the settlers had not yet totally destroyed the resources of the Oromo nation.

The Oromia he characterized as “flowing in milk and honey,” (Bulatovich, 2000: 12), was gradually impoverished by Amhara-Tigray settlers known as *nafxanyas* (gun holders) (Jalata, 1993: 87-89). Menelik partitioned the colonized regions including Oromia and put them under the administration of his war generals. The Oromo “lands together with their population belong to the emperor by the right of conquest” (Bulatovich, 2000: 84).

Menelik established his government under the tight control of eighteen war chiefs or generals “who were completely independent in internal affairs, justice, the distribution of lands and jobs. But in all also they are absolutely under the command of the Emperor. They recognize his power and pay him tribute in the form of taxes or presents” (Bulatovich, 2000: 87-89).

The Abyssinian colonialists devastated “the forests by pulling from it the laths for their houses and [made] campfires or firewood for their dwellings. They lack[ed] the foresight to reforest or to respect the roots of trees, which would grow new off shoots. [They were] the great destructors of trees, others [accused] them of exercising their barbarity against the forests for the sole pleasure of ravaging” (De Salviac 2005, 20). The destruction of natural resources, human lives and institutions, the repression and exploitation of the surviving Oromo population went hand in hand. The Ethiopian state established settler colonialism in Oromia and developed five major types of colonial institutions, namely, slavery, the colonial landholding system, the *nafxanya-gabbar* system (semi-slavery), the collaborative class (agents of the Abyssinians), and garrison and non-garrison cities.

The Ethiopian state introduced the process of forced recruitment of labor via slavery and the *nafxanya-gabbar* (semi-slavery) system (see Holcomb and Ibssa, 1990: 135; Jalata, 2001) and expropriated almost all Oromo lands and divided up the Oromo among colonial officials and soldiers and their collaborators to force them to produce agricultural commodities and food for local consumption and an international market. The Oromo were reduced to serfs or slaves or semi-slaves and coerced to work without remuneration for the settlers, intermediaries, and the colonial state for certain days every week. Whenever they failed to provide free labor or pay taxes or tributes, the settlers enslaved their children or wives. The Ethiopian settlers continued to depopulate Oromia through slave trade until the 1930 when the Italian fascists abolished slavery in order to recruit adequate labor for their agricultural plantations in the Horn of Africa. The *nafxanya-gabbar* system was also abolished during this time through the same process.

The Ethiopian state destroyed any Oromo leadership that resisted Ethiopian colonialism, and co-opted those submissive leaders who accepted the role of intermediary in the Ethiopian colonial system. The Amhara and Tigrayan colonial settlers, their supporters, and their state developed garrison and non-garrison cities as one of their central institutions to control, suppress, and exploit the Oromo people. The repression, exploitation, and terrorism started during the reign of Menelik continued under Haile Selassie’s regime. The Haile Selassie government terrorized the Oromo of Raya-Azabo, Wallo, Hararghe, Bale and other regions because of their political and cultural resistance to the Amhara-Tigray domination. It also imprisoned, tortured or hanged prominent Oromo leaders, such as Mamo Mazamir and Haile Mariam Gamada. During the 1960s the Selassie government also banned civic organizations and musical groups.

The military regime that emerged under the leadership of Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam established a dictatorship and continued Ethiopian colonial policies. When Oromo activists and the people started to resist the military regime, the regime intensified its terrorism. In the 1980s, hundreds of Oromo nationalists were murdered or imprisoned. According to Gunnar Hasselblatt (1992, 17-19), the military government repeatedly held mass shooting among the Oromo population, hoping to break the free, independent Oromo spirit. Sometimes a hundred, sometimes two hundred men were shot on this raised dry field...and were buried with bulldozers. Over years this procedure was repeated numerous times. When this method did not work and the Oromo population could not be forced into submission, other methods were used. Victims were made to lie down with their heads on stone, and their skulls were smashed with another stone. The...government...tried everything to consolidate its reign of terror and exploitation of Oromia....When the Oromo movement could not be quenched by shooting or by the smashing of skulls, [the government] came up with a new idea. Men's testicles were smashed between a hammer and an anvil. Three men tortured and maimed in this way are still living.

The destruction of human lives and liberty in the Ethiopian Empire under the terrorist regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam who was exceeded by Prime Minister Meles Zenawi who has massacred large numbers of Oromos and others because of their political beliefs and their ethnonational backgrounds. Successive Ethiopian regimes have engaged in state terrorism. The Tigrayan-led Ethiopian government also practices state violence against the Sidama, Annuak, and Somali as a legitimate means of establishing political stability and order. Today, Ethiopian colonial settlers led by the Tigrayan-led regime have dominated the cities in Oromia and other regions, segregated the Oromo national majority in urban and rural areas, and kept them under "Ethiopian political slavery" by using the army, modern weaponry, the media, the telephone, the fax, the Internet, and other communication and information means and networks.

Using political violence, the Tigrayan authoritarian-terrorist regime has denied the Oromo and other peoples the freedom of expression, association, organization, and access to the media and information networks. In the 21st century, the Oromo and other peoples are denied the freedom of self-expression and self-development, and are forced to provide their economic and labor resources to the Ethiopian colonizers and their supporters, and live under deplorable conditions. The Tigrayan state elites try to hide the true characteristics of the Ethiopian regime that include state-terrorism and other forms of violence that terrorize and control the colonized population groups, particularly the Oromo. While engaging in political violence in the form of state terrorism, state rape, and hidden genocide to control the Oromo people and loot their economic resources, the Tigrayan state elite claims that they are promoting democracy, federalism, and national self-determination.

Because the Tigrayan-dominated Ethiopian government has been unable to establish internal legitimacy and ideological hegemony, it engages in terrorism and hidden genocide to protect its power. Bridget Welsh (2002: 67-68) suggests that since weak states “lack the capacity to meet the demands and rights of citizens and improve the standard of living for the majority of population,” they participate in political violence and engage in genocidal massacres in order to suppress the population groups struggling for political and economic rights. Most of the Oromo people, under the leadership of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), are determined to challenge the racist policies of this regime; as a result the Meles government focuses on the destruction and devastation of the Oromo. As Lisa Sharlach (2002: 107) attests, a politically “dominant group, frightened by what its members perceive as an onslaught of international and internal movements for democracy and socioeconomic change, harnesses the state apparatus to destroy the subordinate group together. This is genocide.” The massive killings and genocide committed on the Sheko, Mezhenger, Sidama, and Annuak, and Ogaden Somali peoples shocked some sections of the international community. In 2002, when the Sheko and Mezhenger peoples demanded their rights, the regime killed between 128 and 1,000 people. Nobody knows exactly how many people were killed since the government and the victims give different numbers. Similarly, on June 21, 2002, between 39 and 100 Sidamas were killed when government soldiers fired at 7,000 peaceful demonstrators in Hawassa (Awassa) (Jalata, 2005a: 242-243).

Again government forces and colonial settlers committed genocidal massacres on the Annuak people of Gambella in December 2003 and beginning 2004; they killed 424 people and displaced about 50, 000 people (Human Rights Watch, 2005b: 2). Currently, the regime is engaged in genocidal massacres, imprisonment, and massive human rights violations in Ogadenia and Oromia (U.S. State Department, 2009). Former prisoners have testified that their arms and legs were tied tightly together on their backs and their naked bodies were whipped. Large containers or bottles filled with water were fixed to their testicles, or if they were women, bottles or poles were pushed into their vaginas. There were prisoners who were locked up in empty steel barrels and tormented with heat in the tropical sun during the day and with cold at night. In addition prisoners were forced into pits so that fire could be made on top of them. Successive state elites and their governments have remained racist and dictatorial, and have continued to pursue destructive policies that intensify terrorism, war, underdevelopment, and poverty (Jalata, 2000).

The Ethiopian colonial system has taken away the sovereignty of the Oromo people and others and exposed them to massive and absolute poverty by denying them their fundamental human rights and needs that Ron Shiffman (1995: 6-8) calls subsistence, protection, affection, and understanding. Most people in urban and rural areas have low levels of subsistence because they do not have adequate income, enough food, and livable homes. They do not have protection from disease since they do not have adequate access to health and medical services. They do not have protection from political violence since the Ethiopian state engages in massive human rights violations and state terrorism. Currently thousands of Oromos and persons of other nationalities are imprisoned, tortured, harassed or killed by the Meles regime because of their struggle for national self-determination and democracy (Jalata, 2005b).

Although it is impossible to exactly know at this time how many Oromos have been murdered because the Meles government hides this information, the Oromia Support Group (2007, 1) reports “3,981 extra-judicial killings and 943 disappearances [euphemism for hidden murder] of civilians suspected of supporting groups opposing the government.” However, Mohammed Hassen (2001: 27) estimates that between 1992 and 2001 about fifty thousand killings and sixteen thousand disappearances (euphemism for secret killings) occurred in Oromia; he also notes that 90 percent of the killings were not reported.

Furthermore, from 2000 to 2006, the regime killed hundreds Oromo students who participated in peaceful demonstration. It also imprisoned and tortured thousands of them or expelled them from elementary and high schools and colleges (Jalata, 2007: 171). Many Oromos who were murdered by the agents of the Ethiopian government were eaten by hyenas and denied burial. The relatives of the murdered Oromos and persons of other nationalities are not allowed to cry to express their sadness according to their cultural tradition. For example, the wife of Ahmed Mohamed Kuree, a seventy years old elderly farmer, spoke on February 21, 2007 on the Voice of America (VOA), Afaan Oromo Program: “We found his prayer beads, his cloth and a single piece of his bone which the hyenas left behind after devouring the rest of his body and we took those items home. What is more, after we got home, they [government agents] condemned us for going to Gaara Suufii and for mourning. For fear of repercussions, we have not offered the customary prayer for the dead...husband by reading from the Qur’an. Justice has not been served. That is where we are today.” In 2007, the Meles militia killed twenty Oromo and let their corpses on the Mountain of Suufi in Eastern Oromia. Ahmed Mohamed Kuree was one of these Oromo. Another Oromo, Ayisha Ali, a fourteen years old teenager, was also killed and eaten by hyena. On the same VOA program her mother said: “After we heard the rumor about the old man [Ahmed Mohamed Kuree] I followed his family to Gaara Suufii [in search of my daughter]. There we found her skirt, sweater, under wears and her hair, braided...That was all we found of my daughter remains.” These individuals were murdered by the agents of the Tigrayan-led Ethiopian regime because of their Oromoness and their religion. Of course the regime also targets Christian Oromo because of their ethnonational background.

According to Human Rights Watch (2005, 1-2), “Since 1992, security forces have imprisoned thousands of Oromo on charges of plotting armed insurrection on behalf of the OLF. Such accusations have regularly been used as a transparent pretext to imprison individuals who publicly question government policies or actions. Security forces have tortured many detainees and subjected them to continuing harassment and abuse for years after their release. That harassment, in turn has often destroyed victims’ ability to earn a livelihood and isolated them from their communities.” 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 colonized peoples and the Ethiopian masses from decision-making positions.

The racialized Ethiopian state has controlled the colonized peoples by 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 conquered peoples have been denied their inalienable right to self-determination and democracy. They have been denied the right to build their social, economic, cultural and organizational infrastructures.

The Ethiopian State as the Enemy of Peace and Development

It took more than half of a century to create the Ethiopian Empire. Probably hundreds of wars were fought against various peoples, and several millions people perished during these wars. The phrase of Charles Tilly (1985), “war making and state making as organized crime,” clearly depicts the main role of the Ethiopian state. Wars and recurrent political violence have increased human sufferings in this empire. Successive Ethiopian regimes have depended on external powers, lacked internal political legitimacy among the colonized peoples who constitute the majority of the empire’s population, and brutalized individuals and groups through the policies and practices of authoritarianism and state-terrorism for more than a century. Despite the fact that some Amhara-Tigrayan state elites claim that their state, history, culture, religion, and civilization are something to be proud of, Ethiopia is known for its recurrent famines, internal and external wars, backwardness, poverty, and underdevelopment.

Ethiopia has remained an empire of darkness and ignorance and the leadership coming from either Amhara or Tigrayan society has failed to fulfill the responsibilities of a modern state. Their ideological claims of the Solomonic myth and Christianity, or socialism, or democracy have resulted in the same political behavior. The Ethiopian state has been used as an instrument to enrich Abyssinian elites, maintain a compliant Abyssinian populace by means of authoritarian rule and punish those who oppose them through state-terrorism. Theoretically speaking, the legitimate state monopolizes the use of legitimate violence or physical force within its geopolitical territory by practicing the right to protect its sovereignty, citizens, internal order, and territory within the framework of the rule of law. The legitimate state depersonalizes itself as a public domain by building autonomous institutions and organizations and by making and implementing the rule of law to promote the wellbeing and security of its citizens. Michiel S de Vries (2001: 391) identifies the state as “the organization responsible for the security of life and when this was accomplished it became increasingly responsible for securing the quality of life by creating a set of institutions profitable for the stable economic, political, cultural and demographic developments within its territory.”

Contrary to these principles, successive Ethiopian regimes have imposed their political power on their respective subjects through authoritarianism and the barrel of the gun, violating the rule of law and the principles of social contract. The survival of these regimes has depended on political violence and assistance from global powers.

Consequently, the Ethiopian state has remained the organ of political repression, oppression, terrorism, exploitation, and impoverishment, and, hence it has lacked internal legitimacy among the majority of its citizens. Successive Ethiopian regimes have suppressed competing political and cultural narratives and discourses through the Abyssinization/Christianization project. Although there has been regime change through palace intrigue and violence, Ethiopian political and cultural traditions have preserved colonial arrangements and tyrannical political practices and resisted changes in political norms, rules, and practices.

The Amhara-Tigrayan state elites have imposed a cruel, deadly, and hopeless system on the Oromo and other colonized peoples and with the support of big powers, the World Bank, the IMF, and the United Nations have attacked the life and liberty of various peoples and impoverished them. Bad and corrupt governments such as that of Ethiopia have destroyed the possibility of development in poor countries with the support of big powers and international organizations. They have violated human rights by preventing the development of democracy. Referring to democracy William Easterly (2006: 117) notes, "According to the simplest view of democracy, an open society with a free press, free speech, freedom of assembly, and political rights for dissidents is a way to ensure good government. Free individuals will expose any predatory behavior by bad governments, and vote them out of office." Easterly thoroughly describes how Western governments have created and maintained bad governments in the Rest and contributed to existence of poverty and human rights violations.

Although there have been reformist and leftist Ethiopian political elites who have attempted to bring about some political changes, most Abyssinian communities and elites have opposed to any kind of political and social change initiated by the colonized population groups. The Abyssinian communities have informal networks within the Ethiopian government and have repeatedly suppressed attempts to bring about fundamental political change in the colonized areas. C. Stone (1989: 6) notes that governments are based on "the informal arrangements by which public bodies and private interests function together in order to be able to make and carry out governing decisions." Although there have been contradictions in the colonizing Ethiopian political structure, Ethiopian communities and elites have collaborated in maintaining settler colonialism to protect their political and economic interests in the colonized regions. Since the behavior of the Abyssinian political elites and structures have been shaped by the Abyssinian political culture, the Ethiopian political system has remained authoritarian and willing to use state-terrorism thus failing to advance peaceful and meaning of socioeconomic development (see Hagos, 1995). The Ethiopian state is a failed state because it has been unable to secure internal legitimacy from the peoples it controls, failing to provide security and the improvement of their well-being. As Jennifer Milliken and Keith Krause (2002: 764) note, "state failure is causally linked to increased and widespread humanitarian suffering, regional instability, and transnational threats of international organized crime and terrorism."

Although three successive governments emerged after that of Menelik, the Ethiopian state has remained personalized, ethnicized/racialized, dependent on big global power, and never become the domain of public power. These regimes 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). Because of the lack of accountability by successive Ethiopian governments, the product of the people has not been properly channeled toward development. The state elites have used available resources for conspicuous consumption and the consolidation of the position of the state. Because of the backwardness of the economy, the economic surplus is very limited. Hence there is a life-and-death struggle over its appropriation. Accessibility to state power is the major channel through which the surplus is siphoned off from actual producers. That is why there has been no peaceful transference of power, and the struggle for political power is violent. Since these regimes have not represented the peoples whom they ruled, they have failed to establish popular accountability. The Amhara-Tigray state elites that have dominated the means of compulsion and the means of consumption have engaged in plunder and accumulation of wealth and capital with the help of the imperial interstate system. According to M. Mamdani (1986:47) “state connection is a necessary precondition for membership in the African bourgeoisie 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.”

The governments' failure to invest effectively the available surplus in development of productive forces has left the peoples culturally, technically, economically, and political 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 the conspicuous consumption of the ruling classes have slowed the introduction of technical innovation in the agricultural production system. Since the Ethiopian state and the imperial interstate system, spearheaded by the U.S., have refused to recognize and provide an alternative solution to the complex processes of decolonization, self-determination and multinational democracy, today we witness conflicts, recurrent famines, wars, social dislocation and crises in Ethiopia. While most of the people are facing abject poverty, diseases, famines, and illiteracy, the Tigrayan-led Ethiopian regime continues to engage in low-level wars against the liberation fronts of Oromia, Ogadenia, Sidama, and others, while intensifying its war of aggression against Somalia. This regime might also go to war with Eritrea destroying thousands of lives and spending millions of dollars as it did between 1998 and 2000.

Discussion and Conclusion

The old policy of building a state on the basis of one ethnonational hegemony in a multinational society, the blind acceptance of the sovereignty of the racialized state without recognizing the rights of the subjugated peoples, the idea of promoting the politics of order at the cost of democracy and self-determination, the lack of vision to build a multinational democracy based on ethnocultures and universal values of humanism, democracy, self-determination equality, social justice, and progress are contributing to the intensification of political conflicts, state decay and failure, underdevelopment, and social problems in Ethiopia. If the Ethiopian Empire is to be transformed into a viable, self-sustaining, and peaceful country, establishing a multinational democratic state that will have internal political legitimacy must be the first priority. Internal legitimacy can only be achieved through decolonization, national self-determination, and popular sovereignty which require the dismantling of the current racialized/ethnicized Ethiopian state and by replacing it by a state that will be a public domain, establishing and practicing the rule of law. We are afraid that if the existing political problems are not fairly and democratically solved quickly, the result may be genocidal conflicts like those in Rwanda or the former Yugoslavia. Before it is too late progressive intellectuals, democrats, concerned political forces, and the international community must begin to address and solve these complex and difficult political problems.

Alternatively, if the Amhara-Tigrayan elites continue to be interested in maintaining their racialized/ethnicized and colonial state, the national liberation movements of the colonized nations should pursue a common political agenda of liberation from the Ethiopian state and the establishment of one or more independent, multinational, democratic states by implementing the processes of decolonization, self-determination, and popular sovereignty. A just and durable peace, requires either the replacement the Ethiopian authoritarian-terrorist regime by a legitimate, multinational, democratic state and full decolonization, or allowing these nations full sovereignty. Without a new democratic paradigm that will achieve internal legitimacy by allowing the dominated classes, social groups, and ethnonations to have genuine representation within a state that they can form and change, the existing state, continental, and international political structures are inadequate to address and provide a solution for the complex political and economic problems in Ethiopia. The majority of the peoples in Ethiopia are at a political crossroads. The social and cultural systems that traditionally satisfied social and material needs has been broken up, and they have yet to establish state or states that can be responsive to their social and economic needs.

The world community, nongovernmental, and regional organizations, except for intervening during a famine disaster and feed those populations who are starved, have not helped the colonized peoples of Ethiopia. They have not taken preventive action. They only respond when the media start to report the existence of famine, genocide, and/or massive human rights violations. These acute problems in Ethiopia have yet to get the attention of the world community.

That is why peoples like the Oromo, Sidama, Ogaden-Somali, Annuak and others continue to suffer under the authoritarian-terrorist regime of Meles Zenawi that practices hidden genocide. The Ethiopian state is failed and it is on the verge of collapse, surviving only by depending on major world powers and by practicing authoritarianism, terrorism, and hidden genocide.

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