

THE ETHIOPIAN REVOLUTION: PERCEIVED AND ACTUAL MAKING FACTORS VIS-À-VIS THE FRAMING PROCESS***Mohammed ENDRIS ALI** & Gonca BAYRAKTAR DURGUN*******Abstract**

This article explores the Ethiopian revolution by employing plausible factors ignored by traditional works to explain its inevitable occurrence in 1974. This attempt utilizes framing theory as a single most important framework to foreground the eschewed yet relevant historical phenomena in the course of studying the Ethiopian revolution. A large body of the literature displays a notable convergence in attributing the young elite segment of the then Ethiopian polity a causative factor. The seismic change, accordingly, has been characterized as urban-centered. Despite such a vast attempt, the formative course yet remains least understood and incomplete. The present work attempts to address this gap. It seeks to present a major challenge to the taken for granted scholarship and shed new light in the study of the transformation period in question. Its central argument points out that the Ethiopian revolution is better explained and understood by employing the consequential movements the mass segment of the society participated in far from the center. The revolution, accordingly, is primarily characterized as periphery-centered. Relying heavily on overlooked primary sources the research identified and expounded four major consequential movements that occurred in the periphery. The empirical discussion captures the converging symmetrical ambition the protracted movements had toward the formative change.

Keywords: Ethiopia, Revolution, Recognition, Periphery, Framing.

ETİYOPYA DEVRİMİ: ÇERÇEVELEME SÜRECİNE GÖRE ALGILANAN VE ASIL YAPIM FAKTÖRLERİ**Öz**

Bu makale, geleneksel çalışmaların görmezden geldiği makul faktörleri kullanarak Etiyopya devriminin 1974'teki kaçınılmaz oluşumunu açıklamayı hedeflemektedir. Bu çaba, Etiyopya devrimini inceleme sürecinde göz ardı edilmiş ilgili tarihsel fenomenleri ön plana çıkarmak için tek ve en önemli zemin olarak çerçeveleme teorisini kullanmaktadır. Literatürün büyük bir kısmı, o zamanki

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Etiyopya yönetiminin genç seçkin kesimini nedensel bir faktör olarak tanımlarken dikkate değer bir yaklaşma sergilemektedir. Bu kabul ile, sismik değişim kent merkezli olarak nitelendirilmiştir. Böylesine büyük bir girişime rağmen, devrimi biçimlendiren yol henüz en az anlaşılmalı ve eksik kalmış unsurdur. Mevcut çalışma bu boşluğu gidermeye çalışırken, verili kabul gören bilgiyi sorgulamak ve söz konusu dönüşüm döneminin incelenmesine yeni bir ışık tutmaya çalışmaktadır. Çalışmanın temel savı, Etiyopya devriminin, merkezden çok uzakta toplumun önemli bir kesiminin katıldığı sonuçsal hareketleri kullanarak daha iyi açıklanabileceği ve anlaşılabilirliğidir. Devrim, buna göre, öncelikle çevre merkezli olarak nitelendirilmiştir. Çalışma, gözden kaçan birincil kaynaklara büyük ölçüde güvenerek, çevrede meydana gelen dört ana dolaylı hareketi tanımlamakta ve açıklamaktadır. Ampirik tartışma, uzun süreli hareketlerin biçimlendirici değişime yönelik yaklaşan/birleşen simetrik amaç/heveslerini yansıtmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Etiyopya, Devrim, Tanıma, Çevre, Çerçeveleme.

Introduction

As the sole Empire in revolution the African continent comprised, the late twentieth-century Ethiopian state garnered noteworthy traction in the study of revolutions at the global level. The social phenomenon has secured a comfortable presence in the realm of established scholarship that studies cross-continental revolution-bound social changes. The large body of literature focusing on the 1974 Ethiopian revolution sought to attribute its ultimate occurrence to the young elite segment of the society. They display an effective interoperate to employ what became the Ethiopian Student Movement (ESM) as the central factor to explain the change in the political system in then Ethiopia. As such, the converging view that dominated the study of the change in question over the past several decades understood the phenomenon as elite-driven and urban-centered. Despite the relevant historical involvement of the Addis Ababa university students, in particular, this conclusion is not only incomplete and misleading but also suffers from the lack of consequential inclusiveness. Key factors central in engendering the impactful shakeup have been overlooked or utilized as auxiliary aspects in the previous works rendering the change in the political system least understood.

The Ethiopian revolution is least understood in that it has been exposed to various interpretations by local and foreign writers based on the researchers' ideological orientation, understanding of the dynamics of revolutionary movements that predate the actual revolution and its outcomes but most importantly due to the gap in identifying the general and the specific picture of the revolution studied in the previous works. For the then Ethiopian student movement champions and their fellow local and international pro-Marxist intellectuals, the revolution was a genuine social revolution of class struggle for state transition from feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism in a quest for socialist order in Ethiopia (Balsvik, 1985: 265; Clapham, 1988: 4; Tadesse, 1998: 108; Tareke, 2009: 115). Those who tried to explain the revolution based on the autocratic system

prevailed and despondent social & political conditions of post-revolution Ethiopia labelled it as a revolution betrayed or failed revolution. The predicament on the success of the Ethiopian revolution also comes from questioning the degree of economic and political achievements that any classical revolution is expected to realize (Assefa, 1993: 119; Michael, 1979; Messay, 2011: 167). Taking the military junta as the key player in the absence of any political organization in the process, others considered it as a revolution from above or a garrison socialism movement that became a moment of transformation from an aristocratic to a totalitarian autocracy (Andargachew, 1993: 190; Lefort, 1983: 201; Molyneux and Halliday, 1981: 338). Still, a significant number of researchers and mainly western diplomats have a firm stand on the direct and indirect intervention of foreign socialist nations and hesitate to legitimise the ideological consistency and magnitude of transformation at the grass-root level (Henze, 1990: 8,9; Messay, 2011: 336).

The present research argues that those causes entertained most in previous works as root causes of the revolution are selective or simply symptoms of the central problem where the Ethiopian revolution framed only with recent past manifestations, not with the real root causes.

What makes this argument politically more important is the proliferation of successive revolution-bound movements in all directions of the country during the last emperor (1936-1974) followed by the actual revolution and the predominantly religious nature of these movements (Shehim, 1985:332-335).

The previous works demonstrate significant bias in studying the Ethiopian revolution which emanates from the efforts to squeeze various but interrelated casual factors into a single agenda to the interest of the actors. However, the relevance of causal explanation for a certain historical phenomenon like a revolution does not necessarily mean that the event is a product of a single set of conditions. Likewise, as it is difficult to provide a general theorization of all revolutions, it is also improbable that one distinct set of conditions to cause a given revolution. Likewise, in social and comparative historical studies it is very common to have a single outcome as a result of varied and different combinations and levels of causes (Ritter, 2014: 98-101).

The identified bias has been mitigated, in this research, by utilizing the framing theory in the process of framing the Ethiopian revolution. It helps amplify what otherwise would be eschewed factor whose prevalence requires scholars of the question at hand to compellingly deploy. The difference in the political importance of various causes cannot be considered as an excuse for the academic tribalism observed in the study of the Ethiopian revolution. Therefore, the influence of like-minded researchers in the Ethiopian revolution study and the total rejection of strong historical factors that brought the revolution calls for re-investigation that makes this

study highly significant and the first in its kind to approach the subject from a new perspective.

In the interest of time and the scope of the research, international factors that drag the revolutionaries into a wave of ideological war and radicalism couldn't be discussed in detail. In order to focus on the more organized revolutionary struggles, those less organized and fragmented cases in most parts of the country are also less represented in this research.

This research envisages contributing to both the ongoing discussions that broadly focus on revolutions at the theoretical level within the academia and the processes of reconciling historical wrongs in Ethiopia at the practical level within the polarized political spectrum. As far as the contribution tied to the scholarship is concerned the present research joins the discussion by laying a formidable ground to re-examine the established insights that the prevalent literature has taken for granted vis-à-vis the Ethiopian revolution. Anchored to this, the other side of the contribution aims to practically connect the empirical findings this research underscores to the maturing political complexity in Ethiopia. The state formation processes could, henceforth, be understood more in an all-inclusive manner by acknowledging the indispensable contributions of the largely marginalized segment of contemporary Ethiopia's polity. This unity in theory and practice, foreign to the previous works on the Ethiopian revolution, is the single most important contribution of the research in question.

1. BRINGING BACK OVERLOOKED NARRATIVES ON REVOLUTIONS

Theoretical approaches in collective actions and revolutionary movements fundamentally changed with time, types of revolutionary movements, and actors in collective actions for social change. In the mid of the twentieth century the dominant structural orientation in revolutionary studies challenged by social psychology and collective behavior theories a decade later in the 1960s. The social structural theory was a fruit of these period significantly influenced revolutionary studies during the 1970s. Constructivism also reshaped revolutionary studies towards discourse analysis in the 1980s and 1990s. A dynamic shift also observed in the 1990s referring to conceptual gaps in the previous approaches and bringing framing concepts to collective action studies.

At the end of the twentieth century, revolutionary studies almost absorbed or blended with social movement studies, and the latter contributed much on new converging approaches to revolution and social movement studies as a single revolutionary-movement study. New and emergent approaches prevailed where Culturalists and constructivists call for incorporation of culture, ideology, and framing but neither for their structural implications to make the revolution nor based on their effect in post-revolution power relation following the collapse of the old regime, rather as what they are by themselves for their irreducible role in the overall

revolutionary study (Tilly, 1997: 42; Timothy, 2005: 36-37). Culturalists focus not only on how to make a revolution but also to entangle factors that give us our prior image of revolutions and the role of ideologies and framing in the process. This new approach is at the same time a significant deviation in understanding causes of revolutions in an effort to demonstrate the structuralist way of simply listing conditions for revolution didn't work since there must be some mechanisms to investigate how different causes concatenate each other and find out the cause-effect relationship in revolution study (Goldstone, 2003: 77).

During the decade of the 1990s, in search of alternatives to fill a conceptual void in the study of social and revolutionary movements, there has been an almost meteoric acceleration in the conceptual and empirical scholarship on revolutionary movements referring to the framing process (Benford & Snow, 1998: 199). Framing theory brought the social constructivist analysis to movement theories emphasizing that meanings given to movements we knew did not necessarily reflect the realities of that time since realities are not fixed, but are interoperated. It also attempts to describe how collective action doesn't mean people's actions on their own belief system by acknowledging the fact that revolutionary movements and people's participation is bound within a social and political system that shapes their reality (Lindekilde, 2014: 201).

Framing theory is a useful analytical tool to easily understand how and why movements coalesce. By this theory, we are able to understand the nature of movements and illuminate processes of popular consensus and popular support for different ideas and policies. Like that of the political opportunity theory, it helps to explain how social movements illustrate, shape, and take advantage of popular sentiments and also shaped by them. By effectively using framing theory we can explain how movement activists successfully mobilize their mass by giving their agenda an image of a well-diagnosed problem with a proper solution the movement can bring (ibid, 2011: 215). This theory clearly transcends the boundaries that limited other theories from moving beyond the description of movements and their tendency to treat meanings or ideas as given, as if there is an isomorphic relationship between the nature of any particular set of conditions or events and the meanings attached to them. Framing theory sought to bring some dynamism to a rather static conceptualization of social movement by earlier theories and help to understand revolutionary movement as an interactive process by which frames are socially constructed, sustained, contested, and altered, the phenomenological and infrastructural constraints on those processes, and the consequences of these processes for aspects of mobilization. In doing so framing theory went further to help analytical tasks of examining the production of meanings no matter what the existing condition is or the relationship between the movement and the conditions at that time (Benford & Snow, 1998: 200).

For a wide range of reasons, the residents of the Ethiopian empire-state long have struggled against the rulers and their system of government. Most analyses of the Ethiopian "problems" that gave rise to the events of February 1974, focus on the immediate grievances of the urban workers, the famine in the north, the student discontent, the balance of international affairs, etc.- all of which played important roles. Too often, there is only passing mention of the unceasing resistance by the nations and nationalities to the efforts to maintain a repressive colonial regime. Outbreaks or uprisings among each of these groups were put down by various means, from military and police force to outright concessions. However, as the situation in the countryside became uncontrollable, the ruling class became more repressive, which made the masses hit back harder (Ibssa, 1980: 81). This is basically not due to a lack of evidence to entertain these revolutionary struggles but how the framing of the revolution shaped the presentation of facts of equal importance on the same revolution.

Particularly with respect to the case we are going to analyze, framing theory can be used to explain two significant but conflicting natures of revolutionary movements. Framing theory is crucial to link the movement agenda with the existing culture and dominant ideology. This is specially aimed at convincing the injustice is what that dominant culture accepts as an injustice and the movement goal as a goal in line with the prevailing ideology. By doing so, movement activists will lead the framing process and effectively manipulate the existing system and attitudes. Quite contrary to this, framing theory is the only theory in social and revolutionary movement studies that can expose what aspects of social realities endorsed as movement agenda and what aspects externalized in the name of incompatibility with the existing culture and ideology. Through critical investigation on the framing process researchers can identify the real and perceived causes of revolutionary movements and how those perceived causes got prominence in the process while other real causes are marginalized.

Therefore, this article aims at critically analyzing the paradox between the real making factors, yet ignored, of the Ethiopian revolution and the framing process that gave the revolution what is commonly known as a socialist revolution. The ensuing sections of this article, thus, turn to focusing in empirically discussing what the framing process has helped in bringing the overlooked revolution-bound movements in the periphery to forth that ultimately culminated in the 1974 Ethiopian revolution. The discussion begins with the mass struggles that were armed and had a secession outlook in Eritrea and the Ogaden region of Ethiopian Somali followed by the struggles categorized as societal upheavals for self-determination, autonomy, and recognition.

2. OGADEN AND ERITREA: THE TWO STRENUOUS SECESSIONIST REVOLUTIONARY STRUGGLES

Secessionist movements in Eritrea and Ogaden are integral parts of the Ethiopian revolution and it is impossible to talk of the revolution if these movements are ignored or deemphasized because the importance of those struggles in the peripherals and the contribution they made to regime changes in Ethiopia is evident since the emergence of the modern Ethiopia (Meckelburg, 2012: 296). Hiwot pointed out that “the only ‘formidable-nationalist-regionalist’ movement until 1974 confronting the imperial state was that of Eritrea and to some extent Somalia irredentism” (1976: 44). According to Andargachew “The [peoples] in Eritrea and Ogaden had, since about 1960, been involved in armed resistance. Though the general literature on the revolutionary leaves a lot to be desired, the Ethiopian experience seems to suggest that the [people] can be as revolutionary if not more” (Andargachew, 1995: 55).

Although many of the armed struggles in the periphery shared similar characteristics, the Emperor’s wrong justification to simplify integration of Eritrea to Ethiopia as simple as that of Bale or parts of Somali province and lack of any special strategy to manage that special problem led to full scale armed struggle. The interrelationships between them range from social to economic, from home politics to diplomacy and ultimately from the destiny of Eritrean nationhood to the Ethiopian future statehood. These struggles need to be addressed in both ways that how the policies of the Emperor affected these movements and in turn how the struggles affected the revolution and finally brought the century-old monarchy to its unceremonious end.

2.1. The Revolution-bound Struggle in the Somali-Region

People in Ogden were hopeful that the end of Italian colonization will bring them regional autonomy. However, their independent fighter Ethiopia let the Ogaden and Haud on the hands of the new colonizer, Britain, in the name of Occupied Enemy Territory Administration (OETA) through Anglo-Ethiopian treaty in 1942 and again 1944. This agreement was the beginning of the British administration of Ogaden as part of ‘Reserved Areas.’

The internal political situation of Haile Selassie especially his treatment of the Muslims at home was also the main issue on the table to justify Ethiopia’s incapability to administer Muslim dominated Ogaden area. With all the frustration and complaints on the British move in Ogaden, Haile Selassie’s approach to the issue always raised the anger of the local people as it was a pure sense of territorial ownership not that of belongingness of the citizens. In a letter addressed to BilataAyele, governor of the Harerge Awraja, Haile Selassie’s prime concern was the land, the border security for the empire, and the pasture in Ahud area. In the letter, the Emperor mentioned “no house will be safe without a fence and the fence of Ethiopia is Somali and the desert” representing the area as a fence with no national,

historical or cultural intent to make the people feel Ethiopian.¹ Together with the sense of cultural attachment and the long years of political manipulation of Britain to make the people feel more attached to other parts of Somalia than Ethiopia, the seed for the secessionist struggle was existing since then, at least, as militant pan-Somali movements.

2.2. The Impetus and Perpetual Antagonism of the Armed Struggle in Ogaden

Insurgency and liberation movements in Ogaden resulted from multiple but consistent state-led repression that persisted from 1890 to 1974. However, the continuity of the repression is strikingly similar to what Hagman (2014: 729) pointed out:

“In spite of changing geopolitical and conflict rationales in the Ethiopian Ogaden, government responses to armed revolt in the Somali periphery have been strikingly similar. A brief comparison of counterinsurgency campaigns by the imperial army against the al-jaysh in the 1960s and by ENDF troops against the ONLF some four decades later illustrates this observation”

In another major reporting to the same historical occurrence, the main media outlet of the revolutionaries in urban centers and abroad mentioned the continuity of the state-led oppression in Ogaden on its special edition as:

“The regime continued the national oppression policy of Haile Selassie and the Somali nationality in the Ogaden has been subjected to extremely barbarous national oppression. For this reason, the oppressed people of the Ogaden have revolted against this oppression. To that extent it is legitimate, just and democratic.” (Editorial, 1977: 3).

This resistance struggle that can basically be categorized as the struggle of the oppressed people against the oppressor empire has changed its dynamics and scope depending on internal and external actors' interest and engagement. As the struggle grew in scope, however, the liberation front turned it into a struggle of Somalis against Ethiopians and created an opportunity for Somalia's intervention. Beyond the ethnic and cultural connection of the Ogaden people with the Somalia government, the oil rich area of Ogaden, and fertile lands there were additional economic causes to fight for Ogaden. Ethiopia's ruling class, anxious to see internal class struggle stifled, similarly and deliberately orchestrated nationalist hysteria to mobilize the rest of the country against the Ogaden Somalis (Asseged, 1982: 280).

The nomadic resistance that continuously challenged later becomes more organized especially with the independence of Somalia in 1960. In the

¹ As far as the ruling classes of both Somalia and Ethiopia are concerned, the issue is not the liberation of the Ogaden Somalis from political oppression and economic exploitation. It is rather a territorial question. These governments seek either to bring the territory and the people under a new class domination, or to maintain them under the existing class rule. Hence, the issue is clearly and unequivocally the acquisition of the Ogaden territory that put the two regimes on a collision course.

Ogaden, Somalis who had briefly been united with the other parts of the Somali nation under British tutelage after World War II had engaged in guerrilla resistance against Ethiopia since the British returned the area to the Emperor in 1942. Such opposition escalated after the Marxist regime of Mohamed Siad Barre came to power in Somalia in 1969 (Edmond, 1981: 325-326). The Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) was formed in Mogadishu (the capital city of the Republic of Somalia) in 1960, the year when the Republic became independent.² Once came into existence, the organization established a military camp in Mogadishu where its militants were receiving pieces of training. It subsequently emerged active in involving consecutive skirmishes against the Ethiopian government in the Ogaden and Bale regions. It continued its rebellion attacks even after the failure of the 1963-1965 Bale revolt, which it had pressed, and conducted raids in Hararge and Bale territories of Oromo until 1972 (Asseged, 1982: 157). The forerunners of this front and other liberation fronts like OLF which later became ONLF are members of the previous political organizations like Hizbullah and Nasrallah. However, the Ogaden was not returned to Ethiopia until 1948 and the Haud area until 1955, three years and ten years after the end of the war respectively (Andargachew, 1995: 7).

There were also massive settlement programs around the fertile lands of the Wabi Shebele river. The settlement program and subsequent military engagement of the emperor was not only a wrong move but also during the most critical time that helped the pan-Greater Somalia militants to use this advantage to regain their base in Ethiopia. Especially the transfer of Haud on November 29, 1954, the large fertile grazing land commonly used by pastoralists from Italia, British and Ethiopian Somaliland; created common cause for Somalis where the Haile Selassie government had already given them a cause to unite. With the return of Haud, militants escalated their military activity including seeking support from foreign countries, mainly Arab nations that the effect doesn't limit to Haud but made the Ogaden area base for various clandestine political organizations. The political organizations like *Hizbullah* (Soldiers of Allah), *Haqqullah* (True Sons of Allah), *Nasrallah* (victorious of Allah's Din) were operating in most parts of Harerge and supported by Arab countries especially Egypt. As a result of such multiple factors as; the 1948 UN decision to retain the former Italian Somaliland with the trusteeship of Italia itself, Ethiopian diplomatic success to win the support of the US and the unmanageable level of militancy by the Somali youth league frustrating the British Administration itself the British administration finally gave up its dream of "Greater Somalia" and Ogaden

²Nomadic resistance to Ethiopian intrusion in their way of life dates back to the end of the nineteenth century. But this resistance had lacked organization and leadership. Such organized leadership came in the 1960s, when the discontented Somali urban petty bourgeoisie organized and proclaimed itself the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF).

returned to Ethiopia with great turmoil and a handful of militant organizations threatening the peace and stability of the region.

Despite the presence of militant activities in the area, the return of Ogaden to Ethiopia could be a great opportunity for Ethiopia to regain the trust of the people through peaceful administration and development projects. However, the various miscalculated political and economic measures implemented made Ethiopia have a hard and non-inclusive effort of state-building in that part of the region. In fact, it was the same mistake that the Haile Selassie regime made as soon as granted with the federation arrangement in Eritrea that caused the secessionist struggles.

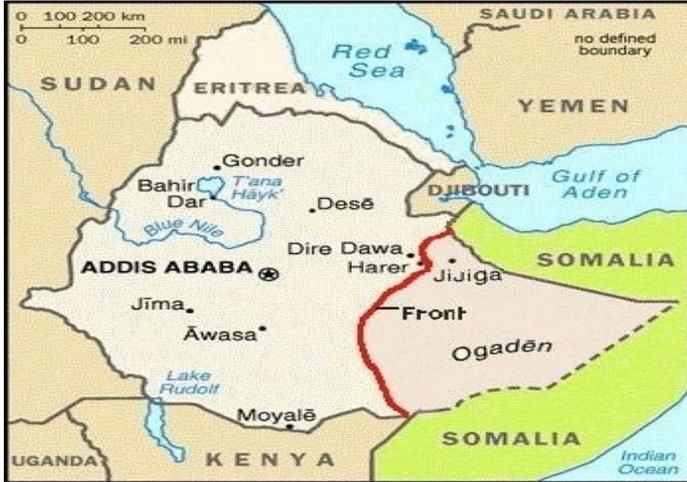
For instance, a resettlement program around the Wabi Shebele river in 1951 replacing the local community with farmers from the central and highland Ethiopia had created anger causing revolts and uprising. Assuring the absence of any significant foreign power in the area, Haile Selassie ordered a massive resettlement program especially around the Gridida fertile area where the local people used to farm in the area both during the Italian and British period. The livestock tax imposed by the Haile Selassie government in February 1963 also created popular frustrations the act of which finally led to an armed rebellion led by Makthal Dahir, chief of the Rer Isaaq Ogaden³ subclan using a collective force mobilized from Somali Youth League leaders and activists of the 1949 Jigjiga revolt. The rebel groups called themselves *al-Jeysh* also known as the Ogaden Liberation Front (OLF) that had popular support because of the highly popular leadership who were also former leaders and members of Nasrallah, the OCTI and major clan chiefs. The brutal response of the military force to all these uprisings finally led hundreds to die and shift the center of the uprising to Ogaden for the total liberation of Ogaden from Ethiopia.

Ogaden and the reserved areas became a safe-haven for any militant activities against Ethiopia wherever their main base and whoever their supporter are. Almost all of the militant movements that had their base in Mogadishu were allowed by Britain to operate in Ogaden as a proxy to challenge Ethiopia. Although the reason is unknown from a diplomatic perspective, the British administration was always in support of these movements while marches and demonstrations by the League, most of the time, disrespected the Ethiopian sovereignty including the flag. One of the most critical challenges for the Emperor was the militant activities and demonstrations in Jigjiga used to target business and investment activities of Ethiopian or foreign owners. Big companies like the American oil refinery company made intentionally frustrated to leave the area making the Ethiopian government feel desperate about the situation.

³“Makthal Dahir had been a founder of the SYL branch in Harar in 1946 and one of the leaders of the 1949 Jijiga revolt before exiling himself to Somalia. British colonialists handed him over to the Haile Selassie Government, which condemned him to death, then pardoned and imprisoned him for 10 years in Addis Ababa before appointing him as the district commissioner of Degehabur in 1962” (Hagman, 2014)

Relying on the structural and military infrastructures inherited from the Fascist Italia and the all-round support as a result of the Anglo-American treaty; Haile Selassie waged continuous repression against every movement, especially the Weyanes and Ogaden revolts that latter turned to full-scale liberation movements (Hiwot 1975).

The clan-based armed struggles and Somali government-sponsored secessionist movements initially were not a major threat for the Emperor had it not been the retaliation of the imperial force turned most Somalis into militants in the later stages. Although the clandestine armed groups operated in some areas of the Somali inhabited areas like *Degehabur*, *Wardheer*, *Quabridehar*, *Fiq*, *Godey*, and *Kelafo*; in the early 1960s, the collective capacity of the rebels were less than 3000 with weak structure and weaponry. The strategies employed were also a hit and run attack on selected government structures like police stations and conveys. However, irrespective of the scale of the armed struggle, the imperial army responded with harsh retaliation. A surviving elder member of *al-Jaysh* who currently is living in Addis Ababa expressed the level of retaliation in his home town *Degehabur*: “in August 1963 few of our members attacked a military convoy in *Degehabur* and a week later while we were in a Mosque, we heard huge artillery of the Imperial army that it carried out an indiscriminate attack killing several hundred including my family.”



Picture 1: The Ogaden Region in the Ethiopian State

The concentration of rebel fighters increased gradually in Ogaden partly due to the exile from other cities fearing mass revenge for every little attack the rebel fighters causing and partly due to the aggressive recruitment of the armed groups. The new trend of exile was not exceptional to fighters. Those who attended their primary and secondary education fled to Mogadishu and some Arab countries to peruse their education. These educated Somalis in exile later returned as leaders of the upcoming

resistance struggle which was quite different from the previous hit and run attacks (Hagmann, 2014: 730).

The Emperor's attitude towards the Somali people and their religion was a potential source of support for the militant activities to mobilize many of their supporters deep in the Ethiopian territory. Haile Selassie's intolerance of the Muslim society was always a gateway for invaders or perpetrators. Even before the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, it is the kings' mistreatment of the Muslims in Ogaden and other peripheries that was taken as an important entry point (Trimingham, 1952: 114).

One informant, leader of armed struggle back then, recounted: "*Our condition under Haile Selassie was a restoration of Anti-Muslim sentiment of Haile Selassie. We had been denied access to official positions within the administrative structures and exile and execution of Muslim activists became a daily norm.*"

At the end of the 1960s and the first two years of 1970s, the resistance struggle in the Somali-land had a strong military impact on Ethiopia. During the 1972 probing of Ogaden oil and natural gas deposit by the Somalia government and the 1973 military confrontation between Somalia and the Imperial army, the management of the Emperor for internal Ogaden affairs gave a gateway for external interference. And therefore, on the eve of the Ethiopian revolution, the resistance struggles in the form of liberation front had already challenged the Emperor both on the military front and diplomatically affecting every aspect of the regime. Although those areas were known for their active challenge in armed struggle significantly weakened on the eve of the revolution due to the critical draught that took thousands of lives especially in Degehabur and adjacent areas; as this same impact was the result of lack of meaningful development intervention it in turn used for counter-propaganda and attack on the Emperor both politically and militarily. Parallel to the Wollo draught at the eve of the revolution which had been significantly used by revolutionaries in the urban center and the North, the draught in Ogaden was one of the major pushing factors to bring the imperial era to its fatal end.⁴

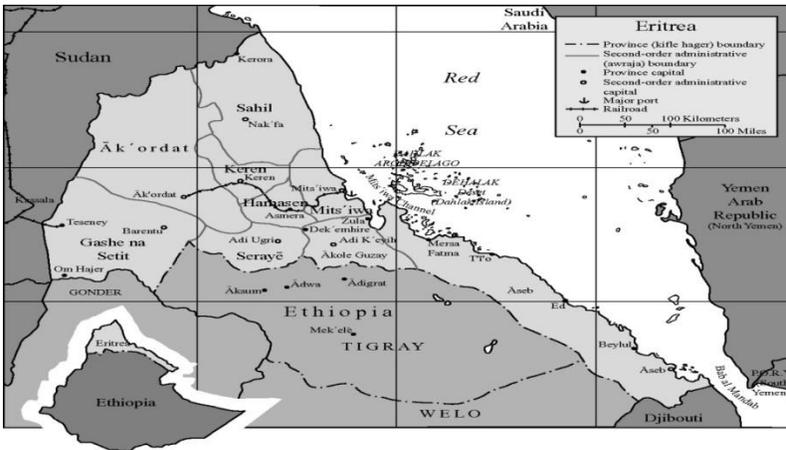
3. THE REVOLUTION-BOUND MOVEMENT IN ERITREA

What became known to be the Eritrea question and subsequent policies of the center that made Eritreans a strong revolutionary force (Lefort, 1981: 40). The most critical moment for the revolutionary movement in Eritrea as it was to other revolutionary struggles was the time when the Emperor returned to the throne in May 1941 after five years of exile. During the Italian short-lived occupation period, the traditional regional leaders weakened and these declines in the power of the nobilities created the fertile ground for the Emperor to consolidate his power and further repress regional forces; be it nationalist, class-based or religious. This

⁴ EthiopianHerald. *Famine Disaster in the Ogaden*. Ethiopian Herald, 1974.

trend of extreme constitutional power accumulation⁵ and intent of centralization led to continuous repression of any regional movements. In this way, the emperor aimed at supporting irredentist movements in Eritrea with the interest of incorporating parts of the areas colonized by Italy in this region. This support for the irredentist movements however became the era of intensification of the identity-based division of the society and marginalization.

A central concern for hundreds of years has been the Ethiopian fear of being "an island in a Moslem sea." This has to do with the perception held against Islam itself and particularly on "its propensity to be militant and political with the jihad or holy war as its potent means" (Sherman, 1979: 56-57). Leaving such a long historical perspective aside, the recent past that determined the Eritreans' position towards the degree of their independence from that of the Ethiopian state can be traced back and linked to the Minilik era. Despite the spectacular victory of Ethiopia during the Battle of Adwa against the European scramble for Africa, Minilik did not push the Italians out from Mereb Melash (Eritrea) after his victory.⁶ Rather, during the treaty in Addis Ababa signed in October 1896 following the victory of Adwa reaffirmed the protector position of Italy over significant areas of Eritrea, about 200,000 square km (80,000 square miles). And therefore, before the actual separatist movement as a result of the Haile Selassie regime's oppression against the selected areas and identities, the sentiment of the *de facto* political entity of the Eritreans state as a result of the various treaties Ethiopia signed were already on the minds of the Eritrean peop



Picture2: The Eritrean Nation After its independence from Ethiopia in 1991

⁵ Revised Constitution of Ethiopia, 1955.

⁶ Even, Atse Yohanis, Minilik's forerunner, Ethiopia was not interested to push the invader; Egyptian force, at the battle of Gundet (1875) and at the battle of Gura (1876) out of the Eritrean region despite their psychological advantage and military capacity.

3.1. The Thrust for an Organized Revolution-bound Struggle

The “patriotic” association in Eritrea, “*Mahbara fiqri hager Eritra*” (Society for the love of the land of Eritrea) established in April 1941 in Asmara and the one established in February 1944 by the name “The Society for the Unification of Ethiopia and Eritrea” with the almost similar program were the first organized initiatives to materialize the Eritrean movement against the empire but also were causes to instigate division between the highland Christian dominated Eritreans and the Muslim dominated lowlands. By its de-facto legal name “Unionist Party”, the association was the extension of the Emperor’s unitary state attitude in Eritrea. At the same time, the association was an informal school for what they called ‘love of the Ethiopian nation’ though purely based on identity blind sense of the nation. Due to their exposure to the European administration, Eritreans were skeptical of the Ethiopian ‘feudal’ system and consciously follow every move of the Emperor in Eritrean. In this aspect of the Eritrean affairs, no division has existed between the highland and lowland, the Muslims and Christians, the pro-unity and the independent seekers. There used to be a secret discussion between Christians and Muslims on how to maintain the Eritrean unity with their diverse identity and interest early in 1939 before Haile Selassie reinstated in 1941.

The unionist party has become the cause of conflict between the various parties as it has gradually fully adopted the unification of Eritrea with Ethiopia without questioning the Eritreans social, political and economic status and more importantly how the unification will manage diversity which is the center of the Eritrean question in the entire struggle. Especially, following a conference held at Bete Ghiorgis, the division between the Muslims and Christians became certain. The Muslim group led by Abdulkadir Kabire forced to leave the secret discussion platform. This time forward Eritreans began to split and organize themselves in multiple fronts. The first organized movement in a separatist sentiment can be said the one started in Keren in December 1946 by the name Muslim League also known as Shaban al-Muslim in Arabic.

There were two important meetings; one on 3 December 1946 where leaders and community representatives at Keren gathered to consider Eritrea’s political future and elect their leaders. As a result, Said Abebaker El Mirghani was elected as the president of the Muslim League, and Ibrahim Sultan was voted secretary-general at this meeting.

Having the support of the community leaders in Keren and electing formal leaders of the Muslim League, the next big event was held again at Keren on 20 and 21 January of 1947. This meeting was the most critical of all in the nationalist movement both in terms of the several thousand attendees and the adoption of the idea of emancipation as Eritrea’s future. Summarized, the composition of the various groups’ and their stand about the decision on that meeting could be quoted as:

“The Tigray and the Baria, of western province, the Maria from Keren and Beni Amer chiefs and the kunamas choose the way for independence ... the Saho from the Red Sea, the damahoita of the Danakil Afar also supported the Moslem league program. All in all Eritrean Muslims can be said to have chosen independence mainly from Ethiopia and if it doesn't work even from the highland Eritrea⁷

From this time onward the Muslim League, despite some differences among the leaders in terms of timing and strategy, adopted the issue of independence as its political program.

Following the proposal the four powers commission comprising Great Britain, France, USA, and USSR for the unification of highland Eritrea with Ethiopia and trustee for ten years for the remaining part; dominantly Muslim areas, the Muslim League addressed the commission presenting itself as a legitimate representative of Eritreans even at international level. The Muslim League has prepared a memorandum for the commission to legitimize the adoption of complete independence from Ethiopia. In the article, the League argued that Ethiopia is “Feudal” and incapable of managing the Eritrean affairs. The League complained about the Ethiopian government having its backward government system that led its own people to a state of disorganization, ignorance, and backwardness facing chronic poverty despite the fertility of the land and privilege of independence. Again, in relation to religion, the League was more critical of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the government for Ethiopia's historic marginalization of the Ethiopian Muslims themselves in their own country. The league blamed the power commission or any other organ pushing for the unification to a county where Muslims do not have the right to be equal to Copt in their own land.⁸

The League's underestimation of Ethiopia's ability to guide Eritrea was further elaborated in a memorandum to the commission on 16 December 1947 reads that: “Is it just that a still barbaric and primitive nation such as the Ethiopians-whose government is unable to improve a lot of its own people should come into possession of a territory which is far more disciplined, advance and civilized than Abyssinia?” (Mohammad, 2013: 65). Right after the UN's passage of Resolution 390-A in December 1950 and especially after the official transfer of power from British to Federal Authority in mid-September 1952, the various branches of nationalists mainly the Muslims started to suffer from political repression and systematic eradication of their communication platforms. The shift in the core values struggling for and sense of urgency they had set also radically changed. During the first two years of the federation, the Muslim League and other Muslim based organizations decided to try every opportunity they might get from the federal arrangement and prefer to stick only to religious issues of

⁷Interview with Yasin, Yusuf-Author and Political Analyst (July 21/07/2016, 2016)

⁸The four-power commission report in August 1948 showed that the Unionist party cause had not attracted a majority. The combined figures for those political parties opposing union (675, 000) were approximately twenty-three percent greater than that in favour (547, 000). (UNGA, Official Reports, 3rd Session, pt.2, 1st Committee Annexes A/c. 1/466.)

protecting the right to have free religious institutions, strong Islamic and Arabic educational system and preservation of the important role of Islamic clerics and Ulamas. This shift in priority is; in one way a pragmatic move to go with the politics of the time but in the other sense, it is a strategic move to look for alternative mobilization agendas for the Muslim constituent in case time would come to resist against the federation. Successful in their effort, the Muslim clerics emerged as a center of unification for all Muslims. ‘Ulama Front’ was also established in Asmara on May 19, 1951, comprising all regional clerics; Islamic scholars, jurists, and community leaders, including several members of the League’s Executive Council.

In 1957 and 1958 the speedy erosion of the federation and extreme abuse of the civil and religious rights of Muslims reached the level that pro-union Eritreans couldn’t even circumvent it. The pro-unionist, in fact, did not share the concern had it not been the federation arrangement eroded enough to abandon their right to practice their constitutional authority within the federation and finally pushed them off out of the system. Ironically, many of members of the assembly who used to pass bills to silence free media, denying rights to education and religion finally came to know the excessive abuse of Muslims right was only the beginning to complete dismantling of the federation.

The revolutionary condition was ripening more at a time when the grievances of the pro-independence coupled with pro-unionists’ late consciousness on the inevitability of the breakdown of the federal arrangement. The autonomy of Eritrea and the economic condition were the two important common agendas for both Muslims and Christian Eritreans since the onset of the federation. However, the chronic unemployment, increase in living cost, and the overall control of the Assembly’s decision by the emperor in late 1957 became a source of broad anti-government, more importantly, an anti-Emperor alliance of all Eritreans (Killion, 1997: 26). Political unrest and instabilities engulfed all the cities as a result of labor activists’ joint mobilization. The joint mobilization was the new beginning of Eritrean nationalism resentment that started late but helped the urban unrest continue and the later grown to the long-lasting armed struggle.

The role of external powers especially the emerging crisis between Ethiopia and the international powerful states mainly US and British also gave priority in the Ethiopian structural analysis of the revolution. The strong relations with the US most importantly helped the country to secure another strategic interest by federating Eritrea to Ethiopia in 1952 due to the influence of the US over the United Nations general assembly (Andargachew, 1995: 33). The strong relationship persisted until the fall of the monarch in 1974 and the revolution was a genuine revolution despite the strong support from the western power. This paradox made western affiliated academicians and diplomats to ignore generally the revolution in Ethiopia (Clapham, 1987: 156-159) and specifically the presence of genuine causations except for the radicalism of Ethiopian student movement and the

interference of socialist ideology from abroad (Mesay, 2001: 336; Henze, 1985: 27).

4. STRUGGLE FOR SELF-DETERMINATION, REGIONAL AUTONOMY AND RECOGNITION

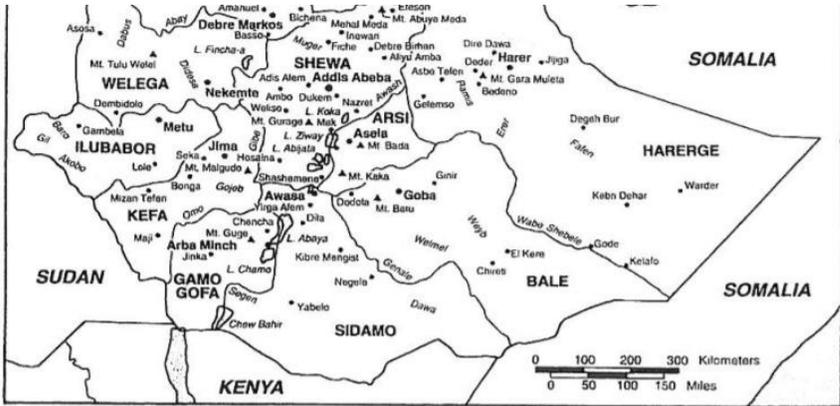
The pieces of literature regarding those pre-revolutionary struggles in Ethiopia focused on; either secessionist struggles that directly challenged the territorial integrity of the state or those organized movements that affected the day to day politics of the government. This is more common when it comes to the study of the Ethiopian revolution. Among the compromised making factors that remained both uncovered and unrewarded are those struggles for regional autonomy within the Ethiopian state and those spontaneous and semi-organized movements demanding more recognition pertaining to their size, history, or political significance.

The struggle for regional autonomy was not only a territorial issue that made the newly incorporated areas to revolt against the Ethiopian state to declare their separation. Their struggle was against the new forms of administration the Emperor followed. Their new rulers became military generals directly appointed by the Emperor and the new cities established were almost garrison villages with no cultural relationship with the local people or modernising effect. Besides, the new towns established following the incorporation made to have new names that were against the history, culture, and interests of the local people. And, despite the taxes and tributes collected from the people the areas remained ignored in terms of social and economic developments.

4.1. Bale Rebellion: The Momentous but unheralded Peasant Struggle

According to John Young accounts, Bale rebellion is a response to the socio-political impact of imperial Ethiopia's 'introduction of Christian settlers from the north among largely Moslem peasants and nomads' (Young, 1997: 55). The settlement programs effected in a way deploying people from central and highland Ethiopia creating pressure on local people to migrate to less fertile areas leaving their productive farmlands for the new settlers (McClellan, 1994: 195). The resentment of the indigenous people cannot be simply characterized based on the economic relationship between the settlers and those removed from their lands. However, the deep-seated "we-they" attitudes were mainly as a result of a state-led religious-based extension into their resource (Henze, 1985: 13-15). Economic pressure was another source of frustration. According to Tadesse, due to uncollected taxes of three years period between 1952 to 1957 amounted 3 million USD, a total of 336,000 hectares of land were confiscated from four localities of the bale area; *Wabe, Dolo, Goba, and Ganale*. At the end of this period and early 1960s, more than 40 percent of the people in the seven provinces lost their

only means of survival and forced to work for landlords (Tadesse, 1993: 35-41).



Picture 3: A map showing Bale as part of local administration in the then Ethiopia

The Bale rebellion was a rebellion of a generation automatically changed to a tenant and oppressed people in terms of dignity, identity, and culture. The leaders of the rebellion were also members of this generation directly affected by the humiliation. General Waaqo Guutuu was one of these leaders who organized the scattered and spontaneous peasant resistances in Bale. In one of the speeches he made, the general explained the cause of the armed struggle as: “Our people remember. Don’t ever forget that you are a people with history and honor and that you are richly endowed with human and material resources. Rise up and arm yourself to destroy the oppressive rule of Haile Sillasse” (Tareke 1991).

The emergence of the leadership of Waaqoo Guutuu changed the nature of the relationship between the highly spontaneous resistance efforts and the harsh anti-insurgent reaction of the Emperor. Those local chiefs and self-appointed leaders of small groups of armed men immediately stepped up their attack on selected bases of Haile Sillasse. General Waaqo Guutuu also expanded his span of leadership to local level clandestine organizations uniting them into a strong rebel group. The Bale rebellion influence on the Emperor was not limited to the rebel fighting in Bale but the broader Oromo struggles across Ethiopia. During the 50th year commemoration of the Bale rebellion, Dr. Mohammed Hassen, a renowned historian and who personally met Waaqu Guutuu described the influence of the General as:

“It was tribute to his leadership that Oromo fighters were able to control three fourth of the large province of Bale by 1966. The armed struggle in Bale attracted Jarra Abba Gada and the martyred Mulis Abba Gada. Jarra Abba Gada, who started armed struggle in Hararge in 1975, was trained under General Waaqoo Guutuu in 1967.”⁹

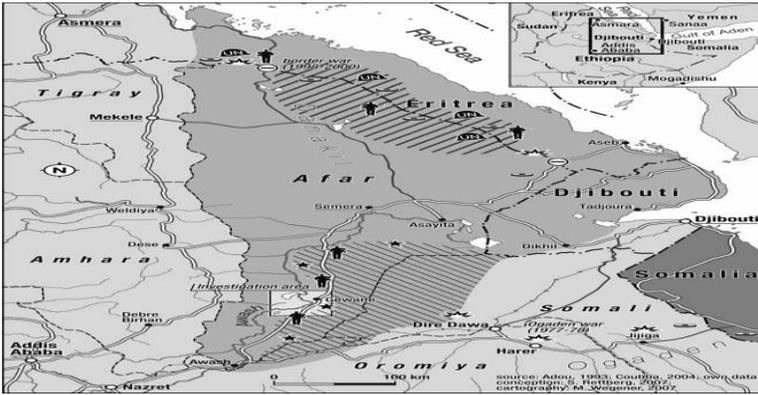
⁹A Speech by Mohammed Hassen on "Commemorating 50 Years of Oromo Struggle led by General Waaqo Gutu in 2013.

The Bale rebellion was not only the longest and bloodiest one but maybe the only struggle for regional autonomy in the then Ethiopia with the highest level of influence on the Emperor. Three to five years after the commencement of the rebel fighting, three-fifth of the area was under the control of the rebel groups and the government was confined to selected urban towns despite the under armed rebel groups incomparable to the military force of Haile Sillasse (Tareke 1991: 160-193). Mid 1966 was a year of the rebel groups and many sub-provinces on the hands of the rebel and their government appointed governors killed. This compromised the effectiveness of the Haile Sillasse government in the highland towns. Goba, the provincial capital was attacked twice and the rebel fighters in Bale and nearby areas almost controlled Borana, Dalo, Genale, Wabe, and El Kere which sent a signal that not only the provinces but Addis Ababa was no longer safe and it was immediately the Emperor declared martial law in Bale in December 1966 (Henze, 1985: 31).

4.2. Afar Peoples struggle in Eritrea and Ethiopia

Haile Sillasse was more strategic in approaching the Afar by securing his legitimacy through his good relationships with the 13th sultan of the Afar, Sultan Ali Mirah. Armed struggles in Afar couldn't be responded like that of the Bale or in the Ogaden since the Afar area is at the heart of the two most critical conflicts; the Eritrea and Djibouti. What is more critical is the Afars are an integral part of the political system and armed struggle in both regions.

The revolutionary struggles of the Afar people were from multiple fronts stretching from the Eritrean lowlands which are the bases for the Eritrean struggle for independence to the French colony of Djibouti. At the same time, this area in Eritrea inhabited by the Afars was a stronghold of Turkey, Egypt, and finally Italia. The Italian period in this part of the Eritrean territory was full of confrontation due to the fact that the Afar are less interested in complete separation from the Ethiopian state which is against the interest of Italy. During the 1949 UN conference on the Eritrean issue, the Afar was represented by Fitawrari Yasin Mohamoda who voted for the federation of Eritrea with Ethiopia (Yasin, 2008: 56).



Picture 4: The Afar in Ethiopia

Although Haile Sillasse was relatively tolerant of the autonomy of the Afar in Ethiopia, he was totally reluctant for their demand for full self-determination. As a result, desperate Afars were aggressively recruited by ELF; in its Afar name ‘jebeha’ since 1960. As a result, if the struggle for Eritrean struggle for independence challenged the Emperor, the role of Afar was very significant. Later on, due to multiple challenges including random assassination the Afar fighters faced in jebeha, the Afar people started their own struggle for self-determination that later became a new front and a new challenge for imperial Ethiopia.

According to Redo’s prison note from Alem Bekagn cited in (Yasin, 2008: 46), following the official abolition of the Eritrean federation arrangement, there were two critical conferences in Ti’o in 1961 and Asab in 1963 on the fate of the ‘Afar Question’. While the consensus of 55 Afar tribal chieftains on the Ti’O conference to reassert the need to bring those Afar people living in Hararge, Shoa, Wallo, Tigray, and Eritrea to form an independent Afar region within Ethiopia; the Asab conference pushed the issue further by delegating one of the forerunners of the issue, Sheikh Yasin Mohamoda to collect the petition of all the clan and religious leaders of the Afar people to try the unsuccessful trial of presenting the question to the emperor’s court in 1964) (Redo, 1998).

The birth of institutionalised approach towards the Afar question by the Afar students had also begun and the Afar Student Association was initiated by Afar students residing in Addis Ababa. The youth, motivated by the activities of the student movements all over Ethiopia, has started their own mobilization especially through members of the Afar Student Association who went to Cairo for education. To this end, Afar students in Cairo formed the Afar Koborih Angoyya (AKA) (The Afar Mobilization Movement) on 2 November 1972.

In the final years of the pre-revolution Ethiopia, Afar Koborih Angoyya (AKA) was the main organ to represent the Afar people in major meetings and events concerning revolutionary movements and resistance struggles. Afar National Liberation Movement and Afar People Democratic

Party are all the decedents of these revolutionary movements. Similarly, the common denominator for all pre and post-1974 Afar revolutionary movements, which is regional autonomy, remained to be the determining factor for any Afar rebel organization.¹⁰

4.3. Harari People and their Resistance against Uncivilized Political System

Although the grievance of the people dates back to their time of incorporation in 1887 no organized effort was documented until the regime enhanced its repression especially after the consolidation of power by Haile Sillasse in the post Italian period. Authors explained the likes of the civilization of the Hareri people and the newly emerged ‘Shoan’ something a contrast between agrarian, orthodox Christian parochialism and urban, Muslim cosmopolitanism (Tibebu 1995). Understanding their relative advancement in education and civilization the reason why a Harai minister was appointed for the first time in Ethiopia was in 1957 can be solid proof for the above argument (Clapham, 1969: 20).

Like other parts of oppressed people in the peripheries, Hararis suffered a lot in the hands of Haile Sillasse after his restoration in the post-Italy period. Contradictory enough, Haile Sillasse avenged those people including, not limited to that, forceful payment of the full cost for the rebuilding of demolished churches by Italia during the 5 years occupation (Fisseha, 2001: 179). And therefore, the struggle against Haile Sillasse immediately started in 1941. At that time a well-known Islamic cleric Sheikh Ibrahim Gatur had struggled against the Emperor army¹¹ Later on the policy of the Emperor, especially his language policy and religious intent of educational expansion frustrated most of the Hararis. The idea of organized peaceful resistance proliferated following the challenge of these policies on access to education and freedom of their religion.

Summarized documents of several incidents in Harar reveal several intriguing cases of the time that underpin the aforementioned claim. The Ethiopian State and the Church shared a cognitive spatial authority in monitoring Islamic activities, suppressing freedom of religion, and ensuring the State’s notable identity remained Christian. One of the par excellent instance of such a systematically designed measure is stated in the ensuing letter from Honorable L. Colonel Tamrat Yigezu to The Regent of Hararge Province:

Your Excellency, Your letter of 21st May 1954 (E.C) with ref. number 1/2245/2566 reached us along with the attachment.

¹⁰ ANLM. "Afar National Liberation Movement general guideline. In: ." *Tiglachen*, 1976: 4-12.

¹¹ Both Somalis and Harari consider Ibrahim Gutur as their own Hero of anti-colonialism struggle with colonial power and later with Ethiopia

“This religion referred to as Baha’i was started by a prophet named Baha’u’llah. ... This religion has a record of more than two million followers all over the world; most of the adherents are American nationals. Despite our anticipation that it might do harm to our politics vis-à-vis religion, we would like to express that it is better for us to see the Somalis/Muslims/ embrace this religion than they remained adherents of Islam. We kindly remind you to keep us updated on the progress concerning this undertaking from time to time.¹²

This particular correspondence reveals what the chains of State measures would ultimately envisage achieving in the region.

The first systematic effort to mobilize the Harari activists and youths was the establishment of schools and informal associations to work together against their common challenge. The birth of a more organized and strong resistant movement can be considered as an extension of this consciousness both in terms of time and goal. During the mid of 1940s, Harari youth established an association called ‘Watani’. The term equivalently represents ‘nation’ and indigenous people’ referring the people of Harar who used to sustain as historically known ‘nation’. In between the establishment of the ‘Jamiya’ and ‘Watani’, there were only five years and the idea of establishing the association was partly a fruit of youth consciousness learning their history and understanding the mistreatment of their people by the regime.

The beginning of the ‘Watani movement’ was primarily focused on the fighting against increasing state encroachment in the internal affairs of the Harari people pushing the Harari intellectuals, civil servants, and merchants. During the first years after established in 1947, the movement was purely a kind of peaceful civil right movement. The objective of this movement emanates from the agreement between King Abdullahi and Emperor Minilik that used to be as a governing principle on the administration of Harar by Harari civil servant that was breached by Haile Sillasse (Abdellah, 1994: 7; Shumburo 1992).

The Watani movement was the source of inspiration for members and the center of excellence for leaders for a wider movement. However, the combined effect of two important interrelated factors made the watani movement to transform into another totally different and violent form of regional struggle against the Ethiopian state. Frustrated by a lack of trust on the Ethiopian side and growing change in the geopolitics of Somalia border with Ethiopia, members of the Watani movement gradually recruited by a separatist movement of the Somali people called ‘Kulub-Hannolato.’ It makes a good deal of sense to take the geopolitical factor on the merger between the two movements than the compatibility of their political program since the unification was only a strategic partnership against a common target.

¹² Letter from Honorable L. Colonel Tamrat Yigezu to The Regent of Hararge Province dated 21st May 1954 (E.C) And No. 1/2245/2566

The establishment of the United Nation that gave rise to a lot of separatist movements and quest for UN trusteeship, members of Kulub-hannolato movements considered the advantage of unifying with movements in Ethiopia so that the UN commission to the region would recognize their demand for annexation. Established in Mogadesho in 1946, the Kulub-Hannolato aggressively operated deep inside Ethiopia opening more than 172 offices in Harar, Arsi, Bale, and Hararge. Negligence of the government to these critical political developments in the region also helped the kulub leaders to propagate their agenda and recruit more members. As a result, during the four powers commission hearing in 1948 in Mogadesho, four leaders from the Watani movement represented in a delegation of 12 members together with kulub leaders.¹³



Picture 5: Harar City of Ethiopia

5. URBAN STRUGGLE AGAINST STATE HOMOGENIZATION PROJECT

The center-periphery nexus of the Ethiopian Muslims with respect to the revolutionary struggle is a paradoxical truth sort. Compared to the history of Islam in Ethiopia and its strong bases in urban cities of the time, the influence of the religion on the socio-political and economic conditions of urban cities and urban Muslims' role in the struggle to abolish the ancient regime is made less visible than the peripheries at least on the produced knowledge level. The revolutionary struggles in these areas needed to be assessed not necessarily based on the military and financial impact they imposed on the State but from the critical conditions of a revolutionary situation and the articulated national objective of their struggles. These struggles are revolutionary in the sense that their goal is a complete change on the foundation of the Ethiopian state homogenization project that didn't recognize all its subjects.

¹³Haji Omar, Widato Haji Ibrahim, Gato Mohammed Yusuf, Ismael Yusuf Abdurahman

Abebe Fiseha (2001: 173-174) expressed the influential state homogenization project through the education board as:

“The Board of Education, which became the concentrated expression of the regime's homogenization drive, was created by Imperial Order in June 1947. Despite Muslim[s] accounted for about 40% of the total population, the Board never had a Muslim member throughout its thirty-seven years existence. For the most part, its policy discussions focused on two major themes: the question of Islamic schools and the role of the Orthodox Church in the regime's homogenization derive”

The national strategy of state homogenization project, especially in the education sector, was primarily challenged by the Muslim community. The decision of the ministry of education in its 23rd meeting of 1940 declaring Amharic language as a medium of instruction at all schools resisted by the Muslim schools in Addis Ababa, Harar, Dessie, and Jimma.¹⁴

Moreover, understanding the political consequence of establishing a Ministry of religion for this homogenization project¹⁵, a new ministry named as Ministry of National and Community Development established in 1957 with the same mission the Ministry of religion aimed to accomplish. Later on, frustrated by the failure of all these strategies to revitalize the role of the Church homogenize the nation by controlling the expansion of Islam, the Emperor finally decided to establish the Department of Religious Affairs in his Private Cabinet in December 1959 (Wudu, 2006: 222).

However, the desperate move was counter-productive at least for two major reasons. Primarily the resistance from the Muslim communities in Addis Ababa, Harar, Dessie, Jimma, and some semi-urban provinces in Hararge southern Ethiopia like in Gurage and Silte renewed with a new spirit and additional claim. The previously fragmented and individual led resistance now became more organized towards a unified goal of secular Ethiopia and recognition of the religion of Islam as a state religion parallel to the Christian faith. Now the question was a matter of the legitimacy of the religion-traditional based regime not a separate demand for education and tax.

Muslims in and around Addis Ababa effectively compiled most of the grievances of Muslims in all directions and showing solidarity to all struggles in the peripheries. The great demonstration just on the eve of the 1974 revolution was the first in its kind not only for the Muslims but for the history of the Ethiopian revolution in general. It was far-reaching in that the demonstration forced all forms of revolutionary struggles to endorse their articulated demand which finally result in the downfall of the imperial regime through peoples' struggle and laid the foundation for a secular

¹⁴Ministry of Education, minutes of the 23rd meeting of the board, Yakkatit 30, 1940 E.C.

¹⁵In addition to the education board 3 high government officials were also appointed to work on this proposal. The officials were; Colonel Kefle Ergetu-Vice Minister of Security, Brigadier General Mulugeta Buli-Commander of the Imperial Bodyguard and Qagn Azmach Hailemaryam Gazmu-from the Ministry of Interior (Kasu, 2006).

Ethiopia through the first articulation of separation of church and state in the new draft constitution of Ethiopia in 1974. Christians were openly invited to the grand protest through an officially written letter that had been distributed to churches and other key representative areas. The letter addressed as: “ኢትዮጵያውያን እስላሞች፣ ለክርስቲያን ወንድሞችና እህቶች...ጫቦ ዚያ 1966” meaning “From Ethiopian Muslims to our Christian brothers and sisters, April 1974” (Zewde 1991).

The second and more long-lasting impact of this move was the struggle against state homogenization project and ‘education for all’ finally became the major issues of Ethiopian politics later in the 1960s. The Question of Nationalities first articulated by Walegn in a first attempt to shape the goal of the student movement clearly challenge this homogenization project: “to be a “genuine Ethiopian” one has to speak Amharic, to listen to Amharic music, to accept the Amhara-Tigre religion, Orthodox Christianity In some cases, to be an ‘Ethiopian’, you will even have to change your name” (Mekonnen, 1969: 2).

Conclusion

The formation of the ever-centralized Ethiopian state was not a smooth process of state-building but a process that finally laid the ground for a continuous conflict between the center and the periphery. The imperial hangover of the leadership of the modern state and the state affiliated elites almost always consider those friendly with the system as the ‘political core’ making the rest ‘the periphery’. Outlying areas have scarcely represented in the government, for they lack ethnic, religious or historical connections with the established core and even the periphery always considered as external and its history has no connection with the history of the nation because the history of the nation is the history of ‘the center’ (Clapham, 1969: 3; Markakis 2013). The imperial legacies on the nation’s political, social and economic situations of the various sub-groups in the country made the lowland peripheries and those marginalized in the urban centres to fight for the death of the monarchical system. The 1974 Ethiopian revolution became a critical juncture in determining the fate of the imperial legacies in the face of wave of changes locally and globally.

This article explored these compromised making factors of the Ethiopian revolution in a comparative narrative against the conventionally accepted making factors. The primeval problems of 1974 and the impacts of political and social changes of the preceding periods cannot be fully understood, let alone addressed, unless the revolutionary watersheds in the Muslim dominated peripheries and struggles for recognition in the urban centers where their struggles compromised while the Ethiopian revolution is framed in the mainstream Ethiopian studies are fully addressed.

Before the student movements in the urban centers, the country was continuously challenged by resistance movements from the periphery. These movements were mainly peasant rebellion, armed resistance struggles and

urban struggles for recognition. Authors imaginatively expressed how the centers of the revolutionary movements were as chaotic and spiral wind to puff covering entire Ethiopia. From its southern part, Bale, to its north, Eritrea; from its east, Harar, to the west, Kaffa, the revolutionary wind spirally blew, rendering the dust to rise heavily (Adera, 1996: 128-131). The seed for Insurgency and liberation movements in Eritrea and Ogaden are found to be resulted from multiple but consistent state-led repression and essentially the failure of Hilessilasse regime to accommodate diversity in these parts of the nation. Struggle for Autonomy in Bale and Afar were legitimate in their cause and internal in their nature. However the response for these movements by the government was a litmus test for the incapability of the regime to transform the nation into all-inclusive state. The internal political situation of Haile Selassie especially his treatment of the Muslims at home was also the main pushing factor for foreign actors to extend support for secessionists. Growing frustrations across the nation latter became the ultimate cause for the expansion of revolutionary struggles which attracts the attention of the center and intelligentsia. And therefore the compromised making factors, which are the core focus of this article, are pertinent to take their relevant position in the Ethiopian politics.

In the course of this article, beyond the specific dynamics of the Ethiopian revolution that can be traced on the eve of the actual revolution, the larger historical context in which the imperial Ethiopia and imperial legacies in the social, political and economic condition of the country is taken as important explanatory factors for the proliferation of various revolutionary movements in Ethiopia. This imperial legacy became source of grievance for some part of the community making them more active insurrectionary than others. The question of nationalities, the issue of land reform and the quest for socialist order that predominantly believed as making factors of the Ethiopian revolution is revisited. In doing so, multiples of compromised revolutionary struggles that have equivalent or more important explanatory relevance for the revolution are given significant representation in the article.

In the presence of these strong revolutionary struggles, the Ethiopian revolution remained to be victim of framing process. Framing process of the Ethiopian revolution is neither a pre-revolutionary project to articulate the goal of the revolution nor it is an independent post revolution reflection on its political significance. Rather it is the process how the Ethiopian revolution is perceived by the intelligentsia finally shaping the political orientation of the post revolution Ethiopia. The temporal gap between revolutionary struggles in the periphery and the emergence of new revolutionary fronts in the urban with the beginning of modern education and elite politics exposes the fallacy in the framing of the revolution making the conventional making factors as leading causes of the revolution. The sequential aspect of adoption of revolutionary agendas in the framing of the

revolution also tells what we know about the Ethiopian revolution is what framed to us not that of what actual problems led to revolutionary struggles.

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